

OECD workshop - The performance of utilities for wastewater collection and treatment

Final Agenda

The document presents an agenda for the forthcoming OECD workshop on the performance of utilities for wastewater collection and treatment.

The workshop will be:

- Convened by the OECD, and hosted by DG Environment
- Hybrid meeting
- Virtual registration with this [link](#)
- Held on 31st January 2023

In person attendance (limited to 100 persons in total) will take place at:

Centre De Conférences Albert Borschette
Rue Froissart 36
1040 – Etterbeek
Belgium

xavier.leflaive@oecd.org



Background and objective

As part of its programme of work on water, the OECD promotes policies and governance arrangements that contribute to cost-effective delivery of water services, including urban wastewater treatment. The focus is on incentives and regulation that can contribute to making the best use of available assets, the most effective use of available finance, and, where required, can attract additional sources of finance to meet policy goals and environmental objectives.

OECD work on financing water¹ argues that operational performance of service provision contributes to these objectives:

- It can minimise operating costs over the long term, even though some upfront investment may be required to set the conditions for operational performance
- It can contribute to efficient expenditure programmes and allocation of available financial resources
- It drives the creditworthiness of operators (be they public or private) and their capacity to access multiple sources of finance: operational performance can enhance the willingness of users to pay for the service; convince (national and local) authorities that public money is wisely spent and not wasted; and attract the attention of private financiers, including domestic commercial banks.

Recent work has focused on the role of independent economic regulation for water services to drive operational performance (ibid.):

- Set appropriate performance standards, in line with the policy ambition defined by the competent department
- Monitor – and report on - performance
- Decide on the appropriate practices to share and disclose information on performance standards. It should be noted that the primary role of regulation is to safeguard users' interest while meeting environmental objectives and standards, for services where competition is inexistent or low
- Compare performance across sets of operators, in ways that does justice to the specificities of local contexts and levels of efforts of service providers. Recent developments suggest that performance benchmarking can operate at multiple levels, including cost of service provision and procurement, performance of services, or ambition of investment and development programmes.

The EU legislation on clean water services - most notably the Drinking Water and the Urban Wastewater Treatment directives – set the level of ambition of service provision across EU member states. The OECD cooperated with DG Environment at the European Commission, to develop a set of performance indicators for wastewater collection and treatment services², in support of the recent legislative proposal to revise the Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive (UWWTD). This proposal introduces the requirement for the collection and reporting of key performance indicators, accessible by the public and customers of wastewater operators, thereby enhancing the transparency of the service provision of wastewater collection and treatment. This paper builds on OECD's own work on water policies and

¹ OECD (2022), *Financing a Water Secure Future*, OECD Studies on Water, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/a2ecb261-en>. See also more recent work in Estonia (OECD (2022), *Towards Sustainable Water Services in Estonia: Analyses and Action Plan*, OECD Studies on Water, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/b82d71c6-en>.) and Lithuania (OECD (2022), *Reform of Water Supply and Wastewater Treatment in Lithuania: Practical Options to Foster Consolidation of Utilities*, OECD Studies on Water, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/f966a980-en>.).

² [https://one.oecd.org/document/ENV/EPOC/WPBWE\(2022\)7/en/pdf](https://one.oecd.org/document/ENV/EPOC/WPBWE(2022)7/en/pdf)

governance, a review of good practices in Europe and beyond, and a review of some of the literature on benchmarking performance for water services.

The objective of the workshop is to share the outcome of the OECD's work, to collect feedback and discuss the practical implementation of performance indicators. The agenda is designed to inform stakeholders about the publication, and to invite the European Commission to present its proposal for a revised UWWTD, in particular as regards the new transparency requirements.

Workshop agenda³

Time	Item
09:00 – 09:30	Registration
09:30 – 09:45	Introduction by the OECD and DG Environment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome • Objective of the workshop
09:45 – 10:30	Monitoring the performance of wastewater collection and treatment services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • European Commission legislative proposal for a recast Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive – Nele Rosenstock and Trudy Higgins • Transparency as a driver for performance – Oriana Romano, OECD – Water Governance Initiative⁴ • The global experience of the new IBNet – Monika Weber-Fahr
10:30 – 10:45	Q&A Coffee break
10:45 – 11:30	The role of wastewater key performance indicators and their use in performance monitoring <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OECD publication <i>Performance Indicators for wastewater collection and treatment services</i> • Best practice from Portugal - Susana Rodrigues, Head of the Quality Department, ERSAR • From comparing costs to benchmarking development plans - Tim Keyworth, Keyworth Consulting
11:30 – 12:45	Q&A The ambition of the OECD publication <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The perspective of regulators - WAREG • The perspective of operators - Eureau, Acqua Publica, Aquafed • The perspective of civil society: EEB Discussion: It would be structured around such topics as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expectations from transparency • Key performance indicators • The process (clustering, reporting, etc.) • New opportunities (digitization, etc.) • How to translate the legislative proposal into action
12:45 – 13:00	Wrap up and next steps <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The OECD • DG Environment

³ All speakers and organisations are to be confirmed.

⁴ Topical work of the OECD Water Governance Initiative includes: *OECD Principles on Water Governance 2015*, <https://www.oecd.org/governance/oecd-principles-on-water-governance.htm>; OECD (2018), *Implementing the OECD Principles on Water Governance: Indicator Framework and Evolving Practices*, OECD Studies on Water, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264292659-en>.