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Institutional twinning agreements: about 10 years have passed! Evaluation of a successful process to accompany changes...

Date de mise en ligne : Monday 2 June 2008

- International Office for Water - Cooperation - International actions - Institutional reforms and governance -

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Launched in 1998, the institutional twinning agreements are initiated by the European Commission. They aim at helping the countries, applying for accession to the European Union, build their administrative capacities for implementing the European Directives, relying on the Ministries concerned in the old Member States.

The twinning projects are based on precise objectives, with an obligation of results, a quarterly work plan, indicators allowing the evaluation of the progress made, stringent administrative and financial procedures, etc.

They imply joint work of experts from the two countries concerned to seek suited solutions, to carry out field tests, to write methodological guides and to have them validated by the national Authorities, to carry out a broad dissemination of results, etc.

These structuring projects imply the secondment of a full-time resident-adviser for at least a year, as well as short time assignments of specialists in various issues.

For about 10 years, as an operator mandated by the French Ministries of Ecology and Sustainable Development -MESD- and Health for implementing water-related twinning agreements, IOWater led 17 twinning arrangements in most Central European countries and in the Mediterranean Region, relying on the expertise of the French Water Agencies in particular:

- * **Bulgaria:** 3 twinning agreements on Urban Waste Water and authorizations for discharges; Basin Organizations; dangerous substances, bathing and fishing water, and water supply;
- * **Estonia:** 2 twinning agreements on basin management and economic instruments; water supply, wastewater and dangerous substances;
- * **Hungary:** 2 twinning agreements on dangerous substances; the Framework Directive and accidental pollution;
- * **Poland:** 2 twinning agreements on the Directives on UWW, nitrates and dangerous substances and the Framework Directive: Programs of Measures, economic analysis, public participation, Management Plan, cost recovery;
- * **Romania:** 2 twinning agreements on the Directives on UWW, nitrates and dangerous substances and the Framework Directive: investment strategy for taking up the "acquis", drinking water supply, wastewater;
- * **Slovenia:** 2 twinning agreements on the Framework Directive and water quality;
- * **Czech Republic:** 2 twinning agreements on nitrates and the Framework Directive.
- * **Malta:** Framework Directive: Programs of Measures, Action Plan and economic analysis;
- * **Turkey:** Drinking, bathing and bottled waters.

The initiative has now extended to the Mediterranean countries and neighborhood area, which wish to apply the great principles of the European legislation.

For example, IOWater participated, with the MESD Department for International Affairs, in a mission to Egypt in May 2007 in order to identify the twinning prospects, which will be proposed by the Egyptian Ministries in charge of the environment and water resources management.