



SEMIDE / *EMWIS*

**SYSTEME EURO-MEDITERRANEEN D'INFORMATION SUR LE
SAVOIR-FAIRE DANS LE DOMAINE DE L'EAU**

/

EURO-MEDITERRANEAN WATER INFORMATION SYSTEM

COMITÉ DIRECTEUR / *STEERING COMMITTEE*

DEUXIÈME RÉUNION / *SECOND MEETING*

ROME, 6.7. 1998

CONCLUSIONS

The EMWIS Steering Committee met at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Rome, under the Presidency of Italy, with the participation of all its members, except the United Kingdom, and with the participation of the European Commission and the technical bodies making up the Technical Unit.

The Meeting was opened by a introductory statement of the Representative of the Italian Government, Under Secretary of State Senator Rino Serri, who recalled that, in the course of the Mid-term Review of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the 27 Partners had underlined the importance of EMWIS. Italy attaches great significance to this initiative, which falls within the line drawn up by the Conferences of Algiers, Rome and Marseilles.

The Steering Committee took note with satisfaction of the establishment of the European Economic Interest Group (EEIG) with the purpose of providing the Technical Unit of the Project with the legal status which had been agreed to in the Conclusions of the Conference of Naples.

France, through the International Water Office, and Italy, with SOGESID, are part of the EEIG, while Spain, though confirming its participation to the project and to the Technical Unit, informed the Steering committee of the difficulties of a legal nature which did not allow its public Administration, the Ministry of Environment and CEDEX, to participate to an economic interest entity.

The Steering Committee took also note of the confirmation received from 14 participating countries concerning the creation of their National Focal Point. The list of National Focal Points is published in the Newsletter prepared thanks to the efforts of the Italian Presidency of the Steering Committee.

The Representative of the European Commission confirmed the decision to grant EMWIS a contribution for technical assistance activities and for providing support to the National Focal Points that would need it. In this context the establishment of the EEIG was suggested by the Commission as a tool to accelerate and facilitate European Commission procedures; it is understood that EEIG participation, which was open to all countries, is simply a legal mechanism and does not limit in any way the role of the Technical Unit.

Due to the withdrawal of the United Kingdom, a tenth member of the Steering Committee will be looked for among other partners and designated at a future meeting.

The Steering Committee approved the Programme of Work and the Budget for the first year of activity of the Technical Unit in their final versions, herewith attached, which incorporate the corrections made by the Committee.

At the end of the meeting, the President, Mr. W. Mazzitti thanked the representatives of the 9 countries for the contributions they provided on the topics discussed; the positive outcome of the discussion constitutes an important step in the EMWIS implementation process.

The importance attached to the System, which was underlined last May at Palermo in the considerations presented during the Mid-term Review of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership represents for all partners a new commitment with the objective of avoiding deceptions. The President therefore invited Steering Committee members to support the Project and ensure its promotion in all occasions, as it has been the case at Paris, Venice and Cairo.

The Newsletter constitutes an excellent tool for the dissemination of the initiatives which will be taken both at the political and technical level. In this context the President invited the representatives of the Technical Unit to insert the Newsletter in the EMWIS Web site and invited warmly all participants to transmit to the Presidency any relevant information concerning the progress of the System in each of the participating countries.

In respect of the question put forward by Spain concerning the relationship between the EEIG and the Technical Unit, it was confirmed that, as decided by the Steering Committee, the representatives of the 3 countries, France, Spain and Italy, which together with the European Commission will support the initiative financially, will work to achieve a balance among them in order to ensure the perfect functioning of the EEIG. Moreover, the planning of activities, the budget and any extraordinary unforeseen decision proposed by the Technical Unit will necessarily have to be submitted for the consideration and approval of the Steering Committee. The same will apply for strategic and financial plans as well as for the budgets.

The Presidency will inform the 27 Partners of the decision of the United Kingdom to leave the system and will seek advice on the opportunity to complete the membership of the Steering Committee. Finally, the President proposed to wait for the first results of the activities of the Technical Unit in order to consider the opportunity of convening before the end of the year a further meeting of the Steering Committee. The next meeting would take place in Lebanon subject to the agreement of Lebanese authorities, or alternatively in another Mediterranean country which will propose its

candidature. Next fall there will be a meeting of the National Focal Points under the Presidency of Algeria.