Sediments and Biodiversity: bridging the gap between science and policy

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Sediment is an integral part of the ecosystem and directly affects biodiversity through hydromorphology, habitat formation and associated pollutants. Using Water Framework Directive definitions, it can be said that sediment affects good ecological and chemical status of water bodies: impacts can be both positive and negative. These impacts are particularly evident in shallow water bodies such as rivers, lagoons and coastal areas. Sediment Management is therefore much more than dealing with more or less contaminated sediment that needs to be dredged for navigation or construction but is more a way of working with nature, finding self-sustaining solutions for the evolution of water bodies in a highly dynamic environment.

The integration of sediment management into river basin management plans, thus supporting the joint implementation of the Water Framework Directive and Floods Directive, is a perfect context to put this holistic approach into practice.

The Mediterranean Sea and its coastal areas present unique challenges for sediment management as compared with other EU eco regions; this is coupled with the need for a whole-basin view, involving both the EU countries and the non-EU neighbours of the southern and eastern coastline.

In most cases the targets for sediment management are strongly connected with different uses of water bodies and with interventions to promote socio-economic development and competitiveness, such as port dredging and beach nourishment. In such contexts, the need for good science to inform decisions and policy is crucial in order to promote sustainable, cost-effective and environmentally sound solutions.

Against this background SedNet is organising an event on 6-9 April 2011 in Venice, which represents a paradigm for all Mediterranean coastal areas due to its cultural heritage, its precious lagoon and its challenges toward climate change adaptation.