



EMWIS

EURO-MEDITERRANEAN INFORMATION SYSTEM ON KNOW-HOW IN THE WATER SECTOR

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005 is the year of the Mediterranean, of the 10th anniversary of the Barcelona Declaration and the year chosen by the EMWIS to address



the Water Directors of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership. As President of the EMWIS Steering Committee for the last 4 years, I have noticed major progresses: the reinforcement of the partnership spirit in the countries, the confirmation of the political support, and the transfer of ownership. I am convinced that we will succeed because EMWIS is more and more integrated by the institutions around the Mediterranean and not an initiative imposed from the outside. The success of EMWIS has been acknowledged at the highest levels. In October 1999, the ministers of the 27 countries and the European Commission asserted again their commitment to use EMWIS more efficiently. In November 2001, in Madrid, the Water Directors reviewed the positive results and approved a development plan. In 2003, the EMWIS was presented as a cooperation model during the 3rd World Water Forum in Kyoto. At the end of this same year, the European Commission awarded a 3 years grant to implement the plan approved in Madrid two years before. EMWIS is based on a common need expressed by the EU countries and their Mediterranean Partners at the first Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on local Water Management in Marseille in 1996: the need to improve the water management practices and, also, to share water information. Both ideas were the foundations used to build up the EMWIS, a void structure to be filled with hard work, enthusiasm and sense of future. Now, EMWIS has become the reality we know: a system for exchanging information on know-how in the water domain and also a cooperation tool among its partners, and among every person concerned or interested by water management in the Mediterranean region. It is the first tangible regional cooperation tool in the water sector within the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, which is the central instrument in Euro-Mediterranean relations. Actually, the European Commission is determined to reinforce it through the European Neighbourhood Policy, the ambitious new policy designed to promote prosperity, stability, and security all over the Euro-Med region. In the Mediterranean area, water is a key issue for peace, and economic and social development. We must all make sure that water is recognised as a key priority at the regional level and within the National Action Plans. We all know that EMWIS is a long term initiative involving a lot of cultural modifications, but I would like to list the key issues addressed during my Presidency to contribute to this process: Most of the Mediterranean Partner Countries have re-affirmed their commitment EMWIS in spite of 11 months delay in 2003 to get the financial support for the 2nd phase 15 countries have now published their national web site and are daily used by people interested in water management issues. Awareness on EMWIS concepts, such as information sharing and decentralised management, has been reinforced at the regional level as well as within each country with a promotion plan and national information seminars The EMWIS international web portal is becoming a reference with some 7 000 registered users, 20 000 visits each month and among the top 10 references on water in the Mediterranean ranked by the major Internet search engine Renewed partnership agreement with the International Network of Basin Organisations (INBO) and its Mediterranean branch (MENBO), new collaboration agreement with the support unit of the MEDA regional program for environment (SMAP) Stronger collaboration with regional initiatives to support the dissemination of knowledge: MEDA regional programme for



local water management, Med component of the EU Water Initiative, and the Joint Process on EU Water Framework Directive and the Water Initiative The increased understanding of the Mediterranean Partner Countries on National Water Information Systems and their willingness to build them in the coming years From this successful past, we face the future with pride and hope: to consolidate the system, increase the number of National Focal Points and web servers, to reinforce National Water Information Systems and to continue the way of a larger dialog with the use of the Arabic language and thematic activities to share knowledge, for example, on the Water Framework Directive or Non-conventional Water resources. EMWIS is already used as a model in other part of the World to build regional water information systems; e.g. SIAGUA in Latin America or AWIS in Africa. But the System can also contribute to water related global initiatives such as the Millennium Development Goal, World Water Assessment Program, with local and regional knowledge and reliable indicators. Since May 2004, the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership count 35 countries, but as Mediterranean citizens we feel necessary to share our knowledge with and to learn from the experience of Mediterranean countries not signatory of the Barcelona Declaration: Libya and the Balkan Countries. These are our challenges. EMWIS administrate knowledge, a virtual patrimony of words, figures and, at the end, ideas, that come up from the truth or, at least, from an objective reality very close to this concept. So, considering the truth as necessary element for the human relations, we believe that our organization gives a public service, directly available for the persons, the social groups and the nations. Let me express my conviction that being like that, EMWIS is a vocational agent of peace. If well-administered knowledge is the keystone of problem-solving activities, there is no doubt about a real bottleneck: the diffusion of the knowledge. At that point, EMWIS is at work to fill the gap.

Juan CANOVAS-CUENCA
President of EMWIS Steering Committee

Information seminar on EMWIS and the water sector in Lebanon

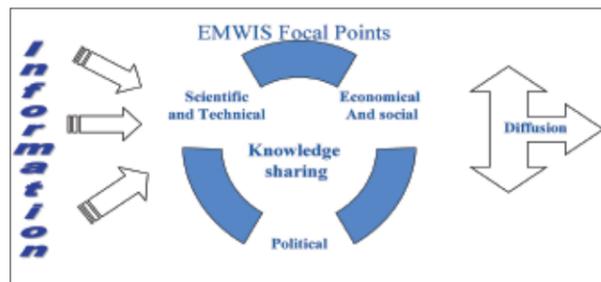
In order to mobilise and raise awareness among the Lebanese water sector stakeholders on exchange of information and know-how, the Lebanese Ministry of Energy and Water (EMWIS National Focal POINT) jointly organised with EMWIS, an information seminar in Beirut November 10, 2005. This event was widely covered by the press and national television and attended by some fifty representatives of the institutional, academic, industrial, associative Lebanese water sector as well as international organisations. This seminar was also the occasion to present the recent reorganisations of the water sector, the decennial Lebanese water strategy, the assistance to the water institutions and an initiative of public-private partnership. The main international projects implemented at Lebanon were also presented and discussed with the participants; in particular an animated debate took place about the coordination of the projects, initiated within the regional MEDA program on local water management, which are implemented at Lebanon.



From left to right: Misters Mazzitti, Hachem, Trolliet and Comair

The speech of the Minister and the presentations are available starting from the Lebanese Focal Point web site: www.emwis-lb.org or EMWIS web site: <http://www.semide.org/documents/html/liban'05.htm>

EMWIS activities



15th countries on line

Following the launching of the Tunisian national web site by the Office of the Inventory and Hydraulic Research (BIRH), the Euro-Mediterranean Information System on Know-how in the Water sector – EMWIS – provides a direct access to the water information managed by 15 Mediterranean countries (Algeria, Cyprus, Spain, France, Greece, Israel, Italy, Jordan, Lebanon, Malta, Morocco, Palestine, Portugal, Tunisia and Turkey).

Today, the EMWIS, through its national Focal Points, offers single access points to water information in each country (institutional structure, education & training, research, data administrators, water regulation, documentation, news) and international services: trilingual monthly electronic news flash, thematic directory, clearing house for regional programs and initiatives (MEDA-Water, European water Initiative, etc). A great part of the EMWIS Technical Unit activities is also dedicated to capacities building for the National Focal Points in particular for the management and the development of national water information systems and awareness raising of the water stakeholders on the benefits of information sharing.

Interest shown by the Mediterranean countries for the European Water Framework Directive

Within the framework of the topical studies initiated in 2004, EMWIS launched a survey on the value of some concepts of the European Union (EU) Water Framework Directive (WFD) for Mediterranean partner countries (MPC). The two **first concepts of interest are the characterisation of basins and**

the monitoring activities. This underlines strong willingness and needs in terms of acquiring a better knowledge on river basins within MPC. That preliminary step is crucial before ongoing the works of planning. Generally, this survey shows a **lack of awareness on WFD** by MPC, but also a **strong interest on the follow up of its implementation** in EU Member States. Thus, efforts are still necessary to extend the co-operation between the Member States and the Mediterranean countries, in particular via the “Joint Process” and its technical working groups but also, in a more general way, through out the EU neighbourhood policy (twinning agreements, etc...). Right now, the EMWIS provides a significant support to the exchange of know-how and collaborative work between two side of Mediterranean Sea with a Web space dedicated to the WFD and the Joint Process working groups, in particular on “ground waters”.

Reinforcement of national water information systems

The studies undertaken in the Mediterranean partner countries show the growing need and the interest of water institutions for the implementation of **National Water Information Systems**, an essential tool for a good water management with the whole community. These studies constitute a first stage which will have to be followed by targeted actions at the level of each country and regional coordination activities. They allow to consider the implementation of **national water observatories** being able to feed a regional observatory.

Many countries launched EMWIS promotion activities and mobilisation of the national actors by the means of national seminars supported by the highest political authorities of the countries concerned.

The training provided by the Technical Unit associated with local technical assistances and the supply of equipment allowed the Focal Points to improve their national Web site (user-friendliness, additional content, translation, etc) and to implement the **standardised protocols and formats for information exchange.**

Renewal of INBO – MENBO - EMWIS agreement

At the General meeting of the Mediterranean Network of Basin organisations (MENBO) in Marrakech in May 2005, the partnership agreement initiated in 2002 between the EMWIS, the International Network of Basin organisations (INBO) and the MENBO was renewed. Within this framework, the main co-operation actions will be continued, in particular the transfer of know-how related to the implementation of the Water framework directive or the development of a worldwide water information system on based on the EMWIS approach in Mediterranean and also adopted in other areas of the world.

New EMWIS website

A more ambitious technical architecture was necessary to improve multilingual content management, the co-operation within and between the various national water information systems and to guaranty an effective exchange of information of any nature. Consequently, it was decided to implement a content management system using standardised but flexible information formats (based on **XML**: extensible mark-up language) in accordance with the concepts of the Web-service. Within this framework, common meta-data have been defined for all the focal points and a multilingual water thesaurus (Arab, English and French) for EMWIS (being able to evolve to water ontology) is under preparation. An invitation to tender was launched mid-2005 for the development of new regional web portal. Italian company FINSIEL was selected, with an **open source solution** based on EnviroWindow, a system



previously developed for the **European Environment Agency (EEA)**. Thus EMWIS will benefit from existing component and, their updates and to contribute (in particular for the Arab language) to the tools of EEA. The implementation began in September 2005 and the final product will be available in February 2006.



Naples, 9-10 December 1997
Euro-Mediterranean Conference
of the 27 Water General Directors

EMWIS reinforcement since the Declaration of the Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on Local Water Management

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION, THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION, FINLAND, ALGERIA, AUSTRIA, BELGIUM, CYPRUS, DENMARK, EGYPT, SPAIN, FRANCE, GERMANY, GREECE, IRELAND, ISRAEL, ITALY, JORDAN, LEBANON, LUXEMBOURG, MALTA, MAROCCO, THE NETHERLANDS, PORTUGAL, SWEDEN, SYRIA, TUNISIA, TURKEY, THE UNITED KINGDOM AND THE PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY,

participants in the Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on Local Water Management in Turin, 18 – 19 October 1999

agreed to

“Emphasise the importance of EMWIS as a strategic tool for exchange of information and know-how in the Euro-Mediterranean area and consolidate it

within the mandate it has been given. Participation in EMWIS should be extended to the greatest possible number of Euro-Mediterranean partners and the national focal points should be assisted on an ongoing basis in their role, particularly through the provision of all necessary data in a coherent manner”

Turin, 18-19 October 1999

The Moroccan focal point

The National Focal Point (NFP) of Morocco was created at the end of 1999 within the Directorate-General of Hydraulics of the Ministry for Equipment. Since November 2002, the NFP is managed by the Secretariat of State in charge of water whose missions are:

- Meteorological watch and information on the climate evolution
- Search for and evaluation of the water resources
- Planning of the water resources development
- Mobilisation and transfer of water
- Water resources management
- Safeguard of the hydraulic heritage (resource and infrastructure)
- Research & Development in the fields of water and the climate

The National Focal Point team is composed of three people:

- Ahmed SKIM, Coordinator
- Souliman KAICHOUH, Data manager
- Rkia ASSAOU, data-processing manager



From right to left: Rkia Assaoui, Ahmed Skim and Souliman Kaichouh

A new national EMWIS Web site was launched in August 2005. It provides information in French on the 5 main EMWIS topics. The first information seminar organised in April 2005 allowed raising the awareness of and mobilising the main actors of the water sector. This event followed by more than 100 participants included also a state of the art on the applications of geographical information systems in the water sector. The national EMWIS web site is strongly linked with the institutional site of the State Secretariat in charge of water (www.water.gov.ma). A network gathering the main water stakeholders is in the course of constitution to contribute to the site content.

Medium-term, the focal point is planning the edition of a national brochure, the contents translation of the Web site in Arabic and English, the enrichment of the contents (training, R & D, Documentation), additional staff training, the implementation of the interfaces for exchanging metadata at the regional level and the analysis of users requests.

For more information: www.emwis-ma.org

