

# Effectiveness of Structural Measures spending on waste water treatment for the 1994-99 and 2000-06 programme periods

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Structural Policies – Performance Audit Unit

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# Who did the audit ?

## European Court of Auditors

⇒ **Audit Group II in charge of  
"Structural Policies, Transport,  
Research and Energy"**



⇒ **Mr Ispir, Romanian Member**

⇒ **"Structural Policies - Performance Audit Unit"**



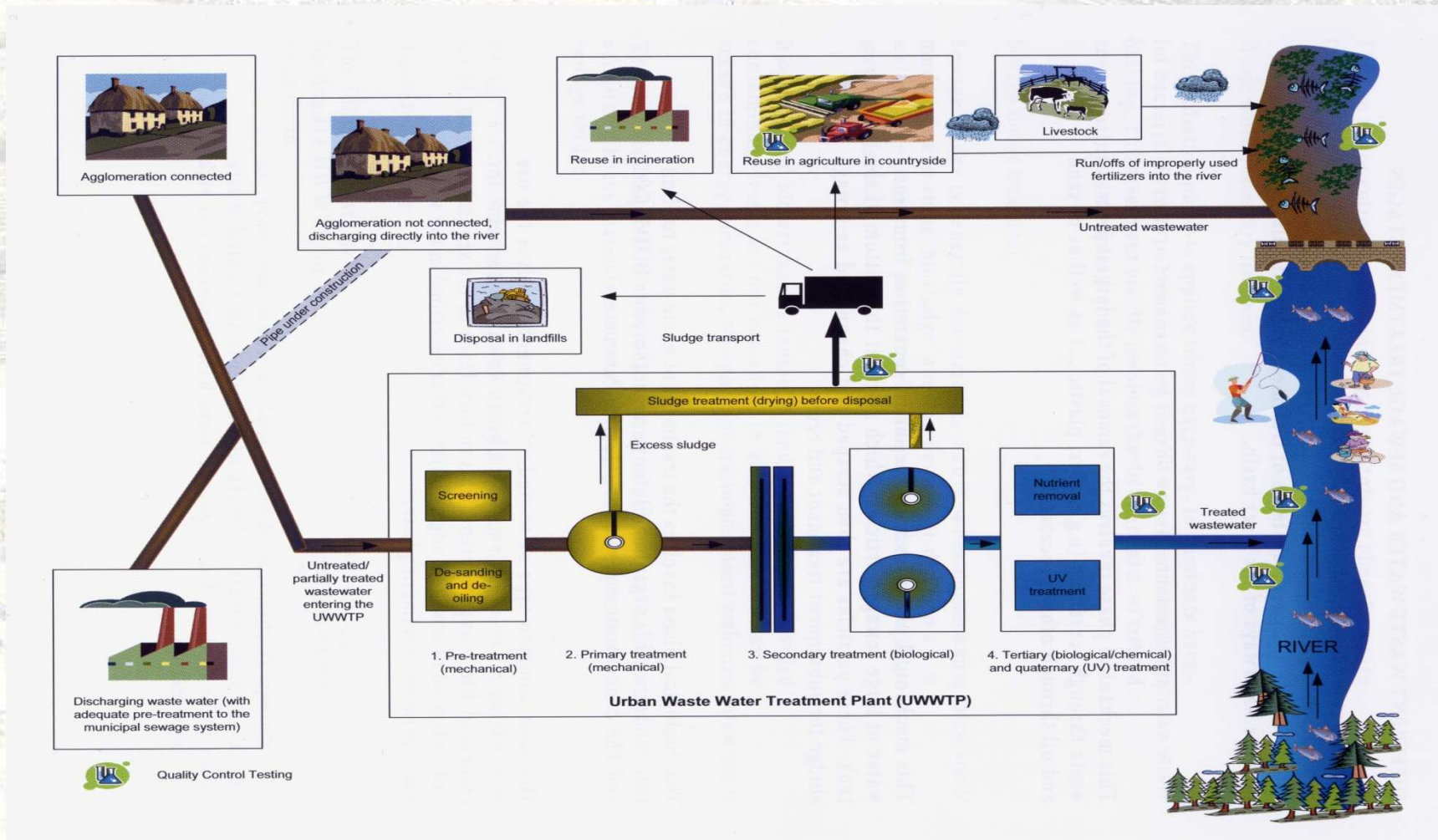
**RS 3/2009 at <http://eca.europa.eu>**

**NB: audit on "Water Supply" being carried out**

# Why do the audit ?

- **Sensitive theme for our « clients » (quality of the water)**
- **Significant financial intervention by EU; even greater in current programme period (2007-13)**
- **Significant late reporting on UWWTD and SSD implementation**
- **Huge implementing delays in MS**

# What were the objectives and scope ? (1/3)



# What were the objectives and scope ? (2/3)

**Assessing the effectiveness of Structural Measures  
spending on WWT ⇒**

- Do WWT plants achieve an adequate performance in the treatment of waste water ?**
- Is the sludge produced used appropriately ?**
- Is the Commission fulfilling its role (project selection, monitoring of outcomes) ?**



# What were the objectives and scope ? (3/3)

- **EU spending: European Regional Development Fund and Cohesion Fund (Structural Measures)**
- **4 MS (11,1 Bio €) which account for about 50% of Structural Measures spending in the area of WWT infrastructure**
- **Programme Periods 1994-1999 and 2000-2006**
- **Average of 6 completed projects on the spot / MS**
- **Further, 12 completed projects for desk checks / MS**



# How was the audit carried out ? (1/2)

- **Preliminary Study: EU background, DG Env, experts, visit of a plant ...**
- **Audit Planning Memorandum including Evidence Collection Plan (questions, criteria, evidence sources, collection and analysis methods) tested with DG Env and an expert**
- **Benchmarks : EU framework [UWWTD (1991), SSD (1986), WFD (2000)] compared with others from countries of similar level of economic and social development**





# How was the audit carried out ? (2/2)

- **Combined audit of direct performance (projects) and system audit (assessment and monitoring in MS and at Commission)**
- **Two-week missions in each MS**
  - **1st week: authorities responsible for wastewater, sewage sludge and river basin management (collecting info on systems and test results)**
  - **2nd week: 6 UWWTP visits with the experts: inspection of treatment facilities including effluent discharge points and sludge disposal**
- **Use of data available in the MS**

# What were the outcomes of the audit ? (1/3)

- **Very significant contribution of SM (50% or more)**

## **Performance of the UWWTP**

- **18 / 26 plants operating at least at 50% of capacity**
- **64 / 73 plants had a satisfactory effluent quality**
- **Frequency and methods for testing effluent quality in accordance with EU benchmark [in one category all plants (14) did significantly more checks than required by EU]**



# What were the outcomes of the audit ? (2/3)

## Use of the sludge

- 48 / 73 adopted EU recommended methods for disposal
- Non-recommended methods in the other cases (lack of strategy, on site, landfills)
- Safe re-use in agriculture: EU requirements do not take into account developments since 1986 (PCBs, pathogens such as E.coli etc); some MS and some non-EU countries do
- Monitoring (frequency / sampling / independent checks): generally OK; some improvements in data collection



# What were the outcomes of the audit ? (3/3)

## Commission

- Little information about sewage sludge disposal
- Lack of information when the Commission pays the balance of the grant
- Reduction of pollution at source: phosphate-based domestic laundry detergents (major issue in the MS visited)
- Polluter pays: DG Regio's internal procedures foresee its application but WFD plans this to be compulsory in 2010 only / lack of information about tariffs for water services

# Lessons to be learnt ?

- **Benchmarks analysis to be carried out before audit phase**
- **Very clear understanding of where the experts may have an added-value [ex ante (audit questions, methodology ...), during visits, at final stage (conclusions and recommendations)]**
- **Sharing all information with the experts**
- **Do not forget to understand and collect facts explaining success / failure / difficulties ...**
- **Internet may provide interesting information on most recent developments**

**Thank you**

