

Coordination Committee Seminar Amman – 27-28 September 2005

CONCLUSIONS

(2005-10-03)

The 5th meeting of EMWIS Coordination Committee took place in Amman on 27 and 28 September 2005 under the presidency of Morocco. The meeting was attended by 11 National Focal Points –NFP- (Cyprus, Egypt, France, Italy, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, Spain, Tunisia and Turkey) and an observer member from the Water Safety Directorate of the Syrian Ministry of local administration and environment. The meeting was also attended by Andrew WARSAP, project officer from the European Commission delegation in Jordan in charge of EMWIS and all the MEDA-Water projects. The Algerian, Israeli and Maltese NFP were unable to attend the meeting (justified absence). Representatives from MEDA Water projects were present the 28th September afternoon but were also given the opportunity to participate in all the session of the 27th September to better understand EMWIS activities.

After the welcome address by H.E. Sa'Ad AL BAKRI, Jordanian Secretary General of the Ministry of Water and Irrigation, the conclusions of the last Steering and Coordination Committee meetings respectively held in Athens (GR) last June 2005 and in Rabat (MA) in July 2004 were presented to the participants.

After an in-depth review of EMWIS progress, the methodology and the first lessons from the feasibility studies on National Water Information Systems (NWIS) were presented. The main objective in pursuing enhancement and improvement of the NWIS in the participating countries is to remove all obstacles at the national level that impede the advancement of the NWIS and, as a consequence, improve and harmonise data/information exchange and sharing between the participating countries and the EMWIS international system via the National Focal Point in each participating country. Improvement of the National Water Information Systems will improve the overall EMWIS system.

Today, 8 visits have been undertaken out of the 10 countries who accepted these studies (Egypt and Syria did not reply). It was noticed that the Ministry of Water Resources in Algeria is now in the process of launching an extensive NWIS that could be used as a good practice example for other countries. Tunisia with the support of the World Bank is also in the study phase for setting up such a system. The consultant in charge of these feasibility studies highlighted the importance of promotional activities at the national level to raise the awareness of stakeholders on EMWIS and the challenges of exchanging water information. Indeed, it has been noticed that EMWIS is well known among stakeholders when a national information seminar has been organized.

When necessary, the country reports prepared by the consultants include costs estimates and a preliminary roadmap for implementing/enhancing the NWIS. These independent reports are provided to the EMWIS NFP and will be sent to the Water Directors of the concerned



countries. The Water Authorities will then have the opportunity to comment these reports and, if necessary to use them for fund raising in order to further develop their NWIS.

The status of the EMWIS topical study on integrated management of drinking water, sanitation and sewage was presented. The objective is to review the current policy of the Mediterranean Partner Countries for water supply, sanitation and sewage services. Six national reports have been completed (Cyprus, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Malta and Turkey) and are in the process of being validated by the NFP. Outline content was presented as well as examples from validated reports (Cyprus, Jordan, and Turkey). The other reports will be completed in October for a presentation at [the Euro-Med Water Directors conference the 24-25 November in Rome \(IT\)](#).

For the other topical studies:

- “Use of non-conventional water resources” carried out by CEDEX (SP), the NFP will receive soon a questionnaire to validate and complete the information collected from bibliographical resources.
- “Irrigation water management” carried out by IMIDA (SP): the study is still in the bibliographical analysis phase
- “Added value of concepts from the EU Water Framework Directive for the Mediterranean Partners Countries” carried out by the International Office of Water (FR), a [preliminary report](#) has been presented at the last Steering Committee meeting (June 2005, Athens) and sent for comments to all the Countries that took part into the survey. Suggestions can still be sent by the NFP before the **14 October 2005**.

One of the working themes identified at the last Coordination Committee seminar (Rabat, July 2004) was the preparation of a “multilingual water terminology”. In this context, it was decided to work on a multilingual water thesaurus for EMWIS aggregating content from [existing thesaurus and glossaries](#). The thesaurus will facilitate access to EMWIS information (keywords for indexing content and search). A detailed progress review has been given to the participants and a web-tool for suggesting new concepts and terms translation has been presented. Today, the “EMWIS thesaurus” count 1424 concepts in 2 languages: English and French. The next step will require the support of terminology experts for:

- translating the existing terms in Arabic and Spanish (using existing terminology resources already identified or proposed during the seminar e.g. work done by the Arab League in Cairo)
- validating new terms proposed (e.g. EU Water Framework Directive terminology)
- defining top-level themes in relation with Mediterranean Water Priorities

The prototype for syndicating metadata on news and events developed with the Algerian, French and Spanish NFP was presented and successfully demonstrated. Fine tuning is still necessary to ensure that the NFP will fully use the common schema adopted: name of the XML elements and standardized value for some elements (list of values such as country names, type of events, etc.). It was also suggested to use the thesaurus for inputting the metadata ‘keywords’. This will allow taking full benefits for searching in aggregated metadata. Other NFP expressed their willingness to implement the metadata on their servers. The metadata harvesting of bibliographical references using the ‘Open Archive Initiative’ protocol was presented for syndicated metadata on full text documents.



Good practices to support the NFP activities were then presented: On-line questionnaires to assess user needs and requirements, Agreements with content providers, Organisation of national EMWIS information/awareness seminar. As a result, it has been decided to centralise all the resources (models, examples, tools) in a unique section of EMWIS web site: survey templates, agreements models, organisation of awareness seminars, examples of brochures, graphical files for the EMWIS brochure, metadata guidelines, and the tool to enrich the multilingual EMWIS glossary...

The NFP from the Mediterranean Partner Countries presented their progress and their workprogramme. It has been noticed that EMWIS starts to be integrated into the 'national water culture' (working groups involving the stake holders, integration of EMWIS into the institutional websites, organization of national information seminars, etc.). But the NFP were reminded that it is now urgent to implement the activities of their national work programme and not underestimating the time necessary for each one). R&D activities related to water information and knowledge involving the French NFP were also briefly presented: text mining (i.e. analysis of relations between concepts from a set of texts), cross-lingual search in Arabic, French and English. It has been noticed that this last tool is particularly relevant for the EMWIS system.

Finally, it was proposed to analyse the organization in 2006, of NFP training seminars including exchange of know-how on the following issues: development of NWIS, water terminology, metadata management, coordination of development projects with the support of the civil society.

The last session was dedicated to an introduction to the Euro-Mediterranean regional programme for local water management –[MEDA-Water](#)- and presentations of six MEDA-Water projects involving partners in Jordan.

The seminar was concluded by an open and fruitful exchange between the NFP and the projects representatives. It was reminded that the EMWIS NFPs are not the water facilitators that were foreseen in the MEDA-Water programme guidelines. They can help in the provision of national water information or some times in disseminating projects results but they have no particular mandate related to MEDA-Water. It was felt that the involvement of the civil society is necessary to strengthen the national water institutions and that the sustainability of projects results will probably require the integration into existing institutions. In the case of Palestine, the coordination between the National Water Authority and the civil society is well advanced and the projects are well integrated into the national development strategy. These issues will be further developed during the conference of the Euro-Med water directors the 24-25 November in Rome.

The Jordanian Authorities were thanked for their welcome, as well as all the National Focal Points for their work and active participation.

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