

Regional Workshop on Optimisation for Sustainable Water Resources Management



Malta, 28 – 29 May 2007

Conclusions

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Rapporteur for Roundtable Discussions

Event supported by



**Conclusions of
Malta Regional Workshop
28-29 May 2007**

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Dirk De Ketelaere, IRMCo, Malta**

Point of departure for the first roundtable:

Participatory stakeholder involvement is formally stated as an objective in the OPTIMA research contract (INCO-CT-2004-509091, 1 July 2004 – 30 June 2007)

Specific activities to engage with Stakeholders included mailshots, a dedicated website, a Water Issues Questionnaire (used in each of the case studies), posters, individual meetings with stakeholders and stakeholder workshops

Outcome of discussions:

- Engaging the stakeholders proved more difficult to implement than expected
- The process has been a learning curve for all the research teams in OPTIMA
- It is never too early to involve stakeholders in a research project
- Stakeholders tend to stick to their individual ‘wishes’, and researchers have the challenge to provide an objective opinion and to keep a general overview
- The Water Issues Questionnaire that was employed proved a very robust method, provided additional explanation was given in the national language, and provided the replies were collected in face-to-face meetings
- Stakeholder replies to the questionnaire need to be verified and validated, and the results communicated back to them
- The Baseline Scenario for the case studies could be more effectively prepared by a ‘smaller’ group of stakeholders, and the group is chosen ‘democratically’, for example through a kind of ‘election’ in a stakeholder workshop

Point of departure for the second roundtable:

The presentations of the invited speakers directed the discussions of the second roundtable on the implementation of the Water Framework Directive, the role of new technologies, and how to mainstream gender in water management

Outcome of discussions:

- The Water Framework Directive was equated with the adoption of a river basin approach in each of the case studies
- The spatial and temporal data requirements of the model proved difficult to satisfy even for those basins that have been studied extensively
- Gaining access to these data, which are mostly held by public authorities presented another problem:
 - o If you are famous in your river basin, life is a lot easier
 - o If you are not famous in your river basin, be “smart”
- Access to the data improved considerably when representatives of these stakeholders were either formally or informally integrated within the respective research teams, for example through the setting up of a steering committee
- Even if no conflicting demands are observed, participatory involvement is a good way to avoid such conflict in future
- Gender mainstreaming: the issue is whether the views of 50% of the population have been considered
- There are very few role-models of woman water managers, be it in the MENA countries, developing countries, or indeed in Europe

Point of departure for the third roundtable:

The Dissemination Strategy in OPTIMA was designed with the respective objectives to (a) increase awareness on similar or comparable issues across the Region, (b) encourage stakeholder networks to be established in each case study, and (c) assist an active south-south dialogue among stakeholders.

The third roundtable invited the stakeholders present to suggest how a future dissemination strategy could further improve on the results that were achieved

Outcome of discussions:

- The future dissemination activities of the research teams are already well defined in relation to the scientific community through the submission of articles to scientific journals and presentations of papers at conferences
- With respect to future dissemination to the stakeholders, the following conclusions were reached:
 - o The research teams carry an obligation towards the stakeholders to show them the results that were obtained in order to acknowledge their active involvement and contributions to the research that was carried out
 - o The results of the comparative analysis between the respective case studies should feature strongly in future dissemination activities
 - o While the focus should be on the success stories that were achieved, future dissemination should maintain an appropriate link to the further research needs that were identified