Is pressure on renewable natural water resources going down?

The preservation of water resources is one of the priority objectives of most of the Mediterranean countries.

Pressure on water resources remains high, especially in the southern and eastern Mediterranean countries, but the situations are very different.

The Mediterranean countries can be classified into three groups, according to the exploitation index:

- The first group of countries whose water withdrawals are close to or go beyond the average annual volume of renewable natural resources (index over 75%). These five countries (Egypt, Malta, Syria, Libya and Israel) are already experiencing great pressure on their natural resources and will have to meet a growing share of their demand with other "unconventional" resources.
- A second group of countries with an exploitation index of between 25 and 50% could experience local or temporary pressure. This is the case for six countries (Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, Lebanon, Palestinian Territories and Cyprus).
- A third group of countries with an index under 25%, including Italy, Spain, Turkey, France and the Balkan countries.

The indexes close to 100 could have several explanations: overexploitation of groundwater (Malta, Libya) or use of return water from agricultural drainage, thus allowing the gross withdrawals to exceed the primary renewable resources (Egypt).

In the Mediterranean watersheds, the exploitation index is generally higher than the national value.

The situation of the countries concerning available resources per inhabitant is slightly different:

- The countries experiencing water shortage, with annual resources of under 500 m^3 per inhabitant: Malta (82 m^3/inhab), Libya, Palestinian Territories, Israel, Algeria and Tunisia (403 m^3/inhab)
- The countries with little water, with annual resources of between 500 and 1000 m^3 per inhabitant: Morocco (694 m^3/inhab), Egypt, Cyprus and Syria (980 m^3/inhab).
- The other countries are considered « rich » in terms of water, with annual resources above 1000 m^3 per inhabitant.

These values, calculated at national level, could hide many disparities locally or in the river basins.

Definition

This indicator measures the relative pressure of annual withdrawals on conventional renewable natural freshwater resources, including transport losses.

The resources of each country are defined by the surface or groundwater formed in or entering the country.

Precautions / Notes

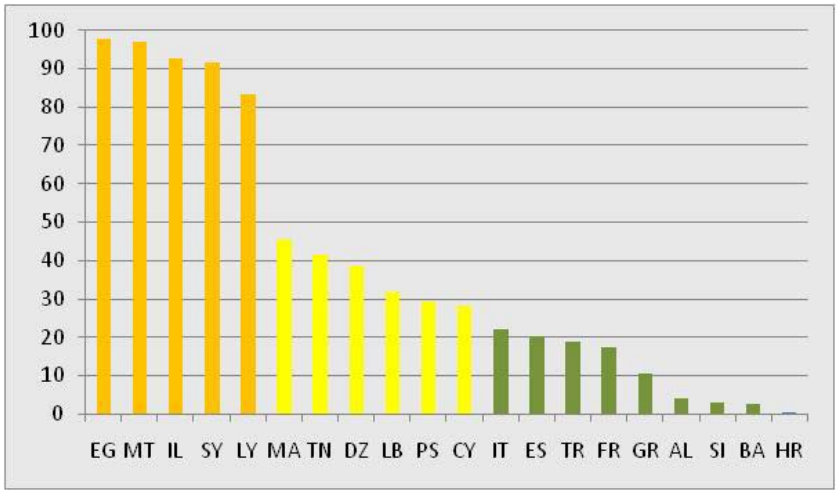
The annual available water is calculated over the medium to long term (30 years).

Sources / References

FAO-Aquastat, Eurostat, World Resources Institute, Plan Bleu and several national sources, including the reports presented during the regional workshop in Saragossa in 2007

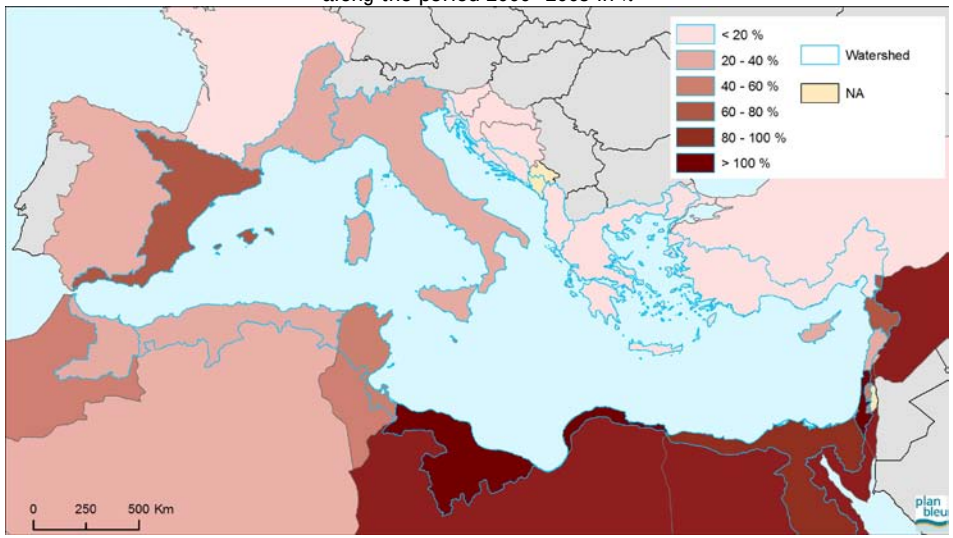
3. Exploitation Index of renewable natural resources

Exploitation Index of renewable natural resources along the period 2000- 2005 in %



Source : Plan Bleu from national sources

Exploitation Index of renewable natural resources(countries and watersheds) along the period 2000- 2005 in %



Source : Plan Bleu from national sources