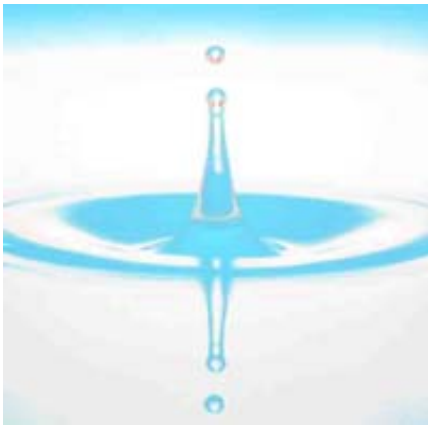


Researchers revolutionise opportunities for the European water industry

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A team of international researchers has revolutionised the opportunities for water industry software developers. They have developed a new toolkit that, for the first time, provides a common standard for linking essential computer programmes that help balance our water supplies against the demand from domestic, leisure and industrial users.

The Open Modelling Interface (OpenMI) will not only make life easier for thousands of water and environmental managers across Europe, it will open up the business market for small companies and universities who are developing computer models.

This new common standard approach is considered so important the

European Commission is hosting the OpenMI launch at an international meeting in Brussels on 15 February.

Under the EU's Water Framework Directive water managers must consider all of the likely social, economic and environmental impacts of their policies before they implement them. The OpenMI will help them to do this and also save them money.

Roger Moore, the Open MI project leader from the Centre for Ecology & Hydrology, explains.

“Water and environmental managers use computer models to help them find solutions to problems and predict how their decisions and actions will affect a whole chain of different elements. For example, a few years ago they might only have considered the benefits to a region's economy by allowing power-boating on lakes. They now have to balance that decision against what effect the noise and possible pollution of this activity will have on the water, the plants and fish, and the local fishing industry.”

“Until now, when these managers have wanted to link models together and explore how different processes interact they have had to buy complete modelling systems covering, for example, ecology, chemistry, hydrology and economy. These might not always have contained the ideal set of models. In future they will be able to buy the best mix from a variety of suppliers and join them up themselves.”

He added, “The unique thing about the Open MI is that it provides a standard that links the computer models and allows them to talk to each other while they are actually running.”

To support the Open MI and its users into the future, the project team is also launching a membership association at the Brussels meeting. Any

organisations with an interest in decision support or modelling relating to the environment or water industries are encouraged to join. Instructions on how to join will shortly be available on the website at www.OpenMI.org

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