

Improving integrated water resource and water demand management

In the Mediterranean countries, water resources are limited and unequally shared out in time and space. The countries of the southern part of the Mediterranean only benefit from 13% of the total.

Almost 30 million inhabitants of this region do not have access to drinking water, especially in the east and the south. In 2025, the population considered as poor in terms of water, i.e. benefiting from fewer than 1000 cubic metres per inhabitant and per annum, included 240 million inhabitants.

Demand for water in the Mediterranean countries should increase by about 50 km³ by 2025 to reach about 330 km³ per annum, i.e. a level that would be incompatible with renewable resources. Losses due to transport, leaks and bad use of this resource could be more than 120 km³ per annum.

The work carried out by Plan Bleu reflects the absolute necessity to change water management policies, to manage the various uses in a better way and to use resources in a more economical and optimal way to meet the needs for development as well as the needs of the present and future populations.

Monitoring of MSSD indicators highlights the main trends concerning the evolution of water demand and of pressure on resources, as well as the efforts needed to reach the Millennium Development Goals.

The rise in demand is causing concern because it is incompatible with the water available in most of the countries of the region. The rise in water demand in the Mediterranean is due largely to the countries of the east and south. Agriculture is still the main user in terms of volumes of water. The pressure of demand on water resources is already high and still increasing, especially in the south and east (notably in Egypt, Syria, Libya and Israel) as well as in Malta where water abstraction is approaching or has even gone beyond the limits of renewable resources.

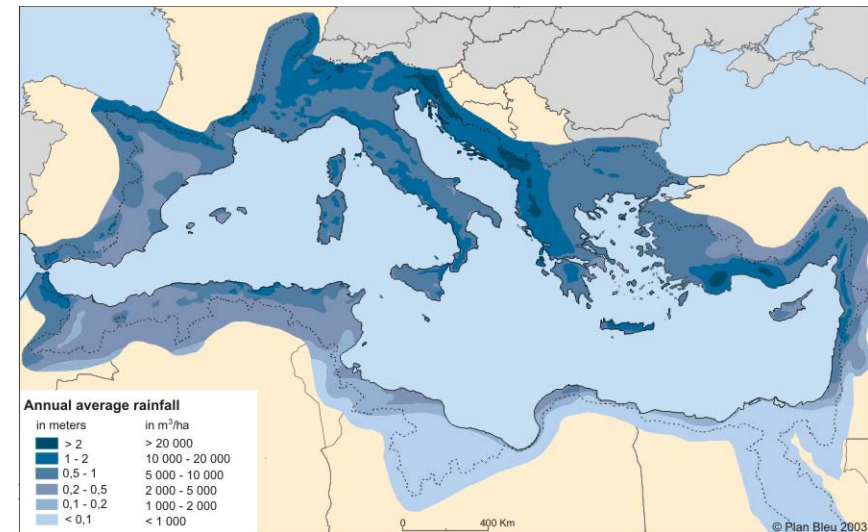
The share of the Mediterranean population with access to improved water resources is increasing and reached 93% in most Mediterranean countries in 2006.

However, the situation in the rural areas remains less optimistic, especially in the southern and eastern countries of the region where the highest number of people without access to drinking water can be found. More than 18 millions of Mediterranean living generally in rural areas

Besides this, if the share of the population with access to an improved sanitation system is also rising and higher than the world average of 59%, about 49 million inhabitants of the Mediterranean countries still did not benefit from an adequate sanitation system in 2006.

Differences between the northern countries and those of the south and east, as well as differences between urban and rural areas, are still significant.

Average rainfall distribution in the Mediterranean basin



Source : Margat, Plan Bleu

3 % of the world's water resources for 7% of the population

Improvement in the integrated management of water demand and resources is the first priority of the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development, with strategic objectives and monitoring indicators:

- Strengthening of water demand management policies in order to stabilise demand thanks to a reduction of losses and bad use and to increase the value added per m³ of water used (priority indicators n°1 and n° 2),
- Integrated management of watersheds, including surface water and groundwater, ecosystems and clean-up objectives (priority indicator n°3),
- Access to drinking water and to sanitation to reach the Millennium Development Goals (priority indicators n°4 and n° 5),
- Fostering of participation, of partnerships and of cooperation.