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Contribution of the Working Group on Water for the Mediterranean Strategy EU 2020

Water-related issues, which is a vital resource, are essential in all regions of the world; however, the manner in which we address them, either to meet the needs and provide water in sufficient quantity and quality for different uses, protect themselves against extreme events (floods and droughts), or the protection of the resource itself as a basic element of the landscape and environment is very different from place to place, each having different characteristics.

In this context, the Mediterranean regions have characteristics that differ substantially from other countries, in terms of river configuration, uses, land use and climate. Therefore, policies which are applied from the European Union, even allowing for a common goal for everyone, are applied with much difficulty for implementation.

The ideas of a river basin unit, the hydrological cycle, river basin management, or user participation, are not novel aspects in countries like Spain, nor is the treatment of water as a scarce resource that must be protected. The drainage and treatment policies were likewise already being implemented since Directive 91/271/EC, as well as the rest of the package quality guidelines (drinking water, fish life, bathing water, discharge of dangerous substances ...) but it is as of Directive 2000/60/EC, known as the Water Framework Directive that targets have been set for all bodies of water, integrating coastal and transitional, with the continental surface and groundwater. It is a water quality directive which, although it makes reference to unforeseen or exceptional circumstances such as droughts and floods, lacks a determined approach towards solving these problems, even though these phenomena are common and recurring in the Mediterranean basins. But above all, it seems to ignore the fundamental problem in many regions and islands of the Mediterranean: the scarcity of water resources is not merely cyclical, but structural, and that most water quality problems are associated, or may have their origin, in quantity issues.

The purpose of this document is not, however, criticism of the directive, although it was directed at some aspects that must be taken into account for future reforms. Rather it is to deal with problems in their application in Mediterranean basins, and in some cases extended to other basins, and suggest useful investments that lead to the achievement of these objectives.

In the Mediterranean regions there are plentiful short, torrential showers, with prolonged periods of drought and catastrophic flooding. However, the favorable conditions of climate and fertile soils have historically favored the expansion of a highly productive agriculture sector, which today is at risk because of market developments and very scarce water resources. These situations have led to these basins being very regulated and showing a reverse in the natural water regimes, preventing flood damage, creating wealth in the irrigated areas and relieving situations of water stress during periods of aquatic ecosystems of drought. All of these are positive aspects, which, inexplicably, seem to be forgotten on many occasions. In any case, it is difficult to change these situations.

The current situation requires changes in water management: better control, the implementation of savings measures, the pooling of surface water and groundwater and the use of additional or unconventional water resources. Nevertheless, implementation of these management measures is not simple, as they tend to

specify broad agreements between different users more complex than would result from the simple application of market laws, and the implementation of various infrastructures, always taking into account the feasibility of possible solutions, financial sustainability and energy efficiency (and not only for economic, but environmental reasons).

Measures such as waste water reuse and the modernization of irrigation are beneficial in any hydraulic system, from a global efficiency and from an environmental standpoint. However, in practice, they only apply when users or government are able to bear the costs of the actions they engage in. The most deficient water systems and coastal areas are forced to make a greater economic effort.

At the same time, the cost recovery principle, which establishes Article 9 of the WFD, in this case does not act as a mechanism to improve water efficiency and achieve environmental goals but rather the contrary (except in establishing proper internalization of environmental benefits and for the whole system within the cost of these measures). These exceptional cases should be considered, given the last paragraph of section 1 of the aforementioned article and *take into account the social, environmental and economic effects of the recovery and the geographic and climatic conditions of the region or regions affected*.

In short, it would be convenient for the European Union to implement an active policy **to encourage the adoption of such measures, favoring agreements between users and adequate financing** of the work, which is not supported solely by accountable users and administrators.

Another key aspect to take into account in the implementation of water policies is that, according to scientific studies, the Mediterranean basin is one of the areas most affected by global climate change on the planet, and will suffer earlier and more sharply from the adverse effects with less rainfall, but more erosive, which will increase the aridity of the area. The change in rainfall in the Mediterranean basin is also a cause of increased flooding in central Europe. Moreover, this climate change will produce a salinity imbalance in the Mediterranean, which will disturb the North Atlantic.

To mitigate these effects, it is considered a priority to maintain forest cover and existing agricultural uses in the Mediterranean coast. However, in the current maintenance of these uses there is an opportunity cost for farmers which is very hard to bear.

Likewise, the consumption of energy acts as an emitter of greenhouse gases, so that energy efficiency to treat and transport water has to be an essential parameter taken into account when making decisions on possible water supply sources.

Therefore, the **basic themes** regarding water, which are proposed by this Committee are:

- 1) Encourage and promote, through the financing of works and facilitating agreements between users, as they can implement management measures such as waste water reuse and modernization of irrigation systems, among others.
- 2) Set determining costs of services related to water taking into account the internalization of social and environmental benefits and exemptions provided in Article 9.1 of the WFA.
- 3) To encourage the protection of agricultural and forested areas in the Mediterranean coastal areas, as a sink for CO₂, to minimize climate change in the European Commission.
- 4) Require maximum energy efficiency in the supply, treatment and transport of water, to limit the emission of greenhouse gases that promote climate change.
- 5) Contribute to future water policies, or reforms of the current, which take further into account the peculiarities of the Mediterranean region and the aspects of quantity, and not only quality.

The Working Group on Water of IMC proposes the following financial instruments:

Action Area	Financial Measures	Comments
Financing Infrastructures	<p>Projects for the storage and transport of recycled water for irrigation use.</p> <p>Works for reuse of reclaimed water for environmental purposes (recharge aquifers, rivers, environmental flows, wetlands, etc).</p> <p>Projects for the modernization of irrigation.</p> <p>Projects for the interconnection between systems and facilitation of exchanges between users and the implementation of Water Banks.</p> <p>Reforestation projects</p>	<p>The signature of the corresponding Convention for users and authorities concerned and the allocation of resources committed by the European Commission is required.</p> <p>The commitment of resource allocation by the European Commission and Member States. Also, the favorable report from the regional environmental department and the relevant water administration.</p> <p>Signature is required between the Irrigation Community Convention and the administrations involved and the relevant commitments of resource allocation.</p> <p>The commitment and resource allocation report from the pertinent water bodies is required.</p> <p>Commitment to resource allocation and projects approved by the Department of the Environment of the region concerned.</p>
Financing of Studies	<p>Analysis of the costs of services related to water and the justification of exceptions of art. 9 of the WFA.</p> <p>Projects for the implementation of a Floods Directive.</p>	<p>Designed for the analysis of the viability of the adopted measures.</p> <p>Designed for the use of Territorial Zoning, Civil Protection, and water administration departments..</p>