



Second plenary session  
Agadir, 29 January 2011

**ARLEM report on local water management  
in the Mediterranean**

This ARLEM report was prepared by rapporteur Mr Ramón Luis Valcárcel Siso, President of the region of Murcia (Spain). It was discussed by the members of the ARLEM's commission on Sustainable Development (SUDEV) on 2 July and 8 November 2010 and was adopted at the second ARLEM plenary session in Agadir (Morocco) on 29 January 2011.

## **INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

The declaration issued at the **Paris Summit of 13 July 2008**, which established the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) and was attended by 43 heads of state and government from the EU and the Mediterranean basin, refers to the sustainable management of water resources as one of its fundamental priorities.

**At the Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on Water**, held in Jordan on 22 December 2008, UfM ministers agreed to draw up a **Strategy for Water in the Mediterranean (SWM)** and approved guidelines for its drafting, calling on local and regional bodies to take part in the future strategy.

At the **5th World Water Forum held in Istanbul in March 2009**, local authorities adopted the Istanbul Water Consensus, in which they give a commitment to optimising water management systems and adapting these to global challenges, identifying targets, developing adaptation plans and setting specific goals.

**At the Conference held by the Mediterranean Commission of United Cities and Local Governments (Med-CGLU), in Lyon on 24 November 2009**, the contribution of regional and local bodies to the UfM's Water Strategy was adopted.

The **4th Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on Water, held in Barcelona on 13 April 2010**, ultimately failed to adopt the Strategy for Water in the Mediterranean, but the draft version forms a fundamental basis for future progress in this area<sup>1</sup>.

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**The first meeting of the Euro-Mediterranean Regional and Local Assembly (ARLEM) took place on 21 January 2010.** ARLEM was set up by the EU Committee of the Regions, local and regional authorities of the three shores of the Mediterranean and international and European associations representing local and regional bodies in the Euro-Mediterranean area in order to provide the UfM with the crucial support of local and regional bodies when carrying out its projects and to give it a territorial dimension.

With this report on local water management, ARLEM aims to offer local and regional support to the **Strategy for Water in the Mediterranean**, its priorities, targets and instruments, in order to achieve wide-ranging goals: firstly to ensure that the Water Strategy is now adopted and secondly to propose practical measures in this field, on the basis of the proposals endorsed at the Barcelona Ministerial Conference held in April 2010.

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This point (and subsequent points referring to the same situation) is likely to be amended in line with the outcome of the Summit of Heads of State or Government, which will take place in November.

## **PROPOSALS BY REGIONAL AND LOCAL REPRESENTATIVES FOR THE STRATEGY FOR WATER IN THE MEDITERRANEAN AND ITS LOCAL AND INTEGRATED MANAGEMENT**

Preserving water resources in terms of quality and quantity is one of the main challenges facing the world today. Global challenges require joint responses and effective water management requires joint action and the involvement of all of the authorities and users affected, because only through shared vision and common commitment will the objectives be achieved.

The Mediterranean basin suffers from an acute shortage of water, which impacts on the environment and the development of socio-economic activities that affect millions of people in the region. This shortage could worsen in coming years, for climate-related, economic, demographic and social reasons. Local and regional leaders are aware of this challenge and have taken on board the aims and measures set out in the draft Strategy for Water in the Mediterranean, convinced of the need for a joint response by all tiers of government in the area concerned.

The strategy should be developed through a properly structured and open process that includes both national governments and local and regional leaders, because the implementation and monitoring of the planned policies and initiatives will largely depend on establishing responsibilities and coordination appropriately between all tiers of government. Furthermore, the private sector and civil society must make an active contribution to the implementation of the strategy, through public participation and good governance of water.

Local and regional bodies effectively play an increasingly active role in water supply and sewage disposal, although their role should be further strengthened and supported, in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity, and with responsibilities allocated to the most appropriate tier of government. It is also important to ensure that all tiers of government manage water, ecosystems and the associated natural resources in an integrated, decentralised and participatory manner. Just as importantly, the need to ensure access to water in rural areas, in order to combat depopulation, must not be overlooked, in line with the recommendations of the United Nations of July 2010 on access to water.

### **Local and integrated water management**

Local authorities are playing an increasingly active role in water and sewage disposal services. Furthermore, many regional and local authorities are responsible, amongst other things, for implementing policies, plans and measures in this area and for combating poor practices and inefficiency.

In conjunction with wider-ranging infrastructural and regulatory measures, which generally fall within the remit of national governments, mechanisms such as financial incentives, cost-benefit or cost-efficiency studies are extremely important for the rational selection of water supply and demand management strategies, which should be designed in cooperation with the regional and local authorities. These strategies should also boost demand management instruments, such as measuring

systems, incentives for 'grey water' systems, network improvements, charging through local rates or taxes, or fiscal measures that tax the production of waste water and make it possible to treat and recycle such water. This would improve the sector's ability to finance itself, in order to avoid excessive consumption, achieve increasingly efficient usage and ensure that due regard is given to the 'polluter pays' principle. In drawing up these strategies, account must be taken of the importance for different territories of the use of traditional water management systems, which are often a valuable cultural and technological heritage which must be preserved. Furthermore, in choosing alternatives, it is very important to bear in mind the need to increase energy efficiency, in such a way as to improve both water supply and energy consumption.

Local management also includes promoting sub-national measures to improve water resource systems' resilience to drought and climate change – which will exacerbate the current problems – to reduce flood-risk through infrastructure and land-use planning, to protect surface and ground water, and for all tiers of government to manage water, ecosystems and natural resources in an integrated, decentralised and participatory manner.

The Strategy for Water should be based on an integrated approach to water resources, ensuring that its measures involve all sectoral policies (the environment, transport, energy, agriculture, etc.), all of the players concerned and the different tiers of decision-making. This approach should cover the management of supply as well as demand, and should if necessary develop appropriate measures, both structural (implementing technological improvements, new infrastructure and updating existing infrastructure, etc.) and non-structural (regulations, financial incentive schemes, institutional mechanisms, etc.) - and attention should be paid to both the quantitative and qualitative aspects of water resources (environmental quality, shortages, efficiency, flooding, drought and climate change).

Weighting the various measures in a rational manner will depend on the circumstances in each specific case and should be carried out on the basis of plans and strategies that ensure local and regional authority participation and guarantee, through the direct involvement of these authorities, the viability, profitability and the social and environmental value of these plans.

### **Governance**

Proper implementation of the integrated approach will require plans to be drawn up to reflect river basin districts and not political or administrative divisions. Local authorities should be given an effective role in all bodies responsible for planning and managing river basin districts, in a system of multilevel governance and joint management, with differentiated and clearly defined responsibilities.

To ensure the strategy's success, the principles of subsidiarity, coordination and multilevel governance are particularly important because - in the common vision set out by the UfM - it falls to the States, together with their local and regional authorities, to carry out the measures needed to address problems relating to water resource management. Public participation and transparent decision-making should be key aspects of effective governance, involving not only water administrators themselves; they should involve all organisations and individuals affected, from the highest decision-making bodies to the end-users.

Measures should, therefore, fall within a global Euro-Mediterranean framework, whilst acting locally, with the different tiers of government demonstrating the necessary flexibility. To this end, and to make it easier to draw up a framework for effective governance, new consultation mechanisms could be established at different levels - **the consultative committees** - to help channel and formalise public participation, linking local and regional authorities to the different user groups and central authorities, under the auspices of and in close cooperation with regional bodies such as the UfM or the European Union.

The main aim of these consultative committees, initially at the level of water basin districts and then grouped together on a larger scale, would be to work together to create integrated water management strategies and ultimately to help implement the provisions of the Water Strategy, launch it effectively at the designated regional level and follow up and assess progress on achieving the strategy's goals.

The consultative committees would help identify the specific needs of the different regions, within a framework of common action on water management, with the ability to draw together the different local and regional policies. The aim would be to ensure the coordination and effectiveness of the goals that have been set, watching over local and regional interests, in order to uphold the general interest and that of future generations.

In order to take this process forward it would be useful to have a support framework in place, firstly to confer legitimacy on the role of the local and regional authorities involved in water management and secondly, to ensure the human and financial resources needed, in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity and with each State's legal system.

### **Proposal for a pilot project**

Convinced of the added value of the experience held by the tier of government closest to the citizen, the local and regional authorities of the Euro-Mediterranean basin hope to promote the common development of the goals set by the Strategy for Water in the Mediterranean.

It is therefore proposed that a Euro-Mediterranean pilot project be set up by the UfM, in coordination with ARLEM, making it possible firstly to agree on practical goals<sup>2</sup>, taking the lead from those already set in the Water Strategy, adopting the model of the EU Mayors' Covenant to combat climate change and the Istanbul Water Consensus. These goals should also be met by the local and regional authorities taking part in the project under the auspices of the secretariat of the UfM. Regional and local authorities should be the main players involved in the pilot project, in order to help meet the strategy's short- and medium-term goals, and will be likely to receive funding assistance through the UfM, the EU or other international or private sources of funding.

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For example, in relation to the following areas: rainwater disposal, water decontamination, regeneration and re-use, economic studies and implementation of the 'polluter pays' principle, assessing the risk of flooding and rising sea levels, joint consideration of water and energy in water services, developing specific networks to monitor water resources in areas suffering water stress, the vulnerability of supply systems to climate change and the diversification of supply sources.

In this regard, and on the basis of the principles underpinning the Strategy for Water and the various Mediterranean local and regional authorities' contributions to the drafting of this report, it is proposed that at the pilot stage, projects pursue the previously identified goals, in the following areas of action: 1) education/awareness-raising; 2) training; 3) research and technology transfer.

These areas of action will essentially be aimed at the actors directly involved in water management, from administrations to end users. The pilot project must therefore expressly provide for training and for the exchange of knowledge and best practices amongst all actors, in a continuous and evolving manner.

This pilot project should be carried out under the auspices of the Union for the Mediterranean and in close cooperation with ARLEM, which should agree on the procedure needed to get it off the ground, including launching a call for proposals by the UfM, defining the assessment process, setting criteria (in line with the fourteen criteria already detailed in the Strategy), and establishing a committee within the UfM secretariat to follow-up projects.

In order to implement this initiative and any future projects, available funding sources will have to be identified.

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## **POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS**

The proper implementation of the four priorities set out in the Water Strategy (water governance, adapting to climate change, managing demand and water financing) will require the involvement of local and regional authorities. This involvement in turn requires the responsibilities of all tiers of government and coordination between them to be properly defined.

Establishing responsibilities must ensure a degree of decentralisation and own human and financial resources, enabling local and regional authorities to play their role supporting the national and international players involved.

Convinced of the added value of the experience of local and regional Mediterranean authorities in the field of water management, and aware that only an approach based on multilevel governance can achieve the goals that have been set, ARLEM:

1. **Calls on the UfM, the Member States and international organisations to make the necessary political effort to secure the adoption of the Strategy for Water in the Mediterranean as soon as possible, and supports the efforts of the regional and local tiers of government to start studying ways achieving the Strategy's goals. In any event, maintains that the fact that the strategy has not yet been formally adopted should not stop authorities from starting to implement the measures needed to achieve its goals. The strategy's operational objectives**

should respond in a consistent manner to the short-, medium- and long-term goals set, combining the enhancement and funding of new capacities with efforts to manage demand.

2. **Reminds the UfM and the Member States** of the need to **involve local and regional authorities** in drawing up, launching, **implementing and following up** the initiatives contained in the Water Strategy. All of these measures could also help to achieve the Millennium Development Goals in the field of access to water and sanitation.
3. **Urges the UfM to involve ARLEM directly** in all initiatives which are linked to the drawing up and launching of the Water Strategy, in line with the raison d'être of this Euro-Mediterranean Assembly.
4. **States** its conviction that the **principle of multilevel governance** is included in measures relating to water management, ensuring that all interested parties and the different levels of decision-making are involved, and **calls on the UfM Member States to ensure that this principle is applied** within their borders and when **implementing** the Strategy for Water in the Mediterranean. More specifically, calls for local and regional authorities to be involved in developing national plans to reduce and adapt to climate change, thus promoting decentralised cooperation between local governments.
5. **Suggests that the UfM and the Member States** establish "**consultative committees**", as a tool for improving effective governance to ensure the integrated management of water resources. These committees, which would be organised along river basin district lines, would help define the problems and specific needs of each region in the Mediterranean basin, within a global and coherent framework, based on a **participatory** and transparent approach. They would also support the establishment of integrated water management strategies and their effective implementation in line with the provisions of the Water Strategy, also contributing to following them up and assessing their success.
6. **Proposes that the UfM** launch a **pilot project** on local water management in the context of the Strategy for Water in the Mediterranean, under the terms described above, at the World Water Forum due to be held in Marseilles in March 2012. This initiative should be coordinated by the UfM and developed in cooperation with ARLEM.
7. In order to properly address all of the initiatives needed for water management in the Mediterranean, **urges the UfM** to set up a **specific department** within its secretariat to ensure the follow-up and continuity of matters linked to local water management, to provide ongoing technical advice and monitoring throughout the life-cycle of any projects that are launched.
8. Therefore **calls on the UfM** to have this new department, in conjunction with the European Commission and other European and international institutions and bodies, produce a **financing atlas or map** that includes a breakdown of financing opportunities and synergies between different schemes and institutions. This initiative should encourage the presentation of projects, making existing procedures and resources more comprehensible and transparent,

whilst at the same time promoting greater practical cooperation between the different institutions.

9. To facilitate the exchange of best practice and provide a shared vision of problems and opportunities, **calls on the UfM** to draw up a descriptive and updated list of current **national and sub-national legislation** on water-related issues, emphasising the legislation's main features, experiences of its application and future trends.
10. **Calls on the European Commission** to collate and examine all **projects relating to water management** that have been carried out under existing Community and Mediterranean programmes and undertake a joint study that will make it possible to draw up a single guide to good practices, detailing the results that have been achieved, focussing on each of the goals identified by the Strategy for Water in the Mediterranean.
11. **Wishes to highlight** the importance of the coordination, participation and advice of Euro-Mediterranean and international **scientific and technological centres** of excellence that are carrying out research projects on water resource management, channelling these contributions through UfM initiatives such as the Euro-Mediterranean University.
12. **Calls on the co-presidents of ARLEM to forward this report to the Heads of State or Government of the Union for the Mediterranean, the secretary-general of the UfM, the President of the European Council and the presidents of the various Community institutions and bodies.**

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**N.B.:** Appendix overleaf.

**APPENDIX – List of contributions received<sup>3</sup>**

- Qalyubiya Region (Egypt)
- Province of Algiers (Algeria)
- Zadar Region (Croatia)
- City of Ma'alot-Tarshiha (Israel)
- Catalonia Region (Spain)
- Puglia Region (Italy)
- Hérault Region (France)/Arco Latino
- Sicily Region (Italy)
- Nouakchott (Mauritania)
- Sousse (Tunisia)
- Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality (Turkey)
- United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG)
- Jacques Blanc, the Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly's rapporteur on water.

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The contributions can be consulted at the following webpage: [www.cor.europa.eu/arlem](http://www.cor.europa.eu/arlem).