

Note from Walter MAZZITTI to the EMWIS Steering Committee members

Dear colleagues,

I regret very much not being able to take part in the meeting of Steering Committee because of a last minute commitment and for which I had to cancel my departure to Athens.

I write this brief note because I feel the requirement to let you know what I would have liked to say to you during my intervention and which I will try to summarise here in a very synthetic way.

As you know it, I had the pleasure and the honour to form part, immediately after first Euro-Mediterranean Conference of Marseilles in 1996, of a restricted working group in charge launching the first phases of study and development of a project which according to the wish of the Ministers in charge of water at the time, should have supported the exchange of information between the countries of the Partnership with the aim of improving local water management. After one year of intensive work, in 1997 in Naples the EMWIS was born, and I had the honour to be named President of first Steering Committee of the general directors Assembly of the 27 countries involved. The facts which proceeded since and which characterised the development of this great information system are known by all. Today, we can say that the objective was achieved, that almost all the countries of the Mediterranean were equipped with a Web site. In short, the objective was achieved, even if there were weaknesses or delays which are not all to allot to the Member Countries.

I am sorry for this long introduction, but I think that it was useful to recall these steps which brought us all together in a great will of realisation and a great dash of enthusiasm with which we worked together. I am sure to interpret the common feeling by thanking with sincerity President Juan Canovas Cuenca for the impulse that he gave to the development of the system during the years of his presidency.

I come quickly to the main point from my thought.

Although the Technical Unit carried out a large amount of work for the coordination, the promotion and the technical support in favour of the national focal points of the member countries – and it is thanks to Eric Mino– it should however be recognised that an analysis is essential in an urgent way with regard to the incomplete realisation of the system. We must understand why, besides some examples, in many countries of the Partnership, EMWIS did not succeed in being fully integrated into the instruments of national policy. And yet, as you know it, the first broad objective of the system was to support the launch within each country of a focal point that would have put together all the national information available on water. Indeed, it was known that all the Member Countries suffered – and some countries still suffer – from a serious phenomenon of water information fragmentation, disseminated among various organisations that do not communicate between them, or even do not know each other.

It is this problem that the Point Focal National (NFP) was to precisely solve. In several countries, as I already said, this result was achieved. On the other hand, for the great majority, the NFP, although having been created by a political good-will, did not consolidate, did not find the force, the necessary stability of a real institutional structure which would have made the network built by EMWIS, more vigorous and robust. The natural and foreseeable consequence of all that is that in some countries, the historical memory of the EMWIS and the NFP was lost, mainly because of the alternation of the Ministers and the directors in the ministries in charge of water which did not have

the time necessary to assimilate the strengths and the importance of the system, for their country and in the context of the international co-operation.

It seems to me that it is the main theme on which we must provide an urgent answer. For this reason, I would like to draw your attention on the need for expressing a unanimous assent as for the requirement to organise an euromediterranean conference of water General Directors with the aim to reaffirm the strengths, the validity and the vitality of the system, as that had been done in a unanimous way in 1999 in Turin by the 27 EuroMed ministers in charge of water when they approved the first action plan for the Mediterranean. This conference that Italy will be honoured to host, must have this objective and will have to be concluded by a political commitment from each country to make that EMWIS, the first and single regional project in the water sector approved by all the Partnership countries since the birth of Barcelona Process, form an integral part of the national policy as instrument of knowledge and information exchange between the member countries with the only objective of improving local water management. This is the main objective that this Conference will have to achieved, in addition, of course to offer to each country the opportunity to present the results achieved up to now, and to present the future strategy of System.

The organisation of the conference in the first days of November will enable us to forward the conclusions that will be consigned to the Spanish government, which will organise at the end of November, the celebration of the tenth anniversary of euromediterranean Partnership.

Dear colleagues, sorry for having delayed your work program. I hope to have contributed to the discussion and to the decisions to be taken.

I wish you a good work

Walter Mazzitti  
Honorary president of EMWIS Steering Committee

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