

# Key Events Related to the SMAP Programme during the Period 2002-2003

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The Short and Medium-Term Priority Environmental Action Programme (SMAP) was adopted by the first Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on the Environment (Helsinki, November 1997). The Programme constitutes the environmental component of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP) established in 1995, and offers the framework for policy making and funding in the Mediterranean within this context.<sup>1</sup>

The period 2002-2003 was of special significance for the SMAP Programme and for the environmental cooperation in the Mediterranean region for several strategic and operational reasons.

At a strategic level, two major events during this period can be highlighted:

- a) The Euro-Mediterranean Conference (Ministers of Foreign Affairs) that took place in Valencia, in April 2002, and
- b) The second Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on the Environment held in Athens in July 2002.

The Valencia Conference, acting as the higher body of the EMP, which ensures policy coordination and pro-

vides orientation to all fields of regional cooperation, stated with great clarity the need for sustainable development and a high level of environmental protection, for integration of the environmental considerations in all cooperation sectors of the EMP, and the importance of launching the long-promised Sustainability Impact Assessment (SIA) of the Euro-Med Free Trade Area (EMFTA) by the end of 2002.

This backing from the Foreign Affairs Ministers of the 27 Euro-Med partners and the Commission considerably assisted the Environment Ministers in their efforts at the following Athens Ministerial Conference to provide more specific areas of orientation. The Environment Ministers took stock of the experience gained during the 5 years of implementation of the SMAP Programme and identified in their Declaration the major policy objectives and steps towards strengthening the environmental integration within the EMP. They also stressed the need to ensure complementarity and synergy with the other Programmes and Organisations that are active in the Mediterranean region, and in particular with the Mediterranean Action Plan (MAP), and the Mediterranean Environment Technical Assistance Programme (METAP). It is important to underline the broad consensus on the idea that the Strategy for Sustainable Development in the Mediterranean would not be elaborated within the EMP but within the MCS / MAP, since the latter ensures the involvement

in the process of all the Mediterranean coastal countries implicated in such a strategy.

The Euro-Med Ministerial Conference on Energy, held in Athens in May 2003, was the first occasion to follow up and promote the idea of environmental integration in a sectorial policy of the EMP in concrete terms, putting emphasis on the use of clean and renewable energy sources and techniques.

Furthermore, in November 2002, the call for consultants/consortia for the SIA/EMFTA was published. A short list of the most experienced among them was drawn up and a call was launched on the basis of the Terms of Reference for the study agreed upon by the EC Directorates General concerned: AIDCO, Environment, RELEX and Trade. The contract with the consortium that will be finally selected is expected to be signed in the Autumn of 2003. The purpose of this SIA is to identify specific potential risks on the sustainability of the region due to the EMFTA, which is scheduled to be established by the year 2010. The SIA is also meant to propose possible measures and adaptations to policy in order to make the environment and trade policies mutually supportive.

A third follow-up action was the preparation of a working paper by the European Commission on Synergies among SMAP, MAP and METAP, with emphasis on priority actions for the next two years. The paper was sent to all the organisations concerned, where it was thoroughly commented and broadly welcomed. The foreseen

<sup>1</sup> For more details on the Programme, see the SMAP website created in February 1998, regularly updated and visited by more than 12,000 people per month at: <http://europa.eu.int/comm/environment/smap/home.htm>

actions would start to be implemented in the course of the coming months. Another event came to offer additional possibilities to the Mediterranean countries for environmental protection and sustainability: the creation of Sub-Committees within the Association Agreements of the EMP, and in particular the creation of a Sub-Committee for Transport, Energy and the Environment. The first such Sub-Committee to meet was that of Morocco (Brussels, June 2003), which was preceded by a joint environmental expert group (EC/Morocco) in February 2003. Other Med Partners will soon follow the same pattern, while some (Jordan and Malta) have already had discussions on environmental matters with the European Commission in the context of their Association Councils. Discussions on environmental provisions with Syria are also on the agenda, the only Med Partner with its Association Agreement still under negotiation (hopefully to be concluded by the end of 2003).

At the operational aspect, to ensure the success of this Partnership on environmental matters, the Helsinki Conference agreed that a Network of SMAP Correspondents would be created from the outset, consisting of representatives of all Euro-Med Partners designated by their Environment Ministers, and coordinated by the European Commission (DG Environment). This Network was complemented by the Comité de Suivi (Steering Committee) of Mediterranean NGO's, which was created at the same time by active NGO's in the region and which became an integral part of the broader SMAP Network. The SMAP Network constitutes a valuable tool for consultation and the exchange and dissemination of information and follow-up on the Programme's implementation, and meets annually. The Network's meeting in April 2002 also acted as the 2nd Preparatory meeting for the Athens Ministerial

Conference. The 1st Preparatory meeting took place in Malta (February 2002), and there was a 3rd Preparatory meeting in Athens (July 2002) that was preceded by an NGO Preparatory meeting and a Forum of Stakeholders (both in Athens). Beyond the necessary backing and consensus on the working documents, these meetings have contributed considerably to a better understanding among different groups of stakeholders and to a longer-term mutual building of trust.

A large part of the SMAP implementation is facilitated by the EC funding under both the regional and the national envelopes of the MEDA instrument. During this 2-year period new regional projects were contracted constituting a total amount of 30 million Euros. On a bilateral level there was also a positive trend, as the environmental component of the MEDA-II National Indicative Programmes (NIP) increased to nearly 9%. The launch of a new Call for regional SMAP projects is planned before the end of 2003. It is expected that EuropeAid (known also as AIDCO), the new EC service created to follow the entire project life-cycle in all sectors, as well as the recently established Regional Monitoring and Support Unit (RMSU) for SMAP, will contribute considerably to a sound management of the SMAP projects.

However, and since SMAP also covers policy issues and not only project funding, the Programme's implementation refers also and mostly to policy adaptations and structural changes. Such adaptations and changes are meaningful particularly at a national level, while joint efforts at a regional level can play a significant catalytic role. The «Report on the first 5 years of SMAP implementation», drafted by the Commission, approved by the SMAP Network and endorsed by the Athens Ministerial Conference, offers a detailed panorama of the activities during these 5 years, attempts to identify the

reasons for some of the weaknesses, draws conclusions, and makes recommendations for future actions. These recommendations were the basis for the Athens Ministerial Declaration adopted in July 2002. The full texts of this Report and that of the Declaration have been published twice, in English and in French, and diffused broadly throughout the Mediterranean region; they are also available on the SMAP website. To facilitate future comparisons and follow-up of the progress expected from the implementation of the SMAP Programme, the Report was accompanied by another publication: «The Country Profiles of the 12 Med Partners». This compiles basic elements in a standardised way of the current situation in each country regarding its environment, also using relevant information from other organisations, donors and programmes. The Country Profiles have also been broadly disseminated and put on the SMAP website.

To conclude this brief panorama of the SMAP-related activities that have taken place over the last biennium, it is important to recall the sensitivity of the Mediterranean region and the complex political context of the Euro-Med Partnership. Under such delicate conditions, the long-standing and very positive experience of constructive co-operation among the Mediterranean countries on environmental matters constitutes a basis that can also facilitate co-operation in other fields. This is one of the reasons for which the Euro-Med Committee (consisting of Ambassadors of all Euro-Med Partners) has included the SMAP activities several times in the agenda of its meetings, and has offered to hold in-depth thematic discussions in order to better assist the efforts both for environmental integration in the other co-operation sectors of the EMP and for synergy with the other big Mediterranean environment programmes such as MAP and METAP.

#### EMWIS ACTIVITIES. FOURTEEN COUNTRIES ON LINE *(June 2002 - June 2003)*

The Euro-Mediterranean Information System on the know-how in the Water sector (EMWIS or SEMIDE in French) is the first tangible regional tool of cooperation implemented within the Barcelona Process within the water sector. It aims to facilitate access to existing information on the water sector, to develop the sharing of useful information, to prepare common output, and to promote the necessary cooperation programmes.

Today, twenty of the twenty-seven partner countries have nominated an EMWIS National Focal Point (NFP) and fourteen of those have set up jointly defined on-line information services. Together with the Central Technical Unit, this information network is providing a wide range of services, including: a thematic directory with more than 2,500 organisations dealing with water in the Euro-Med area, bi-lingual electronic news (with about 4,000 subscribers), access to national and international water legislation, descriptions of institutional structures of water management in each country, the latest news on the Euro-Med regional programme on local water management, and other relevant information.

One of the main characteristics of EMWIS is to help each country to set up and operate its own national water information system as a point connected to an interna-

tional network of knowledge. With this end in mind, three training and information seminars have been organised during the period of the National Focal Points. In June 2002, in Rome, the information technologies experts of the NFPs were informed on how to localise the EMWIS online services, to improve their Internet connections and how to introduce emerging Internet technologies (such as the XML standards suite). In September 2002, in Madrid, the content managers of EMWIS NFPs were informed about quality control of on-line information, legal issues related to on-line publishing and how to fully take advantage of existing applications. Finally, in December in Tunis, the NFPs coordinators reviewed the guidelines for setting up an NFP, and studied the work programme for the second phase (2003-2006).

Two national conferences have been organised to raise awareness concerning the benefits of sharing information and the know-how among the water stakeholders of Jordan (in October 2002) and of Tunisia (in December 2002). In addition, EMWIS has been presented at various international events, including the Third World Water Forum and international cooperation (for example, collaboration with the Global Water Partnership), and is being established as a tool to develop com-

patibility and complementarities with other information systems.

The EMWIS Steering Committee, composed of the water directors of nine countries plus a representative of the European Commission, held its annual meeting in September 2002 in Rome to review the progress and validate the work programme and its associated budget. During this event, the Presidency of the Steering Committee was officially transferred from Italy to Spain and the Vice-Presidency from Jordan to Cyprus. Cooperation frameworks have been established with the International Network of Basin Organisations (INBO) and its regional Mediterranean network (MEMBO) and with the Mediterranean Water Institute.

The work programme of the EMWIS second phase put the emphasis on the coordination with political structures, the reinforcement of the NFP, the development of access in Arabic, thematic regional analysis, a better knowledge of national needs and requirements, the dissemination of the MEDA Water Programme results, visits to sites of the most impressive practices in Mediterranean water information systems, and so forth.

For further information and the latest news on water in the Euro-Mediterranean area:

[www.emwis.org](http://www.emwis.org) (English) or

[www.semide.org](http://www.semide.org) (French)