



OECD WATER GOVERNANCE INITIATIVE: TERMS OF REFERENCE 2016-18

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This document sets out the Terms of reference for the OECD Water Governance Initiative, its Steering Committee and its Working Groups over the period 2016-18.

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Acronyms

ASTEE	Association Scientifique et Technique pour l'Eau et l'Environnement
COP	Conference of the Parties
GOV	Public Governance and Territorial Development Directorate of the OECD
INBO	International Network of Basin Organisations
LAC	Latin America and the Caribbean
NGOs	Non-governmental Organisations
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
RDPC	Regional Development Policy Committee
SIWI	Stockholm International Water Institute
WGI	Water Governance Initiative
WIN	Water Integrity Network

Background note

The OECD Water Governance Initiative (WGI) was launched on 27-28 March 2013 as a multi-stakeholder network of 100+ members from public, private and not-for profit sectors gathering twice a year in a Policy Forum). It was created in subsequent to the 6th World Water Forum (Marseille, 2012)¹ with the following objectives stated in the [Terms of Reference for 2013-2015](#):

- advise governments at all levels in taking the needed steps for effective water reforms
- provide a technical platform to discuss analytical work on water governance
- provide a consultation mechanism to raise the profile of governance in the Global Water Agenda
- support the implementation of the governance targets designed at the 6th World Water Forum
- contribute to the development of OECD Principles on Water Governance and related indicators.

The creation of the WGI builds on the observation that water crises around the world are often primarily governance crises as they relate to who does what, at which scale, how and why. Since 2009, RDPC's evidence-based assessments drawing on benchmarks², country policy dialogues³ and thematic work⁴ has emphasised that policy responses to water challenges will only be viable if they are coherent; if stakeholders are properly engaged; if well-designed regulatory frameworks are in place; if there is adequate and accessible information; and if there is sufficient capacity, integrity and transparency. This requires breaking silos across ministries, co-ordinating across levels of government, articulating private, public and non-profit interests, and engaging with those who have an interest or stake in water-related outcomes in addition to policymakers. Setting up a multi-stakeholder platform to share experiences was therefore a necessity to enhance cross-fertilisation of knowledge and scale up best practices with a view to shape better policy guidance.

Over its first three years of activity, the WGI gathered six times in plenary meetings to carry out the above-mentioned activities: 27-28 March 2013 in Paris; 7-8 November 2013 in Paris; 28-29 April 2014 in Madrid; 24-25 November 2014 in Paris; 26 May 2015 in Edinburgh, and 2-3 November 2015 in Paris.⁵ To draw lessons from the first three years of operation and identify whether adjustments in terms of content, structure and results were needed, a satisfaction survey among WGI members was conducted in May 2015. The [results of the satisfaction survey](#), based on a 70% response rate, pointed out extremely high levels of satisfaction (above 90%) and a unanimous pledge to pursue WGI activities. Many surveyed members considered the network as one of the few international fora sharing experience on water governance in a comprehensive and participatory way.

¹ The OECD co-ordinated the thematic group on governance and set-up a taskforce of 300+ participants to prepare discussions during the Forum. Setting-up a multi-stakeholder platform under OECD leadership was recognised as a means, amongst others, to foster governance continuity in between World Water Fora.

² Water Governance Assessment across [17 OECD countries](#) (2011) and [13 LAC countries](#) (2012)

³ National Policy dialogues in [Mexico](#) (2013), [Netherlands](#) (2014), [Tunisia](#) and [Jordan](#) (2014) and [Brazil](#) (2015).

⁴ [Stakeholder engagement](#) for inclusive water governance (2015) and Water Governance in [Cities](#) (2016)

⁵ Detailed *Highlights* from all WGI meetings can be accessed on the WGI website:

[1st meeting](#) 27-28 March 2013 in Paris;

[2nd meeting](#) 7-8 November 2013 in Paris;

[3rd meeting](#) 28-29 April 2014 in Madrid;

[4th meeting](#) 24-25 November 2014 in Paris;

[5th meeting](#) 26 May 2015 in Edinburgh; and

[6th meeting](#) 2-3 November 2015 in Paris.

The first three operational years of the WGI produced many tangible outcomes⁶ and it is proposed to pursue the activities of the network under the same framework for the next three years. The Terms of Reference of the WGI for 2016-2018 follow those of 2013-2015 in terms of the objectives, composition and working methods. The five overarching goals remain unchanged (technical platform, support reforms, consultation mechanism, global agenda and follow-up on the Principles). As in the previous phase, it is proposed that the WGI remains a technical gathering of policymakers and practitioners, which should under no circumstance be considered as an OECD body. The only adjustments proposed are i) to move from *four* Working Groups (originally based on thematic areas) to *two* Working Groups that would aim at sharing experiences on water governance best practices and indicators, and ii) to devote specific efforts to communication and outreach within the Steering Committee.

⁶ These achievements are detailed in Table 1, pp.8-9 of the document [“OECD Water Governance Initiative: Achievements and Ways Forward”](#)

Terms of Reference (2016-2018)

OECD Water Governance Initiative

Objectives

The OECD Water Governance Initiative (WGI) is an international multi-stakeholder network of members from the public, private and non-for-profit sectors gathering twice a year to share best practices in support of better governance in the water sector. The Initiative is hosted within the OECD, the Secretariat of which is ensured by the Public Governance and Territorial Development Directorate as part of the activities of the OECD Regional Development Policy Committee (RDPC);

As was the case for its first three years of operation (2013-2015), the WGI is conceived as a network of experts, policymakers and practitioners that should, under no circumstance, be considered as an OECD subsidiary body and has no decision-making prerogatives vis-à-vis OECD documents and processes. The five overarching goals of the WGI are as follows:

- Provide a **multi-stakeholder technical platform** to share knowledge, experience and best practices on water governance across levels of government;
- **Advise governments** in taking the needed steps for effective water reforms through peer-to-peer dialogue and stakeholder engagement across public, private and non-profit sectors;
- Provide a **consultation mechanism** to raise the profile of governance in the Global Water Agenda (Sustainable Development Goals, World Water Forum, Habitat III, COP etc.);
- Support the **implementation** of the OECD Principles on Water Governance in interested member and non-member countries by scaling up best practices and contributing to the development of indicators; and
- **Foster continuity** on governance discussions between two World Water Forum (every 3 years), in particular by supporting the Governance Implementation Roadmap of the 7th World Water Forum (Korea, 2015) up to the 8th World Water Forum (Brazil, 2018).

Structure

The WGI will continue to operate according to a three-tiered governance structure, in close co-operation and co-ordination with the RDPC:

- The **Secretariat** is ensured by the Public Governance and Territorial Development Directorate of the OECD (GOV), subject to appropriate funding through voluntary contributions. The Secretariat is mainly responsible for the day-to-day operational activities of the WGI, the drafting of the material discussed at the meetings, the analytical work subject to consultations within the platform, the co-ordination of partner institutions, and the organisation of WGI meetings.
- The **Chair**, designated in 2013 for three years, spearheads the strategic orientations and presides over biannual WGI meetings and quarterly Steering Committee Meetings. He ensures the recognition of the multi-stakeholder network, strives to raise the profile of the WGI and its contribution to different processes, supports fundraising efforts, and ensures that the compliance with the terms of reference pay due regard to the opinion of all members.

- The **Steering Committee** supports the implementation of the strategic goals of the WGI and contributes to the fundraising efforts. It is composed of co-founding institutions, namely the International Network of Basin Organisations (INBO), Transparency International, the *Association Scientifique et Technique pour l'Eau et l'Environnement* (ASTEE), Suez, Stockholm International Water Institute (SIWI) and the Water Integrity Network (WIN).

Composition and membership

The WGI has an open membership and large geographic, economic and institutional representation at local, national and global levels. All members participate in WGI discussions and consultations either through written contributions or physical presence at the meetings and related events.

- The **100+ members** include national and subnational governments, river basin organisations (and/or their networks), public or private service providers (and/or their networks), economic or environmental regulators (and/or their networks), donors agencies, NGOs, international organisations, industry, associations of water users, the scientific community and academia;
- Membership of **national governments** from OECD and partner countries is subject to their interest in the topic and capacity to engage in the activities. A total of 24 (out of 34) OECD countries were members of the WGI in the first phase (2013-2015);
- The WGI cooperates with **regional partners** (or sub-networks) in the Mediterranean region, North America, Europe, Africa, Latin America and Asia, which provide a bridge to non-OECD countries as appropriate and link the WGI to broader regional initiatives and activities.

Funding

The maintenance and operation of the WGI relies essentially on voluntary and/or in-kind contributions. **Voluntary contributions** can come from countries or institutions that are supportive of the WGI and willing to fund its activities through specific grant agreements. **In-kind contributions** from WGI members can take the form of hosting meetings, liaising with non-Members for outreach and communication, contributing to seminars, workshops or surveys, and/or mobilising a range of expertise as needed.

Activities and expected deliverables

Subject to available funding, the activities of the WGI will be organised as follows:

- The WGI will gather in a **Policy Forum** every six months at OECD Headquarters or outside when meetings are hosted by members. Whenever possible, such meetings will be organised back-to-back to RDPC or major water-related global events. The Highlights of WGI plenary meetings will systematically be shared with RDPC delegates, in both English and French.
- Through the **technical platform**, WGI members will share knowledge and experience on water governance, foster the dissemination of best practices and carry out peer-to-peer dialogue to support water reform processes as appropriate.
- **Two Working Groups** (replacing the initial four thematic Working Groups) will contribute to supporting the implementation of the OECD Principles on Water Governance in interested Member and non-Member countries through:

- collecting and scaling up **best practices** that can help foster peer-to-peer dialogue within and across cities, basins and countries facing similar types of challenges. This could be featured in an *OECD Best Practice Database* scaling up success stories and practical, action-oriented guidance based on international experience; and
- contributing to the development of **indicators** on water governance as a voluntary-based self-assessment tool for bench-learning and peer-to-peer dialogue. This could support evidence-based analysis on the state of play of water governance against the OECD Principles to be published in a *Water Governance at a Glance* report in 2018;
- The Steering Committee of the WGI will contribute to **communications and outreach** while disseminating relevant tools for better water policy design and implementation at different levels and ensuring greater impact and co-ordination with other initiatives.
- The WGI will provide a **consultation mechanism across stakeholders** to contribute to the Global Water Agenda. In particular, it will strive to support the implementation of the 7th World Water Forum Roadmap on Effective Governance and foster linkages, as appropriate, to other global processes such as the Sustainable Development Goals, Habitat III, and COP.

Terms of Reference for WGI Working Groups

Objectives

Subject to available funding, two Working Groups will contribute to WGI activities with a view to supporting the implementation of the Principles on Water Governance in interested Member and non-Member countries:

- The **Working Group on Best Practices** will identify, share and scale up best practices to foster peer-to-peer dialogue and bench-learning across cities, basins and countries facing similar types of water governance challenges; and
- The **Working Group on Indicators** will share knowledge and experience on water governance indicators and measurement tools to help interested countries understand whether governance systems are performing well and delivering expected outcomes.

Co-ordination and composition

The Secretariat will provide facilitation, co-ordination and support to the activities of both Working Groups in co-operation with the Steering Committee members. The Working Group on Best Practices will be led by OECD, SIWI, WIN, and Suez, while the Working Group on Indicators will be led by OECD, ASTEE, Transparency International and INBO.

The Working Groups will be composed of WGI Members willing to participate on a voluntary basis and in synergy with their own resources and activities. A call for application will be extended in April 2016.

Methods of work and activities

The Working Groups will map existing knowledge, collect evidence, share experience, scale up success stories and advise on pitfalls to avoid. In doing so, members of the Working Groups will shed light on how cities, basins and countries have successfully designed and implemented water policies across levels of government as well as lessons learned and ways forward to adjust where needed.

The activities of the Working Groups may be carried out through a variety of means, subject to available funding, such as expert workshops, webinars, side events, as well as written comments on documents of the Secretariat. The results will be shared on a regular basis with RDPC delegates, for discussion as appropriate. More particularly:

- The **Working Group on Best Practices** will contribute to the preparation of a template to collect best practices from interested countries, as well as “snapshots” providing insights on the OECD Principles on Water Governance at local, basin and national scales, across public, private and non-profit sectors and for each water management function (e.g. drinking water, wastewater, flood and drought management, water resources etc.). Findings could feed into an *OECD Best Practice Database* to scale up success stories and discuss the potential for replicability with a view to fostering place-based approaches.
- The **Working Group on Indicators** will contribute to the preparation of a self-assessment framework with impact, outcome and output indicators to assist interested countries in strengthening the state of play of water governance through evidence-based and peer-to-peer dialogue, building on reality checks from practical experience. Results could feed into an *OECD Water Governance at a Glance* report, providing dynamic institutional mappings at

city, basin or national levels as well as factsheets with key facts and figures supported by data visualisation.

The Working Groups will each determine how to communicate, mobilise resources, co-ordinate with the other Working Group, and engage with partners. The performance of both Working Groups will be assessed in 2018 to adjust where need be.

Terms of Reference for the WGI Steering Committee

Objectives

The Steering Committee:

- Provides guidance on the strategic orientations of the WGI through quarterly meetings and regular interactions with the Chair and the Secretariat as appropriate;
- Contributes to the sustainability of the network by identifying fundraising opportunities and reaching out to potential donors in a concerted and co-ordinated fashion;
- Co-leads the activities of the Working Groups on Best Practices and Indicators in co-operation with the Secretariat;
- Ensures maximum visibility and impact of WGI activities through co-ordination with other relevant networks and activities;

Composition

The Steering Committee is composed of the co-founding institutions of the WGI, i.e. the co-ordinators of the 6th World Water Forum Good Governance target solution group, namely INBO, Transparency international, ASTEE, Suez, SIWI and WIN.

Members have fixed terms of office over the duration of the programme of work, with a possible rotation of one-third of the Steering Committee every 3 years.

The possibility of changing the composition and/or enlarging the Steering Committee or the filling of vacant seats should be subject to a call for applicants among all WGI members.

Methods of work and activities

The Steering Committee is responsible for the design and implementation of a proactive communication and outreach strategy, and the mobilisation of necessary resources to that effect. The objectives of this strategy are to disseminate WGI findings outside the network, raise awareness on current and forthcoming activities, and bridge membership gaps as appropriate.

The Steering Committee should also explore opportunities to implement the *OECD Principles on Water Governance* in interested countries, for example through policy dialogues at city, basin or national levels.

For each WGI plenary meeting, the Steering Committee provides support to the Secretariat for the preparation (agenda, invitations, and communications), execution (content and logistics) and follow-up (summary records and dissemination) of the meeting.

In between biannual plenary meetings, the Steering Committee supports the continuity of the work through regular exchanges with the OECD Secretariat, and links up with WGI members' strategies, networks, products and activities.