

**Local action report
Draft version**

LOCAL ACTION:

SEMIDE / EMWIS - Sharing water information in Mediterranean countries

ID

LA 0470

Framework theme:

Risk Management

Cross-cutting perspectives:

Institutional Development and Political Processes.

Capacity-building and social Learning

Application of Science, Technology and Knowledge.

Targeting, Monitoring and implementation Knowledge.

SESSION

5.13 Developing and implementing Water Information Systems- WIS

SYNOPSIS

In order to build an effective cooperation and exchange of know-how, the ministries in charge of water of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (35 countries: 25 European Union members and their 10 Mediterranean partners) decided to set-up a regional information system built on a federation of national systems. Each country is financing its own system harmonizing the exchange of information between the stakeholders and implementing the regional recommendations that will guarantee interoperability. The System and its management are distributed among all the Mediterranean countries.

The system aims to:

- Facilitate access to the information existing on know-how in the water sector, while prioritising the five following topics:
 - the institutions involved in the water sector and their representatives;
 - the documentation on water;
 - the training opportunities;
 - the research and development programmes;
 - the data administration.
- Develop the sharing of useful information;
- Prepare common outputs and promote the necessary co-operation programmes.

The operational phase was launched at the end of 1999 and today, the water authorities of 15 countries have published their national web site dedicated to inland water management. In 2005, feasibility studies on National Water Information systems in 10 Mediterranean countries have been carried out. All the stakeholders met have declared a strong interest in building such systems as intranet (private systems) to improve the management of water resources.

LESSONS LEARNED

The main added values of EMWIS (and NWIS) are:

- Unique point of access to all the relevant inland water information for each country with a guaranteed quality.
- Better cooperation and information flow between all national stakeholders (provider and users of information).
- Provision of a common water vocabulary (multilingual inland water thesaurus and glossary) and common standards metadata of exchanging information
- The possibility to define indicators for monitoring effective implementation of national policies and international agreements (MDG, Sustainable Development).
- Better participatory approach thanks to the sharing of information, expression of needs and requirements, public consultation between all the stakeholders: public administrations, user associations, private sector

The Major risks in the Mediterranean water sector are related to drought, water scarcity, floods and water quality. These risks concerned all the countries. EMWIS is a valuable platform for exchanging of experience in this field, e.g. transferring results from European Commissions funded projects (e.g. Mediterranean Drought Preparedness and Mitigation Planning from the MEDA programme on Local Water Management), or evolution of national legislation. WIS also integrates components on risk management with early warning systems for floods (Morocco) or drought (Tunisia).

Integrated water management requires a reliable national water information system (NWIS) allowing better cooperation and information flow between all national stakeholders including the public for implementing participatory approach.

In most of the developing countries, building NWIS requires modifications of cultural and institutional structures. EMWIS has initiated this process by focusing on the benefits of sharing know-how, usually considered as less sensitive than quantitative water data. Once the communication channel established, new needs appeared in term of data necessary for better resource management.

The approach used in the Mediterranean region could be reproduced in other regions, i.e. not collecting information in a centralised way but in a more sustainable way by integrating such approach into the national institutions of the countries concerned. A similar approach is being successfully implemented in Latin America (SIAGUA) and under preparation in Africa (AWIS).

KEY MESSAGES

- The development of National Water Information Systems involving all the main stake holders is a long term process; even the developed countries have not yet fully achieved this objective. In Europe the implementation of the Water framework Directive is useful catalyst. But for developing countries it is necessary to raise awareness on the benefits of sharing information among the various stake holders in a systematic way and then to build the capacity of each of them.
- reliable water and climate information systems are necessary for an integrated management of water resources

- More cooperation is required to define common standards to be used by any organisation willing to set-up a water information system, allowing a smooth integration in a broader system at a later stage
- The networking of regional water information systems (such as EMWIS, SIAGUA and AWIS) could lead to the set-up of a global water information system
- A regional water observation mechanism can be easily built on the same approach and taking benefits of the existing platform and National Water Information Systems. In addition of following the implementation of the national policies, the objectives of such observatory could be to monitor the indicators towards the achievements of the Millennium Development Goals related to water and sanitation in the Mediterranean, as well as the implementation of the water related section of the Mediterranean Strategy of Sustainable Development.