

SEMIDE
Systeme Euro-Mediterraneen
d'Information sur les savoir-
faire dans le Domaine de l'Eau
<http://www.semide.org>



EMWIS
Euro-Mediterranean
Information System on the
know-how in the Water Sector
<http://www.emwis.org>

Euro-Mediterranean Partnership

EMWIS Achievements

(Version of 2001-10-31)

1 A reminder of EMWIS

The Marseilles Euro-Mediterranean Conference on Local Water Management (November 1996) initiated EMWIS. Its goal was to make wide-ranging and in-depth knowledge available in all partner countries, especially information on: stakeholders, available documentation, the technologies and methods used, research programmes and findings, training opportunities, etc.

After a preliminary study of the technical, economic and organisational processes, the implementation of EMWIS was approved in **Naples (Italy) on 9 and 10 December 1997**, during a conference gathering the Water Directors of **the 27 countries involved in the Euro-Mediterranean agreements**.

The declaration of the **Turin Ministerial Conference on Local Water Management (October 1999)** emphasized the importance of EMWIS (Euro-Mediterranean Information System on the know-how in the Water Sector) as being the first operational integration and co-operation system within the **Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (Barcelona Process, 1995)**. During this Turin Conference, EMWIS was also underlined as being a tool for the implementation of the Action Plan, especially on the priority issue of sharing information and knowledge.

The first stage of EMWIS has aimed to set up the system. It has been co-financed, over a 3-year period (1999-2002), by the three countries of the European Union (Spain, France, Italy) participating in the "Technical Unit", by the European Commission, as concerns the costs of their "National Focal Point". A European Economic Interest Group (EEIG) was created in July 1998 to manage the Technical Unit. This joint financing was the subject of a contract signed by EEIG-EMWIS TU and the European Commission. This contract, amounting to **2,426,758 Euros (EC part: 45.7%, i.e. 1,318,528 Euros; the three countries' contribution: 54.3% i.e. 1,318,528 Euros)**, was signed the **20 July 1999**. The Technical Unit, located at Sophia Antipolis (France) started its activities in October 1999. This contract includes a mid-project evaluation by the Water Directors of the 27 countries concerned.

2 Objectives of the Madrid seminar

During the 5th meeting of the Steering Committee (Cyprus, July 2001), it was decided to organise a meeting of the 27 Water Directors of the countries concerned and the European Commission in order to:

- Inform the Water Directors (several of them having been replaced since EMWIS approval in Naples) of the progress made by the system, in compliance with the commitments of the 27 countries during its constitutive meeting in Naples in 1997;
- Validate EMWIS prospects for evolution (topical cover and operating) and financing after this first 3-year stage which ends in July 2002;
- Renew the presidency and the composition of the Steering Committee;
- Validate the political commitments of the countries in EMWIS future;
- Define the assignments, organisation and financing of the Technical Unit.

The Spanish Government accepted to host this meeting that is organised as a working seminar more suitable for the review of technical documents (such as the sustainability study) necessary for the mid-term evaluation of the 1st stage of EMWIS.

3 Main features of EMWIS

EMWIS is now becoming operational with a 3-year development programme (1999-2002). Its main features are summarised hereafter:

- EMWIS is a tool for co-operation between the Euro-Mediterranean countries. It aims to:*
- **Facilitate access to the information existing on know-how in the water sector, while prioritising the five following topics:**
 - *the **institutions** involved in the water sector and their representatives;*
 - *the **documentation** on water;*
 - *the **training** opportunities;*
 - *the **research and development** programmes;*
 - *the **data administration**.*
 - *Develop the sharing of useful information;*
 - *Prepare common outputs and promote the necessary co-operation programmes.*

EMWIS does not manage data on water resources.

The information is made available by "**a National Focal Point**" (NFP) in each country and by a central "**Technical Unit**". Only information sources granted with a "quality label" by EMWIS managers could be accessed through the system. EMWIS existence thus implies participation, to which all partners countries committed themselves.

The **National Focal Points** (NFPs) are small teams working in a public or semipublic organisation responsible for water related-documentation and information. Their tasks consist in creating and developing a national information server, organising communication processes and access to vetted information, ensuring information availability in the working languages (English or French), developing access to the information and maintaining relations with the users in their country.

The **Technical Unit** is a permanent body which executes the yearly action plan with the National Focal Points. Its assignments consist in proposing strategic orientations, action plans and yearly budgets to the Steering Committee, co-ordinating and providing technical assistance to the National Focal Points, being the International Focal Point, developing and managing EMWIS information portal.

Owing to its original approach to the "know-how" in the water sector, EMWIS is complementary to many international activities

While remaining accessible to any person interested in water management-related issues, **EMWIS is above all addressing the public and private operators of the Mediterranean water circle.**

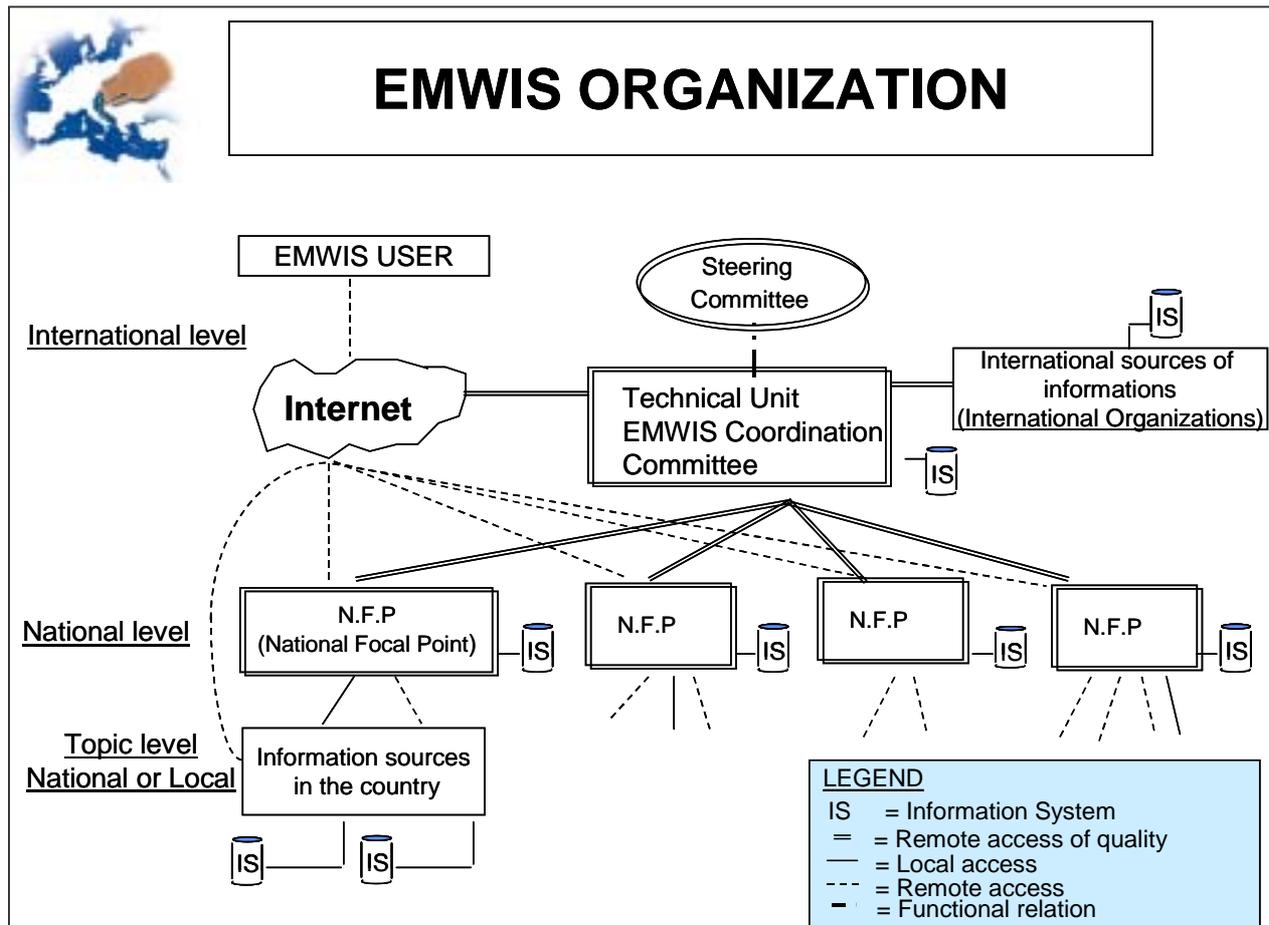
From a technical viewpoint, EMWIS has set up a system of shared and vetted information which uses the Internet already available in the 27 countries.

A restricted "**Steering Committee**" of 9 countries, designated for a 3-year period, formulates the main strategic orientations and validates the yearly budgets and progress reports. Under an Italian Presidency and a Jordanian Vice-Presidency, it is made up of the Technical Unit's donors (Spain,

France and Italy), of the European Commission and of Algeria, Cyprus, Jordan, Malta, Morocco and the Palestinian Authority.

A "**Co-ordination Committee**" is responsible for supervising the system development in the countries, formulating the yearly action plan and proposing the yearly budget. It is made up of representatives of the Technical Unit and of all the National Focal Points. Algeria assumes the Presidency and France the Vice-Presidency.

The figure below shows the organisational and technical structure of EMWIS



4 Main activities undertaken

4.1 The Steering Committee

EMWIS Steering Committee has met five times since 1998.

The first meeting of EMWIS Steering Committee, which took place in Paris (France) in 1998, enabled the validation of the financial commitments of Spain, France and Italy, the preparation of requests for the designation of NFPs and the confirmation of the European Commission's participation.

During the second meeting of EMWIS Steering Committee, held in Rome (Italy) in July 1998, the members took note of the creation of EEIG-EMWIS TU and of NFPs in 14 countries. The committee also approved the first year detailed work programme and budget.

The third meeting of EMWIS Steering Committee was held at Sophia Antipolis (France) in December 1999. It validated the detailed work programme, the budget for year 2000 and the Technical Unit's Web sites (www.semide.org for the French version and www.emwis.org for the English one). These allow the daily follow-up of EMWIS development.

The fourth meeting of the Steering Committee took place in Amman (Jordan) in October 2000. It evaluated the work carried out, approved the activity programme and the budget for the coming year, and launched strengthening actions for supporting the implementation of some NFPs.

During the fifth meeting of EMWIS Steering Committee, held in Nicosia (Cyprus) in July 2001, its members noted the progress made in terms of development, promotion and liaison with international initiatives working on similar issues. The committee decided to organise a meeting of the 27 Water Directors and the European Commission to assess the progress made by the system, in compliance with the commitments of the 27 countries during its constitutive meeting in Naples in 1997.

The conclusions of these meetings are available on the Technical Unit websites and appended in the participants' file.

4.2 Training of the National Focal Points

As soon as its installation was completed, the Technical Unit contacted the managers of the NFPs designated by the representatives of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership Member countries. Four seminars have been organised for the 20 existing NFPs since October 1999.

1. A meeting of the Co-ordination Committee, gathering the managers of all the NFPs, was organised at Sophia Antipolis on 2 and 3 December 1999. It informed them of EMWIS activity programme, the NFP assignments and of the human resources recommended for each NFP (a co-ordinator, a person in charge of the contents and a specialist in Information and Communication Technologies).

2. The first seminar, addressing the specialists in 'Information and Communication Technologies' (ICT) of the National Focal Points (NFPs), took place in Rome from 22 to 26 May 2000. This seminar presented and validated the recommendations relative to the technical architecture (communication network, hardware, software) and Website design. It also defined the next step for the NFPs' connections and equipment.

3. The first seminar, addressing the persons in charge of the 'content' of the National Focal Points (NFPs), took place in Madrid from 12 to 16 June 2000. The main topic of this seminar was the creation of a topical directory on water issues. This directory is only part of the information which will be available on the NFPs servers. It provides knowledge of 'Who does what ?' in each country, regarding the five EMWIS topics: institutions, documentation, research and development, training and data administration. The Spanish and French NFPs showed, as an example, the tools used and services provided by their server. This seminar also presented and discussed the preliminary options

selected for this topical directory and for the organisation of data gathering in the different countries.

4. A training seminar, dealing with the implementation and management of an Oracle database to be used on the EMWIS server, was organised from 26 to 30 March 2001 at Sophia Antipolis (France) – for the French speaking NFPs - and from 2 to 6 April –for the English speaking ones. This training met the requests made by the NFPs' specialists in Information Technology during the Rome seminar, held in May 2000. In addition to the educational documents on Oracle, the 13 NFPs, who attended this training seminar, could also handle the database of the EMWIS water-related topical directory and received the latest reference documents.

The conclusions of these seminars are available on the Technical Unit website.

4.3 Visits in the countries

The Technical Unit made 12 technical visits to the NFPs from mid-February to the beginning of June 2001. The purpose of these short-term assignments (2 to 3 days) was to assess the progress made and determine the specific needs of each Focal Point, to provide ad-hoc technical assistance (website, topical directory, content structure) and to start co-operation with the water stakeholders at the national level. Each assignment was carried out by one or two specialists. During these visits, a CD-ROM with all the items necessary for implementing an EMWIS server was handed to each NFP.

The Algerian and Israeli focal points were visited in February 2001. Assignments were undertaken in March 2001 in Greece, Lebanon, Jordan and Cyprus. The representatives of the Technical Unit went to Egypt, Malta, Tunisia and Turkey in May. Lastly, visits were made to Morocco and Syria in June. Walter MAZZITTI, President of the EMWIS Steering Committee, participated in the assignment to Syria to provide additional political support.

These visits were very profitable in a general way. Draft national websites were prepared and some of them are being approved by the national authorities. Meetings, organised to introduce them to the institutions of the water sector, led to a strong mobilisation at the national level (e.g. Tunisia, Jordan). Finally technical assistance, adapted to the identified needs, will be provided in the coming months.

4.4 Development of EMWIS websites

The success of the first stage of EMWIS relies, above all, on co-operation among the National Focal Points. This co-operation provides good bases for the programme. Twenty NFPs were designated after the Naples conference of 1997. Nowadays, 17 NFPs (including the 12 Mediterranean Partner Countries) regularly participate in the activities and development of the system in spite of an environment which is often difficult for the southern Mediterranean countries.

During this first stage, EMWIS, through its Technical Unit, mainly focused on providing the 17 NFPs with the knowledge necessary for building their own information system, as a component of a Euro-Mediterranean system.

Eleven website are already operational: 10 National Focal Points and the International Focal Point. Common access is now possible from <http://www.semide.org> (French version) and <http://www.emwis.org> (English version).

4.5 Promotion

From a promotional viewpoint, two issues of EMWIS newsletter and a leaflet for general presentation were published in English and French. Posters and an electronic presentation were prepared to complete these products. The Technical Unit, the National Focal Points and the members of the Steering Committee use them during events involving EMWIS.

Many presentations were made during international and national events.

5 Very stimulating results

5.1 Strong political bases

EMWIS has received strong political support at the highest level since its creation. The Ministers in charge of water management in the 27 Partner countries have reasserted, more than once, their commitment to the system. Indeed, it is the only multilateral initiative of the Partnership in the water sector. During the Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference of Stuttgart (April 1999) water management was declared one of the six priority sectors for the future of Mediterranean co-operation.

The declaration of the Turin Ministerial Conference on Local Water Management (October 1999) underlined once more the importance of EMWIS, especially for the implementation of the Water-related Action Plan. In this declaration, the participants agreed to:

Entrust the Euro-Mediterranean Water Directors and the Commission, owing to its co-ordination role, with the orientation, follow-up and evaluation of the action plan implementation. For this purpose, they will rely on the Mediterranean Water Network, on the Euro-Mediterranean Information System on the know how in the Water Sector (EMWIS) and on other relevant bodies, etc.

5.2 The Partnership's only operational project in the water sector

In spite of the many difficulties encountered, the Mediterranean Partner Countries have all expressed, at different levels, their will to make EMWIS progress as the main tool for regional co-operation in the water sector. Their active involvement in EMWIS is a tangible proof.

EMWIS, with active focal points in 17 countries and an increasing number of national websites (10 national websites in October 2001 as compared to 4 in March 2001), is the inescapable tool as regards information on water in the Mediterranean.

5.3 Strengthening of the Partnership spirit

The notion of partnership and subsidiarity, which is translated into strong commitment of countries at the political and economic levels, is now well accepted and applied in the countries of the European Union. Some Mediterranean Partner Countries (MPCs) are also strongly committed and show the way to the other countries.

Algeria is one of the model countries. It has a specific budget and a team dedicated to the national focal point. This commitment was demonstrated during the EMWIS promotional seminar, held in

Algiers on 9 July 2001, during which the national website of the focal point was presented to more than 150 people representing the stakeholders of the Algerian water sector (public institutions, universities, research centres, associations and private sector). The European Commission and the Algerian Government shared the financing of this event. It took place in the presence of many Algerian political personalities, including the Minister for Water Resources, the Minister for Agriculture, the Minister for Co-operation, General Secretaries from the Ministries in charge of water and the Water Director.

5.4 EMWIS in the 'national water culture'

At the national level, EMWIS has a stimulating role essential for strengthening water policy and improving integrated resource management, especially in the Mediterranean countries where 'water stress' is high.

EMWIS success is guaranteed when the main water stakeholders appropriate this system (i.e. when it is integrated into the national water culture). It must become the reference tool in the area of water-related information. One of the main tasks of the NFP is to promote the system on the national scale and establish necessary partnerships with managers of water information to create communities of information users and producers who will guarantee the 'sustainability of the system'. Top level political support is required to make the system successful at the national level.

*Up to now, actions have started in three Mediterranean Partner Countries. In **Algeria**, direct contacts were made with the various stakeholders and during the promotional seminar of 9 July 2001, as mentioned above. The **Jordanian** focal point organised a seminar, gathering about thirty participants to inform them and initiate collaboration with the Ministries of Water and Irrigation, of Planning, of Industry and Trade, and of Agriculture, universities, international initiatives (e.g. WaterNet, WHO) and national institutions. Bilateral contacts were made later by the NFP with these organisations. The **Tunisian** focal point organised two information seminars, gathering all the public institutions of the water sector and the main universities. This seminar led to the creation of an ad-hoc working group to develop the Tunisian focal point.*

6. Conclusions

Many actions have been carried out by the whole of the partners, at the level of EMWIS Technical Unit as well as at the level of each country.

This first assessment shows that the system developed following the feasibility study, and thanks to the many technical and policy meetings, reflects a real need and a strong demand of all the partners.

It is now advisable to continue this work and to build on this solid base, a tool increasingly user-friendly and useful for the development of the Euro-Med co-operations in the field of water.

This is the subject of the proposals described in the EMWIS strategic plan for the years 2002-2005.