

<b>DATE:</b>	12 May 2009 - 9h30 – 16h
<b>VENUE:</b>	Novotel - Monaco
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	EMWIS Steering Committee - Meeting n°13 <b>ANNEXE</b>
	<b>Achievement of EMWIS Phase II (Dec'03-June'08)</b>



## 1. Main achievements of EMWIS Phase II (Dec'03-June'08)

During this period supported by a contract with the European Commission, EuopeAid, two main results have been achieved according to the initial work programme (the table with benchmarking indicators –BMI- is provided in annex):

- a) **The accessibility and availability of online water information have significantly improved** thanks to the regional website managed by the EMWIS Technical Unit and the 16 national websites launched by the water authorities of MEDA countries. They act as information hubs or reference access points to direct international & national users to the right information. All together, they form a unique network providing access to water information in the Mediterranean region. Access is available in Arabic, English and French for the regional information, while the national information is provided by the local websites in nine languages (Arabic, English, French, Greek, Hebrew, Italian, Portuguese, Spanish and Turkish) to ensure the accessibility by national water communities.
- Today 16 countries have launched an EMWIS National website focusing on water issues (Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, Lebanon, Palestine, Israel, Jordan, Turkey; Cyprus, Greece, Malta; Italy, France, Spain and Portugal) while in 2000, only 3 countries had such a website. The last one was the Egyptian website launched in February 2008 (and recently revised) thanks to a financial support obtained from the Italian cooperation (kick-off meeting held in February 2007). These national websites are now covering all the Mediterranean Partner Countries except Syria (that did not take part in any activities since 2004). During this 2<sup>nd</sup> phase, most of the web sites have been redesigned and new content added. The other EU countries that have nominated a NFP (i.e. Luxembourg, Belgium and Austria) are playing an observer role in EMWIS and did not launch a dedicated website.
  - Thanks to the promotion activities, the new services implemented and the daily updates, the online information provided has attracted more and more users: from about 200 000 yearly visitors in 2004 to more than 1 000 000 at the end of June 2008 on a yearly basis. The part coming from the MEDA region is difficult to assess as statistics are based on registered domain names and that domains such as “.org” or “.com” are considered as coming from North America. But an analysis of subscription to the e-news flash shows the strong interest from MEDA region users.
  - In addition to the website, information is also pushed to registered end-users thanks to an electronic monthly news flash providing briefs on the latest developments in the region, projects, publications, call for proposals, training, events, etc. 69 issues have been produced (see BMI A3.1.) in Arabic, English and French. This news Flash is very popular among the water community with today more than 14 000 subscribers (see BMI A3.2), registration has been increasing regularly during all the project duration.
  - The EMWIS international portal is becoming a reference system with more and more organisations contacting the EMWIS to make announcements and an increasing number of citations or links in relevant information sources, media and websites (see BMI A3.3), today more than 140.
- b) In order to build efficient water information systems, **sharing of information at regional and national levels** is necessary mainly because water management responsibilities are split between various institutions. In most of the countries sharing quantitative data has never been discussed before the feasibility studies launched by EMWIS in 2005. The situation was improved at both national and regional level:
- At the national levels:
    - The awareness on the benefits of developing water information systems shared among the main stakeholders (so called NWIS: National Water Information Systems) was increased thanks to the organisation of 13 national



- information seminars involving a wide range of water stake-holders and high political representatives (see BMI B3)
- Following the EMWIS studies and exchanges of experiences that took place during study visits or workshops, Lebanon and Jordan are in the preparatory phase for the development of their National Water Information System, Algeria and Tunisia are preparing a revision of their legislation to include water information sharing, Turkey and Morocco are strengthening their in-house systems before opening it to other institutions. Today, the Algerian system (strongly supported by bilateral funds from the EC: a 20 M€ contract to support for the water sector has been signed at the EMWIS seminar in June 2006) is used as flagship for other countries. The Tunisian system is going to be supported by the African Water Facility in the framework of the PISEAU II, 2<sup>nd</sup> phase of the investment program for the water sector jointly funded by the World Bank, the French Development Agency –AFD- and the African Development Bank. The Moroccan system will be funded with National funds, 50% from the State Secretariat for water and 50% from the Public administration modernisation fund.
  - At the regional level:
    - Eight countries (see BMI B4: Algeria, France, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Spain, Palestine and Tunisia) have been exposed to the sharing of information with the EMWIS Technical Unit. Their EMWIS NFPs have implemented the EMWIS metadata standards for automatic exchange of bibliographic and legislation references, news or events. This allowed them to better understand the underlying mechanisms.
    - The feasibility study on a regional water observation mechanism allowed to reach a consensus among the international organisations involved in water information management in the Mediterranean area (FAO, UNEP-MAP, World Bank, Eurostat, African Water Facility, World Water Council, etc.) on the fact that their current data collection could be improved by a coordinated support to National Water Information Systems (becoming a reference source of quantified data on water for each country) and the harmonisation of indicators they are using. Now, the development of such mechanism relies on its governance that has to be defined at the Ministerial level. But a similar approach is now supported by the African Water Facility in its water monitoring and evaluation initiative for Africa and more particularly for North Africa Countries.

This second phase of EMWIS allowed the **capitalisation and the sharing of experiences among Euro-Med countries** thanks to:

- The websites created that store and make available a wide range of knowledge relevant for the Med water community. The monthly pushing of information to some 14 000 persons facilitated the sharing of the information collected and the direct contacts with experiences owners.
- A common vocabulary specialised on water (EMWIS thesaurus) comprising about 1000 terms and definitions in Arabic, English, French, Italian, Spanish, Turkish and Greek. It allows multilingual indexing and search. With the new technical architecture implemented, it is the foundation for the semantic web required by the e-infrastructure foreseen across the Mediterranean in the framework of EUMEDGRID and EUMEDCONNECT.
- The launch of 5 working groups by the EMWIS Steering Committee (Water Directors from 13 countries) to exchange experiences at the institutional level and prepare joint



pilot projects to foster the ownership of the know-how transferred (see BMI P1 and P2). The activity of these working groups is planned for the next phase of EMWIS, except for some groups managed jointly with the Med-EUWI / WFD Joint Process: water scarcity (report published in 2008), waste water reuse (report published in 2007) and water monitoring (started in July 2007). Funding has been secured for 2 of these working groups: water scarcity and water monitoring thanks to a contract between EMWIS and EC DG Environment to carry out additional activities (mainly focusing on indicators).

- A study visit from Algerian and Tunisian experts to French organisations involved in the management of the National Water Information System to review the legal and organisational context as well as the technical facilities of the French system.
- The organisation of regional conferences and workshops (see BMI P3):
  - For exchanges between decision makers: 3 Euromed water directors' conferences. As only one was planned in the current contract, the 2 last ones have been jointly organised with Med-EUWI (as part of MEDA-WATER RMSU contract). This process, initiated by EMWIS, is now becoming a routine similar to the EU water directors meetings, to discuss a wide range of cooperation issues related to the water sector in the Med area.
  - For exchange of experiences on technical issues during regional workshops: one on National Water Information Systems and one for the Med water observation mechanism. These workshops as all the other EMWIS meetings are documented online.

The experiences gained during this 2<sup>nd</sup> phase of EMWIS, (especially on NWIS and water observation mechanism) will serve for preparing the interface between the Water Information System for Europe –WISE- and Mediterranean water information systems. This new project will be implemented by the EMWIS Technical Unit with the European Environment Agency thanks to a grant from the EC DG Environment.

In addition to the information tools outlined above, EMWIS has contributed to the **improvement of the cooperation among the Euro-Mediterranean Countries in the Water Sector** and therefore the regional water policy by initiating regular Euromed conferences of water directors in 1997 (Naples), 2001 (Madrid), 2005 (Rome), 2006 (Athens), 2007 (Bled). The EMWIS 10 years' strategy, presented in Rome, was proposing to use the forum of Euromed water directors as a body for reviewing regional cooperation in the water sector. In this context, the water directors agreed that their forum could serve as institutional support for the implementation of the Med-EUWI. Since 2006, the water directors meetings were jointly organised (by EMWIS and Med-EUWI) and a broader range of stakeholders were invited.

The under-evaluation of the priority given to the water sector in ENPI regional program for the Mediterranean was a major concern among EMWIS Steering Committee members. Indeed, most of them took part in the definition of the Turin Action Plan and have supported the launch of the MEDA-Water program. This is the reason why they decided to propose the organisation of a Euromed Ministerial conference on water, and they launched a study on the assessment and prospects for cooperation in the Mediterranean water sector in 2007. The French EMWIS Steering Committee Presidency proposed to organise this conference during its EU Presidency to give more visibility to the event and to provide the necessary resources for the assessment and prospect study.

