



EMWIS

EURO-MEDITERRANEAN INFORMATION SYSTEM ON KNOW-HOW IN THE WATER SECTOR

The Euro-Mediterranean Conference on Local Water Management, held in Marseilles in November 1996, stressed the need of providing access to wide and substantial knowledge in all partner Countries, in particular knowledge concerning relevant subjects, available tools and documentation, utilized techniques and methods, programs and research results, training opportunities, etc.

The information available on the above mentioned issues is fragmentary, scattered and heterogeneous. That is why it has been agreed to launch a great effort in rationalising and making readable the information, enabling its better access and utilisation.

For these reasons, at the Conference it has been decided to study the approach for the implementation of an information system that will allow to connect the already available existing information sources: the EMWIS (Euro-Mediterranean Information System on Know-how in the Water Sector).

This study has been co-financed by France and E.U. Commission, and has been promoted by a Working Group constituted by 10 Countries (Algeria, Cyprus, France, Italy, Jordan, Malta, Morocco, Palestinian Authority, Spain and United Kingdom) lead by the Water Dept. of the French Ministry of the Environment. The work co-ordination and the secretariat support have been assured by the Office International de l'Eau (France).

The above mentioned Working Group met in Amman (Jordan) in April 1997, in Valence (Spain) in October 1997. The conclusions of the activities of the Group have been presented in Naples (Italy) in December 1997, on the occasion of the Conference which grouped the Directors General for the Water Sector and the main operators involved in this project from the 27 Countries participating in the Euro-Mediterranean partnership.

The most important conclusions of the feasibility analysis are summarised as follows:

- a) EMWIS is a tool for co-operation between the Euro-Mediterranean Countries finalised to:
 - facilitating the access to the existing information on know-how in the water sector; in particular on the following four issues:
 - * institutions,
 - * documentation,
 - * training and research,
 - * data management,
 - developing the dissemination of other information;
 - creating common tools and promoting the necessary co-operation programs.
- b) EMWIS itself will not deal with data concerning water resources, since they are within under the responsibility of the participating Countries.

Looking at the structure in more detail, EMWIS is based of the following criteria:

- A) The information concerning each Country will be made available by a "National Focal Point" for each country and by the EMWIS "Technical Unit". Only the information sources, having a "Quality label" imprinted by the EMWIS managers, will be accessible through the System, whose existence is based on a complete participation. Each partner Country is directly engaged in the System.
- B) Due to its original approach on know-how in water sector, EMWIS is complementary to several international actions in the field of water resources data management (EEA, MED-HYCOS, ..) and in specific fields concerning the "know-how" (training, local experts, batch files...). Therefore close collaboration will be ensured with other international programs.
- C) EMWIS will be addressed to public and private operators in the Mediterranean water field: (administrations, water services, training and research centres, study offices, enterprises, ..), even though it is accessible to everyone concerned with water management.
- D) Technically speaking, EMWIS will be implemented thanks to an information system adequately locally distributed and labelled, and will make use of the Internet network which is already available in the 27 Countries. It is also foreseen to base EMWIS on the Internet TEN 34 Network (transeuropean network co-financed by the E.U. Commission) and on RAITNET ("Regional Arab Information Technology Network" co-financed by UNESCO) in order to assure a good communication quality between the partners.
- E) The plan of work for establishing EMWIS in three years has been defined (1998-2000). Such a programme is based on the development of information access to the following priority issues:
 - Organisation of communication network;
 - Elaboration and dissemination of a Directory (institutions, operators, experts, ..) and a source information catalogue concerning the 27 Countries;
 - Development of common access to the existing information systems;
 - Development of the access to information not digitised (paper list, microfiches, ..)
 - Access procedure for languages other than English and French (in use from the beginning);
 - Elaboration of common by-products in order to make the information valuable.

The general EMWIS architecture, as approved in Naples, can be summarised as following:

1. A Steering Committee will identify the main strategies and guide lines, and will approve the budget and the yearly activity report. The Steering Committee is appointed for 3 years and is

composed by 10 Countries, among them 3 European Countries which will financially support the Technical Unit, together with the E.U. Commission. At present the presidency is entrusted to Italy and the vice-presidency to Jordan.

2. The general structure for management will rely in each country upon a National Focal Point. All the National Focal Points will be put together in a Co-ordination Committee under the presidency of Algeria and the vice-presidency of the France.
3. The Technical Unit will be based on an European consortium made up of three principal operators (French, Italian and Spanish) dealing with the water information sector. Such a consortium will be constituted as an European Grouping for Economic Interest, whose headquarters will be located in France.

The EMWIS funding is guaranteed by the financial contributions of the three European Countries members of the Technical Unit, of the E.U. Commission and of all the Countries as far as the National Focal Points activities are concerned.

As a whole, it is important to underline that the establishment of EMWIS is entirely in line with the evolutionary framework, at global level, of the water resources sector.

A few months after the Euro-Mediterranean Conference of Naples, France invited to Paris 80 Countries - 60 at Minister level - with the aim of identifying the fundamental strategic principles for the water management. The Directives and the Action Plan, approved at that International Conference on Water and Sustainable Development, aim at promoting the start up of actions finalised to the development and fund mobilising necessary in order to ensure the future and suitable availability of water for the various needs of the civil society.

It is useful to recall, on this subject, that the water needs for urban, industrial and agricultural purpose are fundamentally in competition between themselves.

Generally speaking, the Conference of Paris has fully recognised the importance of EMWIS and its basic principles: the dissemination of scientific and technical information concerning water resources, determined action for sharing know-how and optimal modality for water resources management, as well the Mediterranean scientific co-operation.

After Paris, it has been the United Nations turn, last spring. The Sustainable Development Commission met in New York with the aim of discussing several aspects related to future water availability and freshwater management in order to reach a general consensus on some broad guidelines. In New York, also, the right emphasis has given to the role of information, since nothing can be developed without knowledge and development can not exist without certainty of future water availability.

The EMWIS Technical Unit is born: establishment of EEIG

Further to the feasibility study carried out in 1997, the Water Directors of the countries signatories of Barcelona Convention adopted EMWIS three-year action programme. Its management and implementation have been entrusted to a **Technical Unit (TU)** to be created between Spain, France and Italy. This Technical Unit gathers:

- El "Centro de Estudio y Experimentación de Obras Públicas" (Cedex) for Spain;
- The International Office for Water (OIEau) for France;
- La "Società per la gestione degli impianti idrici- società per azioni" (SOGESID S.p.A) for Italy.

the last two organizations being regrouped in a European Economic Interest Group (EEIG) named "**GEIE UT-SEMIDE**", created in order to manage financial and human resources and equipment necessary for the functioning of this Technical Unit.

The statutes of this EEIG were signed on June 15, 1998, between:

- the International Office for Water, represented by Mr. Donzier (General Manager),

and

- SOGESID S.p.A., represented by Mr. Mazzola (President).

Besides, the three Technical Unit's members drew up an agreement protocol in order to officialize their will to cooperate.

The headquarters will be located in Sophia-Antipolis (FRANCE) at the following address:

Department of International Cooperation
International Office for Water
BP 75 - 06902 Sophia-Antipolis (FRANCE)

Besides, the International Office for Water has been appointed manager of the EEIG and has been allowed to sign a grant agreement of ECU 1,200,000 with the European Commission for financing the project named "EMWIS implementation".

In order to finalize the organizational principles of this Technical Unit, the representatives of the 3 EMWIS Technical Unit's members met on June 25 and 26 in Sophia-Antipolis. This meeting permitted in particular to:

- Approve EMWIS first year planned programme;
- Approve task sharing between TU's members;
- Approve the profile of the permanent agents who will be seconded by TU's members;
- Approve the principles of task sharing for technical assistance and training actions financed by the European Commission;
- Approve the first year planned budget for investment and functioning of the Technical Unit, which will be submitted to EMWIS second Management Committee (Rome, on July 6, 1998). It has been agreed that the contributions of TU's members will be identical and amount to a total of ECU 507,726 for the first year, i.e. ECU 169,242 per member.

PAUL HAENER
EEIG MANAGER

The Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the 27 partners met in Palermo: «The EMWIS is a reality»

The sustainable supply and the rational management of water resources are priority-items for the Euro-Mediterranean partnership.

The work programme embodied in the Barcelona Declaration devotes an important role to water and opens the way to the adoption of concrete co-operation actions.

The Ministerial Conference of Marseilles on November 26, 1996, which was held on the initiative of France, has given the first and important answer, in fixing the fundamental principles for an efficient policy for water, a resource which is more and more scarce and badly used. The Conference has also proposed the realisation of an information system on the know-how in the water sector (EMWIS).

The priority of water in the socio-economic development of the Mediterranean region has been endorsed by the Conference of Foreign Ministers in Malta on April 1997. The Conference of Ministers for the Environment, too, which was held the

following November in Helsinki, has renewed the invitation to extend co-operation in order to meet the increasing needs of this valuable resource. The Ministers for Environment have also supported the EMWIS implementation.

In fact, the Conference of Directors General for water, which was held a month later in Naples on the initiative of Italy, has adopted the System not only as an information tool, but also as an instrument for cooperation among partners. This is a very important result.

The task of the System is that of disseminating and transferring the know-how and specific experiences for the rational management of water resources. The decision of Naples is emblematic of the spirit of partnership and contributes to increasing the trust in the region.

In fact, water is not only the source of life and the essential basis for socio-economic development, but, unfortunately, also of tensions. We have succeeded in making a network connection among all the coast countries and those of the EU: this represents a work of unquestionable political value. A proof of this is the fact that EMWIS is expressly mentioned in the final UK Presidency Declaration of during the meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, which was held on June 3-4 in Palermo. It stressed, by unanimous decision, the relaunching of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership. It is unquestionable that EMWIS has a central place among the main partnership realisations.

The EMWIS Steering Committee is aware that it is now urgent to go for action; therefore it will meet for the second time, in Rome on July 6, 1998. The Steering Committee is composed by Algeria, Cyprus, France, Italy, Jordan, Malta, Morocco, Spain, the United Kingdom, the Palestinian Authority and the European Commission.

There is now a favourable context to make concrete and important progress. The EMWIS is a tool that can act as catalyst for other actions and fora, including the Water Mediterranean Network, which was set up by the Rome Conference in 1992 in order to promote common actions in the field of water planning and management.

AMBASSADOR ANTONIO BADINI
COORDINATOR FOR ITALY OF THE EURO-MEDITERRANEAN PARTNERSHIP

EMWIS presented in Venice



Venice, 8 May 1998. Presentation of EMWIS

SEMIDE raised great interest during the International Conference on Water Policy in Europe organized by the Italian Federation of Public Gas and Water Utilities (Federgasacqua) and EUREAU (European Union of National Associations of Freshwater and Sewage Services) on the occasion of the 30 Anniversary of the European Water Charter.

Mr. Walter Mazzitti, President of the SEMIDE Steering Committee, and Mr. Antonio Badini Ambassador and Coordinator of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership for Italy, Mr. Francois Casal, Deputy Director for Water of the French Ministry for Environment, Mr. G.F. Donzier Director of the Office international de l'Eau, Mr. C.M. Santafé Martinez, Regional Director in the Ministry of Public Works for Spain, Mr. Edoardo Berera, Professor of Information Networks and author of the SEMIDE System study participated in the event, Mr. R. Mazzola, SOGESID S.p.A. President.

The conclusions were presented by B. Brusset, representative of the European Commission, who outlined the European policy for Water in the Mediterranean Region.