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## **BROADENING THE EMWIS STRATEGIC PLAN 2002-2005 FOR THE PREPARATION OF THE 2<sup>ND</sup> PHASE**

**FINAL VERSION**  
**(2002-09-19)**

During the EMWIS meeting held in Madrid in November 2001 the Water Directors of the Euro-Med countries welcomed the positive achievements of the first phase of EMWIS (1999-2002) and agreed on the implementation of a second phase along the lines of the EMWIS strategic plan 2002-2005.

Between March and July 2002, two different groups of independent experts mandated by the EC conducted a technical evaluation of the first phase of EMWIS, and a monitoring mission of the corresponding work programme, respectively. The conclusions of both missions have been substantially encouraging with regard to the results achieved, while at the same time highlighting certain weaknesses and formulating relevant recommendations aiming at the improvement of planning strategies, organisational matters and implementation approaches towards the promotion of sustainable evolution of EMWIS.

Hence, the overall principle emanating from this collaborative work indicated the need for broadening the earlier approved strategic plan in the second phase of EMWIS in order to better adapt EMWIS to the evolving needs in water information systems to the member countries. Specifically, the present document proposes certain enhancements of the strategic plan in order to take into account the set of recommendations formulated by the experts and discussed with the EC, while maintaining a pragmatic approach:

1. **Broadening the scope of EMWIS:** when a Mediterranean Partner Countries will request it, the Technical Unit will provide support to the NFP to explore the national needs in water information systems and by providing capacity building to create a formal network of National Water Information Systems. Indeed, the awareness created by the first phase of EMWIS in the Mediterranean Partner Countries has revealed new needs and requirements to this effect. In addition it has become evident that, the sustainability of the system would be better achieved if EMWIS primarily addresses relevant national needs related to everyday water information management parallel to the still foundation objectives of regional co-operation, communication and dissemination of public information. Most probably, these needs will vary among the EMWIS partner countries, and thus may result in different organisational and technical frameworks. The challenge of EMWIS will be to respond to these national requirements while maintaining the possibility to establish the international exchange of selected parcels of information defined by the partners themselves.

Following the request of a country, the first step should be to analyse specific needs for the development of a national water information system and to formulate recommendations at the technical, organisational and funding levels, taking into consideration existing efforts on the ground. On this basis, the NFPs will be assisted in preparing action plans and related budgets, reflecting their needs in terms of capacity building for their implementation. The role of EMWIS/Technical Unit will be the provision of the technical support necessary for this capacity building. If external-funding support is required, the recommendations should be presented to prospective bilateral co-operation donors. Upon the identification of those donors, the EMWIS/Technical Unit shall assist the NFPs with the formulation of the relevant request in conformity with the specific donor(s) requirements.

It is to be remembered that EMWIS partner countries should better use their NFP for their own needs and are not obliged to put sensitive information on the network. EMWIS/Technical Unit could help in establishing the national water information system of a member country, if the country requests it. The choice of the content to be published in the EMWIS public web site shall be made by the individual countries. In this context, each NFP remains responsible for its contribution to the network while recognising the co-operation objectives as approved at the Naples conference in December



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1997. **With regard to the latter, the MEDA partner countries, which have participated in the EMWIS training programmes but not yet launched their public web sites should be sensitised on the need for finalising the on-going work by the end of 2002.**

2. **Integration of the Arabic language into the system.** Indeed Arabic speaking persons represent a wide community in EMWIS partner countries (Arabic is the official language in 7 EMWIS partner countries). Arabic will become an access language to the system as French and English today. Content will progressively be developed (i.e. information produced by the International Focal Point) and specific tools implemented as far as possible alongside the latest research efforts for similar products (automatic translations etc.)
3. **A more ambitious technical architecture** will be necessary to improve the co-operation within and among different national water information systems and to ensure an efficient exchange of versatile information as intended by a specific country. Therefore, the development of a more distributed architecture is foreseen based on standardised but flexible formats of information (using the eXtensible Markup Language to define them) in conformity with the concept of web-based services rather than on recommendations of specific technological solutions. In addition, it is expected that the introduction of these new technologies combined with the definition of a so-called markup language dedicated to water (e.g. WaterML or WaterTalk) could attract more interest from Northern EU countries.
4. **Revised management rules will be necessary to improve the collective administration of the system and the efficiency of the EMWIS/Technical Unit** in providing high level consulting services and training to the Euro-Mediterranean water community in a wide range of domains. Such revision should reinforce the existing permanent structures with improved clarity in responsibilities. An administrative board, comprising the representatives of the funding sponsor countries, will supervise the EMWIS/Technical Unit. The participation of the European Commission as an observer member of this board should be investigated. This board will be open to any country willing to join the funding partners of the EMWIS/Technical Unit.
5. **A mechanism should be developed in order to ensure that the Steering Committee comprises both permanent members (i.e. those funding the Technical Unit) and rotating members** to ensure a continuous high-level support from all the countries.
6. **The co-operation with the MEDA-Water programme should be improved.** At the national level, the EMWIS NFPs should co-operate very closely with the Water Facilitators of their country. At the international levels, the EMWIS/Technical Unit should establish functional links with the future Meda-Water Regional Monitoring and Support team.

If the Steering Committee members approve the above-mentioned proposals, the President and the Technical Unit will have to be mandated with the following tasks:

- I. Proceed with the necessary changes in the strategic plan;
- II. Prepare a detailed project document (including an implementation plan and a detailed related budget) for a proposal for funding by the European Commission and the countries committed to the operation of the EMWIS and its Technical Unit. This document should be prepared for early November 2002, if it is to be presented in time for approval before the end of the present Commission contract.