

## **WATER RESEARCH TO MARKET, can we speed-up the knowledge transfer process?**

*Beatriz Medina, Amphos 21 and Water RtoM partners (LIFE09 ENV/FR/000593)*

The implementation of the Water Framework Directive (WFD) and its daughter directives, as well as the Floods Directive, needs new knowledge and know-how. This concern is shared by many stakeholders, who would like to boost the transfer of research outputs to the real life, even if most of current initiatives are focused on the policy-making step, not the day-to-day policy-implementation one.

When looking at the impact of research on water management practices, it is demonstrated that the connection between research and the policy process is not efficient ; as stated by FUNDETEC, a FP6-project, final report in Dec.2007, *“the typical length of time needed to complete the development cycle (in the water sector) is 10 years”*; it means that research commissioned today will impact water management practices within about 12 years, far after the milestones of the Water Framework Directive (2015, 2021).

The *Water Research to Market* project **addressed this challenge to speed-up the transfer of research outputs to practitioners**. This four partner's initiative (International Office for Water, France; Amphos 21, Spain; Gdansk Water Foundation ,Poland; and Fundatia Centrul de Formare si perfectionare Profesionala in Domeniul Apei ,Romania) has been running for 3 years, started up in September 2010 and ended in September 2013. Results were gathered from the analysis of more than 200 research outputs from both national research programmes of the four participating countries and EU level research and innovation projects. The analysis was framed under the perspective of innovative potentiality of the water related research output and under the experience of different dissemination tactics adapted to each individual target audience (tpocial seminars, workshops, exhibitions, e-seminars, etc.). Evidence from all those activities could be integrated in a guideline document, which aims to pose changes on the key stakeholders' attitudes in the innovation process. The main focus was fostering a proactive and effective dialogue among all the stakeholders among their existing transfer scheme.

Water RtoM carried out as a service linking authors' outputs (named researchers or knowledge makers) and users'outputs (practitioners or knowledge users). Therefore addressed target groups were the practitioners whose most of them come from basin organizations of sub-basin authorities, water users, and suppliers of technologies, also researchers, knowledge transfer institutions and research funding bodies.

Main challenges faced by this initiative have been on how to motivate exchange of existing new knowledge from the research side in a two-way direction with the potential users. Determinant factors such as the willingness of stakeholders to engage in this exchange process or for them to change their language in a common approach have been raised. Further key challenges were with regards how to analyse a research output coming from multi-dimensional and multi-disciplinary databases in a marketing oriented vision. The amount of information from research faces the efficiency of knowledge brokers in finding key information useful for potential users.

Success stories within the project (closing the innovation cycle) raised the importance of having a knowledge transfer boost for a better mutual understanding process to complete transfer of knowledge into the market.

The partnership activity coming from the engagement work with a Liaison Committee (a board of experts within the project) highlighted the importance of “working together” to assess if a research output is ready to be taken up, to better find the ways to promote it, to identify and reach potential users, and to identify and update market needs. This partnership can take place at European level but is essentially needed at regional and national level.

The new paradigm on how to better transfer knowledge in the water Science-Policy-Industry gap should be addressed in accordance with the changes in the needs of the active social system of the stakeholders, adapting transfer strategies and fostering dialogue, thus leading to the “speed up of the transfer of the research results”.



**Figure 1.** 10 Key Recommendations from Water RtoM. Tools, best practices and recommendations are based on the “output life cycle”: Identifying the needs of the water sector in research → Identifying and collecting research outputs → Assessing research outputs in terms of their distance to the market → Promoting research outputs to the users for the re-use market uptake (Water RtoM 2013).