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IWRM-net - The European network of managers of research programs on water facing new prospects



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The European network of managers of research programs on water facing new prospects

(The News N° 21 - January 2011)

The final Conference of IWRM-Net project "Improving research cooperation in the field of water policy through Europe" was held in Brussels from 1 to 3 December 2010. It was an opportunity for IOWater and all partners to present the results of their activities and paths for future collaboration.

To allow for constructive exchanges between participants and speakers, the Conference was structured in three steps :

- The first day dealt with the transnational coordination of research in the field of water,
- The second day focused on IWRM-Net activities and gateways that have been launched towards the future
- Finally, the third day allowed the transfer of scientific findings from research to users, managers of rivers.

These three days were an opportunity for the 21 partners of IWRM-Net, European managers of research programs, of showing how the challenges of transnational research were brilliantly met in terms of :

- **programming practices of research** : by identifying research needs, scientific specifications of calls for projects, coordination of research ;
- **facilitation of a social network** : by providing tools for the different stages of exchanges between the partners - knowledge management tool, European Water Community - available on the project website ;
- **research** : two calls for projects were launched in 2007 and 2009 respectively.

Pending the constitution of the "Joint Program Initiative" on Water, initiated by Spain and the Netherlands, the partners of IWRM-Net will have the opportunity to share and collaborate via the "**Scientific Project Coordination (SCP)**", which is financed by the French Ministry of Ecology (MEDDTL) and managed by IOWater with support from ONEMA. It aims to coordinate IWRM-Net research projects beyond December 2010 and to completing them.

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

(The News N° 2 17 - February 2010)

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/eranel>, 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.

Transnational research is starting

(The News N° 16 - December 2008)

IWRM-Net is an ERA-Net (European Research Area) project aiming at undertaking joint transnational research programs related to integrated water resources management. **IWRM-Net is financed by the European Commission for 5 years (2006-2010) and coordinated by the International Office for Water. The project gathers 20 partners coming from 14 Member States.** ONEMA joined the project in 2008 as a permanent observer.

Launching of the first joint program : a success story

The donors of the first joint program met in Berlin in May 2008 to select research projects among the submitted seventeen within the call for proposals launched at the end of 2007. Two projects called FORECASTER (Facilitating the application of the Case Studies on Ecological Responses to hydro-morphological Output from Research degradation and rehabilitation) and RIPFLOW (Riparian vegetation modelling for the assessment of environmental flow regimes and climate change impacts within the WFD) were retained for the topic "Hydromorphological pressures/impacts on good ecological status" and a project named I-FIVE (Innovative Instruments and Institutions in Implementing the Water Framework Directive) was adopted for the topic "Water Governance". Research began during the last quarter of 2008.

IWRM-Net : a network which sees far…

Using this first experiment, IWRM-Net is preparing its second call for projects, the launching of which is planned at the end of 2009. Again, the method of identifying research needs is based on a series of regional workshops through Europe. The workshops aim at drawing up the list of research priorities for each regional area considered :

- Valencia, Spain in June 2008, for the Mediterranean area ;
- Sibiu, Romania, in October 2008. This workshop joined the General Assembly of the EUROPE-INBO Group of European Basin Organizations for WFD implementation ;
- Stockholm, Sweden on 18 and 19 November, for the Baltic countries ;
- Brussels, Belgium on 10 February 2009.

Within IWRM-Net, the French Ministry of Ecology, Energy, Sustainable Development and Regional Planning (MEEDDAT) organized a conference in May 2008 on the prospective stakes related to water in Europe.

A work for convergence of short and longterm topics for drawing up the 2nd joint program will be finalized in a meeting of the potential donors in May 2009.

Simultaneously to these activities, **IOWater initiated a cycle of meetings with the other ERA-Nets dealing with water** (CRUE, SPLASH, SNOWMAN, CIRCLE) in order to plan a common strategy for the sustainability of the various networks after 2010.

The progress report of IWRM-Net activities and the draft program of the next call for projects will be presented at the international conference, which will take place on 10-11 February 2009 in Brussels.