

Global Water Partnership - Mediterranean

Global Water Partnership – Mediterranean (GWP-Med), is a regional partnership of the Global Water Partnership and was established in 2002. GWP-Med is a multi-stakeholder platform that brings together competent organisations working on water issues in the Mediterranean Region, including Southeastern Europe. The goal is to promote action and exchange knowledge on Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) and the sustainable use of water resources. In order to achieve this, GWP-Med's role is to act as a broker, a catalyst, a facilitator and an advocacy organisation.

Water situation in the Mediterranean

Water resources in the Mediterranean countries are limited and unequally distributed in space and time. The countries to the South receive a mere 10% of the total annual average rainfall. 'Water poor'¹ people in the Region count to more than 180 million, while those faced with water shortage² exceed 60 millions. Some countries of the south and east have run up a 160% renewable water resources deficit.

Intensive abstraction for domestic, agricultural and industrial purposes has led to depletion of surface and groundwater bodies. Overexploitation of groundwater resources in particular have led to seawater intrusion in coastal aquifers. Over the last 50 years, water demand for all sectors of activity together has doubled to reach 280 km³/ year in 2007. Agriculture is the major consumer with 64% of total water use (varying from 50% to 90% in some countries), followed by industry (including the energy sector) at 22% and the domestic sector with 14%. Generally speaking, water use efficiency is far from satisfactory, especially in agriculture. Furthermore, discharge of domestic, industrial and agricultural wastewater has led to distressing deterioration of water quality.

Access to potable water is above the global average and shows significant progress (it is estimated that 75 million inhabitants received access to water between 1990 and 2006). Today, the proportion of the population enjoying access to improved water services stands at over 90% in the majority of the Mediterranean countries, particularly in the urban centres. Service to the urban poor remains inadequate in many parts of the Region, and over 20 million inhabitants are still deprived of access to improved water services.

With climate change just 'around the corner', the Mediterranean region is even more prone to issues such as water scarcity and extreme weather events, including droughts, floods and irregular precipitation, that will heavily impact on freshwater availability in terms of quantity and quality. Climate change is therefore an additional factor to be taken into account in IWRM and water-related adaptation strategies should be developed in a manner to address or prevent future crises and reduce the vulnerability of the region.

Therefore, there is a need to:

- meet the IWRM targets set at the World Summit for Sustainable Development (WSSD-Johannesburg 2002) as well as the objectives of the Strategy for Water in the Mediterranean (Barcelona 2010) in all countries and strengthen and concretize the regional framework on IWRM, including at transboundary level;

¹ Disposing less than 1000 m³ of renewable water per capita per year

² Disposing less than 500 m³ of renewable water per capita per year

- raise water concerns into national development plans and integrate water concerns into policies of related sectors;
- meet the water related Millennium Development Goals and WSSD target to halve by 2015 the proportion of people without access to safe drinking water and sanitation;
- mainstream climate change adaptation and mitigation and risk management into IWRM planning in order to enhance the region's resilience in the near future;
- further develop tools, build capacity, raise public awareness, improve knowledge of targeted groups including parliamentarians and journalists and educate the youth on water issues;
- build synergies and boost commitment to action by setting up active water partnerships at the regional and national levels.

Responding to the needs of a water scarce Region

In order to tackle the water-related issues, GWP-Med:

- Facilitates a multi-stakeholder regional water partnership across the Mediterranean basin, bringing together major Mediterranean networks of different water disciplines (government, river basins, local authorities, professionals, NGOs, research institutes, irrigators, etc) and over eighty (80) other organisations, institutions and companies.
- Seeks and facilitates multi-stakeholder engagement and donors' support for dialogue and action to promote IWRM at national and regional levels.
- Makes the principles of sustainable water use and IWRM widely recognised and applied, through sharing of information and experience.

Since its establishment (and already since 1999 as the Mediterranean Technical Committee of GWP) the partnership has been instrumental in developing the Vision for Water in the Mediterranean and the Framework for Action for Water in the Mediterranean (2000) in preparation for the 2nd World Water Forum (The Hague 2000). Since 2001, GWP-Med has facilitated regional and sub-regional dialogues on national IWRM planning, effective water governance, water and climate, water demand management, river basin management and transboundary water management in order to promote IWRM practices. A set of activities are also carried out on the role and engagement of the private sector in water infrastructure and resources management.

Through collaboration with its partners, GWP-Med activities extend to water, food and environmental interaction; integrated groundwater management; and education, through the Mediterranean Education Initiative for Environment and Sustainability (MEDIES – www.medies.net). Moreover, it co-facilitates the Circle of Mediterranean Parliamentarians for Sustainable Development (COMPSUD) and the Circle of Mediterranean Journalists for Environment and Sustainable Development (COMJESD). In addition, GWP-Med is promoting the set up of Country Water Partnerships in the Mediterranean in order to facilitate the intra-country dialogue on water and ensure the involvement of all related stakeholders.

Moreover, GWP-Med acts as the:

- Secretariat of the **Mediterranean Component of the EU Water Initiative** (MED EUWI, 2003-ongoing), led by the government of Greece and supported by several parties including the European Commission. MED EUWI aims to assist achieve the water-related MDGs and WSSD targets in the non-EU member states of the Mediterranean and Southeastern Europe (www.minenv.gr/medeuwi, www.euwi.net).

More specifically, Country Policy Dialogues are on-going in Egypt (with emphasis on sustainable financing strategies to complement the new National Master Plan on Water and Wastewater) and

Lebanon (with emphasis on updating the 10-Year National Water Plan and elaborating on new the National IWRM Plan). Activities on targeted issues of IWRM planning, water governance and water financing are progressing in more countries (e.g. Tunisia, Palestine, etc).

Regional activities include elaborating assessments and guidelines on water issues linked with the MDGs and WSSD targets as well as the organisation of regional events. Furthermore, MED EUWI is providing administrative and technical assistance to the Water Expert Group that is mandated to develop the new Strategy for Water in the Mediterranean, within the framework of the Union for the Mediterranean.

- Technical facilitator of the **Rabat Declaration on National IWRM Planning in North Africa** (2006–ongoing), in cooperation with the African Development Bank, African Water Facility and UNEP Collaborating Centre on Water and Environment. The Declaration was adopted at the Rabat Seminar, in 2006, that was hosted by the government of Morocco. The Seminar discussed progress, gaps and solutions for IWRM planning in North African countries and Mauritania.

Follow up activities have been implemented in Libya with emphasis on advancing institutional settings for IWRM. At regional level recent activities have focused on the theme of finance and water, also in the MED EUWI framework, with direct linkages made to the Strategy for Water in the Mediterranean (2010) and the follow-up of the African Union's Sharm-El-Sheikh Declaration (2008).

- Technical facilitator of the joint **Petersberg Phase II / Athens Declaration Process** (2005-ongoing) on promoting transboundary water resources management in Southeastern Europe, led by the governments of Germany, Greece and the World Bank and assisted by GEF IW:LEARN, UNECE, UNDP UNESCO, etc in close cooperation with the beneficiary countries (www.watersee.net). Emphasis is on building capacity of decision makers and stakeholders on targeted related issues and on promoting IWRM planning at the local (transboundary) level. Among major activities under development is the promotion of cooperation for the management of the extended Drin River Basin.

- Leader of the **Working Group on Shared Water Resources Management of the Joint Process between the EU Water Framework Directive and the Mediterranean Component of the EU Water Initiative** (www.emwis.net).

- Leader of the **IWRM Component of the GEF Strategic Partnership for the Mediterranean Large Marine Ecosystems** (2009-2014) with emphasis on catalytic actions for IWRM planning at national and transboundary levels in Mediterranean and Southeastern European Countries (<http://www.medsp.org/>). Emphasis of activities is on Egypt, Lebanon, Palestine, Tunisia and the Buna / Bojana River Basin in Southeastern Europe.

Through its activities, GWP-Med has an established network of active collaborations and synergies with a wide spectrum of institutions and organisations at the regional, sub-regional and national levels.

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In addition to the Head Office in Athens, the GWP-Med Secretariat has extended its human resources with officers based in Beirut, Lebanon, and Tunis, Tunisia.