

8th meeting of the Steering Committee Athens, 23 June 2005

CONCLUSIONS

(2005-06-29)

The eighth meeting of EMWIS Steering Committee took place in Athens on 23 June 2005 under the presidency of Spain and vice-presidency of Cyprus. Most of the country members of the Steering Committee were represented (Algeria, Cyprus, France, Italy, Malta, Morocco, Spain and the Palestinian Authority) at the exception of Jordan (justified absence). Apologizes were also given for the Honorary President, Walter MAZZITTI (who was called for an urgent mission for the Middle-East Peace Process) and for Egypt that was willing to take part in the meeting as observer. The meeting was also attended by the President of the Mediterranean Water Institute as observer and by the organisation members of the EMWIS Technical Unit (CEDEX, OIEau and SOGESID).

The first session was dedicated to a discussion on potential synergies between EMWIS, the Mediterranean component of the European Union Water Initiative ([Med-EUWI](#)) and the Joint Process (JP) on the EU Water Framework Directive and the Water Initiative. The Greek EMWIS NFP (Water Department of the Ministry of Environment), the DG Environnement of the European Commission (Joint Process leader) and the International Department of the Greek Ministry of Environment (MED EUWI leader) took part in this session. After a brief reminder on each initiative, it was proposed:

- for the Med EUWI:
 - o To present Med-EUWI during the EuroMed conference of the 35 general directors which will be organized in November 2005 by the EMWIS
 - o To invite the EMWIS members to name representatives for the Med-EUWI working group
- For the Joint Process:
 - o To use EMWIS as the electronic platform for exchanging information among the members of the working groups on the water scarcity and on groundwater
 - o To propose to the water general directors of the 35 EuroMed countries to direct the future developments of the Joint Process

After this opened session, the Steering Committee President Dr. Juan CANOVAS, reviewed the activities since the last Committee meeting in May 2004. The statement of account for the period December 2003 - May 2005 (budget committed: 1 116 182 EUR) was presented and validated by the members of the Steering Committee.

The review of the activities undertaken during the first 18 months of the contract with the European Commission (December 2003 – May 2005) highlighted the progress achieved and the growing commitment of the National Focal Points of which 10 have defined their national work program.



The progress of the feasibility studies of the national water information systems caused much interest, in particular in terms of potential monitoring of the millennium goals and development of participative approaches. It was pointed out, that these studies are limited in terms of effort allocated and aim to help the countries to develop their internal system according to their own priorities (stakeholders concerned and contents). It is planned to present the first recommendations of these studies during the meeting of the general directors in November 2005.

For promoting the “EMWIS approach”, it was suggested analysing a possible participation into the [4th World Forum of the Water](#) which will be held from 16 to 26 March 2006 in Mexico City (possible sessions to present EMWIS: sharing knowledge or monitoring).

After the presentation of the call for tenders related to the improvement of the design and technical architecture of the EMWIS international website (implementation planned for the end of 2005), the members of the Steering Committee stressed the importance a revision of the user interface design to facilitate access to information.

The organisation of the conference of the water general directors of the 35 EuroMed countries in November 2005 in Italy was agreed. The principal objective, recalled in the [note that Walter Mazzitti](#) proposed to the participants, is to reaffirm the validity of the system, the commitment of the countries to implement it, to adapt it and to take the ownership, as well as defining the strategy for the 10 next years. This conference will be also the occasion to analyse the involvement of the Mediterranean countries not signatory of the Barcelona declaration: Libya and Balkan countries. This event will be also the occasion to appoint the new Presidency of the Steering Committee. This conference could take place during the week of November 14, after the Ramadan, in order to be able to forward the conclusions to the celebration of the tenth anniversary of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership in Barcelona, 27-28 November 2005. Moreover, it was proposed:

- to integrate within EMWIS the monitoring for the Mediterranean of trends towards the Millennium Goals relating to water and sanitation, as well as the implementation of the water section of [the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development validated](#) by the Mediterranean Commission on sustainable development the 20, 21 and 22 June 2005 just before the meeting of the EMWIS Steering Committee in Athens,
- to stress the importance of the Water Framework Directive for the transfers of knowledge and experiences between the EU and the partner countries
- to evaluate the conditions of potential opening of EMWIS to the civil society
- to involve the European Commission departments working on the EU [neighbourhood policy](#) in order to improve the financing of the water sector in the partner countries
- to inform the ministers and water directors on the organisation of this conference in order to validate the dates as soon as possible

For the progress of the topical studies, the importance of achieving quickly preliminary results on the study relating to the “Integrated management of local drinking water supply, sanitation and sewage” was stressed in particular concerning the monitoring of the Millennium Goals.

The presentation of the first results of the survey on the concepts of interest of the [EU Water Framework Directive for Mediterranean Partner Countries](#) (MPC) gave place to a very positive debate. The [document presenting the results and the preliminary conclusions](#) will be



transmitted for comments to the organisations which answered the survey, the EMWIS NFP and the European Commission (in particular to the persons in charge of the Joint Process) in order to finalise the report after the summer 2005. A possible presentation of the results obtained is considered during the [next meeting](#) of the European Basin Organisations Group for the implementation of the water Framework Directive (Namur, September 29 – October 1, 2005).

For the study on the non conventional water resources, a [progress report](#) was sent to participants before the meeting. It was suggested putting forward some case studies of success and failure of implementation of such resources. This progress report will be also transmitted to the NFP for comments.

The [concept note](#) introducing a potential topical study on the specificities of the Mediterranean islands based on a short state of art in Cyprus, Malta and Sicily was well received. A complementary analysis will be nevertheless necessary to define the topics to be treated in more details in the framework of such a limited synthesis of experiences. During the discussion, many other topics were proposed, such as specificities of the oases, the intrusion of marine water or the exploitation of the underwater sources.

In terms of collaboration with other initiatives:

- the participants welcome the proposal for a memorandum of understanding between EMWIS and the regional monitoring and support unit ([RMSU](#)) of the European Commission's SMAP program (Euro-Mediterranean program for the environment). This protocol relates to the collection and the diffusion of information, in particular between the web sites of the two initiatives: the EMWIS ensuring the deputy management of the water section of the SMAP Unit website, and the SMAP Unit providing information on the SMAP projects relating to fresh water.
- The continuation of the discussions with the initiatives of Midle-East Peace Process in the water sector (EXACT and WaterNet) was reaffirmed: in particular for the valorisation and exploitation of the results obtained.
- The members of Steering Committee were informed of the renewal of the partnership agreement between the EMWIS, [INBO](#) (International Network of Basin organisations) and the [MENBO](#) (Mediterranean Network of the Basin Organisations) signed in Marrakech in May 2005,
- It was finally proposed to establish links with the Arab Water Council.

The President, Mr. Juan CANOVAS, closed the meeting and thanked again the Greek Authorities for their welcome and the possibility offered to establish synergies with the Mediterranean component of the European Union Water Initiative (MED EUWI), the Joint Process (JP) and the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development (MCSD).

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