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INFORMATION AND TRAINING SEMINAR FOR INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY MANAGERS

CONCLUSIONS

The 6th information and training seminar organized in the framework of EMWIS was targeted to the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) experts of the EMWIS National Focal Points (NFP). It was held in Rome from 24th to 27th June, 2002.

This four days seminar aimed at:

- Presenting the concepts and the set-up of the applications dedicated to the consultation and update of the EMWIS thematic directory;
- Training the NFP on basic technology concepts related to JSP (Java Server Pages) and Java Beans used for the thematic directory;
- Introducing XML for Internet architectures: concepts, applications and tools
- Presenting and validating the results of the study of alternative solutions to improve the quality of Internet connections between the NFP and the Technical Unit;
- Discuss technical progress and possible implementation difficulties in each country:
 - Implementation of the thematic directory by the NFP
 - Progress of national web server implementation: technology used, difficulties faced, etc.
 - Training and technical support needs
 - Evolutions planned

13 countries of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership delegated ICT experts from their National Focal Points (Algeria, Cyprus, Egypt, France, Israel, Italy, Jordan, Lebanon, Malta, Morocco, Palestine, Spain, and Turkey).

The first part of the seminar provided background information to ensure that all participants have enough knowledge to benefit from the various sessions:

- A presentation of the seminar and its objectives;
- A review of EMWIS progress and future steps;
- A review of the basic ICT concepts of the web applications related to the EMWIS thematic directory (who is doing what in the water sector in the Euro-Med countries)

The following session, that lasted 1.5 day, was dedicated to the technical architecture and the technology used for the web applications related to the EMWIS thematic directory. This included an overview of the overall J2EE architecture (JAVA 2 Platform Enterprise Edition) with an in-depth training on the components used for the 3-tiers EMWIS application, i.e. Java Server Pages –JSP- (for the “user interface”), Enterprise JAVA Beans –EJB- (for the so-called “application logic”) and database (3rd tier). The thematic directory was used to illustrate the theoretical concepts while showing various ways of customizing the application for national purpose. Tuesday afternoon, the session ended with a presentation of the set-up utility (i.e. tools installing this web application).

Wednesday was dedicated to introducing the extended Mark-up Language (XML) used for new Internet architectures, in particular for web sites. This overall introduction included live demo and a practical session on the transformation of an XML data stream coming from the EMWIS thematic Directory into HTML pages using XSL-T. Finally some suggestions were proposed for using XML (and related standards) in the framework of EMWIS, in particular for

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exchanging data, for content management of EMWIS websites (e.g. publishing the same information on various web sites using different “look and feel”) or for developing a WaterTalk or a WaterML (i.e. Water Mark-up Language) initiative in collaboration with the International water community. An additional short survey will be undertaken during summer to investigate in more details the potential benefits of this language for EMWIS. Results will be disseminated among NFP in September.

Thursday morning, alternative solutions based on satellite connections were presented to improve the quality of Internet connections between the NFP and the Technical Unit. Two main barriers were identified for the implementation of such a solution during the phase 1 of EMWIS (ending December 2002). First the related running costs are not compatible with the budget available, the implementation of satellite connections would require agreements with other national organizations to share the connection costs. Secondly, although providers of satellite connections are stating that they are providing official access in all EMWIS partner countries, some National Focal Points (Egypt, Jordan, Palestine) who tried to set-up similar connections commented that it is almost impossible to get the official authorizations. Therefore, it was agreed to implement individual solutions aiming at improving the Internet access to the EMWIS server of the Mediterranean Partner Countries concerned (i.e. 10 countries). The following procedure was agreed:

- The average budget per NFP is about 10 000 Euros
- The NFP will ask their local providers for technical and commercial solutions (following EC procurement rules) to improve their network access.
- The NFP will then rank the proposals
- The Technical Unit will validation the solution and will formalize the agreement with the selected operator
- The operator will set-up the solution

During the roundtable, the representatives of the NFP presented the development plans of their web server:

- Israel asked the T.U. to host its website, that will be finalized during a technical assistance visit to the Technical Unit before the autumn 2002.
- For Malta a web server has been bought and will be installed soon. The website will then be moved from the server of the T.U. to the Malta server.
- In Cyprus the NFP intends to develop further the content of its website with the support of the T.U.
- The Palestinian Focal Point asked the T.U. to host its website and to organize a technical assistance visit to the Technical Unit to finalize its development.
- In Algeria, the NFP will develop the missing sections (i.e. data management, Research and Development) and the Arabic user interface during the Autumn 2002.
- In Egypt, the NFP is waiting for an administrative authorization to develop and publish its website
- In Lebanon, the NFP is waiting for an administrative authorization to publish its website
- In Morocco, the NFP is using the web sever of its Ministry but is planning to buy its own server and to link its internal documentation server to EMWIS
- In Turkey, content will be upgraded soon and the application of the EMWIS thematic directory will be installed.

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During this session, the NFP were reminded that the T.U. is also providing a number of remote services that could be customized for national use on demand. These services included: websites statistics (using the commercial software WebTrends) prepared remotely and published automatically on National web sites, Electronic forums and mailing lists.

Finally the participants were given a CD-Rom containing:

- All the Ms-PowerPoint files of the presentations made during the seminar
- The reference technical documents on J2EE, JSP, EJB and servlet
- The set-up program for the installation of all the necessary components related to the web application of the EMWIS thematic directory.
- The source files of the EMWIS web application

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