

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

# EMWIS Algeria: the winning team

The Euro-Mediterranean Water Information System, or EMWIS, is an online network with the objective of facilitating information exchange in the water sector. Thirty-seven European and Mediterranean countries are participating in this network which currently has fourteen national web sites up and running. The Constantinois-Seybouse-Mellegue Catchment Basin Agency represents Algeria within EMWIS.

by Tarek Hafid

Photos: Samir Sid

**Constantine** – The National Focal Point (NFP) of EMWIS in Algeria is located in Constantine, a town 400 kilometres east of Algiers. The development, management and administration of the EMWIS.dz Internet site is carried out by the Constantinois-Seybouse-Mellegue Catchment Area Agency, headed by Mr. Khatim Kherraz. "Our agency was designated as the Focal Point by the Algerian Water Resources Minister during the Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference at Turin in October 1999. The web site was developed during the month of February 2000 and was operational six months later. The official launch was at the at a regional information seminar held in Algiers in July 2001", explains Mr. Kherraz.

▲  
*Tagsabte Wilaya  
dam at Tizi Ouzou,  
100 km east of  
Algiers*

## About the network

### What is EMWIS ?

According to the official definition, this network "aims to facilitate access to information about know-how in the water sector, by giving priority to the following five themes: institutions working in the water sector and their representatives, documentation, training opportunities, research and development programmes and data management. EMWIS also aims to develop the exchange of useful information, preparing joint products and promoting the necessary cooperation programmes". Anyone looking for information (institution, agency, law, university, training, press article...) relating to the



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**Anyone looking for information relating to the water sector is likely to find it on the national web sites of the EMWIS network.**

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The main task of the national focal points is to provide input and update these portals.

In the case of Algeria, the involvement of the Catchment Area Agency in the EMWIS programme turned out to be a real human adventure. "We must admit that, basically, our organisation is not really specialised in managing an information system. So we trained a team to administer the site. I must say that the success of our partici-

### Trilingualism

The person in charge of documentation, Miss Yasmine Benmostefa, is the linchpin of the team. "I was recruited for my translation skills. But very soon, I took over the management and updating of the content. Initially, searching for information was often tiresome, in the absence of established procedures", says Miss Benmostefa. As time has gone by, the documentalist of EMWIS.dz has developed her own search, sorting and updating procedures for the information. "Four or five items are

Even better, thanks to her abilities, the Algerian Focal Point handles the translation of the newsletters issued monthly by the technical unit of the EMWIS programme based in the south of France.

### New configuration

In a networked system, the IT expert's role is of the utmost importance. Programming and development of the Algerian portal is done by Mr. Rafik Assas. "We have come a long way", Mr. Assas recalls. "In the beginning, we developed a ded-

#### EMWIS ALGERIA IN FIGURES

- 764 press articles put online in the three languages: English, Arabic and French. Compilation of 16 information sources.
- Number of visits to the Internet site: over 600,000 to date.
- Number of pages read on the portal: 1,318,518
- Average number of files downloaded from the Internet site: 65,713
- Total transfer volume: 34,824.78 GB
- Budget: two million dinars per year (the equivalent of twenty thousand euro/year) allocated by the Hydraulic Engineering and Water Resources Ministry.
- Contribution by the European Union: donations of computer equipment, Internet connection charges and training courses.

Source EMWIS

pation in this programme is due to the professionalism and commitment of each member of our staff", Mr. Kherraz emphasises with pride.



◀ Seawater desalination plant, El Hamma, Algiers

put up on the site every day. The Algerian press, particularly the Agence Press Service (APS), is one of our main information sources. We are also in contact with all the institutes and university research centres, which enables us to give very valuable information about training. The training section of the site has one of the highest numbers of hits". But the documentalist's work is not just limited to content management.

Yasmine Benmostefa is also responsible – in fact, first and foremost – for the translation work. Thanks to her work, the EMWIS Algeria site is available in three languages: French, Arabic and English.

It was the first web site in the programme to offer information in the three languages.



◀ Dam at Fergougue Wilaya de Saida, 400 km West of Algiers

icated server accessible via a remote network. Then the situation evolved very quickly, due to the rapid development of new information technologies in Algeria. EMWIS.dz has never looked back. Now, we are implementing a new configuration, the third since the programme started. This platform will be identical to that of the official EMWIS site".

We should point out that the work by the documentalist-translator and the IT expert would be virtually impossible without the

**This programme also enabled the Water Resources Ministry to develop its Water Information System.**



The EMWIS Algeria team: (left to right) Miss Yasmine Benmostefa, Mr. Rafik Assas, Mr. Khatim Kherraz and Mr. Abdellah Bouchedja



Mr. Khatim Kherraz, Director General of the Constantinois-Seybouse-Mellegue Catchment Area Agency and EMWIS Algeria

Source: Pfnalgerie



**Algeria: key water indicators**

- Area** (hundreds of km<sup>2</sup>): 2,382
- Population** (million): 31.3
- GDP** (\$ billion): 56
- Water per capita**: 457 m<sup>3</sup>
- Water catchment**: total 35.0 %
- agriculture 52 %
- Access to drinking water**: 92 %
- Sanitation**: 89 %

Source EMWIS

"I must say that the success of our participation in this programme is due to the professionalism and commitment of each member of our staff"  
M. Kherraz.

support and assistance of an engineer, Mr. Bouchedja Abdellah. He says: "I am in charge of the studies, projects and research department. My role consists basically of validating that the information meets quality standards. In a network like ours, it is impor-

tant that the information and data that we put on line should be reliable. This is teamwork, and requires intensive research".

**What does the future hold for EMWIS Algeria?**

First of all, it is necessary to point out that in addition to

the appreciable contribution from the communication viewpoint, this programme also enabled the Water Resources Ministry to develop its Water Information System. The same applies to the Constantinois-Seybouse-Mellegue Catchment Area Agency, which set up a web site that is both comprehensive and powerful.

And the adventure is unlikely to end there. In fact, it has only just begun. ■

**Name:** EMWIS/SEMIDE

**Budget:** €2 million MEDA, €1.3 million Spain, Italy & France

**Duration:** 2005-2008

**Participating Mediterranean Partner Countries:** Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestinian Authority, Syria, Tunisia, Turkey

The Barcelona declaration acknowledges the priority nature of the sustainable management of water resources, and recommends the development of a series of actions in this regard, particularly the strengthening of regional cooperation. This is precisely the role of EMWIS.

**Website:** [www.EMWIS.net](http://www.EMWIS.net)  
[www.semide.dz](http://www.semide.dz)



The **EuroMed Info Centre** is an EU-funded

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