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Engaging Stakeholders and Endusers in EU funded research projects on integrated water resources management in the Mediterranean

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Through their participation in a continuous succession of EU funded research projects concerned with the needs of an integrated water resources management in countries around the Mediterranean basin, the authors have become increasingly aware of the importance to actively engage the stakeholder and enduser community for project results to be more effective and useful. In a first research project, RESMANMED⁽¹⁾, the authors explored the application of the 'Schema d'Aménagement et de Gestion des Eaux' (SAGE) approach, developed in France in 1992, which offers a new planning and management approach to water and its use, based on the concept of decentralisation. A GIS based diagnosis of the state and use of water resources was coupled with a role and attitude survey among different actors, analysing their respective interests, actions and also perceptions. In COLASU⁽²⁾, the authors made it a priority to first define the issues relevant to an integrated water management in active, direct consultation with all actors, with further, specific tasks in the overall project workplan to ensure a continuous feedback was achieved. The lessons learned so far are currently being tested in OPTIMA⁽³⁾, placing emphasis on a Participatory Strategic Approach, that targets the creation of tools which the stakeholders can relate to and are therefore willing to adopt through the demonstration of the various geomantic technologies. By documenting this learning curve in progress, the step-by-step guidelines that are emerging may be of valuable use also to other research projects in the Mediterranean.

(1) RESMANMED: Resource management in Karstic Areas of the Coastal Regions of the Mediterranean, INCO-Med Project (1997-2000)

(2) COLASU: Sustainability of Mediterranean coastal lagoon ecosystems under semi-arid climate, INCO-Med Project (2002-2005)

(3) OPTIMA: Optimisation of sustainable water resources in the Mediterranean, FP6 INCO-Med Project (2004-2007)