

MEDITERRANEAN WHITE BOOK ON WATER



Aims of the project

Water is an essential development driving force for all socio-economic activities and is vital for the environment. Despite the information available in the Mediterranean region, which is more accessible from member states of the European Union, and given the importance of the resource, an integrating publication with references on water in the region is essential.

This project aims at developing the White Book on Water undertaking an assessment of water resources, environmental requirements, water demand in different sectors, regional water balances as well as major policies and programs of measures applied in the countries of the Mediterranean basin.

It must be updated with reliable data and become a reference document that, after the mentioned assessment, establishes a set of recommendations for a sustainable water management in the region.

Water in the Mediterranean region

The Mediterranean region, cradle of civilisations, has a strategic location at the crossroads of three continents. Its mild and favourable climate has encouraged the settlement of people throughout history permitting important socio-economic-growth. However, at present, the pressure produced by population growth, tourism and urban development, mainly on the coast, is producing environmental problems that affect the development in the region. Even being one of the richest regions regarding ecosystems, it is at the same time one of the most vulnerable worldwide due to these pressures and to other environmental problems as water scarcity, deforestation, soil erosion or desertification that are closely related.

Water, vital natural resource, is spatially and temporally very irregularly distributed in the region. It is very scarce in a state directly usable and has a limited availability of quality and quantity required for each demand, converting it, in some areas, into a limiting factor for economic activity, development and food production. The main water-related problems include its scarcity, irregular distribution, high point source and diffuse pollution, conflicts between demand sectors,

between regions and countries, and the overexploitation of aquifers, which additionally cause seawater intrusion in coastal zones and the exhaustion of non-renewable groundwater resources in the Maghreb. Droughts, floods, degradation of hydraulic infrastructures and climate change aggravate these problems and increase additionally social, environmental and management problems.

Territorial scope

The territorial scope of the publication covers the following countries: Spain, Portugal, France, Italy, Slovenia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro, Croatia, Albania, Greece, Malta, Cyprus, (Mauritania), Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Palestinian Occupied Territories, Israel, Lebanon, Syria and Turkey (Jordan).

Main issues addressed

The main issues addressed by the publication are:

- a) The natural water resources, surface and groundwater, environmental and / or geopolitical restrictions and the available resources, including those from other non-conventional sources.
- b) The uses and water demands and their evolution scenarios (urban and agricultural water supply, industry, hydropower, tourism...) as well as the economic characterisation and the water footprint.
- c) The existing hydrological infrastructures in the region: regulation dams, distribution channels, wells, water depuration infrastructures, inter-basin transfers, etc.
- d) The water balances, including availability and water stress indicators, as well as the status of surface and groundwater bodies and the relation between main pressures and the impact.
- e) Extreme events (droughts and floods) and the climate change (impact on water resources, water demand and measures).
- f) Management and planning instruments: institutions and legal framework, the organisation of water management in countries and regions, planning tools and economic instruments (taxes and tariffs, water price), as well as European and Mediterranean policies and international agreements between states.
- g) Future challenges like the satisfaction of water demand, protection of water bodies, food safety, social, political-military and territorial conflicts and participatory processes regarding information access and decision making.
- h) New technologies and R&D: monitoring networks, information sources and databases, water information exchange processes, technological advances in various fields: non-conventional resources and water economy, the water energy nexus, R&D programs and initiatives and investment priorities in the region.

Methodology of work

The proposed methodology of work is the following: creation of a Steering Committee to direct the work, establishment of a Drafting Committee consisting of leading authors and contributors from different countries. The last will be supported by a Technical Team regarding information treatment and data storage, creation of databases, developing figures and maps and eventually the establishment of groups in professional social networks. The countries of the region will designate a “national focal point” to be in charge of providing information for each country.

Organisers and participating entities

The Mediterranean Water Institute (IME), the Center for Studies and Experimentation on Public Works (CEDEX), the Mediterranean Network of Basin Organisations (MENBO), the Euro-Mediterranean Information System on Water (EMWIS), European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMed) and the Euro-Mediterranean Water Institute (IEA) will form the Steering Committee. Other collaborating organisations and entities will be: the Secretariat General of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), the Blue Plan, the Global Water Partnership Mediterranean, the River Basin Authorities, consulting companies, IPEMED, EUWI-Med, the Marseille Centre for Mediterranean Integration (CMI), WWF MedPo, MedWet, Universities, cooperation agencies, NGOs and civil society groups.