UNESCO Chair and Network / International Network of Water-Environment Centres for the Balkans (INWEB) at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece

The UNESCO Chair/International Network of Water-Environment Centres for the Balkans (INWEB) on “sustainable management of water and conflict resolution” was established in July 2003 at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (AUTh), Department of Civil Engineering, Division of Hydraulics and Environmental Engineering, Hydraulics Laboratory.

The Division has 20-years experience in modelling of hydrological and environmental phenomena and water resources management. The majority of applications concern water management and flood protection studies in river basins in Greece and abroad.

The UNESCO Chair/INWEB is a network of academic and non-academic institutions. Each of the ten Balkan member countries has a focal point for its own country's members. Concentrating mainly on transboundary issues, the UNESCO Chair/INWEB promotes a multi-disciplinary approach to water resources management issues, involving scientists, engineers, economists, legal experts and sociologists. It encourages initiatives on water resources management issues from the bottom up, and promotes joint training projects and the sharing of expertise. Its aims are to:

- Facilitate the exchange of information in the fields of water and environment by establishing an international, open network in the Balkan region
- Raise public awareness in the fields of water resources and environmental protection
- Promote training and professional development in the Balkan region by providing distance learning
- Develop inventories of existing transboundary monitoring systems
- Create and maintain databases on water and the environment by use of official, validated national data compatible to European Union standards and mainly related to transboundary water bodies (rivers, lakes, and coastal waters)
- Establish an international expert network open to the Balkan States.

The UNESCO Chair/INWEB cooperates closely with UNESCO’s International Hydrological Programme (UNESCO IHP) (Paris) and UNESCO’s Regional Office for Science in Europe (UNESCO BRESCE) (Venice), as well as other major international organisations such as the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE).

Activities to date include:

- organisation of international workshops on transboundary water resources issues
- development of web-based water databases on the internet powered by Google Earth
- inventories of transboundary surface and ground waters in the Balkans and the Mediterranean region
- adaptation of UNESCO's "Potential Conflict to Cooperation Potential" (PC-CP) programme to the Balkans.
- organisation of IV International Symposium on Transboundary Waters Management, Thessaloniki, Oct 08