

**FEASIBILITY STUDY ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF A REGIONAL WATER
OBSERVATION MECHANISM IN THE MEDITERRANEAN REGION**

**FIRST RESULTS FROM PHASE 1 – DIAGNOSIS ANALYSIS
VERSION DATED 2006-10-25**

Context

The principle of a global observation mechanism on water and sanitation has been brought up in international bodies. The European Union presented its vision at the Commission for Sustainable Development –CSD- of the United Nations in New York, April 2005. The final document published by the CSD integrates the key measures proposed by the EU to continue the progress made towards the objectives fixed by the international community: a global mechanism based on national and regional mechanisms, the improvement of data collection and the comparison of information.

On the basis of the mandate assigned to EMWIS by the Euro-Mediterranean Ministers at the Turin conference of Local Water Management, the Euro-Mediterranean water directors agreed in the resolution of the conference held in Rome, 24-25 November 2005, to “*Study, with interested countries, the objectives and the feasibility of building up within EMWIS a regional water observation mechanism to monitor the indicators towards the achievements of the Millennium Development Goals related to water and sanitation (MDG 7) in the Mediterranean, as well as the implementation of the water related section of the Mediterranean Strategy of Sustainable Development, based on the information provided by the National Water Information Systems, whenever they exist.*”

The terms of reference of this study, validated in May 2006 by the EMWIS Steering Committee members, include a 1st phase to be carried-out in 2006 with the objective of laying down the main orientations proposed for this mechanism and a second phase (in 2007) to define more in details its functions, an implementation scenario and to validate the approach at a broader scale.

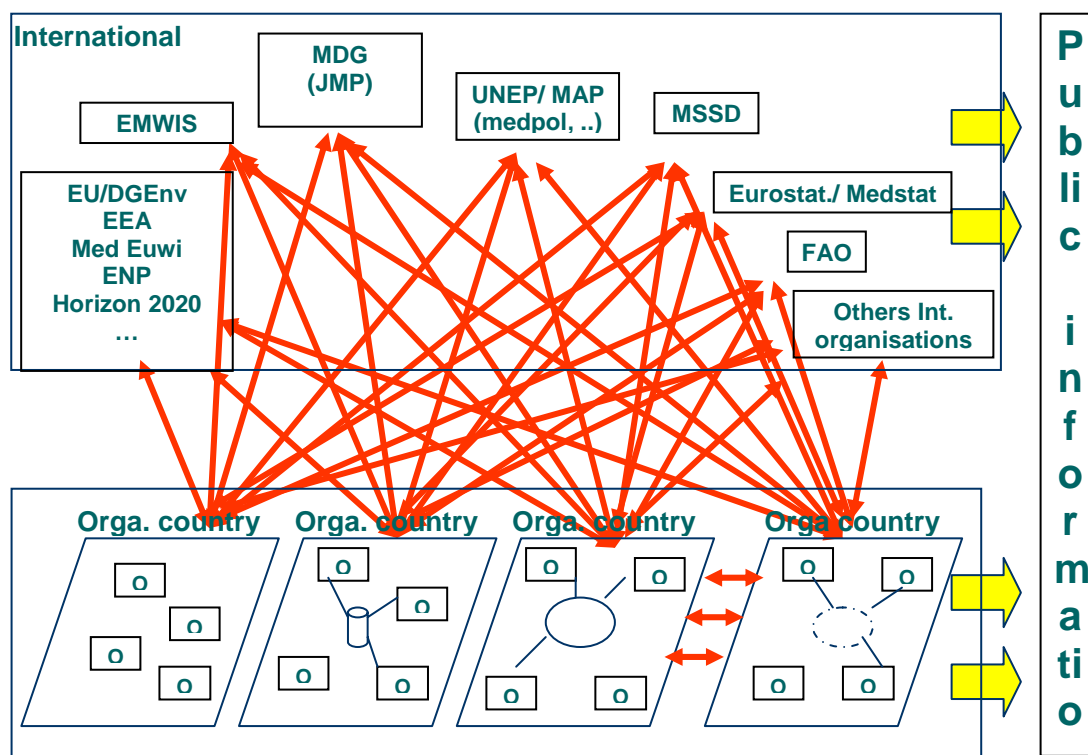
This note relates to the **preliminary results of the 1st study phase** i.e. diagnosis at the regional level (with a sample of the initiatives and regional organisations (EEA, European Commission - DG Environment, Eurostat/ MEDSTAT, FAO, GWP-Med, MAP-INFO-RAC, MAP-Medpol, MAP-Blue Plan, Med-EUWI, Mediterranean Water Institute, Sahara and Sahel Observatory, UNEP-MAP, WHO/UNICEF-JMP, World Bank, World Water Council, UNESCO-WWAP, ...) and four national diagnosis studies carried out in Mediterranean countries (Spain, France, Jordan and Tunisia). A detailed report will be prepared on the basis of the interviews carried out in December 2006.

It proposes an overview of the current situation related to the data collection processes and on water information diffusion, an analysis of the needs and **proposes to the Euromed Water Directors a pragmatic approach for such a regional water observation mechanism and to complete the 2nd phase of the feasibility study.**



Context overview

The following diagram illustrates the current situation.



Except for EU and candidate countries bound to implement the Water Framework Directive, each country has its own water management policy, its own organization of water monitoring and specific water data management. In each country various Water Information Systems are available, data are usually heterogeneous, dispersed and not very accessible at the national level. A very few countries have a National Water Data Management System but most of them wish, or are on the way to develop their own National water Information System¹.

The **regional level** is showing a large **multiplicity of the actors**, each one having its own objectives and logics of intervention linked to its **own political framework**. These organizations often developed bilateral/multilateral partnerships to undertake their activities. Many processes of monitoring and information systems already exist to meet the specific aims of each initiative (e.g. WISE², Eurowaternet, EIONET, INFO/MAP, EMWIS, Joint Monitoring Program, Water Monitoring Alliance, AQUASTAT, IBnet, Geonetwork FAO, etc.). In parallel various think-tank groups were initiated (UN-WATER, EEA/JRC/DG-ENV on Wise, EEA/UNEP/MAP,), in particular, to improve the data collection processes and data harmonization.

In all the cases the used data are coming from the national level and are collected through various mechanisms (e.g. field survey, bibliographical analysis, existing data bases, etc.)

¹ Result of the study carried out in 2005 by EMWIS in 10 voluntary Mediterranean countries.

² WISE : Water Information System for Europe

Main identified expectations

On the **national level**, the main need expressed is related to the support to the development of National Water Information Systems that are missing in most of the Mediterranean Partner countries. Joint regional activities on the NWIS (experience sharing, preparation of common methodologies, standardization, etc) have a high potential for the international co-operation. The reinforcement of monitoring and the promotion of common methodologies (in particular methods for assessing resources, uses, socio-economic impact,...) are also part of national requirements with respect to the observation mechanism.

On the **regional level**, the analysis of data collection and diffusion processes highlighted some major difficulties related to:

- The identification and accessibility to basic data ;
- The data collection processes (too many intermediaries, data producers overloaded by requests, too few updates and data series, expensive fields investigations, etc)
- The heterogeneity, completeness and quality of data.

The interviewed organizations expressed needs as regards to:

- Additional data on water resources (aquifers description, underground waters quality, availability of resource), water uses, socio economical aspects (investments, impacts of water scarcity), drinking water and sanitation services
- complementary key characterization data (breakdown by river basin, eco-region, according to gender, etc.)
- coordination of data productions at the national level for the regional processes
- sustainable financing of monitoring processes
- Adaptation of the information systems to facilitate data exchanges at the national and international levels.

First conclusions and recommendations

Most of the stakeholders interviewed were **in favor** of a “Mediterranean water observation mechanism” while highlighting the necessity to avoid implementing a new system or setting up a new institution but **by enhancing the existing initiatives and taking into account their competences**. The priority objectives could be expressed as follows:

- **To consolidate the capacities of the Mediterranean countries** in order to better meet the needs of the regional level, while leaving the autonomy of each country for the organization of its national water information system (NWIS)
- To develop **a framework for dialogue and concertation between regional and national organizations** in order to better meet the needs for reliable, comparable and quality information that is necessary to an effective management of the water resources in the Mediterranean.

To achieve these priority objectives, it is proposed to launch a “**Mediterranean water data and information partnership**” which would be a **tool of consultation and collaboration between voluntary organizations either regional or national** working in the field of water data.

The objectives of this partnership could be:

- Streamlining the collection processes of reliable data to meet the national and regional needs,
- Promoting the identification, access and enhancement of data made available by the national and regional partners
- Supporting voluntary countries in the development of their Information systems



- Facilitating the exchange between national and regional organizations of comparable and reliable data, in particular through the promotion of common procedures and a common technical language,
- Promoting the exchange of experiences between Mediterranean countries and with regional organizations
- Strengthening synergies and collaboration between regional organizations and “think-tank” concerning data management and enhancement.

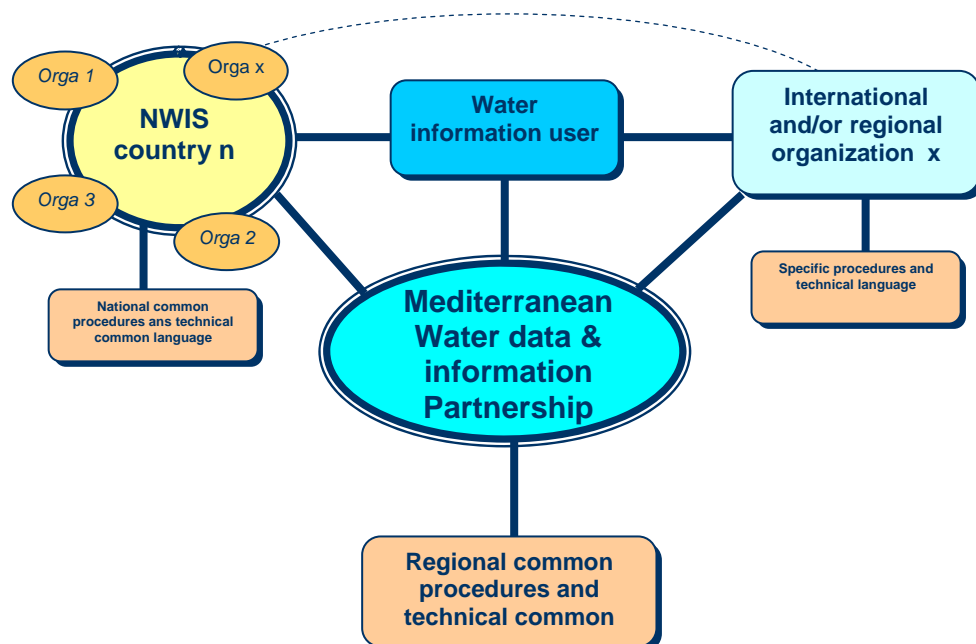
The following organizational principles are proposed for this partnership:

- **Voluntary participation** of the members
- **Data confidentiality** levels **defined by the producers**
- **Open to any organization producing, managing and/or using water data** and information in the Mediterranean
- **Privileged services for members** to present their data catalog, validate their methodological approach, to launch thematic consultations, to validate their data quality,
- **Enhancement of existing works** (standards, definitions) to **foster national and local ownership**
- **Research of quality** by descriptive approaches (metadata, and collection process, statistical processes), by cross validation and “Peer reviews”
- **Annual progress review presented to the Euromed Water Directors Forum**

One of the first outcomes of this partnership could be “**a concerted plan for Mediterranean water data and information**”. This document, result of a collective work, would highlight:

- Inventory of water data collected and indicators produced with a mapping between the various processes
- Data and information needs at the regional and national levels
- The activities and resources required to meet the common needs at the regional and the national levels.

The diagram below presents a long term vision of this partnership:



Within this framework, it is proposed to finalize the feasibility study of the Mediterranean water observation mechanism in 2007 with a first definition of the architecture of the “Mediterranean water information partnership”. The objective is:

- To extend the analysis of existing processes and expectations to other Mediterranean voluntary countries
- To define the partnership organizational issues (preparation of a partnership charter), and technical tools (Web portal for collaborative work)
- To disseminate the partnership concepts, to collect the declarations of interest and to identify the first common topics
- To initiate the concerted regional plan for water data (working groups, descriptive inventory of water data and information, ..)

