

## **Knowledge-based policies in support of water related Millennium Development Goals and Johannesburg targets – Research as part of the EU Water Initiative**

In an era of global change, the pursuit of knowledge-based sustainable development is inextricably linked to the decoupling of socio-economic development from environmental deterioration. Over the last centuries, science and technology and more specifically the ability of our societies to generate and manage knowledge have been central to understanding opportunities and limitations of the interactions between ecosystems and our societies. After a doubling of the world population in the last 50 years, about 6 billion citizens now share the life-support system Earth, but also affect it in unparalleled ways. There is an increasing awareness about the need to adapt natural resources planning and management practices against a background of their impact on poverty and social welfare of developing countries. Changes in wealth and consumption patterns and projected demographic growth to perhaps 9 billion people before human population is expected to level off in about another 50 years prevent ‘business as usual’-scenarios from being an option.

Hence there is an urgent call for intensification of research, interpretation, knowledge dissemination and management efforts through wider and open strategic partnerships. Such partnerships should place emphasis on capacity building and empowerment of key social actors. They shall also aim at bringing science and society closer together to ensure common understanding of the major drivers and help reshape our action for the transition towards sustainable development.

The pace of improved access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation, alongside the planning and management of water for food production, national and household food security and ecosystem maintenance and all other uses in a sustainable manner will determine whether the transition towards poverty reduction and sustainable development expressed in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and targets adopted by the WSSD Johannesburg will be achieved.

Recognising the magnitude of the challenge and its implications for knowledge and innovation, the Research Component of the EU Water Initiative promotes, in addition to existing policies, knowledge-based partnerships and dialogue with a wide range of social actors in Europe and partner regions in pursuit of the following aims:

- Identifying research priorities and demands in an ongoing dialogue with partners; e.g. more widespread dissemination and use of existing scientific knowledge and technologies from past research that should be used to inform today’s policy formulation, support planning and implementation;
- Suitable integration and synergistic use of scientific and other forms of knowledge and its translation into innovative approaches throughout the spectrum of water resources management, taking due account of the interactions between cultural, social, economic, ecological and institutional factors;
- Generation of new knowledge through cooperative research in Europe and between Europe and its partners in different regions of the world to generate improved understanding: of ecosystems and the dynamically evolving way in which human societies interact with them and of requirements for implement of the MDGs and targets adopted by the WSSD Johannesburg;
- Organising and sharing scientific knowledge well beyond the scientific community with citizens in Europe and partner regions, including improving interactions with educational systems at all levels for a more systematic and generalised access of all age groups and as empowerment for citizens and their local institutions;
- Improving coordination, cooperation and complementarity as well as striving for greater synergies between EU Member States bilateral and EU Framework research programmes’ activities on the one hand and efforts towards integrated water resources management in partner regions on the other.

The participants at the Session urge the DG Research to increase its efforts to better integrate the research component with the other components of the EUWI. Elaboration of a work program in collaboration with other working groups of the EUWI and partners is needed.

For more information: [www.euwi.net](http://www.euwi.net) and [http://europa.eu.int/comm/research/water-initiative/index\\_en.html](http://europa.eu.int/comm/research/water-initiative/index_en.html)

**Discussed and endorsed at the EUWI Research Session, World Water Week 2004, Stockholm.**