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Communicating scientific results to stakeholders to facilitate the decision making process in transboundary water resources management

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The main difficulties arising in integrated transboundary water resources management are usually two-fold: (1) Lack of political willingness for cooperation from one or both sides of the border and (2) the gap in communication and understanding between scientists on the one hand and the public, stakeholders and decision makers on the other.

Geopolitical perceptions, historical reasons and different degrees of economic development between riparian countries and a lack of priority for transboundary water issues on the political agenda are usually the main reasons for any reluctance to cooperate. Hydro-diplomacy and agreements at different scales, such as international, regional and bilateral, may facilitate negotiations and discussions at a political level.

The key element for effective water resources management is the involvement and participation of stakeholders, scientists and decision makers in order to negotiate acceptable alternatives for water use, and to reach compromise on issues with conflicting objectives.

In this presentation the progress made towards achieving interaction between scientists and stakeholders is reported for the case of the Mesta/Nestos transboundary river basin, shared by Bulgaria and Greece. Firstly, an integrated modelling approach was

developed covering different main areas like hydrology, hydropower, agricultural economics and climate change scenarios. Secondly, by using special software, the results of the integrated modelling were communicated to stakeholders at the basin scale in such way as to facilitate their involvement in the decision making process. Alternative models were developed based on different aggregations of conflicting multiple criteria.