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Prince Albert II Foundation A "Water Think Tank" for local Authorities in the Mediterranean

- IOWater - Our projects : news and update -
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An International Public-Private Partnership

Since 2010, the Department of International Cooperation of the International Office for Water has been involved in the Water Think Tank (WTT), along with Prince Albert II Foundation, the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), Veolia Environment and the Blue Plan.

The official launching of this initiative of Prince Albert II Foundation took place at the 5th World Water Forum in Istanbul. The objective is the capacity building of local Authorities in the Mediterranean basin for implementing effective governance in water resources management through increased inter-and intra-sectoral cooperation, beyond the administrative barriers at local, regional and national levels.

The WTT is based on four pillars :

- * A state of emergency increased by the evolution of climate change ;
- * Mediterranean mobilization a key challenge for sustainable development ;
- * Practical responses at local level ;
- * A research / action step to be applied in the field by local stakeholders in charge of IWRM implementation.

It aims to improve understanding of the mechanisms for local governance in order to define solutions to shared water resources management.

Preliminary research

In partnership with the Chair of Ethnology "Water, Society and Sustainable Development" of the University of Nice-Sophia Antipolis, IOWater launched, in this context, a study on water governance by local authorities in Mediterranean peri-urban areas. The approach focuses on characterizing the resources, local stakeholders and malfunctions of water supply systems, on the role of local authorities in conflict analysis and developed resolution methods.

The study distinguishes between sharing conflicts and conflicts of use :

- * The first is opposing different groups of stakeholders to stakeholders 'external' to the study area. In both cases, the balance of power has resulted in the abandonment of projects and the use of projects to mobilize additional resources ;
- * The latter traditionally opposed sectoral uses, or with the evolution of the European regulatory framework, the natural environment appears as a priority "sector". In the case studied, from a speech blaming the problems of water supply to physical factors over which they have no influence, local Authorities prefer technical solutions to increase water availability on the grounds of preserving natural environments.

This study resulted in : i) the concept of water resources availability is often based on arbitrary differences of representation vis-à-vis proposals at odds with the current practices, ii) the principle of state ownership of water resources may face the question of their appropriation (legal or not) by the established groups of beneficiaries, iii) the local water management bodies may object to the local authorities when it comes to pursuing exogenous economic objectives.

Based on this preparatory work, on additional studies, and on cyclical information issued from EMWIS flashes and INBO newsletters that give an excellent view of developments and progressions of regional stakeholders, the students of the Master of Sciences Po Paris on Territorial and Urban Strategies, with the support of Veolia Environment, have drafted a report that deepens the context and analysis. This report includes six case studies and a dozen factsheets that are available from Veolia Environment.

A symposium for enhancing results

A feedback meeting of this work was held at a symposium chaired by the Sovereign Prince on 10 November 2011 in Monaco, in which the International Office for Water participated. The four workshops were :

- * Conflicts of water use in the Mediterranean : problems or opportunities ?

- * Implementing water governance in the territories ;
- * Technology as a solution to conflict ?
- * The economic and financial issues of conflict regulation.