



OECD WATER GOVERNANCE INITIATIVE: Terms of Reference for the period 2019-21

October 2018

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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 2019-21. This version will be fine-tuned based on WGI members' comments at the 11th Water Governance Initiative meeting to be held in Zaragoza, Spain, 12 – 13 November 2018, and shared with the delegates of the OECD Regional Development Policy Committee for Approval by end 2018.

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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
AEAS	Spanish Association of Water Supply and Sanitation

Background

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 benchmarks, country policy dialogues and thematic work 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.

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 civil society sectors gathering twice a year in a Policy Forum. It was created following the 6th World Water Forum (Marseille, 2012)¹ with the objectives to:

- 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 Agendas;
- Support the design and implementation of the *OECD Principles on Water Governance* ; and
- Foster continuity between two World Water Forums (every 3 years).

During its first phase of activity (2013-15), the WGI co-produced the [OECD Principles on Water Governance](#), in a bottom-up and multi-stakeholder fashion. Since their adoption by the OECD Regional Development Policy Committee (May 2015) and their endorsement at ministerial level (June 2015), the Principles have been endorsed by 170+ stakeholder groups gathered within the [Global Coalition for Good Water Governance](#). During the second phase of activity (2015-18), the WGI developed an [indicator framework](#) to support multi-stakeholder dialogues and self-assessment of water governance in interested cities, basins and countries, and facilitated the peer-review of over 50 concrete water governance stories from across the Globe. These findings were summarised in the report [Implementing the OECD Principles on Water Governance](#), as well as in an [online map](#), which were both released at the 8th World Water Forum (Brasilia, 2018).

Since its creation, the WGI has gathered 10 times in plenary meetings to carry out the above-mentioned activities and to facilitate knowledge and experience sharing in addition to co-production and contribution to global agendas. In order to draw lessons from the last three years of operation and to identify whether adjustments in terms of content, structure and results were needed, a [satisfaction survey](#) was conducted in May 2018. With a 70% response rate, results pointed out extremely high levels of satisfaction (above 90%) and a unanimous pledge to pursue WGI activities. For this reason, the Terms of Reference for 2019-2021 follow previous Terms of Reference in terms of objectives, composition and working methods. The 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 remain a technical gathering of policymakers and practitioners, which should under no circumstance be considered as an OECD body.

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.

Terms of Reference (2019-2021)

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 WGI is hosted within the OECD, the Secretariat of which is ensured by the Centre for Entrepreneurship, SMEs, Regions and Cities as part of the activities of the OECD Regional Development Policy Committee (RDPC).

As was the case for its six years of operation (2013-2018), the WGI is conceived as a network of experts, policymakers and practitioners that should, under no circumstance, be considered as an OECD subsidiary body. The WGI 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 Agendas (Sustainable Development Goals, World Water Forum, Habitat III, COP etc.);
- Support the implementation of the **OECD Principles on Water Governance** in interested cities, basins and countries by promoting the uptake of the Indicator Framework and peer-learning from concrete water governance stories; and
- Facilitate the implementation of the **Brasilia Multi-stakeholder Pledge** from the 8th World Water Forum (Brazil, 2018) up to the 9th World Water Forum (Senegal, 2021).

Structure

The WGI will continue to operate according to a three-tiered governance structure, in close co-operation and co-ordination with the OECD Regional Development Policy Committee (RDPC):

- The **Secretariat** is ensured by the Centre for Entrepreneurship, SMEs, Regions and Cities of the OECD (CFE), 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**, renewed in 2015 for 3 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 fundraising efforts. It is composed of co-founding institutions, namely the International Network of Basin Organisations (INBO), the International Office for Water (OIEau), 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), as well as by the *Spanish Association of Water Supply and Sanitation* (AEAS) that joined the Steering Committee in 2016, after a call for applications among WGI members.

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 through 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), donor agencies, NGOs, international organisations, industry, associations of water users, the scientific community and academia, amongst others;
- Membership of **national governments** from OECD and partner countries is subject to their interest in the topic and capacity to engage in the activities. All water focal points of OECD member countries systematically receive an invitation to join the Network, as well as focal points from partner countries that have shown an interest in the water topic;
- 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 WGI members. Whenever possible, such meetings will be organised back-to-back to RDPC or major water-related global events. The Highlights (or Summary Record) of WGI plenary meetings will systematically be shared with WGI members and 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** will contribute to supporting the implementation of the *OECD Principles on Water Governance* in interested Member and non-Member countries through:
 - Working Group n°1 (Indicators): promoting the uptake and use of the existing **Water Governance Indicator Framework** to help interested countries, basins, and cities, both in OECD countries and non-OECD economies, understand whether governance systems are performing well. It will also contribute to the development of impact/outcome indicators to complement the existing framework and assess whether water policies are delivering expected outcomes.
 - Working Group n°2 (Capacity): promoting **capacity development** that can trigger water governance reform processes at different scales (cities, basins, regions, countries). It includes, amongst others, the further use and dissemination of water governance practices as a peer-learning tool and the development of other modules and tools on specific governance dimensions; and,
- 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 Agendas. In particular, it will strive to foster continuity on governance discussions in between the 8th and the 9th World Water Fora 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 OECD member countries and non-member economies:

- The **Working Group on Indicators** will complement the OECD Water Governance Indicator Framework with result indicators (e.g. outcome and impact indicators) to assess whether water policies are delivering expected outcomes. It will also support the uptake and use of the existing Water Governance Indicator Framework in countries, regions, basins and cities, based on the 10-step methodology for self-assessment.
- The **Working Group on Capacity Development** will develop capacity development materials and share knowledge and practices on water governance to support interested countries, basins, regions, or cities overcome hurdles in water reform processes.

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 Indicators will be led by OECD, ASTEE, Transparency International, AEAS and INBO, while the Working Group on Capacity Development will be led by OECD, SIWI, WIN, and Suez.

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 the 11th plenary meeting of the WGI (12-13 November 2018).

Methods of work and activities

The Working Groups will map existing knowledge, collect evidence, share experiences, scale up success stories to develop indicators and capacity development modules and tools. In doing so, members of the Working Groups will shed light on how cities, basins and countries have successfully assessed the effectiveness, efficiency and inclusiveness of their 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.

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 2021 to make adjustments if needed.

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 Indicators and Capacity Development 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, as well as AEAS that joined the Steering Committee in 2016 after a call for application extended to all WGI members.

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* or to use the indicator framework in interested countries, for example through policy dialogues or other activities 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.