

A SUSTAINABLE CO-OPERATION NETWORK IN THE BALKANS THE INTERNATIONAL NETWORK OF WATER-ENVIRONMENT CENTRES IN THE BALKANS

Discussions at the NATO Advanced Research Workshop on Transboundary Water Resources in the Balkans, Thessaloniki 1999, resulted in the creation of **THE INTERNATIONAL NETWORK OF WATER-ENVIRONMENT CENTRES IN THE BALKANS (INWEB)**.

INWEB was legally recognized by the Greek courts as a scientific association (Non-Governmental Organization) in October 2001 (go to "Documents" for a copy of the constitution) and in July 2003 INWEB was appointed as a UNESCO Chair for "Sustainable Management of Water and Conflict Resolution" under the UNESCO UNITWIN umbrella. (see www.unesco.org/education/networks).

1. Justification for the creation of INWEB

The protection and rehabilitation of water resources in the Balkans are essential to:

- Human health
- Socio-economic development and sustainability
- Stability

Any activities on water issues should:

- be regional and multidisciplinary
- aim to protect the environment
- be in accordance with international laws and treaties
- be socially and environmentally sensitive
- include reference to the education and sensitization of children and adults alike

2. Situation in the Balkans justifying the need for INWEB

- Disparities between national monitoring systems in the Balkans do not provide the scientific and technical basis for an adequate, cost-effective, integrated planning of water resources in the region, which hinders economic growth and reconstruction
 - War damage and years of neglect of water supply systems make economic recovery more difficult
 - Weaknesses of institutional and administrative structures in a multitude of small international water basins, which were created after the collapse of the former Yugoslavia, do not allow for effective regional policies concerning water resources management
 - Existing or potential conflicts on the use of water in the region could damage efforts for peace in the region
 - There is a need to create a reliable and objective information source in the Balkans and an active experts network in order to support government policy effectiveness
 - Globalisation of the economy and new communication and information technologies have created the need for new ways of working based on networking, collaboration, and the ability to anticipate future changes
 - A regional co-operative group will be able to develop and implement a shared strategy for stability, economic prosperity, environmental protection and peace in the Balkans
 - Funding from the European Union and other international organisations may be more easily granted to a regional cooperative group rather than to individual institutions

3. INWEB's objectives

- Facilitate the exchange of information in the fields of water and environment by establishing an international, open network in the Balkan region
 - Raise public awareness in the fields of water resources and environmental protection
 - Promote training and professional development in the Balkan region by providing distance learning
 - Develop inventories of existing transboundary monitoring systems
 - Create and maintain databases on water and the environment by use of official, validated national data compatible to European Union standards and mainly related to transboundary water bodies (rivers, lakes, and coastal waters)
 - Establish an international expert network open to the Balkan States