

Opening Speech at the EWRA Conference in Porto

By George Tsakiris, President of EWRA

Only during the last few years governments and institutions started to project negative trends of water availability and accelerated deterioration of water quality which seem to remain for the next few decades. It is unfortunate that the seriousness of water problems were not discovered tens of years ago.

This view can be supported by the fact that water landmark events in the 90s considered the global water security as a rather minor issue in the discussions, giving more emphasis to other issues (e.g. biodiversity, deforestation etc.).

During the first years of the new Millennium several international organizations decided that the world is moving towards a global water crisis and that water had to be in the centre of interest in the political agenda.

Today, it is widely understood that several driving forces lead to changes which sooner or later will influence the water sector. Change of demographic conditions, urbanization, climatic change, changes in technologies, economics and people's attitudes, and many others, will definitely affect water resources development and management in the years to come.

New methods and skills should probably be developed to deal with water issues in this new ever changing context.

It is true that the 8th International Conference of the European Water Resources Association is organised in the midst of an unprecedented economic crisis affecting most countries of the world. Unfortunately, due to these adverse conditions, environmental issues and issues related to water resources management are not given priority by governments and institutions.

The Conference is held to remind, among others, that the major water problems still remain in most countries of the world and that the future decades may cause more problems in the water sector and the environment, not clearly foreseen today.

The Conference aims to summarise acquired knowledge and experience in water resources management through the implementation of the Water Framework Directive in the European member states. It also intends to reviewed new ideas and scientific approaches and methodologies in a number of critical issues in which significant developments have been made recently. This may assist governments for a more effective preparedness against future hazardous phenomena, such as droughts, water scarcity, floods and climatic changes. In short, as the title of the Conference indicates, the Conference is dedicated to issues of water resources management in an uncertain and changing context.

As known, the conference is devoted to the International Year of Water Cooperation as declared by the UN. Fruitful discussions are expected to take place for advancing existing knowledge on critical issues in water resources management and having significant impacts on the current practices worldwide.

On behalf of the Executive Committee of EWRA, I have to sincerely thank the Organising Committee for their excellent organisation and the Scientific Committee for their devoted reviewing process, which led to the selection of high level presentations in the Conference. I wish also to deeply thank the University of Porto for hosting this international event and all the authors and participants.

In particular, I wish to thank Prof. Maia and his team for their strict and excellent arrangement for all the aspects of the Conference organization.

I wish to all of you fruitful discussions and enjoyable stay in Porto.