

WWF8: Feedback on the session on 'Circular Economy: Reuse in the Mediterranean and its impacts on territories'

March, 20th – 14:30-16:00

The World Water Forum took place in Brasilia on March 18 to 23. It is one of the very few international fora where the Mediterranean region is recognised as a relevant regional space. Thus the preparatory process led by the Mediterranean Water Institute (IME) and the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) has been crucial to highlight the views, the know-how and the solutions of Mediterranean stakeholders especially as regards the priority themes.

As coordinators of the Urban Topic, the Economic Foresight Institute for the Mediterranean (IPEMED) and Medcities organised a series of workshops with the prospect of the World Water Forum. All the case studies and recommendations presented during those sessions have been compiled in a [policy paper](#) entitled "Reuse in the Mediterranean and its impact on territories".

With their partners such as the Euromed Cities Network, the International Office for Water (IOWater) and the Euro-Mediterranean Information System on Know-How in the Water Sector (EMWIS), a session has been organised on **March, 20th, within the framework of the World Water Water**.

Based on lessons learned on the ground, this bottom-up and participative session had two main objectives :

- Presenting the Mediterranean context, challenges and best practices as regards Waste Water REUSE;
- Encouraging a debate with the audience in order to share experiences.

Two case studies were presented thanks to the participation of **Giora Shaham**, Director General of the Israel National Water Authority, and **Pedro Simón**, Technical Director at ESAMUR, the Wastewater Treatment Entity of the Region of Murcia in Spain (*see Powerpoint presentations below*). In Israel and Spain as well as in other Mediterranean countries, access to sufficient safe water is still boiling issues considering their structural water stress situation, growing anthropogenic pressures and anticipated climate change impacts. But these challenges offer opportunities to break away from past water management approaches and to shift to innovative solutions, such as a circular economy approach of water management, which includes the use of treated wastewater. As agriculture is the most water-intensive activity in the region, farmers are interested by treated waste water. But in both cases, the success of a REUSE project depends on a strong regulatory framework (minimum quality standards for different water uses, effluent quality limit values for wastewater collected and efficient inspection capacity for law enforcement), the facilities, the quality of the treatment, the financial viability of the operation as well as the governance and the monitoring capacities.

Researchers may help public authorities to better understand the local specificities, in order to adapt a REUSE project to the intended use and to evaluate the impacts on the development of the territory in which it is implemented. The interdisciplinary approach presented by **José Martinez**, Deputy Director International Affairs at the National Research Institute of Science and Technology for Environment and Agriculture (IRSTEA) in France may be a useful tool to influence decision-making.

As **Raphaëlle Primet**, Vice-President of SIAAP said, it is essential to involve local stakeholders (elected representatives, citizens, etc.), from the beginning, into the governance of REUSE projects to guarantee the success and sustainability of initiatives. It permits to secure mutual trust and confidence between the authorities, the operators and the users.

Finally, upon request of the two moderators, Kelly ROBIN, Project Manager at IPEMED and Eric MINO, Director of the EMWIS, the audience and the panellists mostly approved the following recommendations about REUSE:

- **BETTER ANTICIPATING:** Adapting the IWRM approach in a prospective manner to the coming challenges of climate change, urbanisation and demographic growth.
- **BETTER UNDERSTANDING:** Strengthening knowledge in the sanitation field; the data-collecting work should be entrusted to national groups which are proficient in “waste water” and standardised at the Euro-Mediterranean scale.
- **BETTER PLANNING:** Implementing a circular and sustainable approach, in order to offer a treated waste water that is adapted to its future use, while integrating in the REUSE project the whole recycling chain, from the discharge of waste water to its reuse. Favouring local distribution channels to enhance local activities. Resorting to a water-energy-agriculture nexus approach to make the most of all potential solutions.
- **BETTER INTEGRATING:** Using the REUSE approach can reinforce the bond between a city and its territory. Developing sanitation and the REUSE in peri-urban and rural spaces, often lagging behind in relation to urban centres, via a decentralised approach and nature-based solutions. Involving local communities (especially local authorities), from the beginning, into the governance of projects.
- **BETTER SUPERVISING:** Adopting a more flexible, pragmatic and ambitious approach of the REUSE in national strategies, especially by making the development of decentralised projects easier. Creating an inter-regional normative framework on waste water and treatment sub-products.
- **BETTER FINANCING:** Developing ways to finance projects, especially by resorting to the private sector (PPPs). Amortizing the investment and recovering the costs, and developing projects’ sustainability through an innovative approach in terms of pricing and on-site value creation.
- **BETTER INFORMING:** Integrating the civil society by developing awareness tools, in order to inform populations on the necessity to control water consumption. Facilitating cooperation between political, economic and academic spheres. Taking into account the cultural or religious obstacles, if they are a source of concern regarding the REUSE, in order to find solutions.
- **BETTER COOPERATING:** Developing South-North, North-South and South-South cooperation initiatives on the REUSE, possibly via the creation of an inter-regional governance framework, capable to launch call for innovative projects. Encouraging experience- and technology-sharing to boost the capacities of the region’s countries.