

SPLASH, the EU Water Initiative ERA-NET, Co-ordinating European water research programmes for the developing world



'Effective water research processes can play an important role in supporting developing nations to meet the challenge of providing poor people with equitable access to safe water supply and improved sanitation' explains Peter O' Neill, Deputy Head of DFID's Central Research Department, and Coordinator of the EU Water Initiative European Research Area Network.

Water is a vital resource to many facets of human existence, for drinking, agriculture, transport and energy. However, one in six people on the planet are unable to access safe drinking water. Two in six do not have access to basic sanitation. In September 2000, the United Nations Millennium Summit established the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) - a set of time bound and measurable goals aimed at combating poverty, hunger, illiteracy, environmental degradation and discrimination against women. The MDGs include targets to halve the number of people without access to safe water and improved sanitation by 2015. The goals are interdependent, safe water, improved sanitation and hygienic behaviour will contribute to the achievement of each of these goals.

Clearly, in order to achieve these ambitious targets, far greater harmonisation and coordination is required by the international community than has been the case to date. Recognising this, at the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg in 2002, the European Water Initiative (EUWI) was launched. The EUWI embodies the European Union's aims of harmonising and coordinating its efforts to support developing nations in overcoming water related problems, through knowledge sharing and joint activities.

SPLASH, the EUWI-ERA-NET provides a mechanism to further the efforts of the EUWI research working group. SPLASH brings together 15 European organisations involved in the funding of water for development research. The 15 organisations are from 11 countries: UK, France, Germany, Denmark, Norway, Italy, Austria, Czech Republic, Finland, Belgium, and Switzerland.

Previous research in the water sector for development has been programmed and managed in isolation by different donors, such that overlap and duplication has occurred, and specific gaps and issues may not have been addressed. The EUWI-ERA-NET attempts to address these shortcomings through the following planned joint activities:

- compiling and analysing information on research funding;
- developing best practices for improving research and impact management;
- engaging the main actors in the research communities and beneficiaries;
- sharing past and present water research knowledge between European states and developing countries;
- building capacity of research managers in developing countries;
- developing joint activities and programmes between national research and technology development programmes and other partners; and
- ensuring research findings inform policy and practice.

Most importantly it is hoped that programming of future Research and Development, will avoid duplication, align with a commonly agreed research agenda, and include joint funding of programmes. This will lead to more efficient use of the limited funding available to the research community. Relevant ties with the Sixth Framework Programme and other ERA-NETS will be established.

"Water has been and will continue to be a significant research area for DFID, and we look forward to joining with other ministries across the EU to learn how we can work together better" concludes Peter.



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Co-ordinator

United Kingdom: Department for International Development

Partners

- **United Kingdom**
Natural Environment Research Council
- **Austria**
Austrian Development Agency
- **Belgium**
Belgian Directorate General for Development Cooperation
- **Denmark**
Danish Water Forum
- **Finland**
Finnish Environment Institute
- **France**
French Ministère des Affaires étrangères et européennes
- **France**
Institute of Research for Development
- **Germany**
German Development Institute
- **Germany**
Federal Institute for Geosciences and Natural Resources
- **Italy**
Ministero dell'Ambiente e della Tutela del Territorio
- **Czech Republic**
Czech Ministry of the Environment
- **Norway**
Norwegian Water Resources and Energy Directorate
- **Switzerland**
Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
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