

<p style="text-align: center;">SEMIDE Système Euro-Méditerranéen d'Information sur les savoir-faire dans le Domaine de l'Eau</p>		<p style="text-align: center;">EMWIS Euro-Mediterranean Information System on the know-how in the Water sector</p>
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Co-ordination Committee Meeting
Tunis (Tunisia) - 17 & 18 December 2002

CONCLUSIONS

The EMWIS Co-ordination Committee, gathering the National Focal Points (NFP) and the Technical Unit, met in Tunis on 17 and 18 December 2002, under the chairmanship of Morocco. This meeting followed the EMWIS Information Seminar (16 December) that gathered some 150 participants representing the main water institutions of Tunisia ([see conclusions](#)).

The objectives of this third meeting of the NFP's representatives with the Technical Unit were to draw up the lessons of the EMWIS developments to-date and to discuss the practical implementation of the EMWIS 2nd phase (2003-2005) in the different countries. Above all, the following topics were covered:

- EMWIS progress and set-up of NFPs over the last 3 years;
- Online tools currently operational (thematic directory, information searching tools, etc.);
- Discussion on the work-programme for the second phase (2003-2005);
- Exchange good practices between the NFPs.

This meeting gathered the coordinators of 10 National Focal Points of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership: Cyprus, Egypt, France, Jordan, Lebanon, Malta, Morocco, Spain, Syria and Tunisia.

Mr. Djemili El-Batti (Tunisian Water Director), and Mr. Abdesselem Zouggar (Water Director from Morocco) gave the opening addresses to the participants. This introduction was followed by the review of EMWIS progress. Today, EMWIS has 20 National Focal Points (NFP), 14 have published their web site on the Internet and 9 have collected information for the EMWIS thematic directory (that includes information on Organizations, Contacts and Information Sources). These sites are offering a homogenous access to the available information on water in the concerned countries ([see detailed presentation for more details](#)).

The operation and distributed management of the thematic directory were presented and demonstrated to the NFP's coordinators. The updating and the validation of the content of the EMWIS thematic directory were presented ([see detailed presentation for more details](#)) and discussed at length. It has been agreed that the thematic directory will be updated continuously and that annual updating campaigns will be necessary. But no consensus was reached on the issue of responsibility for updating international organizations located in a country with an active NFP (e.g. UNESCO Regional Office located in Cairo, Egypt). Indeed, a NFP has the responsibility for the publication of all the information related to its country while the Technical Unit, acting as the International Focal Point, has the responsibility for publishing international information. Several options were discussed to solve this problem:

1. Adding 'International' as an additional type of organization (as already done for governmental, industrial or commercial, non governmental, academic, etc.)
2. Highlighting more the responsible publisher for each record in the thematic directory (already identified by two fields: the updating manager and the organization that made the last update of the record –information filled in automatically with the log-in information)
3. Informing the data manager of the related NFP each time a new record is inserted or updated for its country. This facility is included in the forthcoming upgrade of the Thematic Directory.

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In particular, Dr. Mohamed Rami Mahmoud (Egyptian NFP) required that no information concerning its country be published without its prior approval. Therefore, it has been decided that this sensitive issue should be solved by the Steering Committee members during their next meeting.

During the second day of the seminar, the detailed work-programme for 2003-2005 was presented and discussed. Following the [decision of the last Steering Committee meeting](#) held in Rome (September 2002), the Technical Unit and the President of the EMWIS Steering Committee have prepared this work-programme and submitted it for co-funding by the European Commission and the three countries supporting the Technical Unit (France, Italy and Spain). This programme is based on the strategic plan, adopted at the General Directors meeting held the 12 and 13 November 2001 in Madrid, enhanced with six proposals adopted at the last Steering Committee meeting. These proposals resulted from an independent technical evaluation of the first phase of EMWIS, and a monitoring mission of the corresponding work programme. This 3-years action plan has been distributed to the NFP's coordinators during the Tunis seminar. It is composed of the following 9 action-lines:

- The co-ordination with political structures to maintain a high level of commitment for the support of the water sector in the Euro-Med area
- The reinforcement of the NFP to ensure their sustainability through a strong national commitment,
- The expansion and development of services, including the introduction of the Arabic language and a better knowledge of user needs and national requirements
- The technical upgrade of the existing system, taking into account state of art technologies and new water information systems under development in the various partner countries
- The operation of Euro-Med water information services
- Promotion of EMWIS to raise awareness about the benefits of sharing information and know-how, particularly best practices in water
- Development of topical activities (analyses, summaries and events) oriented towards the areas and themes of the Turin Action Plan.
- Dissemination of the MEDA-Water Programme results in close cooperation with the European Commission, the programme monitoring team and the Water Facilitators
- Liaison and cooperation with international initiatives to avoid duplication and develop synergies

The technical upgrade of the existing system was explained in more details, with an introduction to the main concepts of the XML standard and its potential applications for EMWIS. The eXtensible Markup Language is an emerging standard for the new generation of the WWW. It is particularly useful for the flexible integration of applications (e.g. national water information systems) over the Internet and for website content management (e.g. using the same content for the publication of several websites).

The last session was devoted to the exchange of good practices between NFPs and an open discussion. Three general comments were made on planned activities:

- The structure and navigation of EMWIS websites should be reviewed to be more user-friendly;
- The publication of a weekly Euro-Med water newsletter would be very useful. It could be based on the model already started in 2002 by the Technical Unit;
- The NFP should be involved in the management of the studies related to the National Water Information Systems and national experts should have the opportunity to take part in these activities.

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Concerning the MEDA-Water programme, Mr. Zouggar, Morocco water director and chair of the seminar, commented on the lack of participation of the water facilitators in the decision process of the programme, particularly on the selection of proposals. A number of NFPs highlighted the similar role of EMWIS NFP and the MEDA-water facilitators calling for the establishment of a common unit in each country.

Dr. Mohamed Rami Mahmoud (Egyptian NFP) welcomed the introduction of Arabic as a language for EMWIS. He reminded that no information concerning its country be published without its prior approval and noticed that the detailed proposal for 2003-2005 was not circulated to the NFP prior its submission to the European Commission.

Mr. Ramadan (Syrian NFP) mentioned the administrative difficulties faced by the National Focal Point for obtaining the authorizations to publish information on the web.

Dr. Kambanellas (Cyprus NFP) mentioned that Cyprus would like to organize one or two national seminars during the first semester of 2003 requiring the support of the EMWIS Technical Unit.

Mr. El-Khabote (Morocco NFP) stated that they are planning an EMWIS information seminar in April or May 2003.

On behalf of all the NFP, the chairman thanked the Tunisian government for welcoming this seminar, the Tunisian Focal Point for all the practical arrangements and the Technical Unit for its support.

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