

CONCLUSIONS OF THE REGIONAL WORKSHOP ON ENVIRONMENTAL KNOWLEDGE AND INFORMATION EXCHANGE IN THE MEDITERRANEAN.

Specific conclusions on the SMAP Clearing House initiative:

1. Agreement on the positive results of the SMAP-RMSU CH, on the pertinence of the new interface and functionalities and on the usefulness of the new themes added (Cleaner Production and Sustainable Consumption, Climate Change and Energy).
2. Recognition of the usefulness of the CH for gathering and organizing existing environmental information and as a single entry point to facilitate the navigation in the sea of information on the Mediterranean.
3. Ownership of the CH at National level has improved since the beginning. Continuing this will be a key factor for its long term sustainability.
4. The CH web technology is compatible with the European Environment Agency and Eionet website, with the MED POL Info System currently at the testing stage and with EMWIS;
5. The CH could also, in the future, host an information flow more in line with the needs and requirements of the local governments. In the meantime, a link in the CH with the Local Resources 21 on-line Toolkit presented by MedCities.
6. There is still a need for technical and institutional support to the national and regional CH Partners and for promoting awareness and improving visibility towards wider user categories, including youth.
7. There is a need for the CH to extend to environmental data exchange. This implies stronger links with existing information and data exchange systems and the need to formalize the relationships between the different information/data providers/data users.

General conclusions on the SMAP Clearing House initiative and relations with other environmental exchange and reporting mechanisms in the Mediterranean region:

8. International organisations are catalyzing integration of information systems, but the countries are at the core of the process.
9. The multiplicity of producers and users of environmental information at different levels of governance and sectors should be adequately considered.
10. Information sharing is important but knowledge sharing should be emphasized, e.g., diffusion of success stories.
11. Quality assurance at various level of responsibilities, as well as standardisation of data production and dissemination, need to be taken into account to enhance data and information sharing.
12. Use of relevant information and communication technologies needs to be enhanced in the region to offer a user-friendly Content Management System.
13. There is a need to move towards a coherent Reporting System to facilitate the reporting requirements of the Mediterranean countries at national (State of the Environment reports), regional and global level. This process seems feasible since the main “reporting” actors are already CH members.
14. To this end, existing tools to collect, store and analyse data could be further integrated towards a streamlined and coherent reporting system for the Mediterranean with moderate efforts, including technical and institutional support.

Proposal of sustainable way forward for the SMAP Clearing House:

15. A suitable framework to continue the activities of the CH would be to serve the component on reporting and monitoring of the Horizon 2020 Initiative;
16. To fulfill the objectives of the component on review and monitoring of Horizon 2020, as set out in the Cairo 2006 Declaration, there is a need to:
 - keep a dynamic data base and reference catalogue of the many activities in the region;
 - facilitate the sharing of information on key players, programmes, projects, best practices, etc;
 - make this information easily accessible for use by all Horizon 2020 partners to support their work.
17. Consider how to build on the SMAP-RMSU CH towards a single CH for the Mediterranean Environment, as a possible step towards a Mediterranean Shared Environmental Information System (MED-SEIS), taking into account current discussions on the creation of an INFO/MAP, to ensure improved coordination and coherence of sound environmental knowledge to support Mediterranean environmental policy integration;
18. Close collaboration needed between key environment institutions and initiatives working on environmental data and information management of Horizon 2020 countries, such as the EEA, UNEP-MAP, EuroStat, CEDARE;
19. While the above conclusions indicate some possible next steps in the future development of the CH, its positive experience so far has opened up a much wider discussion on the need for widening, deepening and mainstreaming knowledge and information sharing (to support environmental sustainability in the Mediterranean region). Working in this direction requires a clear vision of the overall environmental cooperation in the region.