

**CONFERENCE OF THE WATER DIRECTORS  
OF THE EURO-MEDITERRANEAN COUNTRIES  
AND SOUTH-EAST EUROPE**

**Athens**

**INTRODUCTION TO SESSION 9  
EMWIS AND  
MEDITERRANEAN WATER OBSERVATION  
MECHANISM**

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Ladies and Gentlemen, dear colleagues,

Information is at the core of any decision-making process, it is also necessary for building mutual confidence for any transnational, national or local co-operation action. It is rightly that the Ministers in charge of water decided, in Marseilles in 1996, to undertake joint work on the topic of sharing information on water by initiating the Euro-Mediterranean Information System on Know-how in the Water Sector, EMWIS.

During our Rome Conference, in November 2005, we could note the very positive progress made in EMWIS implementation. Indeed, it corresponds to a real need and a strong demand from all the partner countries, in accordance with the decisions made during the ministerial conferences of Marseilles in 1996 and Turin in 1999. We will thus not talk again in details of this progress.

<slide 2 Strategy>

In Rome, we also took note of the EMWIS strategy for the next ten-years and we formulated recommendations so that the new four-year programme, covering the 2007-2010 period, is implemented without discontinuity with the on-going phase.

This programme aims at supporting regional co-operation between all the Mediterranean countries for sustainable water management at the local level. It is based on:

- supporting the countries in the management of water information by way of their National Focal Points and National Water Information Systems;
- developing an effective regional Web site for dissemination and collaborative work;
- implementing a regional water observation mechanism based on the National Water Information Systems to help the countries and international organisations in following up their policy and regional initiatives;
- Transferring knowledge and know-how at the transnational level, leading to tangible results in the Mediterranean Partner Countries.

Today, we are discussing with the European Commission on co-financing methods, as the partner countries have declared themselves to be willing to participate at the national level.



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Before letting Eric MINO, co-ordinator of EMWIS Technical Unit, present EMWIS developments since the meeting of Rome, I wish to remind you that, as any co-operation initiative on a wide scale covering a strategic topic in terms of development and conflict, EMWIS should be considered on the long-term. It is based on the building of confidence between the countries and the stakeholders of the water sector in each country.

The launching of the feasibility study on the regional water observation mechanism, whose first results will be presented in this session, demonstrates progress made. Indeed, when EMWIS was approved in Naples in 1997 by the 27 Euro-Mediterranean Water Directors, possible data exchanges were barely conceivable. Joint work on the national water information portals allowed to initiate exchange processes based on transparency and voluntarism, while respecting confidentiality of information. Once this confidence established, it was possible to study the strengthening of the national water information Systems, that most countries now wish to implement.

This mutual confidence in EMWIS organisation is an invaluable asset for the future of co-operation in the water sector in the Mediterranean.

Thank you for your attention,

Pascal BERTEAUD  
President of EMWIS Steering Committee

