



USING SCIENCE DIPLOMACY  
FOR ADDRESSING GLOBAL CHALLENGES

## WATER DIPLOMACY AND ITS FUTURE IN THE NATIONAL, REGIONAL AND EUROPEAN ENVIRONMENTS

**WATER DIPLOMACY REPRESENTS A CHALLENGE FOR BRINGING THE WORLDS OF DIPLOMACY AND SCIENCE CLOSER TOGETHER; IT HAS THE POTENTIAL TO SHAPE THE DIPLOMATIC ENVIRONMENT AS WELL AS TO CREATE NEW INTERFACES, TECHNIQUES AND TEAM STRATEGIES IN SCIENCE AND FOREIGN POLICY.**

Water diplomacy is an area of foreign policy administration in which government officials, who deal with water policy issues, interact on the national, EU and global levels. It is a new field of diplomacy that combines the aspects of science diplomacy with traditional diplomatic instruments. It is defined by its emphasis on water-related topics (access to drinking water, water sanitation, water scarcity, flooding, etc.) that have become the subject of transboundary regional and international cooperation. Successful handling of the diplomatic and scientific elements of water diplomacy is a global challenge and even a matter of survival for many people.

Besides the EU actors, who have recently been emphasizing the importance of water diplomacy, the case study found that the main actors at the national level (in the Czech Republic, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom) had distinct motivations, goals, priorities and agenda-setting techniques. The countries oriented on, for instance, the use of nanotechnologies in water and water sanitation (Czech Republic), flood management (Netherlands) and international development work (United Kingdom). Examining best practices in water diplomacy shows that water diplomacy offers possibilities for creating or strengthening diplomatic 'niches' for each actor. Attention to global challenges in the field of water diplomacy exposed the priorities of national and EU actors who have ambitions to become agenda setters and 'excellence sellers' in the international arena in the context of public diplomacy and nation branding strategies

Water diplomacy is a multifarious activity that extends to agriculture, national security, public health and other areas. A diplomacy that promotes efficient water management takes into account the double framing: in the first case, it requires the involvement of different actors who need to understand and take into account the 'water dimension' of a specific diplomatic situation. Second, water represents a topic that is per se the main focus of a specific diplomatic interaction. As needed, it can employ the tools of pre-emptive diplomacy and crisis management. The cooperation of government officials with the scientific community must include interactions with experts in the hard sciences, technical disciplines, the social sciences and the often-neglected humanities. It is crucial to successful water diplomacy to work in a multidisciplinary mode that can assure a balanced approach.



### KEY HIGHLIGHTS OF THIS CASE STUDY

- » There is no single understanding of water diplomacy at the national level; the current status quo reflects the different priorities, governance arrangements, stakeholder landscapes, procedures and processes in different national contexts.
- » Water diplomacy represents one of the key areas where the EU can play a leading role at the global level because it offers top quality multidisciplinary expertise.
- » The EU experience in water diplomacy is an example of project management in diplomacy, applicable to both pre-emptive diplomacy and crisis management.
- » In terms of scientific expertise, water diplomacy involves all relevant disciplines, including humanities, social sciences, natural science and technical disciplines.

### KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- » Water diplomacy is a new diplomatic dimension that opens new possibilities of how to implement innovative forms of horizontal cooperation on the national, regional, EU and global levels. Cross-functional teams need to be created.
- » The interactions between the EU and its Member States in water diplomacy need to be clarified.
- » The involvement of and role for private industry in water management needs to be understood and accounted for when addressing water diplomacy. Further mapping and analysis is needed on all levels.
- » Water management issues are inherently involved in a broad range of foreign policy issues, thus science diplomats must be trained to both identify the water diplomacy related components of international projects and/or crises and react by connecting diplomats and scientists.



**Water diplomacy requires not only hard science  
but also the humanities and social sciences.**

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