

Press release

Over a hundred participants from 14 Mediterranean countries, representatives of the national institutions, of the academic world, of the private sector and of associations, met together in Saragossa on 19, 20 and 21 March 2007 to attend the 3rd regional workshop on water and sustainable development in the Mediterranean region. Organised under the aegis of the Mediterranean Commission for Sustainable Development, by Plan Bleu and its regional partners in the field of water (the International Centre for Advanced Mediterranean Agronomic Studies, the Mediterranean Water Institute, the Global Water Partnership in the Mediterranean, MedWet and MIO-ECSDE), Expo Zaragoza 2008 and the Mediterranean Agronomic Institute of Saragossa, this international gathering was based on the theme of water demand management. While the Mediterranean countries' demand should increase by about 50 Km³ by 2025 to reach about 332 Km³, i.e. a level that is not easily compatible with the renewable resources, transport losses, leaks, misuse could be greater than 120 Km³ per year. That is why better management of water demand is of such great importance. During the debates, the participants evoked ways of optimising the various water uses: for agriculture, industry and domestic, while taking into account the water needs of the ecosystems.

Examples of good practices carried out locally in the various water use sectors, as well as studies carried out in the Mediterranean, were presented during the three-day workshop. The discussions highlighted the need to share successful experiences, to draw up reports on progress made in terms of water demand management in the Mediterranean countries, to analyse the policy instruments implemented, to identify the main obstacles and to formulate proposals for the integration of water demand in water and sectorial policies, as well as in international cooperation policies.

Various conclusions arising from this event should be mentioned, including the need to improve knowledge concerning available resources, as well as present and future water needs, to make the general public aware of the problems of water scarcity and the need to save water, to involve local players in the steps to be taken for water demand management and to integrate the factor of climate change in water management strategies.

The main messages arising from this work were presented to the public during the 7th public session of the Permanent Forum on Water and Sustainability of Expo Zaragoza 2008.