

# Protection of drinking water resources from agricultural pressures: effectiveness of EU regulations in the context of local realities



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Over the last decades, nutrients and pesticides have proved to be a major source of pollution of drinking water resources in Europe. Extensive legislation has been developed by the EC to protect drinking water resources from agricultural pollution, but the achievement of water quality objectives is still an ongoing challenge throughout Europe.

## **National implementation - local governance arrangements**

In this study, we aimed to identify lessons that can be learnt about the coherence and consistency of the application of EU regulations, and their effects at the local level, using qualitative expert data for 13 local to regional governance arrangements in 11 different European countries. To this end, two aspects of implementation have been studied: the national implementation of EU directives into national legislation and policies, and the experiences in the local to regional governance arrangements of the FAIRWAY case studies. Information on the national implementation is necessary to better understand the national context of the case studies. The cases studied vary in size, from local (e.g. a small island in Denmark) to regional (e.g. a transboundary catchment (Derg case study, Republic of Ireland – UK/Northern Ireland), and focal point (e.g. local well pollution (Denmark) versus regional optimization of fertiliser usages (Germany)) but all use a Multi-Actor Approach in which stakeholders collectively address pollution of drinking water resources by agricultural emissions. We have used the OECD principles for water governance to analyse the effectiveness of the governance arrangements in the case studies.

## **Intersectoral challenges manifest themselves at the local level**

The results show that the complexities and inconsistencies of European legislation drawn up to protect drinking water resources from agricultural pollution come forward most explicitly at the local level. At the local level, cross-sectoral measures need to be implemented and their effects monitored. Since national implementation is often sectoral, cross-sectoral links need to be created at the local level that are not embedded in the institutional and legal context. This hampers local and regional efforts to achieve water quality objectives and capacity building is needed for cross-sectoral decision making.

The implementation at the national level could be improved by advanced cross-referencing. This would support processes at the local to regional level.



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On the EU level, an opportunity could be found in the upcoming revision of the Water Framework Directive (WFD) to strengthen the links between different directives and how they can be applied coherently and consistently at the local level.

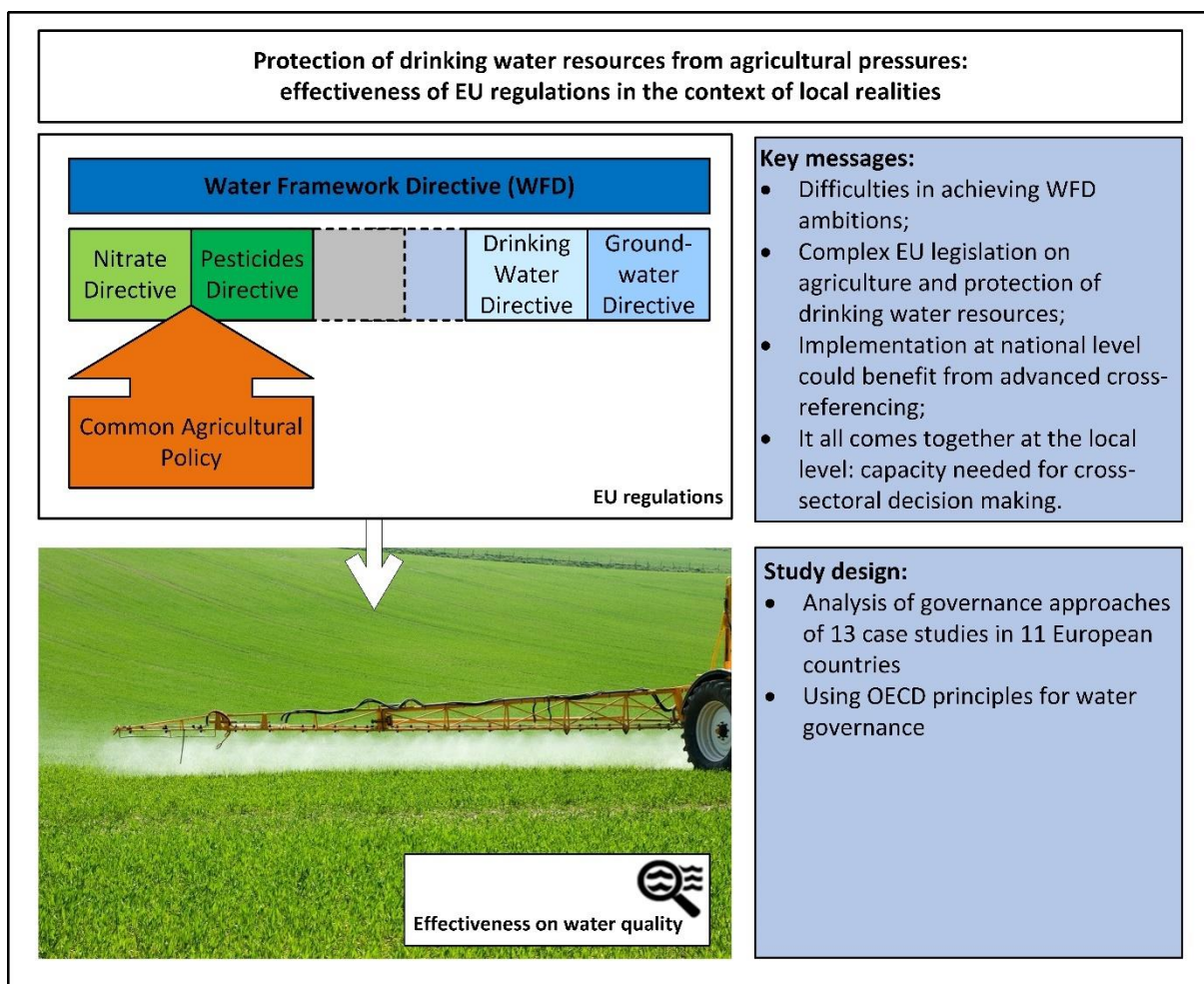


Figure: Study design and key messages