

Coordination Committee Seminar Florence – 02 December 2010

CONCLUSIONS

(2010-12-12)

The 10th meeting of EMWIS Coordination Committee took place in Florence (Italy) on 2 December 2010. The meeting was attended by 16 National Focal Points –NFP- (Algeria, Cyprus, Egypt, France, Jordan, Israel, Italy, Lebanon, Malta, Mauritania, Monaco, Morocco, Palestine, Spain, Tunisia and Turkey). This seminar was organized back to back to the 14th EMWIS Steering Committee meeting on 3rd December. The new NFP from Mauritania and Monaco were welcome for their first participation.

The seminar was briefly introduced by Algerian Presidency, represented in this meeting by Mr. Rabiaa BOUZEKARIA, and by the Cypriot Vice-Presidency, represented by Mr. Nicholas CHRISTOFIDIS.

The coordinator of EMWIS TU, Mr. Eric MINO presented the objectives of the meeting and gave a review of last year activities. Then, Mr. Jauad EL KHARRAZ presented the status and enhancement of EMWIS web portals: the international portal managed by EMWIS TU as well as the national websites managed by EMWIS National Focal Points (NFPs) in the countries. He showed the main services offered by EMWIS international portal and the latest developments including the improvement of EMWIS water thesaurus, available already in 7 languages and been enriched by new concepts corresponding to water accounts and H2020 initiative as well as other concepts used locally in some of the southern Mediterranean countries. A work on the hierarchy and the relations of the thesaurus was also achieved.

Further, the Spanish & Algerian NFPs gave detailed presentations of their activities in terms of content and technology used for their websites. The Algerian website is one of the most updated websites among EMWIS network, and the Spanish website (Hispagua) is one of the most visited. The Algerian NFP website registers more than 27.000 visits per year, and almost visitors come from universities, and Algerians living out of Algeria. The section most visited is on water legislation.

During the discussion each NFP gave its opinion and view on the current status and the future activities to be carried out and maintenance of the national websites. The following issues were mentioned by the NFP:

- Problem of staff turnover, making necessary the organization of more training especially on IT issues (for NFP IT managers),
- Possible combination of NFP website with the website of the Ministry in charge of water (if existing) taking into account that the content required by EMWIS should be available. Support might be required to ensure the technical compatibility of tools, maybe some training support to use the web portal tool kit;
- Translation of content to the EMWIS international languages (English or French)
- NFP content contributions to feed EMWIS Monthly Flash, e.g. small articles or news
- adding a section on water technologies and an “ICT watch” in the international website of EMWIS.
- Exploiting tools such as users satisfaction surveys for NFP websites developments

The Palestinian NFP highlighted that the reforming of the water sector in the Palestinian territories, made the NFP website update slowdown.



As in most countries the national water authority has now website, it was suggested that in order to reduce the maintenance costs, some sections of NFP websites should be redirected to the national water authority's website when content is similar (e.g. water legislation). Such decision has to be taken individually by each country while taking into account design rules as well as format for data exchanges with the international website of the system (mainly RSS).

After the presentations on **NWIS and National seminars** / water accounting, as well as on Water data portal and related tools (metadata catalogue), the President (M. BOUZEKARIA, Algeria) welcomed the efforts of EMWIS towards implementing national water information systems in the Mediterranean countries. He highlighted that the Algerian National Water Information System will be operational as an Intranet at the end of 2010 after 3 years of development. He declared the willingness of Algeria to take part in exchange of experiences by presenting lessons learnt and demonstrations.

The Palestinian NFP proposed that work carried out by EMWIS on National Water Information Systems should also be integrated into the activities of the EXACT group related to water issues of the Middle East Peace process involving today: Israel, Jordan and Palestine. This is particularly important for the definition of reference datasets related to shared water resources.

The **MED Joint Process EU WFD/EUWI** working groups, status, results & future plans; were presented by EMWIS TU. The draft reports of the working group led by EMWIS on water scarcity and drought and on water quality monitoring were given to the participants. Ms. Maggie KOSSIDA, representing the European Environment Agency, gave more details on the works achieved on water scarcity and drought, in particular on data collection test carried out in 3 pilot river basins using the water quantity reporting tool set-up for EU countries. The main added value of this tool is for quality check, data harmonization between countries and the possibility to generate easily databases. On the other side, it requires more efforts to understand the definitions and to input data. The 3 cases highlighted the importance of socio-economic data to assess and understand the impact of drought and water scarcity.

Participants proposed that NWIS under development in different countries should enable the provision of data for this water quantity reporting tool, thus allowing to prepare water scarcity and drought indicators.

The Spanish NFP (CEDEX) through its general director: Mr. Mariano NAVAS presented the **evolution of EMWIS funding**. A discussion followed on how to maintain the activity and assure the sustainability of EMWIS and its NFP.

It was suggested to exploring the possibility of involving the private sector, through promoting their activities and know-how in the countries: products, companies' profiles with their official accreditation. Some reserves were expressed at that regard (sponsorship idea), as he considers that there is a risk of non-objectivity of the approach (some enterprises may be privileged upon others). It was decided that each country could decide on the promotion of national know-how in term of products/services from the private sector.

The possibility of making project proposals to support some EMWIS activities was also discussed. It was felt that the major risk of such approach is losing the initial EMWIS focus on cooperation and NFP. In addition, implementing projects does not provide the expected sustainability. The NFP suggested to ask the water directors and their Ministers to ensure international support for EMWIS.

In addition, as most NFP as belonging to Ministries, their involvement in projects proposals is usually not possible, except in some cases such as the Algerian, Mauritanian NFPs.



Finally, it was decided to continue the dialogue with financial institutions (e.g. European Commission) and countries for sustainable funding, but also prepare projects proposals coordinated by the EMWIS Technical Unit on the priority themes presented and discussed during the meeting:

- Pilot projects and working group activities on water scarcity and drought
- Pilot projects and working group activities on water quality management
- Capacity building programme application of earth observation for water management in the Mediterranean (concept note distributed to the participants)
- Pilot projects on public participation in water management and awareness raising
- State of play study on national water financing schemes
- Technical assistance for water documentation/library systems in the countries

The potential used of bilateral funding mechanism to support the NFP, NWIS and the provision of technical assistance by the Technical Unit was also commented, e.g. UNICEF supporting Palestinian NFP for EMWIS training, twinning projects.

The French NFP presented the use of the OAI protocol –Open Archive Initiative- for developing **national documentation webportal** on water and its use in EMWIS. This protocol was proposed in 2004 by EMWIS and implemented by the International portal, the Spanish and Tunisian NFPs. The main interests of OAI are

- it is an international standards widely used by libraries (e.g. US congress library)
- the availability of free software tools

In most of the countries, a water library within the water authority exists (except Israel) but usually not accessible for the public. It was decided to make a trial with some countries (Morocco, Jordan, Palestine, Algeria) that will provide the metadata of “public” documents (between 30 and 50 for each country) following the OAI format and a link to the full text document. On the basis of the results of this test and demonstration, it will be decided to move for a full scale implementation with voluntary countries. The Tunisian NFP underline the problem of human resources necessary to digitalized the existing content and documents (reports, maps) and introduce the related metadata, he called for additional support for these tasks.

The Mauritanian NFP called for specific support for newcomers to set-up their website and NWIS.

French speaking NFP also asked for the translation of the working group reports and NWIS guidelines in French.

Eric MINO, EMWIS coordinator, ended the seminar by thanking all the participants for their proactive involvement.

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