



- EMWIS-
EURO-MEDITERRANEAN INFORMATION SYSTEM
ON KNOW-HOW IN THE WATER SECTOR
4th Steering Committee Meeting
Amman (Jordan) - 19 October 2000

CONCLUSIONS

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 and European Commission), at the exception of Spain (justified absence), 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 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 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 EWMIS 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.

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