

UNESCO-IAHR-GREEK UNIVERSITIES NOV.26 & 27 2020 INTRODUCTION-WELCOME

*Prof. ELPIDA KOLOKYTHA, WRM-TC, UNESCO WATER CIMWRM,
Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece*

Dear distinguished guests from almost all continents, thank you very much for responding positively, joining us in this webinar in order to discuss and reveal the importance of the water issues that affect the lives of everyone.

We have the honor to host a panel of notable scientists from all over the world, dear colleagues, who will set up the discussion on sustainable development, water resources management and engineering in the era of climate change.

A few words about the title of the agenda

“From the myths of Hercules to the reality of climate change”,

we want to emphasize the multi-disciplinarity and timelessness of water issues as well as stress the role of our Greek UNESCO Center on Integrated and Multidisciplinary Water Resources Management by shedding light into Water History and Greek mythology exploring the origins and the roots of our current water problems.

Structural changes such as demographic alterations, urbanization, new institutions, technological breakthroughs and also climatic shifts and globalization set the current scene of complexity, uncertainty and global interdependencies.

Natural resources and water resources problems are becoming highly complex and new conceptual, methodological and organizational responses should be considered. The limitation of natural resources and the range of degradation and contamination forces us to provide answers on economic development, efficiency, social accountability, comprehensive planning and management of scarce water resources.

Today our problematique entails:

- Resources and their conservation under the current economic model
- infrastructure expansion, improvement, innovation and integrated design
- institutional improvements in terms of public participation, involvement, engagement
- organizational mobilization,
- water legislation, ethics and standards

a “new thinking” a willingness and daring to move beyond traditional approaches and to conceive and apply new solutions to complex water problems.

Our objective today is to broaden the discussion of international cooperation and the role of science and institutions in inspiring the young generation, young professionals to take a leading role in this new context of rapid change that requires anticipatory, participatory, contingency and flexible approaches to deal with the interdependencies observed between climate, land, water, natural systems and people.

The webinar's agenda will demonstrate major water issues with the help of the experience and knowledge of a great array of scientists from UNESCO, from different UNESCO Water Centers focused on specific water problems, professors from different scientific specialties of the water science and engineering from technical committees and working groups in IAHR.

For those that may not be familiar with IAHR, is now celebrating its 85 years of constant active presence and leadership in hydro-environment, counting:

4178 individual members

130 institution members from more 184 countries worldwide

46 Young Professional Networks in 52 countries

classified in Divisions which are supported by TCs and WGs covering all the range of the water science and engineering.

UNESCO has 36 Water Centers, cat.II, all over the world. Let me say also a few words about our UNESCO Center on Integrated and Multidisciplinary Water Resources Management which comprises of more than 13 different University Schools, active in water related issues, which jointly contribute to the cause of the Integrated Water Management. From all Schools of Engineering, (Civil Rural and Surveying Engineering, Spatial Planning and Development), to the School of Chemistry, of Biology, of Geology, of Agriculture, School of Forestry and Natural Environment, School of Medicine, the one of Political Sciences, of History and Archaeology, School of Law, School of Journalism and Mass Communications. Which develops, promotes and infuses sound practices of IWRM around the Mediterranean region, South Eastern Europe and elsewhere.

I have the honor to represent both the TC of WRM in IAHR serving as chair and UNESCO as the Director of the only UNESCO Water Center in Greece, established in AUTH, one of the largest Universities here in Greece.

We feel that this unique bringing together of respectful scientists from influential international organizations such as UNESCO and IAHR with distinguished professors from Greece will provide a promising «mix and match». By sharing the knowledge, experience and «wisdom» among us we shall try to develop synergies and joint actions with a holistic and *forward-looking vision* for:

Improving decision making, extending policy options, combining data and judgment and transforming IDEAL to REALITY or even better: *Elevating REALITY to the IDEAL!*