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EU-FUNDED PROJECT SUPPORTS SOUTH MEDITERRANEAN COUNTRIES IN REGULATING THE RECHARGE OF AQUIFERS WITH ADEQUATELY TREATED WASTEWATER

PRESS NOTE

The EU-funded Sustainable Water Integrated Management – Support Mechanism (SWIM-SM) project has recently published a **report and a set of guidelines intended to assist legislators** and government officials from the South Mediterranean countries **in the design and administration of a regulatory environment for the safe "managed aquifer recharge (MAR)"** with adequately treated wastewater (or reclaimed water).

Despite the fact that technologies have been developed to produce safe and reliable water supplies out of reclaimed water the uptake has been limited by **lack of a policy and a clear and consistent regulatory framework**. This is regrettable considering that the potential for reusing treated wastewater to recharge aquifers for irrigation in the Mediterranean countries is significant and can play an important role as part of a package of measures to protect aquifers from seawater intrusion, restore the groundwater balance and sustain groundwater-supported local livelihoods, economic activity in general, and ecosystems.

Guidelines and recommendations provided in the document build upon available literature and five original case studies illustrating the regulatory approach and experience in South Africa, Israel, the State of Arizona (USA), the State of Western Australia (Australia) and Spain.

While the case studies show that no country has yet adopted a specific set of provisions to cover the entire process, but are rather regulating the different stages of MAR-related activities through existing legislation on groundwater abstraction, wastewater discharge and treated wastewater reuse, the **guidelines seek actually to cover all operational elements of MAR licensing**.

Review and fine-tuning of the Guidelines are recommended as SWIM Partner Countries (Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine and Tunisia) develop their own regulatory framework based on their national specificities and as the Guidelines are put to the test.

At the application level, it should also be noted that another project implemented in the framework of the SWIM Programme, namely ["Innovative Means to Protect Water Resources in the Mediterranean Coastal Areas through Re-injection of Treated Water \(SWIM-IMPROWARE\)"](#) focuses on producing water of appropriate quality levels through the treatment of wastewater for its successive re-injection into coastal aquifers in Egypt (Nobariya) and Tunisia (Korba).

To download the report and guidelines in English [click here](#)

For an Operational Summary of the document in French [click here](#)

For more information:

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SWIM website: www.swim-sm.eu

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 Partner Countries are: **Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, the occupied Palestinian territory, Syria*¹ and Tunisia.**

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

* In May 2011, the European Union decided to suspend all cooperation with Syrian authorities

- 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**
Leader of the Project's Consortium: Friends of the Earth Middle East (FoEME)
- 3- **Innovative Means to Protect Water Resources in the Mediterranean Coastal Areas through Re-injection of Treated Wastewater (SWIM-IMPWARE)**
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: Desertification Research Group (Centro Interdipartimentale di Ateneo) University of Sassari, Italy