

# Water Governance in the Mediterranean Region and Public Involvement

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The aim of this paper is twofold: on the one hand, to present, in a concise manner, the trajectory of Water Governance and Public Involvement/Participation in the Mediterranean region while presenting at the same time the interface between the two terms; and, on the other, to provide an overview of recent developments in the subject through the work of two regional organisations and propose ways of further enhancing this interaction.

Water is high on the agenda for the Mediterranean, given the scarce water conditions the region faces. In addition to having water unevenly allocated in space and time both regionally and within countries, the situation is further exacerbated by intense demographic changes (population growth and urbanisation trends), unplanned use of the available surface and groundwater resources (leading to overuse and abuse of the resource), coupled with the region's constellation of geopolitical particularities. To add to the situation's complexity, the consequences of climate change, which are proclaimed to be particularly severe in the Mediterranean, call for an urgent policy shift towards adaptation and mitigation measures in order to tackle these corollaries.

Having painted a rather ominous picture, it is also essential to acknowledge two facts: i) The early (since the 1960s) efforts of pioneer scientists, personalities (see Jain Caistean, Elisabeth Wann Borgese, Aurelio Pechei and Doxiades, etc) and civil society groups in raising public awareness on issues of pollution and degradation of natural resources in the region and the future consequences; ii) the relatively early involvement of countries at regional (since 1975), national and sub-national levels to address overall environmental and water challenges in a region with inherent difficulties in international/transnational relations indicating a genuine desire to tackle the environmental problems, without overlooking the commitment to achieving internationally set targets on water and sanitation (Millennium Development Goals and Johannesburg Targets, for example). Within this framework, awareness has been raised across the region on water resources management being primarily an issue of governance and, thus, requiring political commitment on the one hand and wide stakeholder participation on the other.

## **Discussing Governance and Water Governance**

### *Governance*

Governance is a term frequently used to encompass a wide range of meanings; it has become a catchword for functions as diverse as facilitating development and enhancing economic growth, to monitoring the execution of western type socio-economic requirements in the developing world and utilising managerial tools and methods in the public sector to denote the trend towards devolution and private sector involvement.

Despite the apparent convergence with the word government, governance is a wider and more inclusive concept embracing the relationship between a socie-

ty and its government and covering an extensive agenda of policy activities. Governance is about effectively implementing socially acceptable allocation of resources, and power and regulation and is therefore intensely political. This trait at regional level is further reinforced by national sovereignty, social values, ideology and the political systems that tend to impact on attempts to change governance arrangements in all sectors, and the water sector in particular. An important shift in governance thinking is that development is now increasingly seen as a task involving society as a whole and not as the exclusive domain of the government or investors. In the Mediterranean region in particular, where government structures tend to be still rigid, change-resistant and all-policy-encompassing, it is important that the more inclusive governance concept is slowly but steadily gaining ground, also through the encouragement of regional and international forums (UN bodies, EU Agencies, Global Water Partnership-Mediterranean – GWP-Med, donor community), other initiatives and processes (Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development – MSSD, Mediterranean Component of the EU Water Initiative – MED EUWI) and not least the pioneering work of civil society (NGOs individually or working systematically in networks, like the Mediterranean Information Office for the Environment, Culture and Sustainable Development – MIO-ECSDE).

Essentially, governance is about enabling the participation and interaction of all stakeholders, whether public or private, in dealing with issues of common interest, like the distribution and allocation of scarce water resources. Such participation rests upon legislative and institutional arrangements that are inclusive and integrative. As the 2002 Johannesburg World Summit concluded, governance encompasses "...democratic institutions responsive to the needs of the people" and "the rule of law" (Report on the World Summit, 2002). An attempt at definition would see governance as "...the exercise of economic, political and administrative authority to manage a country's affairs at all levels... it comprises the mechanisms, processes and institutions through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights, meet their obligations and mediate their differences" (UNDP Water Governance Programme, [www.undp.org/water/about\\_us.html](http://www.undp.org/water/about_us.html) ).

### *Water Governance*

With reference to *Water Governance*, it was not until the 1990s that the concept gained ground in the international arena and it was in 2000 when the Sec-

ond World Water Forum concluded that, "the world water crisis is a crisis of governance not one of scarcity, and good water governance is one of the main challenges facing governments in attaining water security" (Ministerial Declaration, 2000).

Establishing further this position, the Global Water Partnership re-affirmed that the water crisis is one of governance and that "...it is increasingly about how we, as individuals, and as parts of a collective society, govern the access to and control over water resources and their benefits" (GWP, 2002: 2). In a similar tone, the UNDP proclaimed that resolving the challenges in the governance area forms the key to integrated and sustainable water resources development and management (UN-WWDR, 2003).

Finally, the importance of governance for the financial sustainability of the water sector, a theme of particular interest in recent years in view of meeting the internationally-set water-related development targets, was succinctly described in the Camdessus Panel Report of the Third World Water Forum, where it was stated that "...serious defects in the governance of the global water sector hamper its ability to generate and attract finance" (Camdessus, 2003: 9).

Defining water governance would point towards "...the range of political, social, economic and administrative systems that are in place to develop and manage water resources, and the delivery of water services, at different levels of society" (GWP, 2002). From a similar viewpoint, the term is seen as encompassing "...the political, economic and social processes and institutions by which governments, civil society and the private sector make decisions about how best to use, develop and manage water resources" (UNDP, 2004:17) and "all social, political and economic organisations and institutions and their relationships insofar as these are related to water development and management" (UN-WWDR, 2003: 372). Such understanding reflects a commitment to holistic and integrated approaches and wide stakeholder participation when dealing with water resources management (Scoullou & Tomassini, 2004: 68-69).

### **On Public Participation and Involvement**

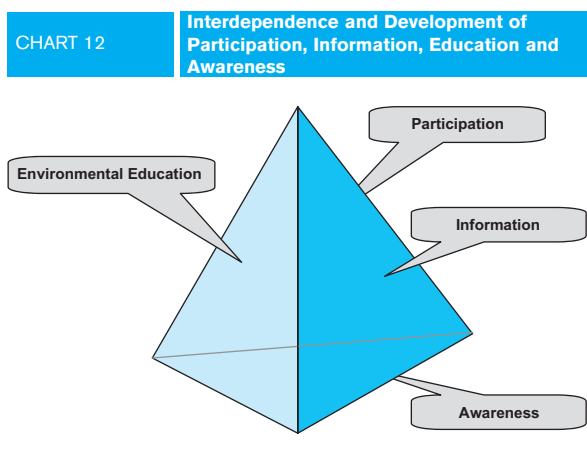
The discussion on governance and water governance eloquently revealed the linkage between the two concepts and stakeholder involvement. In order to avoid terminological confusion, perhaps it is necessary to mention that public involvement, stakeholder and civil society participation do not contain the same mean-

ing, but for the purposes of this article the terms may be used interchangeably with the discussion focusing on water and environment-related themes.

Public participation is not an objective in itself. It is a dynamic, evolving process, central to sustainable development policies, with the aim to ensure that the decision-making is carried out in an informed, as far as possible participatory and in any case democratic and sustainable way. This suggests that decisions are soundly based on evidence provided freely in a passive and active way and influenced by the views and experience of those affected by them, while considering innovative and creative/alternative options and securing that the new arrangements are workable – now and in the future – and acceptable by the public.

Following this line of thinking, the participatory process consists of different components. Access to information was identified as a key ingredient to this process, both as the starting point and as the desired outcome in all stages of the process. When discussing participation, the role of awareness and awareness-raising also come to mind as the way through which people become familiar with the situation and start requesting more involvement. Inevitably, awareness is linked to education (and in particular to Environmental Education and Education for Sustainable Development), which is perhaps the most fundamental means towards awareness-raising.

The following pyramid (Scoullos et al, 2002: 11) represents an attempt to depict the interdependence and the inseparable development of participation, information, education and awareness:



The interlinkage of the four facets is very close and depending on local circumstances each one may act as the basis on which the others are built; this may

happen in sequence when each facet acts as the basis/support for the rest for a period of time. In most cases public awareness and environmental education have played this role, while provision of passive information is usually the initial political tool opening the window of opportunity for more participation, which in all cases is the least developed throughout the Mediterranean region.

At this point one should make the further analysis of dividing public participation into two levels of fundamentally different political significance: “public involvement” including “light” interaction, not “binding” in any case for the authorities and never including anything more than “consultation”; and active participation leading to forms of “co-decision” and “self-determination.”

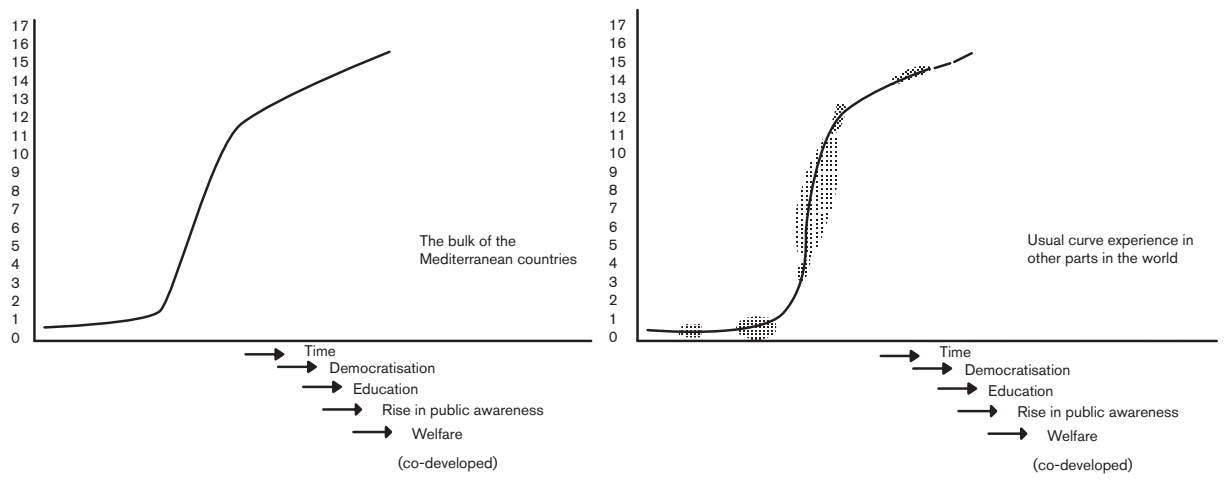
In some cases, such as the provisions of the European Union Water Framework Directive (EU-WFD), information supply and consultation are considered compulsory steps for the introduction of the Directive in the EU countries, while the third more advanced level of active public participation is highly recommended but not compulsory.

The evolutionary nature of participation is better understood when considering the different stages of the process: starting with passive provision of information, followed by exchange of information upon request, raising of public awareness through media and meetings, education on conservation issues gradually developing into education about the root problems and sustainability, access to justice and credit by individual citizens, civil groups and NGOs for environmental purposes and institutionalised full partnership with governments and other socio-economic partners in a new era of shared responsibility and governance. Thus, the linkage between governance and public involvement is further accentuated.

### The Evolving Participation Process

The different stages of the evolving participation process are experienced in most countries, including Mediterranean ones, as an *uprising curve*, very closely linked with the widening and deepening of democratisation, education and sensitisation of the wider public on issues of environment, development and culture. This process is better depicted schematically in the following way (Scoullos et al, 2002: 25 & 37):

**CHART 13** Different Stages of Evolving Participation Process and Bulk of Mediterranean Countries in Terms of Participation Process

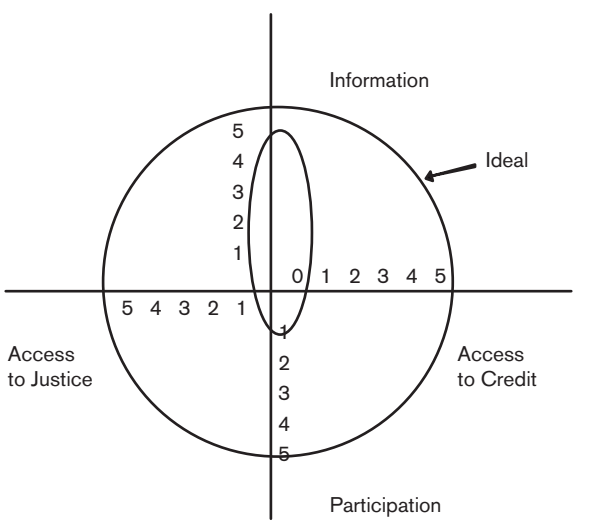


The vertical axis of the diagrams refer to different levels of participation (the full list is available at the end of the article), ranging from no participatory practices at all (number 0) to full partnership in a balanced governance scheme with full support to NGOs, local authorities and the public (number 17). In the Mediterranean, the bulk of the countries figure somewhere in the middle of the axis, with activities ranging between provision of financial support to joint information campaigns and selected NGO projects, consultations and ad hoc dialogues, advocacy facilitation and public participation in environmental impact assessment processes and access of the public to state/national environmental and development information databases.

A more simplified scheme would include four “pillars” or “axes” of the participatory process: i) access to information on environmental and relevant developmental issues; ii) participation in consultation, decision-making and monitoring of implementation of agreements; iii) full access to justice; and iv) access to support funds and credit. It is noteworthy that the latter is indeed the most advanced dimension proposed (by one of the authors), although not accepted yet or fully incorporated into the relevant international conventions and legal texts. Schematically, the combination of the four pillars would result in the following Chart 14.

As all four pillars are – in the opinion of the authors – equally essential for the participatory process, a larger and more regular circle denotes a more advanced process, while a smaller and more irregular shape signifies more distorted participatory conditions. The situation of public participation in the Mediterranean is represented with the elliptical shape in Chart 14,

**CHART 14** Four Pillars of the Participatory Process



due to the lack of institutionalisation of the participatory processes, inadequate funding and lack of access to credit.

At this point, it would be useful to stress once again the linkage between governance and public participation, as the four pillars of the participatory process are also considered key ingredients in the governance (and water governance) process and, therefore, support for these components results in strengthening both processes simultaneously.

It is also interesting to note that the information pillar is rather prominent in the elliptical shape of the Mediterranean (as depicted in Chart 14), indicating that the overall process is in motion but in dire need a) of support towards the other three components and b) of strengthening the “active” dimension of information provision.

The fundamental root problem is the inadequate application of participatory, democratic processes. As more specific problems impeding participatory progress in the Mediterranean, following have been identified:

- Deficient or inadequate legal institutional framework facilitating public participation (including access to information, access to decision-making and justice);
- Deficient administrative infrastructures coupled with limited resources to cope technically with the requests of the public;
- Lack of coordination among the various administrative sectors and public agencies, hindering their ability to be efficient and participatory in receiving input even from other departments/agencies;
- Fragmentation of NGO and civil society initiatives together with weak structures, particularly at national level, where the majority of the critical environment-related decisions are made;
- Reluctance of the authorities to provide information to the public even when this is technically and legally feasible, mainly due to limited (in practice) recognition/acceptance of civil groups and NGOs as legitimate partners in decision making. In many Mediterranean countries representatives of the public do not yet enjoy the type of respect and credit that the authorities ought to demonstrate, despite the generous statements and declarations of good intentions by many governments and political leaders.

## In the Mediterranean, the role and involvement of the public and civil society have developed over the last few decades primarily in areas of global interest, such as the protection of the environment, human rights, peace, etc

In a nutshell, the expansion and strengthening of participatory processes in the Mediterranean encounter the prevailing centralisation of governmental authorities and structures, the weak operational process and the lack of understanding and recognition of the deeper concept of modern governance and partnership between elected or appointed bodies and oth-

er forms of civil representation through local or interest groups and mainly through environmental, consumer and developmental NGOs.

As mentioned earlier, reinforcement of the different components of the participatory process is needed, also in order to assist with overcoming the obstacles identified above. This support has been offered by a number of institutional frameworks that are in place in the Mediterranean region. Furthermore, MIO-ECS-DE and GWP-Med are directly and indirectly promoting public participation in countries and water governance in the region.

### Public Participation Frameworks in the Mediterranean

In the Mediterranean, the role and involvement of the public and civil society have developed over the last few decades primarily in areas of global interest, such as the protection of the environment, human rights, peace, etc. The right of the public, and the affected stakeholders in particular, to participate in the decisions that concern them has been widely acknowledged, but its practical implementation is somehow still lagging behind. This is even less prominent in the area of water. To this direction, overall global or regional frameworks that are operational in the Mediterranean include:

- *The 1976 Barcelona Convention for Protection against Pollution in the Mediterranean Sea (and the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean – adopted in 1995, replacing the 1976 one).* The Convention and its six Protocols together with the Mediterranean Action Plan form part of the UNEP Regional Seas Programme ([www.unep.org/regionalseas/programmes/unpro/mediterranean/default.asp](http://www.unep.org/regionalseas/programmes/unpro/mediterranean/default.asp)). The Mediterranean Commission for Sustainable Development functions in the same context, as it was established within this framework. The Convention's key goal is to reduce pollution in the Mediterranean Sea and protect and improve the marine environment in the area, thereby contributing to its sustainable development while, among the Commitments undertaken by the partners, is the agreement to "facilitate public access to information and public participation."
- *The Aarhus Convention on "Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-Making and*

Access to Justice in Environmental Matters,” signed in June 1998 during the 4th Ministerial Conference on Environment for Europe. The Aarhus Convention is an environmental agreement linking the environment to human rights and government accountability to environmental protection. It focuses on the interactions between the public and public authorities in the context of transparency and democracy. The Convention also acknowledges that sustainable development can be achieved only through the active and responsible involvement of all stakeholders. The Convention has been agreed in the United Nations’ Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) framework and, although it is open to countries from other regions, it has not been signed or ratified by non-UNECE countries (those of the Middle East and North Africa).

- The public involvement-related *European Union acquis communautaire*, concerns the EU-Med countries alone and to a certain extent the accession and/or candidate countries and includes the EU Directive on Access to Environmental Information and the EU Water Framework Directive (EU-WFD). Furthermore, non-binding commitments are included in provisions under the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership Process (EMP). Within the EMP framework figure the Short and Medium-Term Priority Environmental Action Programme (SMAP), the Comité de Suivi, the EuroMed Civil Forum (through the Euro-Mediterranean Non-Governmental Platform established in 2003) and the Horizon 2020 Initiative to De-Pollute the Mediterranean by the Year 2020.

Indicatively, some examples of the different aspects of public participation, as they stand in various Mediterranean countries, are provided in the table below (information derived from the MCSD Strategic Review

for Sustainable Development in the Mediterranean Region – UNEP/MAP, Athens, 2001).

### Public Participation and Water in the EU Framework (Directive 2000/60/EC)

The trend to integrate stakeholders into national and international water resources management reflects a broader recognition of the public’s fundamental right to be involved in environmental decision-making processes. This recognition, clearly articulated in the 1992 Rio Declaration on Environment and Development and the consecutive Dublin Principles, has been incorporated in the provisions of the EU-WFD that was adopted in 2000.

The EU-WFD sets out comprehensive legal provisions regarding public participation in river basin management for all EU member states. Three levels of participation are mentioned in Article 14, which forms the core public participation provision of the Directive: information, consultation and active involvement (modelled after the first two pillars of the Aarhus Convention). The Directive provides the member states with considerable flexibility for the design of public participation endeavours, particularly regarding active involvement of stakeholders.

According to the WFD Common Implementation Strategy Document No. 8: Public Participation in Relation to the Water Framework Directive (WFD CIS on PP), member states shall ensure consultation while they are encouraged to promote active involvement. The WFD CIS on PP also states that “...in principle any level of public participation can be organised at any scale, even at the international river basin scale. The main issue is to find for each issue the right combination of scale, stakeholders, public participation levels and methods.” Encouraging participation in the development and implementation of water management plans (inter-

**TABLE 24** Some Examples of the Different Aspects of Public Participation in Various Mediterranean Countries

*Existing measures to promote environmental information:*

Croatia, Cyprus, Greece, France, Malta, Tunisia and in less distinct forms in other countries

*Legislation for access to information:*

Cyprus, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Greece, Italy, Portugal, Spain

*Environmental institutions promoting information, education and awareness-raising activities:*

Algeria, Egypt, Greece, Morocco and in less distinct forms in other countries

*National legislation for involvement of the public in the decision-making process:*

Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Israel, Spain

*Involvement of the public in the decision-making process:*

Lebanon (not at local level), Croatia, Malta, Syria (through EIA process), France (at local level), Tunisia (largely through NGOs and local authorities)

*NGO backing:* exists in various forms in many countries

*Cooperation of NGOs with national institutions:*

In various degrees and patterns in many countries

ested parties participate actively in the planning process by discussing issues and contributing to their solutions) may be considered as the Directive's core requirement on active involvement. Higher levels of participation also include shared decision-making and self-determination. Although the two latter types do not form specific requirements of the Directive, they are often considered as best practices and therefore explicitly encouraged.

However, and despite the EU-WFD's provisions, the final word on the outcome of the Directive's implementation rests with the appointed competent authorities. It is they who decide on the extent to which their power will be shared with the other stakeholders and hence, it is they who primarily determine whether the process is or has been "completed" successfully or not.

### *The EU-WFD's Role Around the Mediterranean*

The vigour and influence of the EU-WFD in the Mediterranean is more than prominent. In the North, the EU member states bordering the Mediterranean have complied with the Directive's requirements and are in the process of implementing its various provisions. The countries of south-eastern Europe that are not in the EU have signed Association and Stabilisation Agreements with the EU and have all voluntarily agreed to comply with the requirements of the EU-WFD regarding the management of their water resources.

The countries of the eastern Mediterranean, regardless of their national legislations and institutional frameworks, have also declared their intention to comply – to varying degrees – with the requirements of the EU-WFD (especially with reference to IWRM and its insertion into national legislation through the drafting of IWRM Plans, as in the case of Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, Israel and the Palestinian Territories). Finally the countries of North Africa, although not directly reflecting on the EU-WFD, take measures for the management of their water resources that align with the Directive. For instance, the codification of water legislation (most countries have already done so); the design and implementation of IWRM Plans (all countries are within this process but at different stages, with Egypt leading the way); the efforts towards establishing National Water Councils, echoing the Central Water Authority provision of the EU-WFD (as in the case of Libya and Morocco); the river basin management measures/plans, (as is the case in Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia).

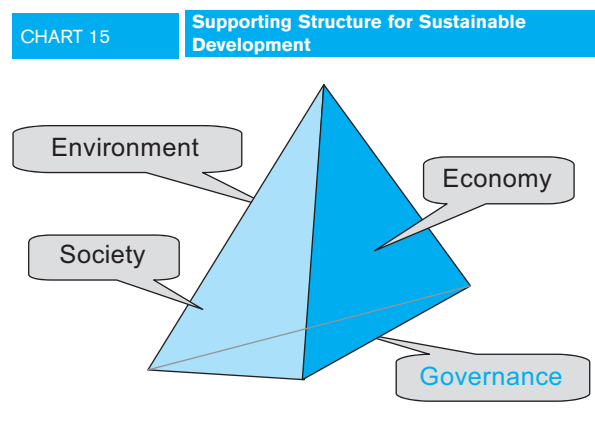
Recently, an interesting pilot project was carried out

in Morocco with the support of the MEDA Water Programme of the European Union Water Initiative on the application of the methodology proposed by the EU-WFD. More specifically, the project dealt with the role and importance of economic approaches for integrated water resources management, using a pilot case study on the Sebou River Basin and then employing the results for an economic analysis of water management on a national scale in Morocco.

For the non-EU Mediterranean countries, another point of particular attention concerns the issue of transboundary water resources management (surface and groundwater). The EU-WFD, by concentrating on the river basin as the level of action, addresses the issue of shared waters and provides a framework for cooperation through joint stakeholder involvement. Although full stakeholder coordination as the means towards successful public participation (and therefore implementation of the EU-WFD) in shared water river basins is not a prerequisite, it is highly recommended. Experience from within Europe (e.g. Rivers Danube, Rhine) as well as from outside (e.g. Rivers Orange, Okavango) has shown that coordination and engagement of stakeholders from the riparian countries has led to more efficient management of transboundary waters.

### **Bringing (Water) Governance and Public Participation Closer**

In the following pyramid that represents the supporting structure for sustainable development, Scoullos (Scoullos & Malotidi, 2004: 21-24) has proposed Governance as the basis of the pyramid:

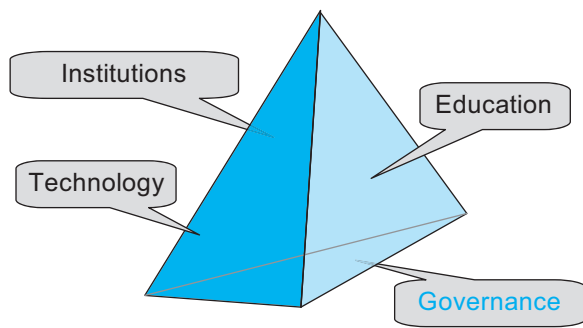


Scoullos has also further analysed the governance components in order to identify the areas where

changes should be made in order to attain sustainable development:

CHART 16

Governance Components that Should Be Changed to Attain Sustainable Development



By linking the two pyramids together, it could be argued that attaining sustainable development requires social cohesion and welfare, responsible economy, environmental protection, effective institutions, application of innovative and appropriate technology and education for sustainable development. The latter three components were identified previously (Chart 12) as the three facets of the public participation pyramid.

## Public participation is directly interlinked with education and also with the development and operation of institutions. What is less obvious is the acceptable use and transfer of technology

It is obvious that public participation is directly interlinked with education and also with the development and operation of institutions. What is less obvious – and developed until now in public involvement – is the acceptable use and transfer of technology, which is an area of great importance for the future (like the themes of biodiversity, nanotechnology, chemicals, etc). Furthermore, without awareness the institutions will continue functioning in sub-optimal ways, while without information the fruits of technology will not reach the wide public. In the same manner, awareness is acutely supported by “aware” institutions and information is enriched by sprouting technology.

## Promoting the Governance-Participation Nexus through Action

An advantage of the schematic representation of concepts is that it makes it easier to visualise the components and identify the actions needed to strengthen them. Different stakeholders contribute with different ways in this effort across the Mediterranean. In this paper, the action of two organisations will be particularly discussed with reference to the pyramids and the components: the Mediterranean Information Office for the Environment, Culture and Sustainable Development (MIO-ECSDE) ([www.mio-ecsde.org](http://www.mio-ecsde.org)), an NGO whose activity extends across the Mediterranean, and the Global Water Partnership – Mediterranean (GWP-Med) ([www.gwpmed.org](http://www.gwpmed.org)), an international organisation that carries out work specifically in the region. The two organisations work closely together on a number of occasions and on a wide range of activities and primarily aim at creating a dialogue platform among the different Mediterranean stakeholders so that they become more environmentally aware and motivated to participate in endeavours of common interest.

### *MEdIES*

With the view to strengthen the role of education in the field of the environment and sustainable development, an initiative was launched in 2002 by MIO-ECSDE on the field of the Mediterranean Education Initiative for Environment and Sustainability (MEdIES). This ongoing initiative aims to facilitate the educational community (both educators and students) to contribute in a systematic and concrete way to the implementation of Agenda 21 and the Millennium Development Goals, as well as the UN Decade for Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014), through the successful application of innovative educational programmes in countries around the Mediterranean Basin. The outcome of this exchange of information and collaboration among countries in the north and the south of the region allows the development of a methodological framework and intercultural dialogue, which can be evaluated and further implemented in other regions.

### *DIALOGUE ON EFFECTIVE WATER GOVERNANCE*

The opportunity to discuss the above theme was offered by GWP-Med through the Mediterranean Dialogue on Effective Water Governance (DEWG), which



is part of the global dialogue run by the Global Water Partnership, UNDP and the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives. The Dialogue assisted in identifying gaps and problems, agreeing on shared objectives as well as on possible solutions and practical ways to overcome the obstacles, formalising the process of interaction amongst key players and elaborating on their duties and competencies. The process, initiated in December 2001, is on-going and one of the main achievements was the creation of the Mediterranean Circles of Journalists and Parliamentarians (see below).

**MIO-ECSDE and GWP-Med work closely together on a number of occasions and on a wide range of activities and primarily aim at creating a dialogue platform among the different Mediterranean stakeholders so that they become more environmentally aware and motivated to participate in endeavours of common interest**

*COMJESD*

On the theme of information a key activity jointly run by the two organisations is the Circle of Mediterranean Journalists for Environment and Sustainable Development (COMJESD) comprising journalists from all the countries of the region, which aims to create an active forum for regular exchange of information and views about crucial Mediterranean environmental and sustainable development issues, the promotion of capacity building of media professionals and the organisation of joint and concerted actions. Through these activities, information and communication experts are strengthened in their capacity of sensitising and informing Mediterranean societies, improving democratic and participatory processes and in directing more effectively the flow of information produced by scientists, NGOs, etc, to the decision-makers. In this direction, an *Elementary Manual on Freshwater Journalism in the Mediterranean* (Alawneh et al, 2003) was produced to assist the work of the Circle.

*COMPSUD*

Similarly, a Circle of Mediterranean Parliamentarians for Sustainable Development (COMPSUD) was created with the joint support of the two organisations, also in 2002, with the aim of promoting suitable mechanisms to support the dialogue among Members of Parliaments (from EU and non-EU Mediterranean countries), politicians and other stakeholders on the protection of the Mediterranean environment and the necessary socio-economic conditions for the sustainable development of the region. This is an open, flexible and light structure that regularly brings together the members of the Circle and is of particular importance because of the highly political nature of the forum.

*NATIONAL POLICY DIALOGUES ON WATER (MED EUWI)*

Addressing the political nature of water governance, GWP-Med, through its capacity as the Secretariat of the Mediterranean Component of the EU Water Initiative (MED EUWI), is carrying out National Policy Dialogues on Water with the overall aim to assist countries with meeting the MDGs and WSSD water targets by formulating through assessment and policy dialogue (i) financing strategies and/or Road Maps for water supply and sanitation (as in the National Dialogue in Egypt) and (ii) developing national water strategies and IWRM Plans (as in the National Dialogue in Lebanon) as well as defining and prioritising the interventions required in terms of projects and actions and the needed funding. Enhancement of donor coordination is among the expected outcomes of the process, while the National Dialogues constitute multi-stakeholder processes, are demand-led and carried out by the countries themselves involving a spectrum of national actors on water issues. Supporting actions that aim to launch National Dialogue processes are also implemented in Syria, Libya and the Palestinian Territories.

*RABAT PROCESS*

Initiated in Rabat, Morocco, in January 2006, this regional process is based on the Rabat Declaration on Regional Cooperation for National IWRM Planning in the countries of North Africa and Mauritania. In addition to assessing and evaluating the status of National IWRM Planning in those countries, it aims to facilitate the public dialogue on IWRM Planning within and among those countries and other stake-

holders. Follow-up activities in Tunisia, Morocco, Libya and Algeria have been organised also in conjunction with MED EUWI activities, while cooperation with Mauritania is currently in the pipeline.

#### *CIRCLE OF WOMEN IN THE MED and GEWAMED*

With the view to address and enhance the role of gender in the Mediterranean with regard to sustainable development (with issues of water and water governance figuring prominently on the agenda), a new Circle of Women in the Mediterranean is about to be established jointly by the two organisations. The work of the Circle will be complemented by the already running GEWAMED project (Mainstreaming Gender Dimensions into Water Resources Development and Management in the Mediterranean Region), a project financed by the INCO (International Scientific Co-operation) Programme within the Sixth Framework Research Programme of the European Commission and addressed to the countries of the Mediterranean region. The project emphasises the networking and co-ordination of on-going research activities with a total of 18 institutions from 14 Mediterranean countries participating in the endeavours.

### **However, involving stakeholders in water governance cannot be considered an overnight process, but requires time, continuity and perseverance**

#### *REACH, NANOCAP and YouthXchange*

Responding to the issue of technology, as the least developed facet in the Governance pyramid (Chart 16), and with the view to reinforce public participation in this topic, MIO-ESCDE is running three projects: one on the sustainable management of chemicals – REACH (Reaching Sustainable Management of Chemicals in the Euro-Mediterranean Region); one on nanotechnology – NANOCAP; and one on responsible consumption patterns through the translation of a UNESCO/UNEP training kit – YouthXchange: towards sustainable lifestyles.

Within the framework of the above activities, a series of events was organised throughout the year 2007, locally, nationally and regionally. The aim was to create the opportunity for different Mediterranean stake-

holders to gather under neutral platforms in order to be informed about, engaged and involved in issues of an environmental and specifically water-related context. It is important to note that the various activities have not been/are not carried out in isolation of other Mediterranean initiatives/processes/frameworks and a key concern has been the identification of potential synergies. Besides avoiding duplication, synergies increase the impact of joint efforts, make better use of available resources and ensure continuity of actions.

### **Conclusions**

With Governance being identified as the key issue of concern for sustainable water resources management, and the linkage between governance and participation being more than apparent, efforts that respond to the two need to be sought simultaneously. Such an endeavour is facilitated by the commonalities that the substantive components of the two concepts bear, and even more so by formal and informal frameworks and networks that are operational in the Mediterranean on participation and water governance. However, involving stakeholders in water governance cannot be considered an overnight process, but requires time, continuity and perseverance. It also depends heavily on local particularities, both in terms of resources as well as values, ideology and the democratic “maturity” of the political systems. It also depends on substantially modifying human behaviour towards water resources management, otherwise the solutions envisaged by effective governance and active participation can never materialise and the proclaimed goals may remain void of context without substantial results for the needed progress.

### **References**

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## SIGNIFICANCE OF THE NUMBERING ON THE VERTICAL AXIS OF CHART 13

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|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>0. No participatory practices at all</li> <li>1. Passive provision of unsystematic, arbitrarily selected information on environmental issues passed by the authorities to the public. Passive, uncoordinated environmental education projects developed ad hoc.</li> <li>2. Acceptance of need for information flow on environmental issues by the authorities.</li> <li>3. Participation of NGOs in information campaigns on conservation and restoration issues.</li> <li>4. Active information: responding to requests by the public. Various means for access to selected information held by the authorities on environment and development issues.</li> <li>5. Financial support for joint information campaigns and selected NGO projects. Introduction of environmental education projects in selected schools or groups. Systematic large-scale awareness campaigns.</li> <li>6. Consultations and ad hoc dialogue between citizens' groups, NGOs, local authorities and the state without secured follow-up. Environmental education in curricula and/or coordinated networks and programmes.</li> <li>7. Facilitation and advocacy by the authorities for access of independent civil groups and NGOs to international funds for projects or their operation with no strings attached.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>8. Facilitation mechanisms for participation of the public in environmental impact assessment (EIA) processes.</li> <li>9. Active participation of the public through transparent mechanisms in drafting sustainability charters (Local Agenda 21, etc).</li> <li>10. Full access of the public to the environmental and development information database of the state.</li> <li>11. Participation of groups in the monitoring of implementation and management of sustainability plans.</li> <li>12. Institutionalisation of No. 7</li> <li>13. Financing of projects and plans for independent assessments (counter-assessments) or counter-EIAs for controversial projects.</li> <li>14. Institutionalisation of No. 10</li> <li>15. Access of public groups to justice including cases of liability and compensation for environmental damages.</li> <li>16. Access of public groups to supporting funds and credit for operation and projects by national and international sources with no strings attached.</li> <li>17. Full partnership in balanced governance with full support for NGOs, local authorities and the public for participation on an equal footing.</li> </ul> |
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