

Policy brief

Scoping the benefits of transboundary water cooperation in the NWSAS basin

Draft annotated outline

This document presents the preliminary structure and content of a *Policy Brief* to be developed for consideration by the three countries sharing NWSAS. This first draft is a background document for discussion at the second regional workshop “Assessing the Water-Energy-Food-Ecosystems Nexus in the NWSAS basin” (18 - 19 June 2019, Hammamet, Tunisia) and will be finalized by end 2019.

The *Benefits Policy Brief* aims to consolidate, in a short document:

- the main achievements, impacts and benefits generated so far by transboundary water cooperation through the work of the Consultation Mechanism;
- the added-value of implementing a Water-Food-Energy-Ecosystem Nexus approach to transboundary water cooperation and possible additional benefits that can be generated in the basin through it;
- prospective benefits from enhancing the NWSAS Consultation Mechanism, looking at opportunities arising from increased cooperation.

The target audience are decision-makers in the 3 countries who have a role to play in transboundary water management. Such a *Benefits Policy Brief* aims to inspire additional cooperative actions to improve the sustainable development of the NWSAS basin for the benefits of the 3 riparian countries, in their efforts to meeting Sustainable Development Goals, also in the context of climate change.

This *Policy Brief* is developed by the Water Convention Secretariat hosted by UNECE, with the support of Eduard Interwies (consultant). It is open for comments and suggestions by workshop’s participants.

1 Introduction

1.1 Aim and approach of a benefit assessment

- Transboundary water cooperation has the potential to generate many significant benefits for cooperating countries, such as accelerated economic growth, improved human well-being, enhanced environmental sustainability and increased political stability.
- Identifying, assessing and communicating the numerous benefits of transboundary water cooperation can help countries to:
 - Fully realize the potential benefits of cooperation and identify common interests
 - Provide fact-based arguments for finding windows of opportunities to develop stronger cooperation (moving from perception to facts)
 - Broaden the scope of cooperation by defining a “benefit cluster”
 - Attract financial resources to implement water cooperation solutions.

1.2 Socio-economic characteristics of the NWSAS basin: main water uses and dependent sectors

Key facts regarding population and human settlements, agriculture, energy and industrial production, tourism and natural assets. Current importance of the basin for the economies of the three countries.

1.3 History of transboundary water cooperation: from a project-based to a sustainable cooperation platform

Short retrospective of the step-by-step strengthening of cooperation for the NWSAS basin management

2 Achievements of existing transboundary water cooperation and benefits generated for the three countries

2.1 Achievements of transboundary water cooperation till now

Outputs of the process:

- Consultation Mechanism (CM) created with Steering Committee (PTC) established, regular meetings and continuous work of the Coordination Unit (CU) (incl. provision of staff and finance)
- Database and information system developed, and modeling capabilities increased, incl. through local sub-models, used as a basis for planning activities for water authorities
- Data exchanged, standardization and repeated tripartite technical trainings and workshops leading to enhanced technical capacities
- Consensus on status of the resource established
- Vulnerable and high potential zones mapped as well as salinity
- Donor grant leverage due to credible cooperation
- Knowledge increased through several hydrologic, socio-economic and ecological studies and recommendations on irrigation practices generated and disseminated through pilot projects (under SASS III)

2.2 Benefits and beneficiaries

Development outcomes from improved water management and from enhanced trust, on and beyond economic activities:

- **Economic benefits:** Increased agricultural production. Improved farmers' incomes thanks to higher water productivity in agriculture under pilot projects (through SASS III). Reduced costs for each country of knowledge management, capacity building, research and resource planning through Coordination Unit's work and database maintenance (efficiency gains of tripartite effort). Avoided cost of misplanning.
- **Environmental benefits:** Awareness raised of sensitive ecosystems (through inventory and analysis of vulnerable wetland ecosystems). Preservation of sensitive ecosystems through avoidance of drilling near e.g. chotts as well as local changes in irrigation practices.
- **Social benefits:** Reduced rural-urban displacement. Increased resilience of local communities to basin challenges incl. climate change. Strengthening of the basin identity.
- **Regional economic benefits:** Regional markets for agricultural products?
- **Peace and security benefits:** Mutual trust developed. Contribute to stability by addressing common water scarcity challenges through transboundary water cooperation. Broader political cooperation prompted by identification of common challenges and solutions.
- **Governance benefits:** Creation of an institutional framework for cooperation with the establishment of the Consultation Mechanism in 2006. Concerted management, and national institutional frameworks and policies improved.

3 Benefits of implementing a Nexus approach to transboundary cooperation

3.1 General outcome benefits of taking a Nexus approach

Based on the results of the Basin workshop and the Nexus report, general anticipated outcome benefits of implementing the Nexus approach at a regional level will be described.

3.2 Selected specific benefits of implementing Nexus solutions

Highlight the possible future benefits that could be generated through the implementation of Nexus solutions that would be supported by transboundary water cooperation.

4 Benefits of strengthening transboundary water cooperation through the NWSAS CM

Based on on-going discussions between the 3 countries on a possible strengthening of the Consultation Mechanism, the prospective benefits of strengthened transboundary water cooperation will be elaborated.