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The 2000/60/EC Directive also called water framework directive (WFD) sets ambitious objectives for water protection in Europe. In particular, water bodies should reach “good status” by 2015 and member states engage in sustainable water management. However, the Directive also offers possibilities for exemptions. These can be justified based on economic analysis, e.g. cost-benefit analysis (CBA).

The implementation and use of these economic tools in the framework of exemptions strongly differs from one country to another and is not always consistent with the sustainability and ecocentric objectives of the WFD.

Based on qualitative document analysis and semi-structured interviews, my PhD focuses on the use of CBA as a way to justify exemptions in two member states, namely; France and the UK. This research aims to analyse the domestic implementation of the WFD and to explore the underlying factors that explain patterns of adoption and usage of economic tools in national and regional water planning. I aim to suggest some recommendations, such as the use of alternative tools and decision-making processes or changes to the current legal text that could be made in the course of the 2019 negotiations. This work could therefore contribute to improve WFD implementation and water management in Europe.

I chose to do my PhD at the University of Leeds, as I was convinced that this place would give me the best opportunity and support to write a good thesis, enhance my knowledge in sustainability and enjoy my studies. The main reasons were the University expertise in my fields of interest, i.e. ecological economics and water management. In particular, the outstanding interdisciplinarity of water@leeds offers an impressive network of researchers in all water-related areas. I really enjoy the interdisciplinarity of the research and events organised and the networks of academics and researchers provided by water@leeds. I think water@leeds gives students all the possibility to broaden their mind, and get the latest knowledge in water management research.

