



EMWIS

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

Five years from Marseilles

There is always a need for fully entering "into" a new initiative, a time for absorbing its concepts, a process of gradual understanding of its thrust and of its potential must be allowed to take place. And then, we discover that objectives and strategies are indeed becoming reality.

At the time of the Euro-Mediterranean Marseilles Conference on local Water Management, the first dedicated to a specific subject in the common framework opened by the Barcelona Declaration, there was a prudent approach to a new era of cooperation between the members of the European Community and 12 Partner Countries around the whole Mediterranean basin. At Marseilles the cornerstone of joint programmes was laid down. A common need for improving local water management practices was recognized and sharing of information on water was selected as the first area for working together. EMWIS was launched. A year later, at Naples, the Project structure, plan of work and budget were approved.

Today, a large number of the countries of the Mediterranean, both EU members and Partners, have their Web Site dedicated to collecting, organizing and disseminating precious information on the management of local water resources, on ways for improving skills and training of specialized staff, of managers and policy makers. The common electronic network dedicated to water is a reality. It has determined the formulation of higher and more demanding information standards on water.

National Focal Points, about 20 of them, have been designated or established and their precious work of organizing and rationalizing such a vital sector has started. Gradually, interest has grown, joint activities have taken place. Thanks to the precious support provided by the European Commission and some EU members, the essential work of the Technical Unit has led to the creation of a broad umbrella, almost a common fabric, which has reached East and West, North and South, in the Mediterranean. A common programme exists.

EMWIS not only exists, but also has stimulated further expectations and ambitious objectives have been formulated. In fact, it can be said that the response of Mediterranean Partners has been more convinced and more operational than that of the EU 15, with their varying degree of activity.

All this sends a clear message to everybody, indicating

strong and well-rooted commitment, which is the foundation of future plans. The renewed MEDA II programme can provide the essential basis for moving towards new goals. The 27 Ministers of Foreign Affairs, meeting at Marseilles in September 2000, have expressed their appreciation for the work carried out and the results achieved together by the countries participating in this endeavor.

Altogether, the conditions are there for EMWIS becoming the common tool for additional forms of cooperation, as specifically mentioned in the Turin Declaration and Plan of Action. As always, the challenge is there for all of us who believed in this initiative, at the time of the first Marseilles Conference.

At this stage it is therefore important to concentrate on the perspectives for the further development of EMWIS in support of Partner policies and plans for improving water management. Significant priorities include stronger coordination of NFPs through the formulation of comparable work programmes, increased dissemination of water information broadening the circle of EMWIS users, opening of additional Web sites to complete the network and its access both for national institutions and Euro-Med partners.

At the Amman Steering Committee, the important decision of opening the System to private entities, in order to increase resources available, not only financial resources, and begin technical cooperation, was taken. As a result cooperation on a technical and scientific level with the main international bodies operating within and outside the Mediterranean is being explored. Contacts have been opened with the Global Water Partnership and the World Water Council, with a view to develop a constructive and reciprocal collaboration.

Recent opportunities to meet with Water Ministers in a number of countries have confirmed the awareness at the political level of the perspectives of EMWIS. As a further encouragement, we have welcomed the decision of the Algerian Government to present officially the National Focal Point to Maghreb Partners and to the institutions responsible for water management in the country. We hope that this excellent initiative is followed also by other Mediterranean Partners.

Walter MAZZITTI
President of the Steering Committee



The strengthening of Emwis from the Declaration of the Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on local water

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 European Commission EMWIS a common tool for the Partners

The European Commission is one of the major partners in EMWIS, together with the sponsor countries - France, Italy and Spain. The concept of EMWIS grew out of the Rome Charter of 1992, and was reinforced by the Barcelona Process and by the Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on Local Water Management held in Turin in October 1999.

The importance of EMWIS was reiterated by the Turin Conference emphasising the important role of this trans-Mediterranean water information network in the development of the Action Plan approved by the Ministerial Conference. This, in its turn, requires the countries of the Euro-Mediterranean Process to build an information which is coherent and compatible in terms of measurements, norms, and methods of water assessment. These require a high degree of co-operation between the many organisations dealing with water in the Euro-Mediterranean context, in the Mediterranean basin, and with other sources of information useful to the management of water. In this context, it can also use comparable data from other parts of the world with similar water problems, e.g. USA, Gulf countries, Asian-

Caribbean-Pacific (ACP) countries and others.

EMWIS is a special tool for the Euro-Mediterranean Process, collating, comparing and synthesising water data from the Euro-Mediterranean countries, and other countries coping with comparable problems. It thus assists the European Community in the creation and processing of information necessary to a proper management of water resources in the Mediterranean. The political, as well as the technical, importance of the work is highly significant. Without comparable data, the countries of the Mediterranean (and the Arab World) cannot work together. In view of climate change, and the increasing problems of drought in the Mediterranean/Middle East region, the importance of gathering information on the Mediterranean region by EMWIS cannot be over-emphasised in our struggle for a positive response to the problems of this heavily water-stressed area.

Rodney STANDRING
European Commission

Technical assistance visits to the Focal Points

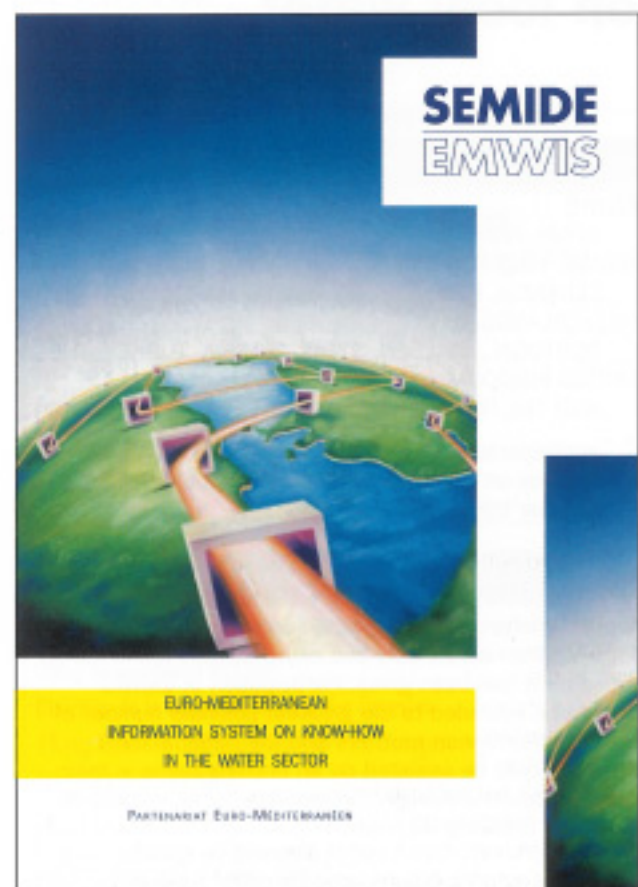
The Technical Unit made 12 technical visits to the NFPs from mid-February to the beginning of June 2001. The aim of these short-term assignments (2 to 3 days) was to assess the progress made, to define the specific needs of each Focal Point, to provide some technical assistance (Web site, thematic directory, contents structuring) and to initiate co-operation with the stakeholders of the water sector at the national level. One or two specialists carried out each assignment. A CD-ROM, with all the items needed to implement an EMWIS server, was handed to each NFP during these visits.

The visits to the Algerian and Israeli Focal Points were made in February 2001. In March 2001, assignments were undertaken in Jordan (with the support of a specialist of the International Office for Water), in Greece, Lebanon and in Cyprus. In May, the Technical Unit's representatives went to Tunisia (with the support of a specialist of the International Office for Water), Egypt, Malta and to Turkey. Finally, Morocco and Syria were visited in June. Walter MAZZITTI, President of EMWIS Steering Committee participated in the Israeli and Syrian assignment to provide additional political support.

This visit to Israel was the opportunity to inform the new Water Commissioner, Mr. Shimon TAL, on EMWIS activities and to prepare the technical and organisational development of the EMWIS Israeli server. Relevant information resources have been identified for two EMWIS topics: the "who does what" and bibliographical databases. These resources could be available for the national EMWIS server. The possibility of organising, in the coming months, a regional meeting in Jordan for promoting EMWIS was welcomed by the Water Commissioner. The main stakeholders working in the water sector in Israel, Jordan and the Palestinian Authority could take part in this awareness raising meeting.

In Syria, the EMWIS delegation met with the Director of International Water Bureau and the team of the new Technical and Informatic Directorate of the Ministry of Irrigation. This new Directorate will be in charge of all the technical issues related to the Syrian EMWIS focal point.

Generally speaking, these visits were highly beneficial. National site projects were defined, some of them have been published on the Internet and others are being validated at the national level. Meetings with the institutions of the water sector, when organised, mobilised many people at the national level (e.g. Tunisia, Jordan). Finally, technical assistance actions, suited to the identified needs, will be implemented in the coming months.



4th Steering Committee Meeting Amman (Jordan) 19 October 2000

The fourth meeting of the EMWIS Steering Committee was held in Amman (Jordan), on 19 October 2000, under the chairmanship of Italy and vice-chairmanship of Jordan.

All the member countries and organisations of the Steering Committee were represented (Cyprus, France, Italy, Jordan, Malta, Morocco, Spain and European Commission), at the exception of the Palestinian Authority (justified absence) and Algeria (justified absence).

The meeting was opened by the Jordan Minister for Water and Irrigation, Mr. AL HALAWANI, in presence of a number of Jordan politicians and the news and TV press. The Minister reminded the Jordan commitment for regional cooperation programs with a particular emphasis on EMWIS.

After this welcome address, the Chairman, Mr. MAZZITTI, reminded that EMWIS is the first real co-operation tool set up within the framework of the Barcelona process. He underlined the necessity for more promotional activities and a greater involvement of European Union countries. He also reviewed the main EMWIS activities carried out since the last meeting of the Steering Committee (Sophia Antipolis, December 1999) with a particular focus on the three seminars organized by the Technical Unit for the National Focal Points (NFP).

This was followed by a presentation of the future



From the left: Mr. El Nasser, Mr. Al Halawani and Mr. Mazzitti.

website of the Italian Focal Point which reminded the objectives and functions of the server of an EMWIS NFP.

The following documents have been presented and approved by the members of the EMWIS Steering Committee:

- The statement of account for year 1 (July 1999, July 2000);
- The updated Work Programme for year 2 (July 2000, July 2001);
- The corresponding estimated budget year 2;

A particular emphasis was put on promoting EMWIS and raising awareness among the main water players at the regional, national and international levels. To this end, a brochure is going to be published in French and English. The NFP will be able to use the original artwork to produce their own brochure. The Technical Unit website will also be re-designed along the same graphical rules.

The politicians and decisions makers of the water sector are the main targets for promotional actions.

Indeed, a stronger political commitment from the EMWIS countries is today necessary to achieve a successful development of the National Focal Points. A set of complementary promotional actions has been defined, including the organization of sub-regional conferences grouping from one to four countries and the presentation of EMWIS during national and international events. The NFP have a major role to play in order to raise the level of awareness of the decision makers in their country. This is particularly important as the services developed by the NFP (e.g. the web servers) are mainly targeted to national users.

The President of the EMWIS Steering Committee, Mr. MAZZITTI, will contact the EMWIS countries to inform them on the possible organization of such events.

The Steering Committee also highlighted the importance of the technical assistance to help the Mediterranean Partner Countries (MPC) in the setting-up of their national server. This assistance must be focused on technical issues (e.g. national EMWIS server set up), organizational issues or financial issues.

The Steering Committee recognized the need for complementary financial means in order to maximize this technical assistance, to cover a part of the investment and telecommunication costs for the national servers and finally to extend the promotional activities. According to its representative, the European Commission is opened to a

complementary funding. In addition, the Steering Committee positively welcomed Mr.

MAZZITTI's proposal of complementary financial supports from both public and private sources. But, the use of these complementary financial supports will have to be studied case by case.

The EMWIS objective is to get 10 national servers operational by summer 2001. To achieve this objective, a particular effort will be put on the technical assistance, with a special attention to Lebanon and the Palestinian Authority. Mr. MAZZITTI will send a letter to the Water Directors with copy to the NFP coordinators of the Mediterranean Partner Countries to ask them for more information on the current status of development of their NFP and on their needs in term of technical assistance.

Difficulties have been noticed in terms of the availability of sufficient quality Internet infrastructure in MPC countries to guarantee an effective communication between NFP servers located in the EU and NFP servers located in the MPC. It has been underlined that EMWIS should not be built on a «two speed» network and that all the NFP should have access to a similar quality of telecommunication network.

Mr. STANDRING, representing the European Commission (EC), is in favor of coordinating this network issue with the EC programme EUMEDIS. But he recognized



A view of Steering Committee.

that the implementation of this programme has been delayed. In order to maintain a strong collaboration, Mr. STANDRING will liaise with the EC EUMEDIS representative. On this matter, it has been agreed that the priority should be given to the development of the national servers while the improvement of the quality of the network will be carried out in parallel.

The Water Net project – involving Jordan, Israel and the Palestinian Authority – and the creation of the related Water Research Center (WRC) in Amman have been presented. Based on this example, it occurred to be necessary to study potential agreements for information exchange between EMWIS and the main other initiatives dealing with water in the Euro-Mediterranean area (e.g. WRC, MEDTAC of the Global Water Partnership, Plan Bleu, etc., etc.). The President of the EMWIS Steering Committee will contact these organizations to inform them about this decision. With the agreement of the EMWIS Steering Committee Vice-President, Mr. EL NASSER, an agreement will be signed between EMWIS and WATER NET.

According to the European Commission representative, EMWIS could play a role in the implementation of the Action Plan defined in the Turin conference (October 1999) at three levels:

1. Information provision on the themes of the Action Plan (e.g. expert contacts, documents);
2. Supporting the Forum of Water Directors for a better coordination of activities and the identification of priorities;
3. Supporting the European Commission's call for proposals through the EMWIS website: publication of call for projects, partner search, projects monitoring and publication of projects results.

The Steering Committee initially counted ten countries, but two years ago, the United Kingdom withdrew its involvement in it. The Steering Committee members unanimously agreed the suggestion to propose the post available to Turkey. The President of the EMWIS Steering Committee will contact the Turkish government to know its opinion on this proposal.

Finally, the future web site of the Jordan focal point has been presented. It will be officially launched very soon.

The next meeting of the Steering Committee is planned for summer 2001. Finally, the Steering Committee thanked the Jordan Ministry of Water and Irrigation for hosting this meeting.

The Steering Committee extends its thanks to the Government of Cyprus from hosting the 5th session of the Committee

Activity of the Technical Unit and NFPs

Preamble

The declaration of the Torino Ministerial Conference on Local Water Management (October 1999) emphasized the importance of EMWIS (Euro-Mediterranean Information System on know-how in the Water Sector) as first integration and cooperation system being operational under the Barcelona Process (1992). EMWIS was also underlined as being a tool for implementing the Action Plan for the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, especially on the priority task of exchanging information and know-how.

EMWIS was initiated during the Marseilles Euro-Mediterranean Conference on Local Water Management (November 1996). Its objective is the access in all partner countries to wide and in-depth knowledge, especially on stakeholders, on available documentation, on the techniques and methods used, on research programmes and results, on training opportunities, etc.

Following the preliminary study of its technical, economic and organisational processes, EMWIS implementation was approved in Naples (Italy) on 9 and 10 December 1997, during a conference gathering the Water Directors and the main operators of the 27 countries concerned by the Euro-Mediterranean agreements.

Progress report

EMWIS started its operational phase in July 1999 (signature of the co-financing agreement by the European Commission). It is developing with the gradual implementation of National Focal Points (NFPs). Today, 20 countries have designated their focal points.

The third meeting of EMWIS Steering Committee was held at Sophia Antipolis (France) in December 1999. It validated the detailed work programme, the year 2000 budget and the Technical Unit's Web sites: www.semide.org for the French version and www.emwis.org for the English one. These allow the daily follow-up of EMWIS development.

The fourth meeting of the Steering Committee took place in Amman (Jordan) in October 2000. It evaluated the work done, validated the activity programme and the budget for the coming year, and launched strengthening actions for supporting the implementation of some NFPs.

Generally speaking, the orientations laid down in the work programme were met, despite a small delay in the completion of some studies. The main selected technical orientations, available to the NFPs to build their server, are the following:

- An open hardware and software architecture, based on commonly used standards. Implementation of this

architecture relies on scalable products (Microsoft-IIS4 Web server, ORACLE relational data base and Java Server Pages)

- A homogeneous design and structure for the national Web servers
- A common structure for the thematic directory on water to be distributed in all countries
- An internet-based network architecture, with guaranteed quality of service.

The NFPs are thus provided with all the items needed to start building their Web site and share information concerning know-how applied to the water sector. The objective is to set-up ten operational national Web sites during 2001. Since May 2001, seven national Web servers are available on the Internet, presenting the information available in these countries (Algeria, France, Italy, Jordan, Malta, Portugal and Spain).

Seminars for National Focal Points

As soon as its installation was completed, the Technical Unit contacted the people in charge of the NFPs designated by the representatives of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership Member countries. Three seminars have been organised for the 20 existing NFPs since October 1999.

1. A seminar, gathering the coordinators of the NFPs, was held in Sophia Antipolis on 2 and 3 December 1999. It informed them of the overall EMWIS activity programme, the NFP role and of the staff recommended for each NFP (a coordinator, an information manager and an expert in Information and Communication Technologies).

2. The first seminar, addressing the experts in Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) of the National Focal Points (NFPs), took place in Rome from 22 to 26 May 2000. This seminar presented and validated the recommendations on the technical architecture (communication network, hardware, software) and Web site design. It also defined the next step of implementing the NFPs' connections and equipment.

Regarding the network architecture, the NFPs of the European Union, Cyprus and Israel were recommended to connect their server to their National Research Network (TEN155). For the other Mediterranean countries, an alternative solution is under study. Indeed RAINET had not the results expected by the preliminary study and the interconnection planned within the EUMEDIS programme of the European Commission (EC) is not yet enough detailed.

3. The first seminar, intended for the information manager of the National Focal Points (NFPs), took place in Madrid from 12 to 16 June 2000. The main topic of this

The Algerian Focal Point



Starting from this issue, a new space will be dedicated to the activities of the National Focal Points (NFP). We start with the focal point of Algeria.

The Constantinien -Seybousse - Mellegue River Basin Agency is the Algerian focal point, and the first one in a Mediterranean partner country to launch an EMWIS national Web server - <http://www.semide.dz> - Today, this Web site provides access in English and French to a bibliographical database, to information on Algerian institutions, legislation, training, events and public call for tenders. An Arabic version is also under construction.

The Algerian focal point has a complete team, made up of a coordinator, Mr. Khatim KHERRAZ, an information manager, Mr. Kamel DAOUDI, a computer scientist, Ms. Salima OUADFEL, and a documentation specialist, Ms. Yasmine BENMOSTAFA. As for all national focal points, its function consists in creating and developing a national information server, organising access to quality information sources, ensuring information availability in the EMWIS working languages (English or French) and maintaining relations with the users in their country.

The Technical Unit visited the Algerian focal point for a mission of technical assistance from 19 to 22 February. This allowed to validate the smooth operation of the focal point which has dedicated human, material and financial resources. Today, only the low quality of the Internet infrastructure slow down the development of the EMWIS Algerian server. But the focal point team, which is very motivated, is already evaluating Internet access through satellites. Indeed, this type of access has recently been authorised by the national law.

The focal Point of Algeria will be officially inaugurated on 9 July 2001 during a regional EMWIS information seminar to be held in Algiers.

seminar was the establishment of the thematic directory on water. This directory is one part of the information which will be available on the NFPs servers. It provides knowledge of 'Who does what?' in each country, regarding the five EMWIS topics: institutions, documentation, research and development, training and data management. The Spanish and French NFPs were shown as examples of tools and services that could be provided by a NFP. This seminar also presented and discussed the preliminary options selected for the thematic directory and for the organisation of data gathering in the different countries.

4. A training seminar, dealing with the implementation and management of an Oracle database to be used in the EMWIS server, was organised from 26 to 30 March 2001 at Sophia Antipolis (France) - for the French speaking NFPs - and from 2 to 6 April -for the English speaking ones. This training met the requests made by the NFPs' specialists in Information Technology during the Rome seminar, held in May 2000. In addition to the educational documents on Oracle, the 13 NFPs, who attended this training seminar, could also handle the database of the EMWIS water thematic directory and received the latest reference documents.

The conclusions of these seminars are available on the Technical Unit Web site.

Short-term prospects

The activity programme for the coming year was adapted to take into account the results of the first phases, the expectations of the countries and of the European Commission and the NFPs specific requests. It includes three main components:

1. A technical component: continuing harmonisation actions to prepare the thematic directory (the 'Who does what') on water and the development of common access to existing computerised systems. These actions will be coordinated by way of coordination seminars, gathering all NFPs.

2. A promotional component: including the organisation of regional information seminars and presentations made during international conferences to raise awareness of the decision-makers in the water sector on EMWIS and invite them to participate in this system.

3. A component for the immediate use of the information sources available in each country by integrating them into the national server. This integration will be carried out while the NFPs servers are gradually implemented. It will be based on assistance assignments of the Technical Unit in the countries ready to implement their Internet site, and on specific technical assistance actions upon the NFPs' request.

The Technical Unit



From the left: Juan Antonio VERA, webmaster and information manager; Lidy THOMAS, multilingual assistant, Eric MINO, coordinator and manager and Alessandro PISCHEDDA, Information Technology manager.

The Technical Unit (TU) carries out EMWIS development and coordination. It gathers three organisations: OIEau, CEDEX and SOGESID which represent France, Spain and Italy respectively. The Technical Unit is located at Sophia Antipolis (France). It started in October 1999, less than three months after the co-financing agreement was signed by the European Commission.

Its function consists in proposing annual budgets to the Steering Committee, participating in the definition of strategic orientations and action plans, coordinating and providing technical assistance to the National Focal Points, developing and managing EMWIS information portal and, finally, being the International Focal Point. To this purpose, the Technical Unit's Web site (<http://www.emwis.org>) is referencing more than 1000 international links on water and the Mediterranean. It provides direct access to the European legislation and to international agreements. It also lists the main international water-related events. Additional services are being developed: dissemination list, electronic information bulletin, memorandum on European financing opportunities and topical forums.

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