ONEWATER
EUROMEDITERRANEAN WATER FORUM
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Capacity Development at the Heart of Water Security

Investing in the Future of Mediterranean Societies

UNESCO & UN DESA, on behalf of UN-Water

Euro-Mediterranean Water Forum 2026 · 29 September – 2 October · La Nuvola, Rome

KEY INFORMATION

Date	30 September
Time	9:30 AM – 11:00 AM
Room	Itaca
Format	Presentations followed by a panel discussion & an interactive session
Language	English

SUMMARY

Capacity gaps – institutional, human, financial and technological – remain among the main constraints on progress towards SDG 6. Drawing on the UN-Water SDG 6 Capacity Development Initiative (CDI), co-coordinated by UNESCO and UN DESA and now deployed in nine pilot countries including Jordan, this session brings together UN agencies, donors, universities, water education institutes and training providers to discuss how Mediterranean countries can move from one-off training to nationally led capacity development and why it should be treated as a long-term investment in water security and in the future of Mediterranean societies.

AGENDA & SPEAKERS

Time	Title/Topic	Organization	Speaker Name & Role
Moderator: Dr Sarantuyaa Zandaryaa, Division of Water Sciences, UNESCO			
10 min	**Opening remarks**	UNESCO	**Dr Samuel Partey,** UNESCO Regional Bureau for Science and Culture in Europe
	Presentations		
15 min	*Framing presentation* The UN-Water SDG 6 Capacity Development Initiative: from global frameworks to country-	UNESCO	**Dr Sarantuyaa Zandaryaa,** UNESCO Division of Water Sciences

Time	Title/Topic	Organization	Speaker Name & Role
	owned capacity development		
15 min	Water capacity development in the Mediterranean	Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya (UPC), Spain	**Prof Jordi Morató,** Coordinator, UNESCO Chair on Sustainability, Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya (UPC), Spain
15 min	Capacity Development in Balkan	IRTCUD, Serbia	**Prof Jovan Despotovic,** International Research and Training Centre on Urban Drainage (IRTCUD) Category 2 Centre under the Auspices of UNESCO, University of Belgrade, Serbia
15 min	**Panel Discussion** Capacity development as an investment for water security in the Mediterranean		***Moderator:*** **Dr Sarantuyaa Zandaryaa,** UNESCO Division of Water Sciences ***Panel speakers:*** • **Prof Jordi Morató**, UNESCO Chair on Sustainability, UPC • **Prof Jovan Despotovic,** IRTCUD, Serbia • **Dr Alice Aureli,** Vice-President of IWRA
10 min	**Q&A: Interactive session with participants**		
10 min	**Closing: Key points from the discussions**	UNESCO	**Dr Sarantuyaa Zandaryaa,** UNESCO Division of Water Sciences

BACKGROUND & RATIONALE

Capacity remains a major constraint on progress towards SDG 6. Year after year, governments report that progress on water and sanitation is held back by gaps in institutional, human, financial and technological capacity. It is in response to this challenge that the SDG 6 Global Acceleration Framework identifies capacity development as one of its five accelerators.

The UN-Water SDG 6 Capacity Development Initiative (CDI) is UN-Water's answer to that accelerator. Established in March 2021 and co-coordinated by UNESCO and the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA), the CDI is the inter-agency coordination platform for water- and sanitation-related capacity development. It brings together the expertise of more than 40 UN-Water Members and Partners and makes it available to countries through a single, coordinated entry point.

The Initiative is demand-driven and country-owned. Working through national authorities, UN Resident Coordinators and UN Country Teams, it follows a step-by-step methodology – from high-level inter-ministerial engagement and capacity gaps assessment to the design of National Capacity Development Plans – to move beyond one-off training towards systemic, nationally led capacity development. The CDI is now deployed across nine pilot countries on three continents, including Jordan in the Mediterranean, which has completed its capacity gaps assessment and is now designing its National Capacity Development Plan.

The Mediterranean is among the most water-stressed regions in the world, and it is precisely where coordinated capacity development can deliver the most value. Universities, UNESCO Chairs, water

education institutes and specialized training providers already form a dense capacity development ecosystem across the region. Connecting this ecosystem with UN-level coordination is key to ensuring that investments in people translate into lasting national capacity.

Building on Spain's founding support to the CDI, this session brings a Euro-Mediterranean lens to that experience and opens a dialogue between the CDI and other capacity development and water education initiatives in the Mediterranean. It also aims to mobilize Mediterranean stakeholders around capacity development for water and sanitation as a long-term investment in people and societies, on the road to the UN 2026 Water Conference in Abu Dhabi and the 11th World Water Forum in Riyadh in 2027.

OBJECTIVES

The session aims to:

1) Present the CDI model and its results: show how a UN-Water joint initiative turns global frameworks into national, country-owned action – from inter-ministerial engagement and capacity gaps assessment to National Capacity Development Plans – drawing on the experience of Jordan and other pilot countries.

2) Connect UN-level coordination with the Mediterranean capacity development ecosystem: open a dialogue with universities, UNESCO Chairs, water education institutes and training providers active in the region and identify complementarities with the CDI.

3) Position capacity development as a long-term investment: discuss how a single contribution can have lasting impact, and explore avenues for sustained financing, partnerships and replication across the Euro-Mediterranean region.

4) Connect to the global water agenda: feed the discussion into the road to the UN 2026 Water Conference in Abu Dhabi and the 11th World Water Forum in Riyadh in 2027.

TARGET AUDIENCE

This session is designed for national water and sanitation policymakers, ministries and basin authorities, water utilities, universities and water education and training institutions, development partners and donors, UN agencies, and young water professionals from across the Euro-Mediterranean region.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

1. Shared understanding of the CDI: greater visibility of the CDI model and its results among Mediterranean policymakers, partners and donors.

2. Replication pathways: identification of concrete opportunities to extend and replicate the CDI approach across the Euro-Mediterranean region, including linkages with regional universities, training providers, and strengthened donor and partner engagement.

3. Messages for the global agenda: key messages on capacity development as an investment for water security, feeding into the UN 2026 Water Conference and the 11th World Water Forum.