

What is SWIM?

Water resources in the Mediterranean are scarce, unequally distributed in space and time, degraded and poorly managed. Approximately 180 million inhabitants have access to less than 1,000 m³ per capita per year and 80 million live under conditions of water scarcity (less than 500m³/capita/year).

This situation is likely to deteriorate further in view of the increased population and rural migration/urbanisation trends (inside the same country or among different countries), fluctuating economic growth and the unpredictable impacts of climate change. Countries have traditionally focused more on investing on “hardware”, in the form of large infrastructure projects and less on “software”, in terms of policy reforms, governance, efficiency, fiscal and environmental sustainability, and climate change adaptation and mitigation. The challenge is to manage water resources holistically, in an accountable and transparent manner, in view of contributing effectively to the sustainable development, stability and prosperity of the Mediterranean region.

With the aim to respond to this challenge and contribute to the effective implementation and extensive dissemination of sustainable water management policies and practices in the Southern Mediterranean Region, in the context of increasing water scarcity, combined pressures on water resources from a wide range of users, desertification processes and in connection with climate change the Regional Programme **Sustainable Water Integrated Management (SWIM)** was launched by the European Commission in December 2010 and funded with an overall budget of approximately 22 million Euro.

SWIM Partner Countries (PCs) are: Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya*, Morocco, occupied Palestinian territory, Syria* and Tunisia.

The Programme consists of two Components, acting as a mutually strengthening unit that supports much needed reforms and new creative approaches in relation to water management in the Mediterranean region, aiming at their wide diffusion and replication. The two SWIM Components are:

- A Support Mechanism funded with a budget of € 6.7 million and
- Five (5) Demonstration Projects funded with a budget of approximately € 15 million.

Both Components contribute to the achievement of the Programme's specific objectives that consist of:

- Drawing the attention of Partner Countries' decision-makers and stakeholders on existing and emerging threats to water resources, on the necessity to adopt a more appropriate water consumption and water use model, as well as on the existence of solutions to tackle the problem;
- Supporting Partner Countries in designing and implementing sustainable water management policies at the national and local levels, in liaison with existing international initiatives in the area concerned;
- Contributing to ensuring institutional reinforcement and the development of the necessary planning and management skills and facilitate the transfer of know-how;

- Enhancing regional cooperation in the areas of sustainable and integrated management of water resources through institutional strengthening, inter-sector dialogue, awareness raising, capacity building and stakeholder consultation and participation.

**The situation in spring 2012 is that following formal EC decision activities have been stalled in Syria while Libya has officially become a Partner Country in the SWIM Programme.*

Context in which SWIM is implemented

SWIM is implemented under the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) that guides the EU policy in the Mediterranean region.

It also aligns with the outcomes of the Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conferences on Environment (Cairo, 2006) and Water (Dead Sea, 2008) and reflects the four major themes of the draft Strategy for Water in the Mediterranean (SWM), mandated by the Union for the Mediterranean.

The main priority areas of the draft Strategy are:

- Water Governance,
- Water and Climate Change,
- Water Financing and
- Water Demand Management and Efficiency, including non-conventional water resources.

While the adoption of the draft SWM is still pending due to the lack of political agreement among the parties and in spite of the consensus reached on the content of the Strategy, SWIM supports concrete measures that would arise from the draft Strategy - if eventually adopted - but are not conditional on its adoption to pursue concrete improvements at regional level.

Moreover, SWIM is operationally linked to the objectives of the Mediterranean Component of the EU Water Initiative (MED EUWI) that aims to contribute to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the UN World Summit on Sustainable Development Targets for water and sanitation through the adoption of Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) policies and measures at national and regional levels.

SWIM also targets water issues related to the three main sources of pollution tackled by the Horizon 2020 Initiative to De-Pollute the Mediterranean: municipal waste, municipal wastewater, and industrial emissions.

Finally, SWIM also links to other related regional processes, such as the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (MSSD) and the Arab Water Strategy elaborated respectively in the framework of the Barcelona Convention and of the League of Arab States, and to on-going pertinent programmes, i.e.g. the UNEP/MAP GEF Strategic Partnership for the Mediterranean Large Marine Ecosystem (MedPartnership) and the World Bank GEF Sustainable Mediterranean.