

## **Euro-Mediterranean Partnership**

### **EMWIS achievements**

*(Version of 2005-10-18)*



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## 1 Reminder on EMWIS

**The Marseilles Euro-Mediterranean Conference on Local Water Management (November 1996)** initiated EMWIS. Its goal was to make wide-ranging and in-depth knowledge available in all partner countries, especially information on: stakeholders, available documentation, the technologies and methods used, research programmes and findings, training opportunities, etc.

After a preliminary study of the technical, economic and organisational processes, the implementation of EMWIS was approved in **Naples (Italy) on 9 and 10 December 1997**, during a conference gathering the Water Directors of **the 27 countries involved in the Euro-Mediterranean agreements**.

The declaration of the **Turin Ministerial Conference on Local Water Management (October 1999)** emphasized the importance of EMWIS (Euro-Mediterranean Information System on the know-how in the Water Sector) as being the first operational integration and co-operation system within the **Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (Barcelona Process, 1995)**. During this Turin Conference, EMWIS was also underlined as being a tool for the implementation of the Action Plan, especially on the priority issue of sharing information and knowledge.

**The first phase of EMWIS implementation (1999-2002)** enabled the establishment of a strong basis for the system, with:

- Political support at the highest level,
- The development of a Partnership spirit in the countries,
- An operational and organisational framework, which operates satisfactorily with 20 National Focal Points, a technical unit, a Steering Committee and a Co-ordination Committee,
- An awareness raising of the Mediterranean Partner Countries (MPCs) regarding the need for sharing information and for adapting the system at the national level,
- The training of the National Focal Points teams on the advanced techniques of knowledge management.

This 1<sup>st</sup> phase was jointly financed by the three countries of the European Union (France, Italy and Spain), which are involved in the « Technical Unit », the European Commission, regarding support to Mediterranean partner countries and all the other countries with regard to the costs of their « National Focal Point ».

A European Economic Interest Group (EEIG) was created in July 1998 to manage the Technical Unit. The Technical Unit, located at Sophia-Antipolis (France), started its activities in October 1999. This contract especially included an evaluation at mid-phase by the Water Directors of the 27 countries concerned.

During EMWIS meeting **in Madrid in November 2001, the Water Directors of the Euro-Med countries** favourably acknowledged the positive results of EMWIS first phase (1999-2002) and approved the implementation of the second phase, in accordance with EMWIS strategic plan for the 2002-2005 period. In 2002, independent evaluations validated the positive results gained while proposing some extensions to the strategic plan in order to better take into account the changing needs of the Member States with regard to water information systems.

EMWIS second phase (2003-2006) aims at consolidating the first results and at developing the System, especially in each country. The implementation of this second phase is governed by a joint-financing contract, **signed on 1<sup>st</sup> December 2003 for a 3-year duration**, by EMWIS-TU EEIG and the European Commission and amounting to **3,332,420 Euro (EC share: 60%; the share of the three countries: 40%)**. Administrative delays in this financing did not allowed for continuity of the activities during the first 11 months of year 2003.

## 2 Objectives of Rome conference

During the 8<sup>th</sup> meeting of EMWIS Steering Committee (Athens, 23 June 2005) the members decided to organise an EMWIS conference addressing the 35 Water Directors of the Partnership and the European Commission. The purpose of this conference is:

- To inform the Water Directors of the progress made in the System.
- To reassert the validity of the system, the commitment of the countries to implement it, to adapt it and to appropriate it.
- To define the strategy for the next 10 years, in particular:
  - integrating an observation mechanism intended for monitoring changes towards the achievement of millennium objectives related to water and sanitation in the Mediterranean region, as well as the implementation of the « water » component of the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development,
  - strengthening EMWIS role as a knowledge disseminating tool for the implementation of the EU's regional co-operation policy (neighbouring policy, Water Framework Directive, Water Initiative),
  - improving synergies with existing international initiatives (e.g. Middle East Peace Process, Observatory of the Sahara and the Sahel),
- To analyse the commitment of Mediterranean countries that have not signed the Barcelona Declaration: Libya and the Balkan countries.
- To renew the presidency and the composition of the Steering Committee.

On the basis of a proposal made by the Steering Committee, the Italian Government generously agreed to organise this conference in Rome, just before the celebration of the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, which will take place in Barcelona on 27 and 28 November 2005, with the Ministers for Foreign Affairs.

### 3 Main features of EMWIS

EMWIS main features are summarised hereafter:

*EMWIS is a tool for co-operation between the Euro-Mediterranean countries. It aims to:*

- *Facilitate access to the information existing on know-how in the water sector, while prioritising the five following topics:*
  - *the institutions involved in the water sector and their representatives;*
  - *the documentation on water;*
  - *the training opportunities;*
  - *the research and development programmes;*
  - *the data administration.*
- *Develop the sharing of useful information;*
- *Prepare common outputs and promote the necessary co-operation programmes.*

EMWIS does not manage data on water resources.

The information is made available by "**a National Focal Point**" (NFP) in each country and by a central "**Technical Unit**". Only information sources granted with a "quality label" by EMWIS managers could be accessed through the system. EMWIS existence thus implies participation, to which all partners countries committed themselves.

The **National Focal Points** (NFPs) are small teams working in a public or semi-public organisation responsible for water related-documentation and information. Their tasks consist in creating and developing a national information server, organising communication processes and access to vetted information, ensuring information availability in the working languages (English or French), developing access to the information and maintaining relations with the users in their country.

The **Technical Unit** is a permanent body which executes the yearly action plan with the National Focal Points. Its assignments consist in proposing strategic orientations, action plans and yearly budgets to the Steering Committee, co-ordinating and providing technical assistance to the National Focal Points, being the International Focal Point, developing and managing EMWIS information portal.

Owing to its original approach to the "know-how" in the water sector, EMWIS is complementary to many international activities

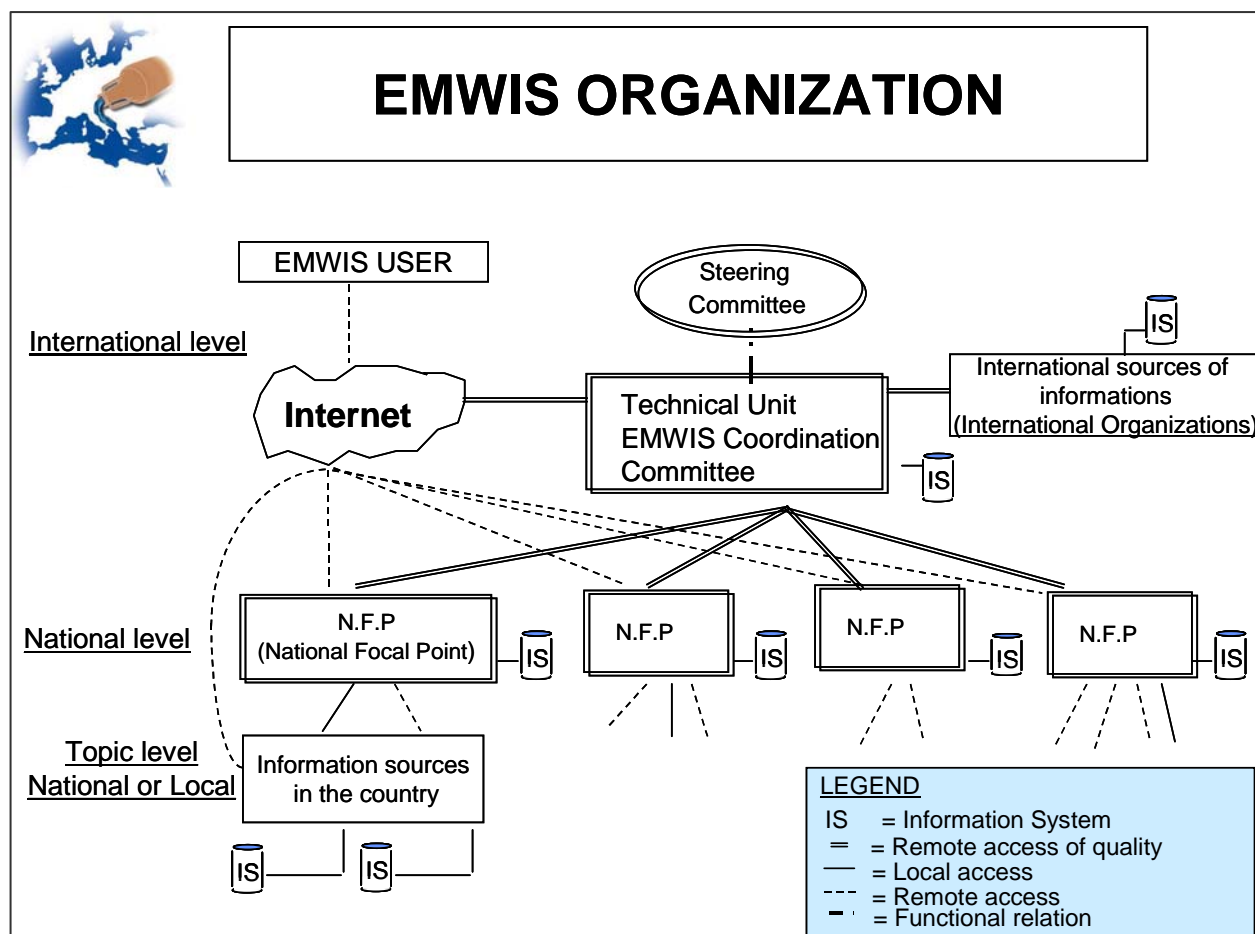
While remaining accessible to any person interested in water management-related issues, **EMWIS is above all addressing the public and private operators of the Mediterranean water circle.**

From a technical viewpoint, EMWIS has set up a system of shared and vetted information which uses the Internet already available in the 35 countries.

A restricted "**Steering Committee**" of 10 countries, with the possibility of renewing some of them every 2 years, formulates the main strategic orientations and validates the yearly budgets and progress reports. Under a Spanish Presidency and a Cypriot Vice-Presidency, it is made up of the Technical Unit's co-sponsors (Spain, France and Italy), of Algeria, Cyprus, Jordan, Malta, Morocco and the Palestinian Authority. The European Commission is always invited to the annual Steering Committee meetings.

A "**Co-ordination Committee**" is responsible for supervising the system development in the countries, formulating the yearly action plan and proposing the yearly budget. It is made up of representatives of the Technical Unit and of all the National Focal Points. Morocco assumes the Presidency and Malta the Vice-Presidency.

The figure below shows the organisational and technical structure of EMWIS



## **4 Main activities carried out**

### **4.1 Steering Committee**

EMWIS Steering Committee has met three times since the end of 2001.

The 6<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Steering Committee was organised in Rome on 17 September 2002. The Presidency of EMWIS Steering Committee was officially transmitted from Italy to Spain during this meeting. This meeting also enabled the validation of the extension of EMWIS strategic plan to the 2003-2005 period, following the recommendations of experts from the European Commission.

The 7<sup>th</sup> meeting of the EMWIS Steering Committee was held in Malta, on 4 May 2004. During this meeting, EMWIS communication plan was validated, the rules for membership to the Steering Committee were revised to give the opportunity to more countries to participate and finally four themes for topical syntheses were selected: i) Use of non-conventional water resources (topic of Turin Action plan); ii) Impact and interest of the EU's Water Framework Directive for the Mediterranean Partner Countries (MPCs): identification of centres of interest and transfer of good practices, resulting from the European implementation, to the MPCs; iii) Management of irrigation water (topic of Turin Action Plan); iv) Integrated management of drinking water supply, sanitation and wastewater at local level (topic of Turin Action Plan).

The 8<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Steering Committee, held on June 23 in Athens (Greece), took stock of the progress made, of the increasing commitment of the National Focal Points, the progress of the feasibility studies of the national water information systems, the first results of the survey on the advantage of some concepts of the EU Water Framework Directive for the Mediterranean Partner Countries. The idea of organising a conference of the Water Directors of the 35 Euro-Med countries in Italy in November 2005 was adopted.

Conclusions of these meetings are available on the Technical Unit websites and appended to the participants' documents.

### **4.2 Co-ordination Committee of the National Focal Points**

Three meetings of the Co-ordination Committee have taken place since the last meeting of the Water Directors of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, organised by EMWIS in November 2001.

EMWIS Co-ordination Committee held its 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting in Tunis on 17 and 18 December 2002 in liaison with a national promotion seminar. This meeting allowed an assessment of phase I of EMWIS, of the establishment of the NFPs (1999-2002) and of the on-line operational tools (topical directory, tools for searching information, etc). The work programme of the second phase was discussed and exchanges of good practices between the NFPs could take place.

The 4<sup>th</sup> meeting of EMWIS Coordination Committee took place in Rabat on 6 and 7 July 2004. It was the 1<sup>st</sup> meeting of EMWIS 2<sup>nd</sup> Phase, delayed almost one year, due to the time required for financing (11 months). The 2003-2006 work programme was detailed and the topical studies presented. Moreover, this meeting allowed discussions on the results of the NFP needs survey and therefore the definition of action priorities in term of training and support.

The 5<sup>th</sup> meeting of EMWIS Co-ordination Committee was held in Amman on 27 and 28 September 2005, under the presidency of Morocco and in the presence of the European Commission. This meeting enabled to note the progress made by the NFPs and in regional activities (topical studies, studies of the national water information systems), to exchange good practices, to assess the needs for activities in 2006 and finally to be informed on the projects of the regional MEDA-Water programme implemented in Jordan.

The conclusions of these meetings are available on the Technical Unit websites.

### **4.3 Strengthening of the National Focal Points**

#### **4.3.1 Training of the National Focal Points**

Two training seminars took place for the NFPs since the launching of EMWIS 2<sup>nd</sup> phase. The training topics were defined with all the NFPs during the co-ordination seminar of Rabat in July 2004. The conclusions of these seminars and the training supports are available on the Technical Unit websites.

The first meeting of managers in charge of NFP contents was organised in Madrid from 22 to 25 November 2004. This seminar provided additional information and training to help the managers of operational sites to enhance them and to better use them (existing tools, topical analyses). Its common standards were defined in terms of metadata and distributed information management architecture. Lastly, it was decided to implement a multilingual thesaurus on water, meeting EMWIS needs through the use of existing glossaries and thesaurus.

The first meeting of NFP IT managers took place in Sophia Antipolis from 14 to 18 March 2005. This seminar allowed the NFPs to include various standards, techniques and technologies in order to analyse the opportunity of their implementation: freeware and Open Source, Enterprise Application Integration (EAI), XML databases, distributed web architectures; Open Archives Initiative protocol (OAI).

#### **4.3.2 National water information systems**

The feasibility study for the implementation or improvement of the National Water Information Systems (NWIS) was validated -by the NFPs- and launched in April 2005 after a

selection of experts, using a negotiated procedure of call for tender. The selected company is EasyInfo (Jordan) with the following experts: Mrs. Hala ZAWATI and Mr. Jean-Marie BARRAT. The objective is to examine the technical, economic and organisational feasibility in order to implement a national information system in each Mediterranean Partner Country, while meeting the national requirements and keeping the possibility of establishing international exchanges of some parts of the information defined by the countries themselves. Such NWISs will allow the improvement and harmonisation of data/information exchange and sharing between the partner countries and EMWIS international system through the National Focal Point of each partner country.

This study is the first step of the NWISs' enhancement. It enables the identification of the main institutional stakeholders and the development of an action plan and budgeting for the improvement of the Water Information System of each country.

Technical visits took place in the ten countries which agreed to this study (all of them except for Egypt and Syria). The national reports were drawn up for these countries and will be available at the end of November 2005. The final report will be issued at the beginning of 2006.

#### **4.3.3 National programmes, equipment and local assistance**

A large majority of the NFPs formalised EMWIS history in their country and an action plan up to the end of 2006 with an associated budget, emphasizing the needs in term of equipment, translation of the contents for on-line publication, staff training, Internet connections, technical assistance for the development of their website and national promotion of EMWIS.

Following an international call for tenders, the equipment (hardware, telecom equipment, software) was delivered to the 10 NFPs which had made requests within the Mediterranean partner countries.

#### **4.4 New technical architecture, new services and improved ergonomoy**

A more ambitious technical architecture was necessary to improve the integration of the various national water information systems and to ensure an effective exchange of information of any kind. Functional specifications were defined, based on the work undertaken with the NFPs for the definition of common metadata, the use of a common multilingual thesaurus and the choice of an architecture, based on the concept of data suppliers and service providers. Following a call for tenders procedure, the Italian FINSIEL company was selected, with a content management solution based on an open source platform especially developed for the European Environment Agency -EEA- (EnviroWindow).

EMWIS will thus benefit from the work carried out by or for the EEA and the international community will be able to re-use developments undertaken for EMWIS.

This new platform allows, in particular, a better localisation of the contents (multilingual management, including Arabic). The whole navigation ergonomics was redefined. Mechanisms for contents syndication (publication of the same contents on several sites) were implemented with the NFPs, e.g. diary of events. The use of some applications, such as the multilingual thesaurus/glossary is available in the form of a 'web service' that can be easily integrated into remote websites.

The site also incorporates a trilingual electronic flash (Arabic, English and French), more than 6,000 copies of which are monthly issued; a topical directory gathering about 2,615 organisations and a multilingual bibliographical base.

#### **4.5 Topical syntheses**

It was deemed necessary to develop syntheses of experiments on more specific topics of interest for the Mediterranean region, simultaneously with the five EMWIS topics, defined in Naples in 1997 (Institutions, Documentation, Training, Research and Development, Data Administration) for which EMWIS role is only the collection and dissemination of existing information.

The preparation of topical syntheses aroused keen interest and nearly 20 topics were proposed. However, due to limited resources, only four topics were selected during the Steering Committee meeting of Malta in May 2004, two syntheses are already completed and will be presented to the Water Directors during the Rome conference in November 2005:

- Identification of the EU Water Framework Directive topics of interest for the Mediterranean Partner Countries (MPCs): the survey was carried out in the Mediterranean Partner Countries at the level of water directorates and also on basin organisations (thanks to the Mediterranean Network of Basin Organisations). A first synthesis was presented to the members of the Steering Committee. The comments of the countries were collected.
- Integrated management of drinking water supply, sanitation and wastewater at local level (topic of Turin Action Plan): the MPCs profiles were drawn up, based on the bibliographical analysis validated and supplemented by the NFPs.

The syntheses on the two other topics will be finalised in 2006:

- Use of non-conventional water resources (topic of Turin Action Plan): a bibliographical study was undertaken and the results of a world survey were acquired. A survey at the NFP level is being prepared on this basis.
- Management of irrigation water (topic of Turin Action Plan): this study was launched later (first quarter of 2005). The bibliographical study is under way.

## 4.6 Information on the EU Euro-Mediterranean initiatives

EMWIS and its NFPs offer a unique operational infrastructure to contribute to the publication and dissemination of information regarding EU initiatives in the water sector in the Mediterranean region. Within such a framework, dedicated spaces were created, especially for:

- The regional MEDA programme on local water management, « MEDA-Water », in order to disseminate the information on the progress made in the 9 projects financed by the EU.
- The Mediterranean component of the EU Water Initiative, in order to allow the greatest number of people to know about the initiative and its developments in the Mediterranean region.
- The EU Water Framework Directive to allow the Mediterranean third countries to familiarise themselves with these concepts (including the translation into Arabic of the Commission documents presenting the Directive, booklets to be published by the Environment DG).
- The 'Groundwater' Working Group of the Framework Directive – Water Initiative joint process.

## 4.7 Links with international initiatives

The great number of active regional stakeholders in the Mediterranean water sector often lead to a lack of co-ordination in the dissemination of the information, in the organisation of many events, to a difficult understanding of the role of each.

EMWIS, as a media for the dissemination of information and knowledge, quite naturally keeps close links with most existing initiatives (UNESCO – some use of the hydrology glossary; European Environment Agency – thesaurus and dictionaries, EuroWindow technical platform; GWP-Med – contribution to the development of the Mediterranean Component of the EU Water Initiative; Global Water Partnership, GWP – enhancement and use of the multilingual dictionary on water; FAO-Iptribid - collaboration regarding the definition of the new technical EMWIS platform: ontology and web services; MAP/Blue Plan – follow-up of progress made in the Mediterranean water and sustainable development field; EXACT and WaterNet – exchange of good practices; Observatory of the Sahara and the Sahel – exchange of good practices). For some of them, this collaboration was formalised by the signing of an agreement with:

- The International Network of Basin Organisations -INBO-, especially to promote integrated basin management in the Mediterranean countries. Some actions are currently ongoing with MENBO (Mediterranean Network of Basin Organisations).
- The Mediterranean Water Institute, in particular for the promotion of regional co-operation projects (for example those resulting from the regional MEDA programme on local water management).
- The unit for the follow-up of the MEDA programme on the environment (SMAP-RMSU),

managed by APAT to deal with the 'water' component of the website of this programme.

## **4.8 Promotion of the system**

EMWIS communication plan was prepared at the beginning of 2004, then presented and approved by the Steering Committee in Malta in May 2004. This plan highlights four target groups: NFPs, 'consumers' of water-related information, information providers and decision-makers of the Euro-Mediterranean area. The NFPs play a significant role in communication activities at the national level, especially to promote appropriation by politicians and to ensure a wide participation of all the national stakeholders.

EMWIS main communication vectors are its websites, booklets, posters, publication of articles and events (national seminars, regional conferences). A graphic charter was also defined with models to allow the NFPs to easily develop their own support.

Most of the promotional supports are produced in Arabic, English and French.

## **5 Very stimulating results**

### **5.1 A strong mobilisation: 15 countries are on line**

Thanks to its NFPs' constant efforts, EMWIS now offers a direct access to water-related information in 15 countries of the Mediterranean region (Algeria, Cyprus, France, Greece, Israel, Italy, Jordan, Lebanon, Malta, Morocco, Palestine, Portugal, Spain, Tunisia and Turkey).

Countries are endeavouring to improve the quality and quantity of the provided information. Greater attention is paid to the 'live' aspect of the web sites, with the national news on water in particular. The annual average budget of the NFPs in the partners countries amounts to 22,000 Euro.

The political representatives in charge of water in the countries get themselves involved in the promotion of the System during national information seminars: Minister for Agriculture in Cyprus, Secretary-General in Morocco and in Jordan.

### **5.2 Towards the appropriation of the National Water Information System concept**

The first national meetings with the institutional stakeholders concerned by the management of water-related information were very promising. Indeed, the participants in these meetings generally acknowledged the advantages of implementing a unified water information system

at the national level. It is obviously a long-term operation on which many European countries are still working. All the more so that the implementation of the Water Framework Directive requires a unified system for 'monitoring' and 'disseminating' the information to the public

### **5.3 A reference dissemination medium**

Today, EMWIS, through its National Focal Points, offers unique access points to water-related information in each country (institutional bodies, training and research organisations, data administrators, regulatory texts, documentation, news) and international services: monthly trilingual electronic flash, topical directory, follow-up of regional programmes and initiatives (MEDA-Water, European Water Initiative, etc). Thanks to the constant work of teams responsible for EMWIS, its portal website is very well referenced in Web search engines and more and more organizations call upon EMWIS to disseminate information on their work (advertisements of publications, of events, translation and dissemination of a booklet on the EU Water Framework Directive, etc.)

### **5.4 An institutional network unique in the Mediterranean water sector**

EMWIS is the only tool for regional co-operation gathering the main contracting authorities of the water sector in the Partnership Country.

This network allowed exchanges of know-how between institutions in the field of water information management of course, but also on institutional reforms (Lebanon), regulations (delimitation of the public hydraulic domain in Tunisia), or on demand management (Jordan).

This platform is also profitably used for establishing dialogue with the representatives of the civil society involved in projects of the MEDA-Water programme. The transfer of results is thus facilitated.

### **5.5 An exemplary approach**

EMWIS success was acknowledged at the highest levels. In October 1999, the Ministers in charge of Water in the Partnership countries and the European Commission reasserted their commitment to use EMWIS in a more efficient manner. In Madrid in November 2001, the Water Directors examined the positive results of EMWIS and approved a development plan. In 2003, EMWIS was presented as a model for co-operation during the 3rd World Water Forum in Japan.

Thus the EMWIS approach of a distributed system, based on an appropriation of the system at local level for meeting the national needs while being integrated into a regional system, was followed in Latin America with SIAGUA and in Africa with AWIS.

## **6 Conclusion: need for a long-term approach**

Thanks to EMWIS NFPs, the availability on the Internet (and thus to the public in general) of quality information on local water management in each country progresses significantly. It generates better transparency and opens a positive debate between the various stakeholders, especially thanks to the regular relations established by the NFPs with the national institutions of the water sector to enhance the national site. However, except few Mediterranean Partner Countries, exchanges with the civil society still remain limited and co-ordination is almost non-existent.

The need for sharing information in order to achieve more efficient water management and planning was highlighted. However, very often, real development, strengthening and harmonisation of the National Water Information Systems are hindered by the many barriers still existing at the institutional level. A long-term approach is required to raise the awareness of the stakeholders, to support development, to ensure the harmonisation of the selected standards, to gradually widen the circle of interested parties.

Methods for information management are very quickly changing under the impulse of technological advances. This implies significant training and assistance needs to adapt the existing bodies. But this also offers real opportunities for the countries which will develop their system in the coming years.

In a region, which encounters strong political tensions between States and within each State, it is necessary to apply a different approach depending on the country: to support the most developed countries as regards water information management, in particular for harmonising exchanges, and to assist the other countries in their development, based on good practices issued from the other countries.

At the regional level, the institutional network made up of the NFPs offers a platform for exchange and transfer that can be interesting for the national or regional development projects. Taking advantage of this network could be more systematic, in particular to develop the activities of the European Commission.

Using these stimulating results, it is now advisable to continue the work carried out by establishing long-term prospects at the regional level and at the level of each country.

This is the purpose of EMWIS strategy proposal covering the future ten years.

## ANNEXE – List of the National Focal Points

EMWIS National Focal Points are already set up in each Mediterranean Partner Country and in 10 countries of the European Union. The table hereafter shows the organisations in charge of the NFP in each country:

<b>Country</b>	<b>NFP organisation</b>
<b>Mediterranean Partner Countries</b>	
<b>Algeria</b>	Agence de Bassin Hydrographique Constantinois -Seybousse - Mellegue
<b>Egypt</b>	Ministry of Public Works and Water Resources
<b>Israel</b>	The Hydrological Service of Israel (HSI)
<b>Jordan</b>	Ministry of Water and Irrigation
<b>Lebanon</b>	Ministère de l'Énergie et de l'Eau
<b>Morocco</b>	Ministère de l'Équipement - Direction Générale de l'Hydraulique
<b>Palestine</b>	Palestinian Water Authority (PWA)
<b>Syria</b>	Ministry of Irrigation - International Water Bureau
<b>Tunisia</b>	Ministère de l'Agriculture - Direction Générale des Ressources en Eau
<b>Turkey</b>	General Directorate of State Hydraulic Works (D.S.I)
<b>Countries of the European Union</b>	
<b>Austria</b>	Austrian Water
<b>Belgium</b>	Aminal - Afdeling Europa en Milieu
<b>Cyprus</b>	Water Development Department (W.D.D.)
<b>Spain</b>	Centro de Estudios y Experimentacion de Obras Publicas (CEDEX)
<b>France</b>	Service National d'Information et de Documentation sur l'Eau (SNIDE)
<b>Greece</b>	Ministry of Environment Physical Planning and Public Works
<b>Italy</b>	Ministry of Environment
<b>Luxembourg</b>	Ministry of the Environment
<b>Malta</b>	Malta Resources Authority (MRA)
<b>Portugal</b>	Instituto de Agua (INAG)

EMWIS Technical Unit, which is also the International Focal Point, is located at Sophia-Antipolis (France) and has its own legal identity: EMWIS TU European Economic Interest Group.