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WES newsletter

Water and Environment Support (WES) project

The EU funded “Water and Environment Support (WES) in the ENI Southern Neighbourhood Region” is a regional project, of the European Union, that aims at protecting the environment and improving the management of scarce water resources in the Mediterranean region. Among the key objectives of WES is to tackle problems related to pollution prevention and water use efficiency. WES capitalises on the experience of previous successful EU funded projects (Horizon 2020 CB/MEP 2010-2014, SWIM SM, SWIM and Horizon 2020, 2015-2019) strives for creating the enabling environment and increasing the relevant capacities of all stakeholders in the partner countries.

WES supports the shift to a more sustainable consumption and production model, promotes an integrated and efficient management of water, combats plastic pollution and marine litter and fosters dialogue on key environmental and sustainable development issues. It operates as a support mechanism to the Partner Countries, creating synergies and opportunities for collaboration and dissemination of information and good practices. WES also provides support to its institutional partners, namely the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) by facilitating specific regional strategies and dialogues and the UN Environment/Mediterranean Action Plan of the Barcelona Convention.

The WES Partner Countries are Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Libya, Palestine¹ and Tunisia.

COVID-19: a wake-up call at the launching of WES

The launching of the activities of the work programme of the EU funded Water Environment Support (WES) regional project coincides with the COVID-19 pandemic, which, similarly to what happened in other parts of the world, has seriously affected the Mediterranean Region.

The crisis was not confined only to health problems with many infected people and large numbers of mortal victims, particularly in the Mediterranean North, but it has very serious socio-economic consequences starting from lock-downs, closed schools and restrictions to traffic and social contacts, to extended damages in most economic sectors, unemployment and further misery for the least privileged.

The WES Team, apart from elaborating measures for the, as much as possible, smooth application of the Work Programme under these extraordinary conditions, wishes to stress that we should consider the current situation as a strong wake-up call for preparedness and reflection on a series of issues, several of which are tackled by the WES project. (...)

¹ This designation shall not be construed as recognition of a State of Palestine and is without prejudice to the individual positions of Member States on this issue.

Starting with water, the simple most basic measure to avoid the spread of the virus, the frequent hand washing with clean drinking water is a condition that has increased water consumption by 30% to 50% in the region with significant shift of resources from agriculture to households. It is an alarming fact that still several millions of Mediterraneans do not have access to safe water and even more people have no access to sanitation. The situation is even worse in areas under armed conflicts and among refugees with chain impacts to health, economy, and society. As a consequence of the intensification and diversion of water resources to households, both agriculture, natural ecosystems and environment as a whole are under more pressure from water scarcity.

Fortunately, WHO and other organisations report that no coronavirus was found in natural water bodies. COVID-19 was found, however, in untreated waste-waters which, in some cases, are still used “raw” for informal irrigation in some Mediterranean countries.

Conventional treatment for drinking water and waste waters is also effective against COVID-19. That means that all the activities related to securing proper integrated management of water resources, water economy, reduction of losses, reduction of non-revenue water, promotion of safe use of non-conventional water resources, water retention systems with recharge of aquifers, methodologies considering the nexus of water-energy-food-ecosystems, economy of water

resources by industry (food industry in particular) and abatement of pollution of water bodies, water accounting, etc., are all relevant and in the heart of policies to address COVID-19 and proactively protect or prepare to address similar future crises.

Furthermore, the fact that many new diseases are linked to zoonosis and closer animal-human contact in mass production linked to new lifestyles with meat as only one of the indicators of the over-consumption of our days, further justifies all the WES activities related directly or indirectly to the environment with emphasis on various types of recycling, avoidance of single use plastics, etc., aiming at reconsidering unsustainable consumption and production patterns and promotion of awareness/education and particularly on appropriate processes, where women and youth are also targeted.

We do believe also that WES contributes in tangible ways to strengthening institutional frameworks and capacities and the ability of partner countries to obtain and properly manage the urgently needed additional investment on water, environment and awareness raising which we hope that will be of high priority within the funds connected to the recovery plans for the post COVID-19 era.

Prof. Michael Scullios
WES Team Leader

Pollution prevention from tomato processing industry

On May 14, 2020, the first WES activity, entitled “Technical Assistance for Pollution Prevention from the Tomato Processing Industry in the Coastal Region of Korba” was officially launched.

The objective of this activity is to reduce environmental impacts linked to the important agro-food processing industry of tomatoes in the coastal region of Korba. This region is rich in biodiversity and highly under threat. The activity is particularly aiming at the introduction of measures to optimise the use of natural resources and to reduce environmental pollution linked to the industrial processing of tomatoes.

It will also set up an environmental monitoring system for the tomato processing industries and launch a process for a sectoral framework agreement for the sustainable management of resources. The activity is expected to be implemented during the coming 18 months.

Due to the Covid-19 restrictions, the meeting was organised virtually with 20 participants and included the EUD represent-

ative, representatives of the Tunisia Ministry of Environment and the National Agency of Protection of the Environment (ANPE). The on-line meeting was organised by Anis Ismail, WES Key Expert for Environment and was attended also by the Non-Key experts from the consortium partners GOPA and MIO-ESCDE, which will be responsible for the implementation of this activity together with the entire WES Project Team.



Development of the WES activities

Since the approval of the WES workplan during the Steering Committee in September, the WES team has been working hard together with the Focal Points, EU Delegations and relevant authorities of the partner countries to develop Terms of References (ToR) for a number of activities that were proposed in the workplan.

Those ToRs, which include the specific objectives, target groups and expected results of each activity, have now been developed for almost all Partner Countries. These ToRs were also coordinated with the various WES consortium Members as each of them will be responsible for/or involved in the implementation of a number of the activities. In each Partner

Country there will be four national activities, two in the field of water and two in the field of environment.

During the first months of 2020, the first Terms of Reference were approved by DG NEAR and the partner countries. We are now in the process of launching the first activities. As is the case for almost all projects worldwide, the COVID-19 crisis is affecting the implementation of WES activities. Nevertheless, we are trying to start our activities by launching them, for example on-line. In this view, priority is currently given to activities that can be partly implemented remotely.

WES ToRs that have been approved so far and which will start their activities soon:

Tunisia: Support for the implementation of Sustainable Public Procurement operations

Tunisia: Technical Assistance for the prevention and monitoring of pollution caused by tomato processing industries in the coastal area of Korba

Regional: Regional training on water accounting

Algeria: Conduct a diagnosis for the performance of NRW in a pilot utility and develop a plan for Non-Revenue Water (NRW) improvements focusing on minimum cost of interventions with fast investment paybacks

Israel: Storm water management and Natural Water Retention Measures





WES Gender and Youth Action Plan

Right from the start of the project, WES has been committed to promoting gender equality and empowerment of women and youth in its structure and management, as well as in its activities. A Gender and Youth Action Plan is currently under development to ensure that different needs, roles and interests of women and men are assessed and that gender differentiated impacts and constraints are addressed. The plan will also focus on opportunities to deal with gender gaps and to empower women and youth.

The Gender and Youth Action plan will be instrumental in ensuring that all WES activities are designed and implemented in an inclusive manner, ensuring women's and youth's participation regardless of their background, age,

race, ethnicity or religion. Consultations with women and youth organizations, and relevant local groups will regularly take place.

When it comes to monitoring and evaluation, WES is including Gender- Responsive Indicators to monitor and report on socio-economic and gender-sensitive changes over a period of time.

In a nutshell, the objective of the WES Gender and Youth Action Plan is to provide input and guidance on how WES can integrate gender and youth considerations in a practical, strategic and effective manner. It also aims to ensure that the project's system captures gender and youth-related results.

Selection of Demo projects at final stages

Promoting water efficiency and reducing water stress in rural and urban areas in the Mediterranean region is one of the aims of Green Med III. In this framework, WES is also providing technical assistance and training to enforce the national regulatory frameworks, to foster the dialogue at national and regional level and to promote exchange of best practices among various stakeholders.

A call for proposals was launched for demonstration projects on 'Efficient Use of Water' (Call reference EuropeAid/163941/DH/ACT/Multi) with the specific objective to identify, test and showcase innovative technical and institutional solutions that have the potential to be scaled up and that lead to the efficient use of water in the Southern Mediterranean region.

Under this call, 31 eligible concept notes were received and 17 of them were invited to provide a full application. A team of WES assessors assessed 16 final applications. Half of the applications concerned single country activities and the other half concerned multi-country activities. Two of the applications had non-EU lead partners, the other applications had lead partners from Italy (6), Spain (3), France (1), Belgium (1) and the Netherlands (1). The full application assessment was concluded in February 2020 and the results were sent by the assessors to DG NEAR, which is expected to take a final decision on awarding of the applications soon.

Preparations for first regional event on water accounting on the way

The first WES regional training on Water Accounting was originally scheduled to take place in June 2020 in Athens, Greece. Due to the current Covid-19 crisis, it was decided to review the organisation in order to hold instead an online training. This training is now scheduled to take place in September. As it is likely that also in September regional events cannot take place, the project has already selected a tailored on-line platform which offers all the features needed for on-line training, allowing up to 40 participants in video mode to join from different remote locations (home/office). The sessions will have the possibility for participants to take the floor, share their screens and simultaneous interpretation will be running in parallel within the same platform. The platform can also host parallel breakout sessions. In view of the shift to on-line training, the program is currently being slightly reshaped in sessions with an adapted content.

The purpose of this regional training event is to introduce water accounting as a tool to achieve integrated water governance and a sustainable water balance and to capture its important role in water monitoring. This activity is in line with the Water Financing Strategy of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), it will refer to International Standards - the UN System of Environmental Economic Accounting Central Framework (SEEA-CF), and the UN System of Environmental Economic Accounting for water (SEEA-water). It will also ensure complementarity with the ENI SEIS II South Support Mechanism which aims at improving the availability and access to relevant environmental information to the benefit of effective and knowledge-based policymaking in the Neighbourhood South region.

This regional training event will be open for water experts within relevant ministries and the statistical offices of the WES Partner Countries. Throughout the training event, participants will have the opportunity to get a comprehensive introduction to the overall concept of water accounts (environmental and economic components), to learn about the benefits of water accounting and the use of water accounting outputs (e.g. UN SDG process), to get introduced to the Physical Flow accounts and Physical Assets accounts, using the UN System of Environmental Economic Accounting for Water. There will also be room for discussing real situations in the countries of the participants, where water accounting can be implemented. LDK Consultants Global EEIG, will be responsible for the implementation of this activity.



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