

11th meeting of the Steering Committee Madrid, 5 July 2007

CONCLUSIONS

(2007-07-31)

The eleventh meeting of the EMWIS Steering Committee was held in Madrid on 5 July 2007 under the presidency of France and the vice-presidencies of Morocco and Lebanon. There were representatives from all of the Steering Committee member countries and organizations (Algeria, Cyprus, Egypt, Spain, France, Israel, Italy, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine and Turkey), with the exception of Malta. The meeting was also attended by observing representatives from the Mediterranean component of the EU Water Initiative (Med-EUWI), the Mediterranean Water Institute (IME), the regional monitoring and support unit of the MEDA-Water programme, and the European Environment Agency, as well as the EMWIS Technical Unit support organizations (CEDEX and OIEau).

In his welcome message, Mr Teodoro ESTRELLA, Deputy General Director of the Spanish Water Direction, spoke of EMWIS's exemplary role in the Mediterranean and its successful cooperation with the Mediterranean Network of Basin Organizations. He also confirmed the continued support of the Spanish Ministry of the Environment to EMWIS for the 2007–2010 period via CEDEX, which is a member of the Technical Unit.

The first session on **financing EMWIS after 2007** took place without the participation of observers. There was a brief review of progress and regional programming linked to the environment under the European Neighbourhood Policy Instrument (see ENPI appendix for details). Today, the European Commission's continued support in financing EMWIS in its present form is not guaranteed, due to the absence of regional programmes on water in the Mediterranean, as well as administrative procedures that entail a competitive procedure (call for tender or propositions) for such financing. The results of the evaluation launched by the European Commission, whose echoes seem positive, are not disseminated to the parties concerned due to the lack of quality of the expert's report. Nevertheless, some countries which took part in the evaluation, wish to receive an official feed-back of the assignments which were carried out in their country.

The President mentioned that EMWIS is at a "cross-road" and that its financial situation must be considered with attention. *A round table discussion reminded the necessary respect of the decisions taken by the Ministers at the Marseille and Turin conferences, underlined the importance of EMWIS's work for the countries represented, and their willingness to continue with the cooperation on the current basis, including, in certain cases, the possibility of supplementary national contributions that would take local resources into account.* These contributions will have to be confirmed officially by the countries.

A consensus emerged for the mid-term objective of institutionalizing EMWIS (intergovernmental agreement to be planned) and enlarging its field of competence to cover all environmental questions in the water sector, including data management (with no obligation on countries), resulting in better regional cooperation in the water sector. This objective should be validated at the ministerial conference planned for the end of 2008. To this end, a policy-based document will be prepared and transmitted to a high political level of the European Commission in order to ensure its future funding for EMWIS.



In the short term, France, Spain and Italy assured their financial commitments for 2007, as announced during the last meeting of the Steering Committee in November 2006 in Athens. There was also confirmation of their intention to continue support in 2008, but *there will also be a follow-up analysis of possible complementary contributions from member countries, and the mobilization of additional private or public funds*. In the short time, the President will contact several services of the European Commission.

To supplement EMWIS's past and current efforts and meet individual countries' needs, there was a proposal for defining, on the basis of existing experiences, *a generic and operational model of a national water information system (NWIS), with an implementation strategy that could be tested in several pilot countries*. This activity would require specific financing.

Observers participated in the meeting starting from the discussion on the **Euromed and South-East European water Ministers conference 2008**.

All of the participants recognized the need for organizing such a conference with a view to stimulating regional cooperation in the water sector for a sustainable development and for the foreseen creation of a Mediterranean Union. *The members of the EMWIS Steering Committee recommended that the conference take place in late 2008, during the French presidency of the EU, in a Mediterranean partner country* able to receive representatives from all the countries in the region.

There was also a discussion on the subject of organizing the 2007 Euromed and South-East European water directors conference. It was recalled that there have been discussions with Egypt for a possible event in Alexandria in December 2007, but that the date has not yet been set (even though it is in the calendar of the Portuguese Presidency of the EU), due to the large number of water-related events being held in Egypt at that time of year.

A pilot committee was proposed to ensure follow-up in preparing these two events. The committee is composed of Morocco, Egypt, France (which are voluntary member countries of the EMWIS Steering Committee), Greece (leader of the Mediterranean component of the EU Water Initiative – Med-EUWI), and the European Commission (representative to be decided).

The President of the EMWIS Steering Committee suggested providing an expert, who would work under the responsibility of this pilot committee and contribute to the preparation of the ministers conference by: drawing-up an inventory of the various existing processes relating to the water sector in the Mediterranean region; making strategic recommendations; providing a workable plan of action on a variety of domains proposed by the Steering Committee (see decision in the appendix), with the particular aim of reaching the Millennium Goals in the region.

Financing of the 2007 water directors conference is covered by the Med-EUWI section of the MEDA-Water RMSU project (regional monitoring and support unit). The possibility of a financial contribution for organizing the ministers' conference in 2008 could be studied with partners of the MEDA-Water RMSU project, since it does not figure in the current budget. But other sources will be required.

Greece, which is leader of Med EUWI, suggested a number of modifications to the initial notes on both conferences, which was included with preparatory documents for the meeting and presented to the EU



water director during their last meeting in June 2007 in Dresden. The new versions of notes relating to the ministerial conference of 2008 and to the water directors in 2007 are included as an appendix.

A progress report was presented on the feasibility study of a **Mediterranean water observation mechanism**, notably including the outcome of the expert workshops that took place before the EMWIS Steering Committee meeting. This subject gave rise to a number of reactions. Participants (members and observers) insisted on the fact that *EMWIS is the obvious platform for running this mechanism in collaboration with other organisms*. This is particularly so given its mode of governance (water authorities of the Euromed countries, who are managing the main national water data sources), its work on National Water Information Systems, and its experience in regional exchanges of know-how. The mechanism would mark a logical development in EMWIS activities. It was therefore agreed that:

- the mechanism be considered as a new function for EMWIS (e.g. coordination of access to comparable data for producing regional indicators), without any obligation on countries to participate, but with participation of all relevant national and regional organisms
- the primary emphasis of the study would be to develop its contents (organizing the production of common indicators for monitoring progress at national and regional levels), and technical aspects (a portal for broadcasting and validating indicators, catalogue and metadata, etc.)
- the study would be limited to a reduced number of indicators on several essential themes (e.g. the Millennium Goals and Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development), with the aim of demonstrating the mechanism's usefulness, both nationally and regionally
- contributions to the development of National Water Information Systems will be continued

There was a reminder of the **working groups** themes initiated by EMWIS, and those set up in the frame of the Water Framework Directive and Med-EUWI Joint Process (see appendix for details). Due to lack of financing, the only progress made was on the three common groups with the Joint Process: waste water re-use, drought and water scarcity, and water monitoring networks. With efficiency in mind, and to avoid the existence of multiple working group channels, there was a suggestion for moving towards one single gathering of working groups, the size of which would depend on the resources available, and the topics would be decided by the Euromed water directors at their yearly meetings. The EMWIS themes that are not presently covered (participative approaches, flooding, desalination, sanitation and prevention of domestic pollution) could be treated at a future date. The countries will be invited to officially nominate their representatives in these working groups.

Mr Jeff Huntington, head of the environmental assessment programme at the **European Environment Agency** (EEA), made a brief presentation of the Agency and the Water Information System for Europe, WISE. He highlighted the links with EMWIS for monitoring the Horizon 2020 initiative, which the Agency is in charge of, and for WISE, certain components of which could be useful for the Mediterranean water observation mechanism and the National Water Information Systems. EMWIS could become a privileged international partner of the EEA in the same way as UNEP, OECD and WHO. It was decided that the EEA would be invited to EMWIS Steering Committee meetings and that its participation would be formalized in a memorandum of understanding.

Lastly, participants were informed about the cooperation with BALWOIS (the water observation and information system for the Balkan countries, www.balwois.net), which has an essentially scientific vocation. The main objective of the collaboration is to strengthen exchanges between the two programmes in order to: mutually enrich information collection methods and technologies; structure and disseminate information; and identify common working themes, while respecting the specific needs and direction of each network.



Mr Pascal Berteaud, Director of Water in France and President of the EMWIS Steering Committee, ended the conference by thanking the participants, the Spanish authorities and CEDEX for their welcome. The next meeting of the EMWIS Steering Committee will take place at the occasion of the Euromed Water Directors Conference at the end of 2007.

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List of appendices

- Reminder on actions taken for EMWIS funding and brief review of the ENPI regional programming
- [Updated note on directors and ministers conferences \(2007 / 2008\)](#)
- [Decision in view of EMWIS's concrete contribution to the organization of a Euromed and South-East European water ministers conference, planned for end 2008](#)
- [EMWIS and Joint Process working groups](#)

Action plan:

Activities	Responsibilities	Dates
Meeting with European Commission services	President, Italy, Spain, EMWIS TU	July 2007
Dissemination of the conclusions of the Steering Committee to Euromed Water Directors: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• highlighting the institutional aspects and the necessary policy action, to foster the priority given to the water sector,• Asking for possible country contributions and for the nomination of national representatives in the wrking groups	President	August 2007
EMWIS history and financial assessment	EMWIS TU	August 2007
Launching the study related to the contribution to the Ministerial conference	Specific pilot committee	Early September 2007
Collaboration with BALWOIS	EMWIS TU	Early September
Policy document on regional cooperation (preliminary note)	EMWIS TU / President	October 2007
Ratification of the time and place of the 2007 directors' conference	Egypt / Greece	September 2007
Dissemination of a policy document to the Commission at policy level	President	October 2007
Preparation of an EMWIS/EEA MoU	EMWIS TU / AEE	October 2007
Searching for funding for project developing an NWIS model	EMWIS TU	

