

Water Strategy in the Western Mediterranean 5+5

10th Technical Working Group

Capacity Development and knowledge Transfer Programme

Valencia, 22nd September 2022

Draft Minutes

The 10th Technical Working Group Meeting of the Water Strategy in the Western Mediterranean 5+5, took place on 22nd September 2022 in Valencia, at the headquarters of the Jucar River Basin Authority.

The meeting was organised back-to-back with the holding of two other events, which together conformed the so-called “Mediterranean Water Week”:

- MWI Symposium: Mediterranean Water Institute Symposium, Water Challenges and Regional priorities for 2050, on the occasion of the MWI's 40th Anniversary.
- MASAR-Water Seminar: AECID's MASAR Water seminar devoted to discussing the Integration of non-conventional resources in a context of climate change in the Mediterranean area.
- **5+5 WSWM Meeting: 10th Expert Working Group** meeting of the Water Strategy in the Western Mediterranean 5+5, to discuss and agree on a **Capacity Development Programme** within its Action Plan.

The meeting kicked-off with the intervention of the President of the Jucar River Basin Authority and Permanent Secretary of MENBO, **Mr. Miguel Polo**, who warmly welcomed all the participants and thanked them for their attendance and their involvement in the previous events and meetings held during the week. He then recalled the approval of the Ministerial Declaration of 10th March 2022, in Valencia, which entrusted to the Working Group the elaboration of a Programme for Capacity Development.

Subsequently, the representative of the **Spanish Presidency, Mrs. Concepción Marcuello**, took the floor.

Mrs. Marcuello first conveyed the message from the Spanish Director General of Water (Mr, Teodoro Estrela) that the meeting should serve to advance in the preparation of the Programme allowing the group to start working on a concrete proposal of the Programme.

She also recalled that Spain continues firmly supporting the Strategy 5+5 and its corresponding Action Plan and noted that the 5+5 Group can be considered as the driver of water actions in the Mediterranean, setting the example through the implementation of numerous best practices by the different actors.

In particular, regarding capacity development, she informed the Group that Spain is deeply committed to the promotion and support of capacity development initiatives in the international arena, in particular within the ONU-UNESCO to help strengthen the water sector.

Then, Mr. **Ramiro Martínez** (General Coordinator of MENBO), representing the Secretariat took the floor and thanked the Jucar River Basin Authority for hosting the meeting and welcomed all the participants.

Mr. Ramirez noted the attendance of six countries of the 5+5 Group: Mauritania, Morocco, Tunisia, Malta, Portugal and Spain. He also welcomed the invited countries (Egypt and Jordania) and the observer organisations present: IME, CIHEAM and *Casa Mediterráneo*.

He went on reminding the purpose of the meeting, recalling the mandate given by the Ministers to the technical Group on 10th March 2022, to elaborate and implement a capacity development-programme, as well as the results of the previous technical meeting that took place on the same day.

Mr. Martínez briefly introduced the draft Proposal for a Capacity Development and Knowledge Transfer Programme submitted by the Spanish Presidency that had been previously circulated among the members. He described the general features of the draft Programme, such as its duration, the proposed courses and the main organisational issues. He highlighted the need to set up a Steering Group, which, inter alia, would assume the task to assess the training needs of the member countries, and elaborate and monitor the capacity development programme.

Moreover, he suggested that the Steering Group should be composed of 2 to 4 member countries as well as by representatives of the IHP (International Hydrological Programme), UpM (Union for the Mediterranean) and IME (Mediterranean Water Institute), as distinguished associates.

He also reminded the pertinence of involving academic institutions in the programme, primarily to allow for the issuing of attendance certificates, thereby contributing to enriching the students' CVs and providing the courses with a quality label. In this regard, he underlined that the Secretariat already contacted a number of institutions, which will be involved in the trainings (Polytechnic University of Valencia, CEDEX, and CIHEAM- International Centre for Advanced Mediterranean Agronomic Studies).

Regarding the financing of the courses, he mentioned that, even though it was previously advised that the host country should pay the costs of the courses, this aspect may have to be reconsidered as some countries might not have the financial capacity to organise courses. He thus suggested that the Steering Group should maintain close contact with the financing institutions to explore alternative financing possibilities in such cases.

Then, the **Spanish Presidency** (Mrs Concepción Marcuello), explained the different parts of the Draft proposal for a Capacity Development.

Mrs. Marcuello underlined that the Proposal is based on three main elements, namely:

1. The discussions and conclusions reached during the previous Working Group of 10th March, as well as later exchanges and debates with some counterparts,
2. It is streamlined with the priorities of the WSWM and its Action Plan, and
3. It takes into account the new Global Accelerator Framework (GAF) of the SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals) and the Capacity Development Initiative led by UNESCO (addressed below).

She pointed out that the proposal is composed of two distinct parts, the organisational part, and the Annex (which contains the work plan for the next period (2022/2023-2024)).

In addition, she described the following guiding principles set out in the Proposal:

- Match offer and demand of capacity development,
- Work in coordination with other initiatives carried out by regional or global relevant institutions (e.g. UfM, PRIMA, UNESCO, UNEP, FAO...),
- Definition of a biannual Activity Plan, and
- Act in coordination with MENBO.

She then further developed the organisational framework briefly touched upon by Mr. Martínez in his intervention:

- Decision organs: Steering Group and Technical Group,
- Support Structure: Secretariat (MENBO),
- Strategic partners: donors, networks, and other financial institutions,
- Centres of excellence: mainly referring to academic institutions.

She announced that Spain is willing to join the Steering Group.

In addition, Mrs. Marcuello commented on the delivery process of the Programme.

She stated that it shall correspond to the Steering Group to collect the training needs or proposals of the members, analyse them, and come up with a firm proposal of a biannual work Plan, which will then be submitted for approval to the Working Group. Once the activity has the support of the members, a call would be launched by joint agreement.

She also underlined that each activity proposed shall have a coordinator and be led by an organising institution which shall be in close contact with the Steering Group and the Secretariat.

Then, Mrs. Marcuello described the implementation of the activities, suggesting that the Secretariat should monitor the development of the course, and once finalised, deliver an assessment report of the results.

As regards the funding of the activities, she highlighted that the capacity development Programme should count with a sustained line of financing irrespective of the degree of involvement of the members in each course or activity.

Subsequently, the **Secretariat** (Mr. Ramiro Martínez) congratulated Spain on the work accomplished and the Draft Proposal submitted, while apologising to the members for not having been able to circulate the proposal in advance.

Discussion with the members and observers

Casa Mediterráneo

The debate began with the intervention of the representative of *Casa Mediterráneo*, Mr. Ignacio de Julián, who explained the purposed of his organisation stating that the fundamental objective and duty of *Casa Mediterráneo* (based in Alicante, Spain) is to showcase and disseminate the existing talent and knowhow in the Mediterranean, including in the water sector.

UNESCO

Mrs. Alice Aureli, representative of the International Hydrological Programme (IHP) of UNESCO, joined the meeting remotely.

Mrs. Aureli set out the main features of the new UN Initiative for Capacity Development in the Water Sector (ONU-Water) approved last May, coordinated by UNESCO and UN DESA, and supported by the Delft Institute for Water Education, besides numerous UN agencies and collaborators such as the Spanish Ministry for The Ecological Transition and Demographic Challenge.

She stated that the rationale of the Initiative comes back from the disappointing implementation status of SDG 6, as reflected in the reports published to date, which show the difficulties that many Member States continue to face in achieving the targets set. On these grounds, in 2020, the Secretary General put forward the Global Accelerator Framework (GAF) for the accomplishment of SDG6.

She mentioned the 5 components of the Global Accelerator Framework (data and information, financing, innovation, governance, and capacity development), highlighting the inclusion therein of the Capacity Development Accelerator which underlies the Capacity Development Initiative.

She went on noting that the Capacity Development Initiative has an inter-sectoral character and reaches out far beyond the training component, which many times is insufficient to address the different challenges faced.

Spain

Followed by the intervention of Mrs. Aureli, Mrs. Marcuello took the floor as the Presidency.

Mrs. Marcuello first invited UNESCO to be part of the Capacity Development Programme of the 5+5, by offering to join the Steering Group. Mrs. Aureli showed her appreciation and welcomed the invitation.

Morocco

Mrs. Oualkacha thanked and praised the Presidency for the submitted proposal and showed her satisfaction for the progress of the work since the meeting in March while she hoped that cooperation with other initiatives be further fostered. She reacted to the presentation of UNESCO and singled out the global Accelerator for Innovation, stating that being able to innovate is of utmost importance for Morocco in order to move forward in the water sector. She also noted the crucial role played by monitoring and evaluation indicators.

Mrs. EL-HARRAKI appraised the draft of capacity building program and pointed out the interest of Morocco for the different topics. She added that, since Morocco and countries of the region are facing climate change effects and mobilizing more and more non-conventional water resources, there is a high need for strengthening capacities in “Financing the water sector” to facilitate having access to new tools of water infrastructure projects. Also, water accounting subject is of paramount interest for Morocco and countries of the region. Consequently, the table in the Annex, about countries ‘interests have to be reviewed according to remarks expressed. She also underlined the great interest of associating academic institutions

Malta

Mr. Sapiano emphasised that the opportunity to find synergies with UNESCO will strengthen the process within the 5+5 Programme.

Tunisia

Mr. Hamadi Habaieb stressed the importance of capacity development in water management, but also of innovation, governance, and adaptation to climate change.

CIHEAM

Mr. Raúl Compés, Director of the **CIHEAM**- International Centre for Advanced Mediterranean Agronomic Studies, offered the capacity of the Institute to fully collaborate with the 5+5 Group on the Capacity Development Programme. He underlined that the added value of CIHEAM, compared to other academic centres, is its flexibility to organise on demand courses and trainings, besides its established Master on Sustainable Water Management and Governance in Rural and Natural Environments.

UNESCO

Mrs. Aureli fully supported the opportunity to find synergies between different regional initiatives, in particular between the 5+5 and UNESCO Initiatives.

Secretariat (MENBO)

The Secretariat (Mr. Martínez) referred back to the description of the 5+5 draft Programme on capacity development. He informed the participants about the new concrete proposals for courses on the table that feed into the Work Plan:

1. Course on joint management of surface and groundwater resources in coastal areas, to be organised by MENBO and funded by UNESCO, within the framework of the UNESCO MedProgramme (“Child Project”), taking place in February 2023, also in cooperation with the Polytechnic University of Valencia,
2. Integration (in the 5+5 Work Plan) of other courses foreseen within the annual Master of the CIHEAM, linked to the financial cooperation in place between the CIHEAM and the Spanish Directorate General for Water,
3. Course on the operation and Management of Desalination Plants, to be organised in 2023 by the Energy and Water Agency of Malta,
4. Course on the relation Water and Energy, to be organised in 2024 by the Energy and Water Agency of Malta,
5. Workshop on Groundwater monitoring, possibly to be organised by Spain during the Spanish Presidency of the European Union (second semester of 2023) with the support of AECID (Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation) and CEDEX (Centre for Public Works Studies and Experimentation)

Malta

Subsequently, Mr. Sapiano gave further details about the course on desalination that Malta committed to organise. He announced that, following the Ministerial meeting on 10th March in Valencia, his team had been working with the water utility on a first proposal to develop the course. He stressed that the course will cover practical issues around desalination, not only theory, targeting a wide range from engineers in the plants, up to technical staff working on site.

He considered that it would be essential to coordinate with the Secretariat on the promotion and dissemination of the courses. Besides, he pointed out that evaluation and follow-up are crucial to ensure a successful programme, which should also help shape a “Community of

practice in the Mediterranean”, for instance by encouraging ex-post exchanges between managers, trainees, and technicians, providing thus for a “living” programme.

Tunisia

The representative of Tunisia referred to the Tunisian Strategy at the Horizon 2050 in the water sector that is being elaborated in his country and will be soon published, offering to share the publication with the other members of the Group, as the Strategy is a very valuable document containing provisions and plans on water investing, financing, and governance.

Mauritania

Mr. Saadou Ebih commented on the course proposed by Malta regarding the operation of desalination plants, stating that public-private partnership should be integrated in the development of the course, eventually considering funding from the private companies managing the plants.

Secretariat (MENBO)

Reacting to a previous comment, Mr. Martínez clarified that all the courses organised in the framework of the Programme will be open for participation to at least all the countries member of the 5+5, while, depending on the financial circumstances, other countries could be invited in certain cases (for instance in the case the UfM would cover the accommodation and transport expenses, then other countries outside of the 5+5 Group but members of the UfM would be invited to benefit from the training). In this regard, he added that, ideally, the courses should be published as being promoted by the 5+5 Group, whilst being open for participation to all the Mediterranean countries.

Morocco

Mrs. Oualkacha commented that the draft document submitted should be revised so that it is rendered “saleable” and “visible”, eliminating some overlaps in the courses listed and certain redundancies that she pointed to, in particular as regards courses related to climate change. She also enquired how the estimation of the costs of the courses, as it appears in the document, was calculated.

Finally, she informed the members and the Secretariat that the priority themes for Morocco are non-conventional water resources (desalination and reuse), climate modelling and water accounting.

Egypt

Mr. Emad Mahmoud Khalil, representing the Ministry of Water Resources of Egypt, stated that even though Egypt does not belong to the 5+5 Group, his country is willing to cooperate in the activities of the 5+5, including the Capacity Development Programme.

He also claimed that Egypt carries out planning for projects at 25 and 50 years horizon. He added that Egypt is particularly interested in drought and floods indicators. He finally pointed out that Egypt has significant capacity but limited resources.

Portugal

Mr. Luis Morbey, representing Portugal, intervened remotely. He thanked the Secretariat and the Presidency for the proposal submitted congratulating on the progress made since March.

However, he considered that the critical factor would be the funding of the actions, especially in the case of face-to-face courses. Thus, he suggested the inclusion of webinars in the Programme.

He informed the members that Portugal had already contacted and involved the Portuguese Water Partnership and a centre of excellence in Lisbon.

Mediterranean Water Institute (IME)

Following the comments by Portugal, Mr. François Guerber, representing the Mediterranean Water institute (**IME**) as an observer, took the floor. He first congratulated the Presidency and the Secretariat on the quality of the draft document presented.

Mr. Guerber thought that it is necessary to focus on a limited number of issues thereby avoiding the multiplication of subject-matters. He also considered that it is essential to target the appropriate audience depending on the subject-matter to be addressed by the course.

In addition, he fully supported the involvement of both professionals and academics, so that to cover both the theory and the practical application. He equally agreed with the proposal to foresee an ex-post evaluation of the courses which should also allow to maintain the contact between the trainers and the trainees in the long term.

Regarding the role that IME could play in the elaboration of the Capacity Development Programme, he pointed out that, as a network of actors, IME could help by putting in contact different actors with each other. He then brought up some examples of know-how which could be shared as for instance the tariff system applied by the Water Agencies in France, to help strengthen the financing framework in some countries.

Lastly, Mr. Guerber expressed his agreement with the need to coordinate with the promoters of pre-existing initiatives on capacity development, in which IME would have a role to play bringing together the involved actors.

Subsequently, Mr. Marc García, as Secretary General of IME, considered that private companies should be invited to get fully involved in the different trainings, in particular in order to facilitate exchanges between them and the public administration but also and foremost to request them to financially support some of the courses.

Spain

Reacting to some of the comments made by Morocco, Mrs. Marcuello first reminded that at the previous meeting in March, the UfM (Union for the Mediterranean) offered to act as a facilitator and supporter for training on financing issues.

In relation to some of the specific parts of the draft document commented on by Morocco, she informed the members that many of the proposals put forward in the document are based on the long experience accumulated by Spain acting as the Secretariat of the Training Programme on water management in Latin-America, since 2008.

Moreover, Mrs. Marcuello agreed with Morocco with the statement that the document should be improved so that it is rendered “saleable” and becomes “visible”. Therefore, she invited the MENBO Secretariat to revise the document by inserting all the comments and ideas brought forward at the meeting and removing possible redundancies, so that it can be circulated as soon as possible among the members and other stakeholders.

In relation to organisational aspects, she proposed the addition of an annex to the document containing a template to help introduce and describe the proposed activity, as well as a template

on the ex-post evaluation of the course (both based on the templates used in the Latin-American Training Programme).

Lastly, she stated that, as a general rule, she thought trainees should not be financed for their participation in the courses, on the grounds that this would bring added value to the course in question.

As a reaction to the intervention of the representative from Egypt, Spain declared his support to the participation in the Capacity Development Programme of countries not belonging to the 5+5 Group.

Secretariat (MENBO)

After the comments from Spain, the Secretariat (Mr. Ramiro Martínez) took up the request of the Presidency to revise the document, while adding that the document must not only be “saleable” and “visible” but also a “living” document in the sense that it could be update where necessary depending on future discussions and circumstances. In addition, referring to the financing of trainees, he reminded that the tradition in the Mediterranean is that the southern countries usually have their participation costs covered and that therefore this issue should be further discussed.

Malta

Mr. Sapiano stated that IME could be an important facilitator by promoting the course across its network of actors and in particular the operators.

In relation to funding mechanisms, he advised to try to address EU funding, be it through cross-border mechanisms or the TAIEX instrument and offered to contact the European Commission to organise a meeting together with other DGs (Spain, France, Portugal) to explore the possibilities of funding.

He proposed that the Capacity Development Programme could also be promoted during the Spanish Presidency of the EU (second semester of 2023).

Mauritania

Mr. Saadou Ebih announced that Mauritania would like to take part in the Steering Committee. Besides, he pointed out that Mauritania is interested in the issue of non-conventional water resources.

As regards the trainees’ expenses, he warned that not covering travelling and accommodation expenses would diminish the chances for the southern countries to participate.

Secretariat (MENBO)

The meeting was closed by the Secretariat. Mr. Ramiro Martinez thanked all the participants for their attendance and active interventions, and set out the following preliminary conclusions:

- General agreement that the members support the draft document as a whole,
- The Secretariat will review and amend the draft document by integrating the new elements and proposals put forward by the participants and will then circulate it as soon as possible among the members and observers,
- Took note and welcomed the bid to participate in the Steering Committee from Spain, Malta, Mauritania and UNESCO, and announced that IME and UfM will be officially invited as observers within the Steering Committee.

Subsequent to the meeting, a Note Verbale was received from the representative of Morocco, Ms. Oualkacha, proposing Morocco as a member of the Steering Committee.