

14th Steering Committee Meeting Florence, 3 December 2010

MINUTES & CONCLUSIONS

(2010-12-08)

The 14th Annual EMWIS Steering Committee meeting took place in Florence (Italy) on 3 December 2010 under the presidency of Italy and the vice-presidency of Morocco and Lebanon. All Steering Committee member countries and organizations were represented (Algeria, Cyprus, Egypt, France, Israel, Italy, Jordan, Lebanon, Malta, Morocco, Spain, Turkey and Palestine). Absences were excused for representatives of the European Commission DG Environment (flight cancelled due to bad weather), the European Investment Bank (EIB) and the Mediterranean Water Institute (IME). The meeting was attended by representatives from National Focal Points (member countries of the Steering Committee plus Mauritania and Tunisia). The Ambassade de l'Eau, the European Environment Agency (Water Topic Centre) and member organizations of the EMWIS Technical Unit (CEDEX and IOWater) were also represented. The event took place straight after a National Focal Points coordination seminar (2 December), which welcomed two new members: Monaco and Mauritania.

The president of the province of Florence and the deputy mayor of the town of Florence opened the meeting with welcome messages and in the hope that the historical setting of the Italian renaissance would inspire the Steering Committee members in their work. The president of the Arno basin authority, representing Italy, stressed her organization's desire to cooperate with Mediterranean countries, particularly on topics linked to the water framework directive.

Introduction by the Steering Committee President

The Steering Committee president, Mr Walter MAZZITTI, looked back over EMWIS's history, quoting from the book, *EMWIS in the context of the Barcelona Process - Union for the Mediterranean from Marseille 1996 to Florence in 2010*, which was published to coincide with the meeting. For fourteen years, EMWIS has united countries around the Mediterranean, including those involved in the Middle East conflict, to debate on how to exchange knowledge on water management. In a difficult political context that has seen the Union for the Mediterranean reach a stalemate, one of the aims of this Steering Committee meeting was to give EMWIS new momentum, and more generally to encourage Euro-Mediterranean cooperation in the water sector.

One of EMWIS's most significant achievements over recent years is countries' commitment to setting up a shared National Water Information System – NWIS. This ambition has involved exchanges between the EMWIS president and ministers from the following countries: Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Syria, Tunisia and Palestine. There are currently two concrete examples of such systems, SINEAU in Tunisia, and another in Algeria. These systems constitute key elements for feeding into a water knowledge hub in the Mediterranean that could be used by the Union for the Mediterranean, for example to analyse and monitor water projects or to implement the Mediterranean water strategy.



Activity report 2009-2010

The EMWIS Technical Unit presented its work during 2009 and 2010 (see [information](#) note). There was a particular focus on:

- Working groups on the Mediterranean Joint Process between Water Framework Directive and the EUWI, which involved meetings and draft reports available on line:
 - [Water scarcity and drought -WS&D](#): this report presents achievable indicators based on data available in the Mediterranean pilot basins. The work was carried out in close collaboration with the EU group of experts on the topic and the European Environment Agency (EEA)
 - [Water quality networks and monitoring programmes](#): a report on the current state of play in Mediterranean countries was prepared with members of the working group.

The Technical Unit has also written up a [report on the Joint Process activities](#) since its launch in Brindisi (IT) in 2004 and a [proposition for a new phase](#) to support preparation and implementation of the action plan for the UfM's Water Strategy project. This proposition underlines the need for pilot projects to test recommendations locally and for relaunching a governance platform similar to the Euro-Mediterranean Water Directors.

- Water information systems, including:
 - A web portal presenting available tools, guidelines and examples needed to set up this type of system and to ensure interoperability with the European system WISE and inline the broader approach of shared environmental information system (SEIS). The portal's design uses the new WISE look-&-feel defined with the EEA. It also provides access to some existing datasets and metadata and the international obligations of the different countries for the water sector.
 - Activities on NWISs undertaken in Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, Syria, Tunisia and Turkey.
 - Preparation of a joint programme with the European Space Agency for capacity building to use Earth Observation technologies for water resources management in the Mediterranean (see concept [concept note](#)). This programme particularly targets making up certain data deficits while optimizing management costs, partly thanks to free satellite data policy of the EU GMES programme (Global Monitoring for Environment and Security).

Round table and follow-up envisaged

The Tunisian and Algerian systems were presented:

- The implementation of the Tunisian SINEAU will start in early 2011 with a budget of € 3.3 M (African Water Facility, African Development Bank, Agence Française de Développement, World Bank and the Tunisian government). The system is the object of a memorandum of understanding between five ministries, which among other things defines the organisational framework for defining common reference datasets;
- The Algerian national water information system will be operational at the end of 2010. It received co-funding from the European Union Delegation as part of its programme to support the water sector (total of € 20 M). The system is a private network (intranet) for exchanging data between actors in the water sector.

These examples illustrate three key components for implementing such systems:

1. Political will and an inter-institutional agreement
2. Organizational, functional and technical definitions

3. Funding for the system

EMWIS has shown its capacity to support countries on all three components. In future, as a way of mutualising resources, EMWIS could:

- **Prepare an NWIS set-up guide**, e.g. with guidelines for terms of reference to reduce costs and preparation times and ensure standardization;
- **Encourage donors** to support the development of these systems;
- **Provide project management assistance to countries** for developing and running the system;
- **Organize exchanges of experience** between countries and with international institutions.

During discussions, Steering Committee members reiterated their desire to continue working together and their commitment to EMWIS and reinforcing their NWIS.

Preparation of activities and projects for 2011: discussion with countries

Regarding future activities, countries put forward the following propositions:

- Study potential ways of adapting water management to tackle the impact of climate change, following discussions at the United Nations conference in Cancun in 2010.
- Database projects on shared water resources in pilot areas (aquifer or river basin) to show their usefulness, and how to set them up particularly in relation with NWIS. The following pilot areas were mentioned: the Orontes River, shared resources between Palestine, Israel and Jordan as part of the EXACT group (Middle East peace process). This type of pilot project could also feed into current work being done by the water centre of the League of Arab states (COWFS) on developing a database on shared waters in Arab countries.
- Analysing opportunities to carry out common studies with the United States.
- Study on NWIS operation and maintenance activities in order to optimise costs and service quality (e.g. outsourcing certain services).
- Continuing the successful collaboration with the EEA, especially to identify common data sets already supplied by EU member states that could be used for preparing common indicators for the Mediterranean.
- Closer collaboration between EMWIS and the UfM secretariat, especially the deputy Secretary-General in charge of water, to secure possible financial support for NWISs and the regional component proposed by EMWIS, which could also benefit the secretariat.
- Exploration of potential for cooperation with the KNOW-Med programme (GEF funding) of the Mediterranean Integration Centre of Marseille –CMIM-.
- Set up pilot projects and technical visits relating to drought management and water quality.
- Analysis of national approaches to funding the water sector (costs recovery).
- Continued visibility campaigns to make up for mobility of contacts.
- Integrate NWISs into the preparation and monitoring of national sectorial strategies.

France, Italy and Spain reaffirmed their commitment to support EMWIS. France underlined its ambition to re-launch the UfM Water Expert Group with a specific mandate on technical activities, that could be adopted by UfM senior officials in early 2011. If an agreement cannot be reached, it will be necessary to organize further Euro-Mediterranean water director meetings via EMWIS.

EMWIS's collaboration with the following partners resulted in exchanges:

- The Action Plan with the **European Environment Agency** since 2008 have achieved good results and could be continued with a focus on: building partner countries' capacities: to prepare indicators; managing data quality; identifying common indicators; setting up NWIS and SEIS.
- The decision-making tool, STRATEAU, which is the object of an agreement with the **Ambassade de l'eau**. Its objective is to create supply and demand scenarios. This tool fits perfectly into the architecture of an NWIS.
- The 6th **World Water Forum** (World Water Council), due to take place in Marseille in 2012, was presented, and particularly the "greater Europe" regional process, whose aim is to include Mediterranean neighbours. The WWF focus on identifying concrete solutions, NWIS approach promoted by EMWIS is one of these solutions.

Conclusions

To conclude the meeting, the EMWIS president pointed out that, 13 years after the ministerial conference in Marseille that launched EMWIS, water directors and the National Focal Points are giving it new momentum with a programme for setting up NWISs. He also reiterated EMWIS's commitment to:

- Supporting development of NWISs, by accompanying countries with training, technical assistance and transfer of knowledge;
- Ensuring regional coordination of information on water using a knowledge hub that will facilitate strategic monitoring in the Mediterranean as well as exchanges of experience, mutualised resources (e.g. guidelines, tools), and capacity building (e.g. use of satellite images);
- Supplying elements for the Water Strategy action plan in the form of thematic analyses and pilot projects on themes like the water sector financing in Mediterranean countries (as envisaged with the European Investment Bank during the Steering Committee meeting in 2009 in Monaco), water scarcity and drought, and water quality. These actions could be envisaged in a new phase of the Joint Mediterranean Process;
- Raising the necessary funds from bi- or multi-lateral donors for implementing priority actions in the form of projects involving institutions in countries concerned;
- Making the EMWIS platform available for ensuring technical coordination of water initiatives in the Mediterranean in direct relation with national water authorities.

The president will inform ministers responsible for water and the UfM secretariat of the conclusions of this meeting. He will also communicate EMWIS's proposition to relaunch the platform of Euro-Mediterranean water directors to technically coordinate Mediterranean-focused initiatives, in the unfortunate event that dialogue should not take place via the UfM.

The president closed the meeting by thanking the local authorities and especially the Arno Basin Agency in the name of all participants for their warm welcome and support in organizing the meeting.

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List of appendices:

- [List of participants](#)
- [Preliminary information note for members of the Steering Committee](#)
- [Report on monitoring drought and water shortages in the Mediterranean](#)
- [Report on the current state of networks and monitoring programmes on water quality in the Mediterranean](#)

- [Summing-up of the activities of the Mediterranean EUWI / Water Framework Directive Joint Process](#)
- [Proposition for a new phase](#) in the Mediterranean EUWI / Water Framework Directive Joint Process
- [Concept note for a joint programme with the European Space Agency to build capacities for using Earth Observation technologies in managing water resources in the Mediterranean](#)

