

Information and Training Seminar for EMWIS NFP Data Managers

Madrid – 22-25 November 2004

CONCLUSIONS

(2004-11-26)

The 10th seminar of EMWIS National Focal Points (NFP) was intended for the data managers of the National Focal Points. It took place in Madrid from 22 November till 25 November 2004. This was the 3rd meeting of the data managers since the operational launch of the Initiative at the end of 1999 (the last meeting of the data managers took place in September 2002).

This seminar aimed at:

- Presenting and discussing the progress of the thematic studies and more specially the one related to the interest of the EU Water Frame Work Directive for the Mediterranean Partner Countries
- Defining common metadata to allow future exchanges or aggregation of information
- Presenting content management methods (classification) and evaluating the use of a common water thesaurus
- Presenting some methods for the provision of quality content
- Defining a common approach for decentralised management of water news in the Euro-Med area (i.e. common repository of the news produced by all the NFP)
- Presenting the functionalities of the new online application of the EMWIS Thematic Directory (consultation and update)
- Reviewing the EMWIS work programme and the action plan of the NFP from Med Partner Countries

13 countries of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership were represented Algeria, Cyprus, Egypt, Spain, France, Israel, Italy, Jordan, Lebanon, Malta, Morocco, Tunisia and Turkey. Due to last minute constraints the Palestinian NFP representative was unable to attend the meeting.

The seminar was opened by a welcome message of Ms. Isabel VILCHES, representing the CETA Director (CEDEX), Mr. José-Manuel GALLIGO who was unable to attend this session due to an unexpected meeting at the Ministry of Public Works.

The first presentation reminded the participants of the seminar objectives, of the approach used for the EMWIS 2nd phase and of the progress so-far. This was followed by a progress review on the topical study related to the identification of concepts of interest for the Mediterranean Partner Countries resulting from the EU Water Frame Work Directive. The study methodology is based on a survey of the Water Directors of the Mediterranean Partner Countries. It has been agreed that to ensure a reply from each country, the active support of the NFP will necessary as well as a covering letter introducing the motivation for this survey,



i.e. potential transfer of know-how from the EU member states towards the Mediterranean Partner Countries and preparation of future priorities of the EU neighborhood policy in 2007 onward. To support this process an overview of the WFD has been published on EMWIS website together with a slide summary (see: <http://www.emwis.org/WFD/WFD.htm>).

The main issues of the topical study on Non Conventional Water Resources have also been introduced. For this study, as well as for the 2 other studies on MEDA-Water themes (i.e. water management for irrigation and integrated management of local water supply, sanitation and sewage), it has been suggested that the study leaders will prepare national reviews on the basis of a bibliographical research that will be transmitted to the NFP for comments and provision of additional information. These could lead to publications on NFP websites with, for example, lists of relevant organizations, publications available and non confidential data, using a very simple format (allowing syndication of content):

- ☞ Title of publication or name of the organisation
- ☞ Short description
- ☞ Link (URL)
- ☞ Logo (optional)

The second session of the seminar was dedicated to the use of common meta-data. The objective of using meta-data is to describe the information resources available in each country and to facilitate internet search on these resources. Eight types of resources have been identified, with a preliminary list of meta-data proposed, the list of NFP managing such resources and the action lines proposed (see [round-table discussion slides](#)):

- ☞ News: press article, nomination (e.g. water director, Minister in charge of water), call for tender/proposal, publication, etc.
- ☞ Events: conference, seminar, etc.
- ☞ Texts of laws related to water
- ☞ Multimedia documents: video, photos, slide-show, electronic animations, etc.
- ☞ Websites,
- ☞ Projects: research, studies, realizations, etc. with International funding
- ☞ Full text documents, bibliographical references:
- ☞ Data sets: monthly rainfall (Tunisia), dams' storage (Morocco and Cyprus), water consumption (Cyprus). The related metadata has not been defined for these types of resources because they are not part of EMWIS priorities and to avoid duplication with other international initiatives.

A technical architecture, based on the Open Archives Initiative (OAI) metadata harvesting protocol (see www.oaforum.org), has been presented to allow the automation in sharing metadata with minimum changes for the existing NFP.

It has been decided to work first on “news and events” with a small group of NFP publishing and updating continuously this type of information (Algeria, France and Spain). After the final agreement on the metadata (definition, mandatory items and validation rules), a central metadata repository will be set-up by the Technical Unit for dynamic collection of metadata coming from the Spanish, Algerian and French NFPs (using XML and web services for inter-system communication). For the other types of resources, the main action lines have been defined to implement the related metadata, once the proposed architecture will have been validated on “news and events”.

The NFP data managers have been informed and trained on:

- The eXtensible Markup Language (XML) -used in the new generations of Internet applications- and its potential for the interoperability of services. An example of remote access to the Spanish NFP server has been presented highlighting the value of XML, e.g. it allows the customization of content presentation on different websites. It is reminded that this language and its potential use within the framework of EMWIS have been presented in details during the IT managers seminar held in Rome in June, 2002 (c.f. [conclusions](#) and presentations of this training)
- Web content management and quality control, focusing on standards and file formats used for the web, User-Centered Design (Usability and Accessibility), Web Log Analysis (Web mining), Search Engine Optimization, information architecture. In addition a set of recommendations for web writers have been provided.

The use of a **multilingual thesaurus** linked to a glossary of terms was also agreed for indexing content and allowing multi lingual search. The use of such a tool is particularly interesting for referencing the metadata discussed in previous sessions of this seminar. The first part of this session was dedicated to the definition of the main concepts, the presentation and discussion of the various thesaurus and glossaries identified. Then, it has been agreed that taking into account the type of contents managed by the NFP, EMWIS would require a general inland water thesaurus. So, a sub-set of an existing thesaurus will have to be defined. Two resources have been identified as the most suitable: the French Water thesaurus and the General Multilingual Environmental Thesaurus (GEMET) of the European Environment Agency (EEA). In terms of glossaries, two suitable resources have been identified: the inland water glossary prepared by the EDEN project and the EEA glossary. It has been noticed that Arabic glossaries will have to be further analyzed.

This activity requiring very specialized skills, it has been agreed that the Technical Unit will establish a working group with mandated experts to prepare an EMWIS multilingual thesaurus and glossary on the basis of existing and well known quality resources. The minimum language requirements will be: Arabic, English and French. But additional languages used by the existing NFP will be an asset: Spanish, Italian, Greek, Portuguese and Hebrew. An EMWIS terminology supervision group will be set up to validate the main steps of this activity (e.g. scope of work, milestones).

The Algerian NFP has presented its 'water news' section updated daily and counting some 124 articles coming from the national press. This section is the most visited (together with the training section) of the NFP web site which counts some 6.000 visits per year. Such level of visits might be considered as small for developed countries, but it is quite significant for Algeria which has a low level of Internet connections and considering the very specialized focus of this web site.

The new features of the online consultation and updating application of the EMWIS thematic directory were presented:

- ☞ Ability to customize the interface in any language (including the Arabic),
- ☞ Possibility offered to the NFP (when logged) to prepare electronic mailing for regular update of content,

- ☞ Automatic information of the NFP when a new entity is proposed for their country, the NFP will then be able to validate the proposed record or to discard it. Only the validated records will appear for online consultation,
- ☞ Online open submission of new organizations for consideration by the NFP or by the Technical Unit for countries without NFP. Once submitted, the NFP or the TU is automatically informed by email for validation or discard as mentioned previously.

This last feature gave place to an animated debate. Therefore the online open submission of new organisation will not be included at this stage for the Thematic Directory. The main arguments taken into consideration are:

- The NFP will require more information than the usual mandatory fields to validate a new organisation (at least phone, fax and address should also be mandatory for online submission);
- The thematic directory presents organizations officially validated by each NFP for their country. For neutrality reasons, the NFP prefers to keep only public bodies or organizations providing a public service in the EMWIS Thematic Directory.
- The set-up of a complementary tool out of the official scope of EMWIS could be analyzed for a broader presentation of organizations.

Finally, the preparation of NFP individual work-programmes has been discussed on the basis of the [English and French templates](#) provided as agreed at the Coordination seminar in Rabat, July 2004. This reference document will be useful:

- at the national level, to present and monitor the NFP activities within their own organizations, to report to their national water authority;
- and at the international level (EMWIS Steering Committee, Euro-Med Water Directors, European Commission) to monitor the progress of EMWIS and its NFP.

It has been agreed that the NFP from the Mediterranean Partner Countries will develop their work-programme for 2005 by the end of 2004. Any additional clarification can be requested from the EMWIS Technical Unit.

The seminar ended with short technical visits to the Tajo basin organization for a presentation of their real time monitoring system and to the water quality analysis laboratory of the CEDEX.

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