

7th meeting of the Steering Committee Malta 4 May 2004

CONCLUSIONS

(2004-05-07)

The seventh meeting of EMWIS Steering Committee took place in Malta on 4 May 2004 under the presidency of Spain and vice-presidency of Cyprus. Most of the country members of the Steering Committee were represented (Cyprus, France, Italy, Malta, Morocco, Spain and the Palestinian Authority) at the exception of Algeria and Jordan (justified absence). The meeting was also attended by a representative of the European Commission EuropeAid Coordination Office and by the organisation members of the EMWIS Technical Unit (CEDEX, OIEau and SOGESID).

After the welcome address of the Steering Committee President Dr. Juan CANOVAS, Dr John MANGION (Water Director, Head of water department of the Malta Resources Authority) reminded the participants about the high value of sharing knowledge and experiences among the Mediterranean countries, all facing water scarcity problems. He added that EMWIS must play the role of a network of Excellence facilitating the transfer of know-how among Euro-Med water institutions.

These introductory speeches were followed by the review of the activities carried out in 2003. The main issue was the important administrative delay (11 months) for signing the European Commission's contract covering the activities of the phase II. It resulted in a lack of financial resources and difficulties in planning concrete activities. But thanks to the joint support of France, Italy and Spain, a minimum set of actions have been developed before the signature in December 2003:

- Promotional activities with various presentations made during international events, including the 3rd World Water Forum
- Completion of actions launched at the end of 2002
- Maintaining EMWIS information services running
- Keeping (electronic) contacts with the EMWIS National Focal Points
- Preparation of the new contract with the European Commission

It was reminded that out of 27 countries signatories of the Euro-Med Partnership, 20 have nominated a National Focal Point, 17 have taken part regularly in EMWIS meetings and 14 have launched their EMWIS national web sites. Due to the lack of joint activities in 2003, the level of commitment has decreased, but most of the NFP have maintained effective links with the Technical Unit.

With the EU enlargement, the Euro-Med Partnership counts now 35 countries: 25 from the EU and 10 Med Partner Countries. The various promotional materials and the EMWIS websites will have to be updated. But this will not affect significantly the contractual budget for the 2nd phase that is mainly providing support to the Med Partner Countries. The potential

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entrance of Libya into the Euro-Med Partnership in 2005 was also noted, this would require some budget adjustments for EMWIS phase II contract.

The statement of account for 2003 (223 563 EUR) and the budget for the period December 2003 – November 2006 (3 332 420 EUR) were validated by the members of the Steering Committee.

The [work programme for the period December 2003 – November 2006](#) was reviewed. This programme is based on the strategic plan adopted by the Euro-Med water directors in Madrid in November 2001 and on the technical evaluation of the Phase I contract (1999-2002). It was reminded that the evaluators highlighted that EMWIS should support the development of National Water Information Systems, should link with the water related initiatives in the Med area and should foster the ownership of the system in each country.

In order to reinforce the level of national commitments and the transfer of ownership despite of the overall delay, it was decided to move forward the meeting of the 35 Euro-Med Water Directors, originally planned at the end of 2005, to around March 2005. In addition, the President of EMWIS Steering Committee will inform by letter:

- The Euro-Med Ministers in charge of water about EMWIS status, the national commitments taken in Naples in 1997 and the objectives of phase II.
- The Euro-Med water directors on the conclusions of the 7th Steering Committee meeting and the importance of the Ministerial commitment to involve all the national water stakeholders (including the civil society) in the development of water information systems.

The President and honorary President might also take direct contacts with the Ministers and Water Directors when difficulties will be noticed.

The members of the Steering Committee welcomed the actions planned for reinforcing the National Focal Points. They proposed a brief survey on NFP needs and current problems (including self evaluation) to be carried out in May and June. On this basis, the themes of good practices case studies will be selected during the Coordination Committee meeting planned in early July in Morocco. The Steering Committee members also required the development of specific work programmes and monitoring tools for each of NFP to better focus the future aids.

An extensive discussion took place for topical studies to be carried out. All the members pointed out that in parallel to the five EMWIS topics (institutions, Documentation, Training, Research and development, Data administration), it is necessary to focus on more specific themes of interest for the Med region. On the basis of the Ministerial Turin Action Plan (October 1999) and suggestions received from the EMWIS community, some 15 themes have been proposed. During the meeting additional relevant topics such as impact of climate changes on local water management, public-private partnership or water demand management were discussed. Finally, it was decided to start working on four themes, with the aim to get significant results on at least 2 of them for the meeting of the Euro-Med Water Directors in early 2005. These studies will provide synthesis of concrete field experiments:

- Use of non-conventional water resources (theme of the Turin Action Plan)
- EU Water Framework Directive and the Mediterranean Partner Countries: identification of interest and transfers of success cases of the WFD implementation in EU countries to the MPC

- Irrigation water management (theme of the Turin Action Plan)
- Integrated management of local drinking water supply, sanitation and sewage (theme of the Turin Action Plan)

For the three themes of the Turin Action Plan, significant contributions are expected from the nine projects launched in the framework of the Euro-Med regional programme on local water management.

The promotion plan was then presented and agreed. It focuses on four target groups: NFP, 'consumer of water information', water information providers and decision makers. It was reminded that NFP themselves should play an active role in communication activities at the national level to promote the ownership by national politicians and ensure a wide participation of national water stakeholders. The paper promotional documents (i.e. updated brochure, annual newsletter, and phase II leaflet) will be produced in Arabic, English and French. It has also been noticed that potential TV spots in collaboration with Mediterranean channels, Euro-News or BBC-World could be further investigated.

The Steering Committee membership rules have been reviewed to give an opportunity to all the Mediterranean Partner Countries –MPC- to take part in this Committee and thus reinforcing their high-level commitment. It has been agreed that:

- The Steering Committee is composed of 10 members:
 - 3 permanent members corresponding to the country committed in the funding of the EMWIS Technical Unit,
 - plus 7 rotating members representing at least 4 Mediterranean Partner Countries
- The term for renewable members will be 2 years. Each year a maximum of 2 members will be renewed
- The term for the Presidency will be 4 years and 2 years for the Vice-Presidency
- To apply, the water Director of a candidate country will have to send an application letter to the Steering Committee President. At their annual meeting, the Steering Committee members will validate the membership renewal on the basis of a fair representation of Mediterranean sub-regions.

Countries not represented in the current Steering Committee will be informed about the opportunity to join it. The next Steering Committee meeting will review the applications received and will decide on outgoing and incoming countries.

The collaboration with international initiatives has a high priority for the second phase of EMWIS. The goal is to give a full picture of the main stakeholders around the Mediterranean and to provide access to their information resources (or developing new ones) while promoting their initiatives. Such agreements have been already signed with:

- the International Network of Basin Organisations –INBO- with a specific attention on integrated water management at the level of river basins in Med countries. Actions are currently under development with the MENBO (Mediterranean Network of Basin Organisations)
- the Mediterranean Water Institute for promoting regional cooperation projects (e.g. Euro-Med regional programme on local water management)

The participants reminded the importance of EMWIS as an effective regional project involving all the countries of the Middle East peace process. Walter MAZZITTI, Honorary

President of the EMWIS Steering Committee and water expert of the EU Task Force for the Middle-East Peace process, proposed to present EMWIS and WaterNet to the 25 EU countries during one of the future meetings of the EU Task Force in Brussels. This would be a good opportunity to promote EMWIS activities and to prepare concrete cooperation between two major initiatives involving Middle-East countries (Israel, Jordan and Palestine for WaterNet and Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine and Syria for EMWIS). Steering Committee members agreed on the organization of this meeting in Brussels.

Finally, the President has been mandated to prepare and sign agreements with the relevant initiatives (with a priority on those directly involved in the Mediterranean area). NFP will be invited to prepare similar agreements at the national level to provide access to information resources, for example developed by universities or research centers.

The President, Mr. Juan CANOVAS, closed the meeting and thanked again the Maltese Resource Authorities for their welcome.

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