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## EU-FUNDED PROJECT ASSISTS LEBANESE DECISION MAKERS IN PRIORITIZING INVESTMENTS TO REDUCE THE DEGRADATION OF THE LITANI RIVER BASIN

### PRESS NOTE

Based on an assessment recently released by the **EU funded project SWIM-Support Mechanism (SWIM-SM)**, the cost assessment of water resource degradation of the Upper Litani Basin (ULB) is estimated to be equivalent on average **to 0.5% of the National GDP** in 2012, and is particularly attributable to **water resources degradation (77% of total costs)** including, in order of importance, water quantity, water-borne diseases and water quality.

Other major causes of degradation are the following:

- Poor waste collection and;
- Air pollution in the Zahleh and Baalbeck areas that affects not only health but also agricultural productivity, as additional use of fertilizers to compensate for productivity losses has some bearing on water resources quality.

Based on the cost-benefit analysis of different scenarios related to the three identified priorities for action, namely **municipal water services improvement, drinking water and sanitation improvement and additional depollution investments to reach acceptable international and national water quality standards**, the following **intervention areas** are proposed, in view of achieving an integrated management of water resources in the ULB:

- a) **Support the River Basin Agency Concept to be implemented by the Litani River Authority (LRA)** to ensure water management at the basin level for a more effective water allocation, monitoring, compliance and enforcement.
- b) **Reduce losses and non-revenue water** by focusing on the preparation of an action plan (with costs) for the rehabilitation of the water, wastewater, and irrigation networks, and its implementation, including specific indicators of performance.
- c) **Improve investment efficiency and prioritize** interventions to improve sanitation for the about 688,000 inhabitants (by 2032) living in rural and poor urban areas through low cost technologies and by also increasing the coverage and the treatment capacities of existing wastewater treatment plants (WWTPs).
- d) **Enhance the overall effectiveness of interventions regarding municipal wastewater discharge, industrial effluents, solid waste leachate and agricultural runoff** through pre-feasibility and economic valuation of additional investments proposed by the Government and development partners, in view of adopting a prioritized and collaborative approach.

Based on a situation's analysis the most urgent investments should be aimed to:

- i- Improved sewer networks (both distribution and connection to WWTPs);
- ii- Treatment of industrial effluents directly at the facilities;
- iii- Closing/rehabilitating open dumps near the Litani River and establishing municipal treatment facilities in major cities;
- iv- Optimize the utilization of fertilizers and pesticides in ULB by improve coordination of all efforts;
- v- Ensure compliance of polluting enterprises with laws

The assessment's outcome was discussed with Lebanese relevant institutions and stakeholders during a **National consultation organized in Beirut, on 12 December 2013, under the auspices of the Lebanese Ministry of Energy and Water**. The feedback received in that occasion has been integrated in the final version of the assessment available in the SWIM website in its integral form in [English](#), while an Executive Summary is also available in [French](#). Moreover, a policy note is available in [English](#) and [French](#).

**For more information:**

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**Note to editors:**

**The SWIM Programme**

Sustainable Water Integrated Management (SWIM) is a Regional Programme launched by the European Commission to contribute to the extensive dissemination and effective implementation of sustainable water management policies and practices in the Southern Mediterranean Region. This is in the context of increasing water scarcity, combined pressures on water resources from a wide range of users, desertification processes and in connection with climate change.

The Programme, with a total budget of approximately € 22 million, is implemented under the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI), following the Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conferences on Environment (Cairo, 2006) and Water (Dead Sea, 2008).

SWIM consists of two major Components, which are inter-related and complement each other:

- A Support Mechanism, funded with a budget of € 6.7 million and
- Demonstration Projects funded with a budget of € 15 million

**SWIM – Support Mechanism (SWIM-SM)**

SWIM-SM is the Component of the Programme that provides Regional Technical Assistance to the Partner Countries. This Component, of the duration of 4 years (2010-2014), aims at:

- Providing strategic assistance to the Partner Countries in designing and implementing sustainable water management policies and plans, involving inter-sector dialogue as well as stakeholder consultation and participation;
- Contributing to institutional reinforcement, to the development of the necessary planning and management skills and to know-how transfer;
- Raising awareness on the threats on water resources, the necessity to switch to more sustainable consumption models and possible solutions to face challenges.

Furthermore, SWIM-SM also:

- assists technically the Demonstration Projects implemented under the second Component of the SWIM Programme and;
- undertakes Capacity Building activities related to water resources management identified under the Horizon 2020 Capacity Building – Mediterranean Environment Programme (H2020 CB/MEP).

SWIM-Support Mechanism is implemented by a Consortium formed by a combination of nine international and regional companies and institutions:

- LDK Consultants Engineers & Planners SA: Leader of the Consortium
- Global Water Partnership - Mediterranean (GWP-Med): SWIM-SM Technical Direction
- Arab Countries Water Utilities Association (ACWUA)
- Arab Network for Environment and Development (RAED)
- DHV B.V.
- Greek Ministry of Environment, Energy & Climate Change, Department of International Relations & EU Affairs
- Lebanese Ministry of Energy and Water, General Directorate of Hydraulic and Electrical Resources
- Tunisian Ministry of Agriculture and Environment, Bureau de l'Inventaire et des Recherches Hydrauliques / Direction Générale des Ressources en Eau
- Umweltbundesamt GmbH - Environment Agency, Austria

## SWIM Demonstration Projects

- 1- **Adaptation to Climate Change of the Mediterranean Agricultural Systems (SWIM-ACLIMAS)**  
Leader of the Project's Consortium: International Center for Advanced Studies on Mediterranean Agriculture – Mediterranean Agronomic Institute of Bari (CIHEAM-MAIB), Italy
- 2- **All Across the Jordan: the NGO Trans-boundary Master Planning of the Lower Jordan River Basin (SWIM-All Across the Jordan)**  
Leader of the Project's Consortium: Friends of the Earth Middle East
- 3- **Innovative Means to Protect Water Resources in the Mediterranean Coastal Areas through Re-injection of Treated Wastewater (SWIM-IMPROWARE)**  
Leader of the Project's Consortium: Italian Ministry of the Environment, Land and Sea
- 4- **Network of demonstration activities for sustainable integrated wastewater treatment and reuse in the Mediterranean (SWIM-Sustain Water MED)**  
Leader of the Project's Consortium: Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (German International Cooperation - GIZ) GmbH
- 5- **Water harvesting and Agricultural techniques in Dry lands: an Integrated and Sustainable model in MAghreb Regions (SWIM-WADIS MAR)**  
Leader of the Project's Consortium: University of Sassari, Italy