

# EU Water Initiative

## MEDITERRANEAN COMPONENT

Lead Country: Greece

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Concept Note  
(v. 14 February 2003)

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### 1. Introduction

The Mediterranean, a water scarce area, lies on the cross road of three continents and it has been the cradle of major civilizations. The shared century-old experiences and diverse cultures have resulted to uneven levels of economic development and socio-political systems. The region is encountering a rapid, unbalanced demographic growth and increased urbanization trends, mainly in the coastal areas. At the same time, the Mediterranean region is rich in unique and fragile ecosystems.

Water supply in the region is unequally distributed in space and time, both at regional level and within each country. The Southern Mediterranean and Middle East sub-regions have among the lowest per capita amount of water supply in the world. It is estimated that 7% of the entire Mediterranean population (28 million persons) lie below the poverty line of 500 m<sup>3</sup>/year per capita and another 29% (115 million persons) are below the threshold of 1000 m<sup>3</sup>/year per capita. In certain countries, exploitation indexes of renewable natural fresh water resources have reached 100%. The intensive extraction and use of water for domestic, agricultural and industrial purposes, without proper provisions for the protection of the resource, has led to serious water pollution of surface and ground water bodies. Agriculture consumes 70-80% of water in the Mediterranean countries. Many countries in the region are currently in a stage of institutional reform, orienting priorities and practices towards an integrated water resources management (IWRM) approach.

Major investment on water infrastructure in the Mediterranean countries has been made through bilateral and multilateral agreements. The EU Member States and the Commission are among the major donors in the region, including support to water sector, constituting a major force towards economic growth and transition.

### 2. Background

The Mediterranean has a tradition in cooperation and networking schemes, many of which address issues of sustainable development, environmental protection and management of natural resources. Water is a defined priority in the majority of related regional processes eg. Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, Barcelona Convention, MCSD etc.

Among recent major plans of action and recommendations we should make reference to:

- Euro-Mediterranean Plan of Action on Integrated Local Water Management, Turin, 1999.
- Recommendations on Water Demand Management of the Mediterranean Commission for Sustainable Development (Frejus and Fiuggi outcomes), 1997 and 2002.
- 'Vision to Action Process' for Water in the Mediterranean (Vision, Framework for Action, Core for Action Plan) of GWP-Med, 1999-2001.

It should be noted that the aforementioned action plans have been developed before WSSD and there is an emerging need for proper adaptation of their orientation according to decisions taken and targets agreed in Johannesburg. The Component should offer a concrete contribution to the WSSD Implementation Plan, as it relates to water issues in the region.

A few EU financial instruments facilitate common action, like the MEDA Euro-Mediterranean Regional Programme for Local Water Management, the Short and Medium Term Priority Environmental Action Programme (SMAP), etc. Tools and utilities have been developed to assist the process, like the Euro-Mediterranean Information System on the Know How in the Water Sector (EMWIS). In the interest of pursuing the objectives of the Turin Meeting (1999), an Euro-Mediterranean Water Forum was established and is facilitated by the EU Commission.

Several EU Member States have bilateral agreements with specific Mediterranean countries of North Africa, the Middle East and the Balkans, supporting water projects through ODA.

The Mediterranean EU Member States (France, Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain) have a very active role in the region and participate in all related processes.

Recently, the Finance Ministers of the 15 EU member states and the 12 Mediterranean Finance and Economy Ministers of the Partner Countries (MPC) launched a new Facility for Euro-Mediterranean Investment Partnership (FEMIP), facilitated by the European Investment Bank (EIB).

At the same time, other mechanisms are supporting water activities in the region, like the World Bank (MENA Water Initiative), UN bodies, USAID, other international organizations, etc. The private sector plays also an increasingly important role on water issues. Their role and contribution should not be neglected in the overall assessment and procedure.

Special reference should be made to the EU Water Framework Directive (WFD) which, directly and indirectly, influences to a certain extent the policies and strategies of accession and other neighboring countries which share with the EU transboundary waters and/or have bilateral and multi-lateral agreements with it. The 'enlargement' of the impact of the EU WFD's principles, procedure and best practices, where and if applicable and after proper adaptation, should be considered as a useful background for the Mediterranean Component of the EU Water Initiative.

In addition, the shared objective of creating a Mediterranean Free Trade Zone until 2010 should act as a key factor contributing to integration and modernization of economic and social systems. Rationalization and common principles on resources management, including water, should be considered in this process.

The Mediterranean Action Plan of UNEP (MAP/UNEP) plays an important role in the region's orientation towards sustainable development, facilitating the Barcelona Convention and its related Protocols. Water resources issues are mostly dealt by the Blue Plan and PAP/RAC, also in the framework of the Mediterranean Commission for Sustainable Development.

Partnerships have been developed at various levels (governmental and multi-stakeholder) in the region enhancing cooperation and promoting common action, like CEDARE, CIHEAM and thematic/sectoral networks like CEIR, IME, MedCities, MedWet, MENBO, MESAEP, MIO-ECSDE, MWN, RAED, etc. The Global Water Partnership – Mediterranean (GWP-Med) has provided a cooperation platform on water where most of these networks participate actively, together with Blue Plan (MAP/UNEP) and EMWIS.

### **3. Objective**

The Mediterranean Component is an integral part of the EU Water Initiative – Water for Life and shares its overall objectives.

The EU Water Initiative was established as a key contribution to the implementation of the WSSD agreements and programme of action and to help achieve water-related Millennium Development Goals and WSSD targets providing a platform for strategic partnerships. The EU Water Initiative seeks to make significant progress in poverty eradication and health, in the enhancement of livelihoods, and in sustainable economic development. The initiative also seeks to serve as a catalyst for peace and security.

The Component will give particular emphasis to Mediterranean priorities, according to needs and strategies defined in partnership with governments, the Commission and major stakeholders, aiming

- to assist design of better, demand driven and output oriented programmes,
- to facilitate better coordination of water programmes and projects, targeting more effective use of existing funds and mobilization of new financial resources and,
- to enhanced cooperation for their proper implementation, based on peer review and strategic assessment.

### **4. Overall approach**

The Mediterranean Component of the EU Water Initiative will take stock of existing processes, initiatives and cooperation schemes. It will not duplicate activity, but will seek to integrate, complement and add value to existing processes.

The concept and detailed content of the Mediterranean Component will emerge through consultation among governments of the Mediterranean countries and regional stakeholders. A functional, inclusive, coherent and committed partnership that will boost development is necessary for achieving concrete targets, such as those adopted by the Millennium Development Goals and the WSSD Plan of Implementation.

The particular role of good coordination among the Mediterranean EU Member States (France, Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain) and with the EU Commission, for the development of the Mediterranean Component is emphasized.

The Mediterranean Component will actively seek linkage with other Components of the EU Water Initiative (eg. Africa, Research, Finances). In addition, it will look for synergies with other Mediterranean initiatives run by out-of-the-region institutes.

### **5. Focus themes**

It is suggested that the Mediterranean Component will focus on the following themes:

- Water supply and sanitation, with emphasis on the poorest part of the societies
- Integrated water resources management, with emphasis on management of transboundary water bodies
- Water, food and environment interaction, with emphasis on fragile ecosystems
- Non-conventional water resources

The first two focus themes are to be given priority within the first phase of the Mediterranean Component.

Subject to agreement with involved partners, within each theme there will be focus on cross-cutting aspects like: promote internationally agreed principles and good practices; assess existing and explore new financial mechanisms; develop benchmarks; build capacity; enhance participation; raise awareness and promote appropriate education. Demonstration projects on the priority themes should be supported. Details on concept and foreseen activity will be described at the *Operation Plan* of the Mediterranean Component, to be elaborated within the 1<sup>st</sup> semester 2003 and be processed through regional consultation (see under 6. Activities).

A cluster of building blocks (projects/programmes financed and supported by various development partners) should assist in bringing partners with related activities under a common framework and co-ordination. This does not aim to take ownership and responsibility away from individual implementing partners and supporters. To the contrary it aims to provide an enabling environment for the development of the various complementary initiatives. Among these, the Euro-Mediterranean Water and Poverty Facility, a Type II Initiative led by Egypt, Greece and GWP-Med, should be considered among the building blocks of the Mediterranean Component, also deemed within the African Component of Water Supply and Sanitation.

## **6. Activities and schedule**

The following activities are foreseen within the 1<sup>st</sup> semester 2003 :

6.1. *Kick-Off Meeting*. The meeting will be organised within February 2003, with the participation of involved EU Member States, the Commission and key European and Mediterranean stakeholders. Optionally, the meeting could be also attended by government representatives of non-EU Members States and international organisations. The meeting will initiate a *Mediterranean Multi-stakeholder Working Group* that would be open to all competent parties from Europe and the Mediterranean

6.2. *Assessment on water financial flows in the Mediterranean*. The study will elaborate on development aid and other financial assistance provided by the EU Member States and the EU Commission to the Mediterranean countries and regional projects. A parallel survey of the short and medium term priorities and needs, related to water, as defined by the recipient countries will be carried out and further analysed.

6.3. *3<sup>rd</sup> World Water Forum, 16-23 March 2003*. The Mediterranean Component will be presented at the Forum in Japan under the Day of Europe and/or the Day of the Middle East and Mediterranean.

6.4. *Operation Plan of the Mediterranean Component*. Based on the findings of the Assessment, the feedback from the Multi-stakeholder Group and in coordination with the overall orientation of the EU Water Initiative, an Operation Plan (OP) will be elaborated. The OP will describe the scope, principles, targets, and first set of activities of the Mediterranean Component.

6.5. *International Conference on "Sustainable Development for Lasting Peace: Shared Water, Shared Future, Shared Knowledge", 6-7 May 2003, Athens*. Cooperation for the management of transboundary water bodies and aquifers in South East Europe and the Mediterranean is a priority theme of the Conference, jointly organised by the Greek government and the World Bank; that will assist in reviewing the knowledge base, in assessing opportunities and constraints and in shaping recommendations, with an emphasis on cooperation for sustainable development, peace and stability. The Conference should provide input to the Operation Plan.

6.6. *Meeting of the Mediterranean Multi-stakeholder Group*. The Group will elaborate on the contents of a draft *Operation Plan* for the Mediterranean Component. The meeting will be combined with the *International Conference on "Sustainable Development for Lasting Peace: Shared Water, Shared Future, Shared Knowledge"*, 6-7 May 2003, Athens. Possible day : 8 May 2003.

6.7. *Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference, 21-23 May 2003, Kiev*. The process of the Mediterranean Component, the main findings about the Mediterranean Balkan and Accession countries and elements of the OP will be presented as a contribution to sustainable development and progress in the region.

6.8. Green Week, 2-6 June 2003, Brussels. The Mediterranean Component will be presented during the Green Week. A technical session and/or a political and press event could be considered.

6.9. *Water Week, 17-20 June 2003, Athens*.

- 6.9.a. *Workshop on 'Enlarging the impact of the EU Water Framework Directive in the Mediterranean', 19 June 2003, Athens*.

The meeting will share experiences from the EU Member States on the development and implementation process of the WFD, as well as from neighboring countries of the region, which share transboundary waters and/or have bilateral and multi-lateral agreements with the EU. Through an interactive dialogue, the meeting will explore the usefulness of the WFD as an eventual model or target for other countries of the region to formulate compatible frameworks. The outcomes of the meeting will assist in enriching the knowledge base of the Mediterranean Component.

- 6.9.b. *Workshop on 'Developing the Mediterranean Component of the EU Water Initiative', 20 June 2003, Athens*

The workshop will mark the end of the preparatory phase of the Mediterranean Component of the EU WI, aiming at providing feedback and, eventually, adopting the Operation Plan.

*Note:* The development of the Euro-Mediterranean Water and Poverty Facility is expected to assist in developing the focus theme of Water Supply and Sanitation of the Mediterranean Component.

Aiming to express maximum political commitment, the EU Water Initiative including its Mediterranean Component, will be presented in key political events eg. the Informal Council of the EU Ministers for Environment, 4-5 May 2003, Athens, etc.

## Time schedule

No	Activity	J	F	M	A	M	J
1	Kick of Meeting		X				
2	Assessment						
3	3 <sup>rd</sup> World Water Forum			X			
4	Operation Plan						
5	Athens Conference on Transboundary Water and Peace					X	
6	Meeting of the Mediterranean Multi-stakeholders Group					X	
7	Kiev Conference					X	
8	Green Week						X
9	Athens Water Week						X
	<i>Euro-Mediterranean Water and Poverty Facility</i>						