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European Union: IWRM-Net : a new network of national and regional research programmes on integrated water resources management 2006 - 2010

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IWRM.Net was born in Stockholm in August 2004 and gathers 35 programme managers from 20 countries of the European Union and neighbouring countries.

Based on an inventory of research and of its organisation in the Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM) field in 13 European countries, it appears that real synergies are possible between each on-going research programme on water to succeed, in the next 5 years, in:

Systematising exchanges of experiences and good practices on the methods used for the management of existing programmes and better sharing of their results,

Defining common strategies, such as for example the assessment of the needs for research, in relation with the new Framework Directive in particular, but also the practices used for disseminating and transferring the results to water experts and managers,

Developing joint activities by favouring crossed participations between programmes (launching joint invitations to tender, project evaluation, etc.) up to the planning of real transnational research programmes.

IOWater developed this network in relation with INBO, starting it with a European cartography of research programmes on water in 13 countries.

The Water Framework Directive strongly renews a demand for research and will result in changes in the methods of thinking, acting, planning in the water field.

The Stockholm Conference clearly showed that research results deserve to be better enhanced and are not sufficiently visible to the community of potential users (decision-makers, managers, elected officials, communities and even the general public).

IOWater proposal, based on the feasibility study and the inventory available on-line on the website: <http://www.iowater.org/eranet>, was accepted by the European Commission, within the framework of ERANet (European Research Area Networking), which aims at better co-ordinating European research financed by public authorities and at strengthening links between programmes and IWRM-Net project got funds from the European Commission within the European Research Area (ERA-Net) of the DG-Research.

At the core of the Framework Directive implementation, IWRM.Net aims at creating new synergies between the stakeholders of good European water governance and research, and more solidarity among the Member States of the European Union.

IWRM-Net, coordinated by the **International Office for Water**, is now made up of **18 research programme managers** from all over Europe.

The ambition of this project, of a 5-year duration (2006-2010), is to set up new research programmes, financed by the network members and meeting the national and regional challenges resulting from the evolution of the European context after the adoption of the Water Framework Directive.

The promotion of research, as a scientific support to the application of public water policies, requires:

- * **The involvement of the various stakeholders** (decision makers, managers, researchers, users, etc.) throughout the process, for identifying the scientific contents of the research activities initiated by the network;
- * **Access to the information** on ongoing or recently completed programmes.

This is why, during the first 18 months, the IWRM-NET partners started:

assessing the needs for water-related research with a short-term prospect, based on a scientific review and workshops inviting the various stakeholders to express their needs;

facilitating access and analyzing the information on existing initiatives;

drafting procedures for financing, launching and following-up the research activities of the network.

The Network members participated in a meeting, held in Vienna on 8 and 9 October 2007, on the financing of the first IWRM-NET research programme, divided in two parts:

Pressures/hydrological and morphological impacts,

Water governance.

The objectives of this meeting were to validate the scientific contents of the programme as well as the procedures for its financing, the selection and follow-up of the research projects.

The programme was launched in January 2008. During the first half of the year, the research projects were selected to allow their starting in September of this year.

The **IWRM-Net** partners already think about the **contents of the second research programme**, which will also deal with long-term prospects - thus aiming at providing scientific support within the second Management Plan required by the Framework Directive after 2015.