

- EMWIS-

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

3rd Steering Committee Meeting

Sophia- Antipolis (France) - 6 December 1999

CONCLUSIONS

The third meeting of EMWIS Steering Committee was held in Sophia-Antipolis (France), on 6 December 1999, under the chairmanship of Italy and vice-chairmanship of Jordan.

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

After an opening 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 also regretted that the signing of the financing agreement by the European Commission had been delayed, a delay which has temporarily weakened the countries' interest in EMWIS. It should, however, be noted that, thanks to the efforts of the Technical Unit, the project has been launched. Great efforts in awareness rising are nevertheless needed.

A progress report of the main actions which have been carried out since the last Steering Committee meeting (Rome, July 1998) was first presented with particular emphasis on:

- The review of the main steps which preceded the official starting of the project,
- The securing of the necessary financial resources,
- The effective setting-up of the Technical Unit's human resources and equipment,
- The conclusions of the first Coordination Committee seminar gathering the National Focal Points that took place in Sophia Antipolis (France) on 2 and 3 December 1999 (see appended document).

The draft of EMWIS Web site was presented. The site architecture was adopted after account taking of the comments and proposals made, and its official opening was unanimously approved at the following addresses www.semide.org and www.emwis.org.

A replacement for the United Kingdom in the Steering Committee and Technical Unit will be proposed to the countries of the European Union having a National Focal Point. This will mean that the candidate country will have to put resources at the disposal of the Technical Unit.

During the Turin Conference, the Ministers acknowledged the major role of EMWIS as a concrete response to the concerns expressed three years ago during the Marseille Conference. The Steering Committee was satisfied with the contents of the Turin declaration, especially regarding the strengthening of EMWIS and the willingness expressed by the Ministers to support this system.

The Steering Committee members emphasised the efficiency with which the Technical Unit was set up and the great success of EMWIS as the number of National Focal Points increased from 14 in July 1998 to 20 in November 1999.

In order to promote EMWIS and raise the awareness of national and international decision-makers on this subject, the Chairman of the Steering Committee was mandated to contact by mail:

- The European Commissioner in charge of external relations, Mr. Patten, to increase the support of the Commission to the Technical Unit and to the countries which participate in the project implementation;
- The 7 countries which have not yet nominated a focal point to invite them to do so as soon as possible, reminding the Ministers' commitments made during Turin Conference;
- The relevant committee of the European Parliament to prepare a presentation of EMWIS to this parliament.

The Steering Committee members commit themselves to promote EMWIS during the relevant National and International events in which they will participate. They recommend that each representative of the EMWIS countries adopts the same approach.

As regards promotion, the Steering Committee also requested that EMWIS publishes a half-yearly newsletter, similar to the one already produced, the first one could be financed by Italy.

It was reminded that clause 4 of the contract with the European Commission stipulates that EMWIS project should effectively start at the signature date, i.e. 20 July 1999. Therefore, the Steering Committee's three-year mandate will last up to June 2002. Accordingly, the EMWIS financial year will cover periods from July to July each year.

EMWIS was then presented to the French local authorities which contribute to its financing and to the press.

In the afternoon, were presented:

1. The schedule planned for year 2000;
2. The overall cost estimate for year 2000;
3. The work carried out by the Spanish focal point.

The Steering Committee requested that the "sustainability study" be delayed for 6 months and entitled "Preparation of a preliminary report on EMWIS economic sustainability". This delay will have to be approved by the European Commission for contractual reasons.

The technical reports of the studies co-ordinated by the Technical Unit will be considered as working documents until their validation by the Co-ordination Committee and the Steering Committee.

As regards next meetings, the Steering Committee requested that the financial documents to be sent to the members one month before the meetings.

Some countries expressed needs that were not initially planned, in terms of technical training and technology transfer related to information systems. These needs will have to be more detailed to better assess the impact of such actions on EMWIS programme.

Two meetings of the Steering Committee are planned in year 2000. The next one should take place in Amman in June 2000, if Jordan confirms it. In addition, a meeting gathering the 27 countries of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership was adopted, in principle, with a provisional date, April 2001.

Finally, the Steering Committee thanked the International Office for Water for hosting this meeting and the Technical Unit for the organisation of both meetings: the Focal Points and Steering Committee.

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