



Working Group on Shared Water Resources Management

Draft Mandate

i. Introduction

Transcending most political and administrative boundaries, the available water must be shared among individuals, economic sectors, intrastate jurisdictions and sovereign nations. There are numerous obstacles in achieving these aims. Except for these deriving from the interdependences that are created between different uses, legal and institutional frameworks, policies, priorities, interests and capacities of each country, obstacles also include entrenched positions over issues such as historical rights, cultural values and political persuasions.

International cooperation has become essential for the sustainable management of water resources. Optimal utilization and effective protection of transboundary waters are only possible if the riparian states cooperate for the management of shared water bodies in line with the principles of Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM). Promoting cooperation over shared waters should aim among others at reducing water poverty, protecting natural resources and preventing crises and conflicts. Joint management of shared water resources can also encourage deepened cooperation amongst riparian countries that goes beyond the water sector.

In the Mediterranean, with growing water scarcity in many parts (south, east, north) of the region, the importance of shared surface (rivers and lakes) and ground water resources in meeting the growing water demand is likely to increase. The region has witnessed conflict resulting from disagreement over the quantitative and qualitative distribution of water from shared resources. Thus, cooperative arrangements to jointly manage shared water resources are becoming a necessity, not only to avoid conflict but also to optimise utilization and to achieve water security.

International cooperation for the management of shared water bodies is a priority for the European Commission. To further develop this issue the “Improvement of transboundary cooperation” was identified as a key activity of the Work Programmes for 2005-2006 and 2007-2009 of the Common Implementation Strategy for the Water Framework Directive (CIS WFD). Moreover, a cross-boarder component is currently developed in the framework of the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI) while action at the cross-boarder level is included in ENPI National Indicative Programmes.

The joint ‘Petersberg Phase II / Athens Declaration Process’ provides a framework for cooperative activities to assist raising of capacity and concrete action for the management of shared water resources in South Eastern Europe and the Mediterranean. It seeks synergies with parallel processes in the sub-regions.

Moreover, the up-coming GEF Strategic Partnership for the Mediterranean Large Marine Ecosystems and its water-related components aim to facilitate action to promote IWRM, ICZM and sustainable groundwater management at the national, transboundary and regional levels as a mean to reduce pollution from land based sources into the Mediterranean.

Considerable work has been also undertaken by countries, institutions and organisations in North Africa and East Mediterranean producing scientific background and supporting mechanisms for cooperation and on-the-ground management.

Multilateral and bilateral donors provide significant assistance for related cooperation activities at the basin, national and regional levels.

Furthermore, in the framework of the MED-EUWI/WFD, the Mediterranean Groundwater Working Group , the international cooperation for sustainable management of shared aquifers was recognised as a priority issue, to be further addressed.

In light of the above, it was proposed to include the “Shared Water Resources Management” topic as an activity to be developed during the second phase of the Mediterranean EUWI/WFD Joint Process. This activity will include both surface and ground water aspects of shared water resources management.

ii. Objectives and key subjects

The overall objective of the Working Group is to promote synergies between competent EU and non EU partners of the Mediterranean region and to assist for a common approach on key aspects of joint management of shared surface and ground water resources. In particular, the new activity on “Shared Water Resources Management” aims to:

- Review current policies, agreements and practices in the EU and the Mediterranean area on the issue;
- Promote synergies, at decision-makers and stakeholders level, for the sustainable management of the shared water resources of the region and facilitate the exchange of experiences and know-how between experts (EU and non-EU);
- Promote common approach and methodology on shared water resources management, based on the IWRM principles and building among others on the provisions of the WFD , and prepare related recommendations;
- Improve awareness raising as well as distribution of information on shared waters cooperation and management;
- Create the basis for additional related action in the region.

In order to achieve these aims and building on previous and on-going work and activities by competent institutions, the following general actions would be undertaken:

- Step 1: identification and description of major shared surface (rivers and lakes) and ground water resources in the Mediterranean region. Description will focus on the institutional cooperation framework, the main characteristics as regards water quality and quantity, and pressures exerted on the shared resources;
- Step 2: collection and analysis of information on existing policies, strategies, legislation, agreements, methodologies and practices as regards the management of shared water resources in the region.
- Step 3: Analysis of best practices in the Mediterranean.
- Step 5: preparation of recommendations and follow-up actions.
- Step 6: dissemination of results, joint demonstration activities, etc.

The activity is targeted to the EU Member States and the Partner Countries covered by the MED EUWI, the European Commission and stakeholder groups.

iii. Organisation

The activity will be led by the Global Water Partnership – Mediterranean (GWP-Med).

Membership of the Working Group targets to representatives from the EU Member States, MEDA and Balkan countries, International Organisations and stakeholders.

Participation in the Working Group is based on active contribution of the membership to its works.

The activity will be linked to the “Groundwater Management” activity (MED EUWI Working Group on Groundwater) under the Mediterranean EUWI/WFD Joint Process, as regards the shared aquifers cooperation aspects of transboundary water resources management. Synergies will be also build with the Mediterranean Pilot Basin Network and its shared waters activities.

iv. Expected outcomes and deliverables

The expected deliverables are:

- Report including the description of the current situation, best practices, priorities, recommendations
- Workshop summary reports.

v. Contact persons

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vi. Timeframe (tentative)

Inception meeting	January / February 2007
Second meeting	September 2007
Final meeting	February 2008
Presentation to Euro-Med Water Directors	June 2008
Regional Workshop (exchange of information):	to be identified