



D5.4 Policy brief

Governance of water reuse schemes: good practice guidance



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Abstract	This brief provides a policy relevant summary of the DEMOWARE research findings on water reuse governance, in the form of 'good practice' guidance that may inform water managers and policymakers within and outside of Europe.

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Executive summary

This brief provides a policy relevant summary of the DEMOWARE research findings on water reuse governance, in the form of 'good practice' guidance that may inform water managers and policymakers within and outside of Europe.

From the assessments and stakeholder consultations conducted at six DEMOWARE water reuse schemes, the following good practices have been derived:

Theme 1: Legal framework for regulating water reuse

An effective legal framework is fundamental to ensuring the sound and safe implementation and management of water reuse schemes. There is need for regulations that find a balance between protecting public health and the environment, and setting a realistic standard for the reuse sector in order to help promote its growth and viability.

- Good practice 1: Establish realistic water quality standards
- Good practice 2: Establish clear institutional roles and responsibilities

Theme 2: Economic viability of reuse schemes

In addition to supportive legal frameworks, greater access to capital investment and competitive tariffs are needed to support the economic viability of (new) water reuse schemes.

- Good practice 3: Facilitate access to capital financing
- Good practice 4: Set competitive recycled water tariffs

Theme 3: Public acceptance and trust

Public acceptance of, or opposition to, water reuse is largely based on (the lack of) public trust in regulation and monitoring, the technical process, the water reuse organisation, and ultimately, the quality and safety of the reused water itself. Different approaches, including stakeholder collaboration, public engagement and information provision, are needed to build trust in water reuse.

- Good practice 5: Promote stakeholder and public collaboration and involvement
- Good practice 6: Inform, raise awareness and educate

These good practices may contribute to the successful integration of the different steps outlined in the EU CIS Guidelines on integrating water reuse into water planning and management. As such, the good governance practices presented in this policy brief can serve to facilitate wider adoption of water reuse schemes.

1 Introduction

The DEMOWARE project, funded by the European Union, aims to identify and overcome the barriers that constrain the widespread implementation of water reuse schemes in Europe. To identify common governance challenges and strategies, the project examined the governance context of existing water reuse schemes. This brief provides a policy relevant summary of the DEMOWARE research findings on water reuse governance, in the form of ‘good practice’ guidance that may inform water managers and policymakers within and outside of Europe.

The good practices presented in this brief are divided into the following themes: (1) legal framework for regulating water reuse, (2) economic viability of water reuse schemes, and (3) public acceptance and trust. In the last section of this policy brief, the good practices are contextualised within EU policy making and related to the underlying DEMOWARE deliverables. Throughout the report, examples of DEMOWARE case studies are provided to illustrate how the good practices relate to the empirical findings.

The governance dimensions of water reuse scheme development and operation, such as policies and regulatory frameworks, economic viability, public involvement and stakeholder collaboration, can serve to facilitate wider adoption of water reuse practices. Good governance practices have been derived from assessments conducted at six water reuse schemes: an indirect potable reuse scheme at Torreele (Belgium), the urban reuse of treated municipal wastewater at the London Olympic Park (United Kingdom) and at Sabadell (Spain), and the reuse of agro-industrial effluent and municipal wastewater for (un)restricted irrigation at Capitanata (Italy), Shafdan (Israel) and Torre Marimon (Spain). The good practices are primarily based on the views of the stakeholders from the water reuse sector consulted.

2 Theme 1: Legal framework for regulating water reuse

An effective legal framework is fundamental to ensuring the sound and safe implementation and management of water reuse schemes. There is need for regulations that find a balance between protecting public health and the environment, and setting a realistic standard for the reuse sector in order to help promote its growth and viability.

2.1 Good practice 1: Establish realistic water quality standards

Nowadays, regulatory frameworks for water reuse (where they exist) vary significantly between European countries. The development and operation of water reuse schemes would be supported by the adoption of European guidelines.

Clear and realistic quality standards help to effectively manage water reuse schemes. They set

clear expectations regarding the outputs of these schemes, and provide a level of standardization. As standards require reused water to meet a certain quality, they generate public confidence and create some flexibility by allowing the scheme to adjust its processes to the required output quality (in comparison to e.g. treatment technology requirements or certification).

Example I: National legislative standards for water reuse in Shafdan, Israel

In Shafdan a strategy for water security has shaped national water policy, which recognises water reuse as a viable option to combat challenges around water management and food security, associated with a growing population. The Israeli water authority has facilitated the development of legislative standards for reuse water within a broader water resources planning framework. The standards specify water quality criteria for agricultural water use, and attempt to balance health risks (particularly to farmers) against the costs of delivered irrigation water. The existence of these standards has been associated with high levels of confidence and trust in products irrigated with reclaimed water, both among local farmers and in export markets.

However, there are potential disadvantages to the sector that must be considered in the development of such standards. Very stringent quality standards can actively discourage the development of reuse schemes if they impose burdensome treatment and/or monitoring requirements. Such requirements can require significant investment from scheme owners and operators, which can undermine the overall financial viability of reuse projects.

This could be avoided by establishing standards that set out treatment levels that correspond to different schemes types and different applications. The development of water reuse schemes benefits from the existence of water quality standards that are based on the application of the reuse scheme, i.e. standards based on water quality judged according to its appropriateness for use and not its origin.

Example II: Regional standards for water reuse in Capitanata, Italy

In Capitanata a water reuse scheme set up by an agro-industrial company functions as a pilot project. The treated water is used for irrigation purposes on tomato fields owned by the same company. Quality and monitoring standards (process, output, soil quality) have been developed at project level to meet regional quality standards, which have been adopted from national framework legislation on water reuse. Local researchers argue that the standards are unnecessarily strict. In the planning, implementation and monitoring of these standards, many different actors at different levels of governance are involved (e.g., municipalities, regional agencies, the province, etc.). The roles and responsibilities of different parties are not clearly specified in these processes, which results in a lack of trust between different parties.

In addition, reuse schemes should adopt a risk management approach to develop scheme-specific targets and risk management measures. Such an approach provides for a system assessment of the whole scheme and determines

whether the scheme can deliver reused water that meets the health-based targets relevant for the intended use and local conditions. A risk management based approach could be operationalized through a Water Reuse Safety Plan.

2.2 Good practice 2: Establish clear institutional roles and responsibilities

The development of water reuse schemes benefits from regulatory and institutional clarity. A highly complex regulatory approval process can significantly increase the overall cost of a scheme. Nowadays, there is often a gap between environmental permits for wastewater disposal, and health-related permits for drinking water systems, which can, in some cases, make the permitting procedures for water reuse quite fuzzy. There needs to be clarity in how the permitting

system for reuse schemes is administered, with clear roles and responsibilities at national and regional levels. Successful coordination and collaboration is needed to establish an integrated permitting system that clearly sets out monitoring requirements tailored to specific end-uses, both between actors, such as regulators and municipalities, as well as between sectors, including health and agriculture.

Example III: Permitting procedure in Olympic Park, UK

The Old Ford Water Recycling Plant is a community-level wastewater recycling scheme that feeds into a dedicated distribution network, which supplies water (primarily for toilet flushing and park irrigation) to several venues at the Olympic Park in London. No national standards exist for non-potable water recovered from wastewater. Therefore, the scheme is subject to a regulatory position (that is based on adhering to the agreed risk management plan) and a contractual agreement that includes unique reporting requirements that are not otherwise legislated for non-potable schemes. Water quality parameters were derived from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency recycled water quality guidelines for 'unrestricted urban use' applications taking into account adjustments for some standards from the UK drinking water standard and customer requirements.

Effective monitoring and control is needed to safeguard public health and to improve the transparency and accountability of operations. This is important for ensuring confidence and building trust among regulators, customers and the general public.

However, water quality standards can stifle the sector if they require reuse schemes to undertake very difficult and costly monitoring programmes. Cost-efficiency requires the frequency of analysis, monitoring and reporting to be proportionate to the scale of water reuse. Therefore, any quality standards for water reuse should be accompanied by 'fit-for-purpose' monitoring requirements.

Monitoring procedures need to be tailored to specific end-use of the reclaimed water or specific (e.g., area-based) risks. A 'fit-for-purpose' monitoring system considers water quality at different treatment levels of the water reuse scheme.

Water Reuse Safety Plans can be useful tools for schemes to establish risk management procedures (incl. monitoring of operations and safety barriers). An advantage of this approach is that it identifies and manages health risks in a proactive way, rather than only relying on post-treatment monitoring.

Example IV: Licensing and monitoring in Torre Marimon, Spain

Torre Marimon is a 116-hectare site located next to the municipal wastewater treatment plant. It consists of experimental fields and greenhouses where different types of vegetables can be grown. Water reuse at the wastewater plant is regulated by Royal Decrees that define water monitoring standards, as well as through national by-laws (e.g., on environmental quality) that empower local authorities to set more strict quality standards in benefit of the environment. These standards require high monitoring and reporting activities which appear unrealistic, especially for small-scale operators. Furthermore, licensing and auditing procedures are very bureaucratic and respond slowly to new situations and needs.

In addition to regulated monitoring, independent certification of the quality of reclaimed water by 'intermediary' actors could help alleviate some public fears around e.g. consuming food irrigated with reclaimed water. Establishing 'trusted' independent advisory groups (consisting of e.g. health professionals, academics and advocates from the community) can ensure that the operation of reuse schemes is transparent and accountable.

3 Theme 2: Economic viability of reuse schemes

In addition to supportive legal frameworks, greater access to capital investment and competitive tariffs are needed to support the economic viability of (new) water reuse schemes.

3.1 Good practice 3: Facilitate access to capital financing

Lack of access to funds and/or timely availability of funds are constraining factors for the development of water reuse schemes. Although there are financing options (both public and private) available, knowledge of these financing schemes or indeed how to apply to these schemes is often lacking.

Targeted grant schemes and mechanisms to ease perceived risks for potential investors can help facilitate greater access to capital and promote new developments within the sector. Cases for new water reuse schemes may be put forward for

government subsidies and capital financing, through for instance whole life-cycle costing or start-up subsidies, situated within an appropriate regulatory framework. Other options such as commuted sums of 'development taxes' would help to subsidise water reuse schemes, through for example housing development. Leveraging additional finances for water reuse schemes through strategic investments can also support the adoption of innovative treatment technologies.

Example V: Water reuse subsidies in Shafdan, Israel

The Shafdan water reuse scheme is supported by the Israeli Government, which controls water pricing. This allows recycled water to be sold at an artificially low volumetric price for farmers, and ensure the viability of the scheme by making initial investment more attractive; i.e. 80% of the costs of drip or spray irrigation systems used by farmers are returned to them in the form of subsidies. Consequently, the field-based infrastructure deployed by farmers is never more than 5-6 years old and is very efficient (low levels of clogging / leaks etc.)

3.2 Good practice 4: Set competitive recycled water tariffs

The high relative cost of producing recycled water (which can be intensified by stringent water quality standards, among other factors) can make it difficult for scheme operators to recover that cost through tariffs. Ensuring recycled water is priced more competitively than conventional water, through subsidies on tariffs and/or a separate tariff structures for sewage collection and water supply, would stimulate demand and therefore effectively increase revenue potential. In addition, there are insufficient price differentials between reclaimed and other sources of water. The

Water Framework Directive should be instrumental in this, as Art. 9 prescribes the principle of recovery of the costs of water services, including environmental and resource costs.

It could be beneficial to perform proper economic analyses that take all the benefits of water reuse into account. Careful financial planning and more accurate pricing, inclusive of externalities, will help show the economic and non-economic benefits of water reuse schemes.

Example VI: Price setting in Torreele, Belgium

The Torreele water reuse scheme produces infiltration water from wastewater effluent for indirect potable reuse through artificial recharge of the dune aquifer. Water reuse contributes to about 40% of drinking water supplies in Torreele, reducing natural groundwater extraction by roughly 30% (1 million m³/year). In recent years, both the infiltration capacity and the drinking water demand decreased, causing a reduction in the production of infiltration water and a rise in operational and investment costs from 0.46 (2005) to 0.62 EUR/m³ (2011). Nevertheless, the cost was still lower than the alternative of importing water from neighbouring areas, which allowed for greater independent control of price setting and improved financial management. Overall, although the drinking water price increased, the price is 1.51 EUR/m³ (2016) compared to an average of 1.11 to 1.84 EUR/m³ in the Flanders region.

4 Theme 3: Public acceptance and trust

Public acceptance of, or opposition to, water reuse is largely based on (the lack of) public trust in regulation and monitoring, the technical process, the water reuse organisation, and ultimately, the quality and safety of the reused water itself. Different approaches, including stakeholder collaboration, public engagement and information provision, are needed to build trust in water reuse.

4.1 Good practice 5: Promote stakeholder and public collaboration and involvement

Successful implementation of water reuse schemes requires broad support. Stakeholder (including public) involvement is a key component in creating trust and acceptance. Multi-stakeholder platforms are needed to facilitate early dialogue and engagement when developing water reuse plans. Good practice encompasses multiple levels of public and stakeholder participation, ranging from targeted awareness raising campaigns through to consultation and higher levels of stakeholder involvement in planning and decision-making.

Although there is no one-size-fits-all solution with regard to the extent of stakeholder and public in-

volvement, too low degrees of, or poorly executed, participation can raise opposition. It is therefore important to set clear expectations from the start regarding how public involvement will be incorporated in decision-making. In well-designed stakeholder processes, stakeholders and the general public should have the opportunity to express their concerns and ideas in a two-way dialogue structure.

No matter what degree of public participation is programmed, public involvement opportunities should start early, ideally before the planning of concrete projects.

Example VII: Stakeholder collaboration in Olympic Park, UK

Throughout the development of Old Ford Water Recycling Plant, there was extensive engagement with regulators (e.g. environment and public health agencies) to seek approval as no national wastewater reuse regulations were in place. Furthermore, extensive consultation took place with customers (Olympic venues, landscape irrigators) throughout the design and implementation phases. Customer views had an impact on the quality standards that were sought, which had knock-on effects on overall scheme design and the treatment train used. Once the scheme was in place, it was used for public outreach and to gauge public reactions to reuse. A study of public receptivity to the scheme found that levels of support were quite high, which highlights the potential of using high profile events (like the Olympic games) to showcase reuse practices.

Next to building long-term collaboration with authorities, extensive consultations with the (end-)users of recycled water (e.g. farmers) is needed. Customer engagement should be organised throughout the design and development process of water reuse schemes.

Example VIII: Customer engagement in Capitanata, Italy

Even though the water reuse scheme operator at the agro-industrial company in Capitanata has not actively engaged with customers about their programme, one of their key customers, a food processing company, believes that, in this case, the use of reclaimed water from Capitanata's internal production process (eventually) may be used for marketing purposes. Just as some consumers are willing to pay extra for organic food, they foresee a potential market for food produced with renewable energy and recycled water. At present, however, farmers don't believe that consumers will perceive products irrigated with reused water as better or as more likeable products. In their view, the agricultural use of recycled water may only be successful if the quality of the water as well as the final product is guaranteed and certified, and if the switch to recycled water is accompanied by a comprehensive communication plan to raise public awareness.

4.2 Good practice 6: Inform, raise awareness and educate

Public education and communication is needed to make people aware of the water cycle, of the need to reuse water, and of the associated benefits of reuse. Informing, raising awareness, and education are key instruments to build public acceptance and trust for water reuse.

An important element of an adequate water reuse communication strategy is to provide objective and comprehensive information through multiple communication channels so as to reach a wide audience. Information should be objective in that it outlines the challenges, possible solutions, and costs and benefits of water reuse in relation to other possible solutions. Next, information on the suitability and value of water reuse itself, working examples of successful water reuse schemes, as well as site visits to existing reuse

facilities could increase public exposure and address the stigma around recycled water. Leaflets, brochures and fact sheets are useful means to provide technical information about water recycling. Interactive methods such as focus groups, public exhibitions, demonstration events, trade shows and social media stories allow for an exchange of information, providing operators, regulators and public actors with the opportunity to listen to concerns, learn from each other, and to answer questions and address problems and opportunities in real-time.

An interesting observation in this respect, is that the general public stresses the importance of experience and voluntary opportunities for them to come into contact with recycled water.

Example IX: Public information in Torreele, Belgium

Achieving public trust through information provision is perceived of as an important factor for the Torreele scheme. In fact, if the public perception towards the reuse would have been negative, this would have been a major impediment to the securing of necessary permits. Therefore, from the start of the planning period, the approach has been to inform the public and be transparent so that trust could be gained. A visitors' centre was built to present the objectives and results of the reuse project, and to the same end, open days and guided tours are organised frequently.

The exact framing of water reuse plays a significant role in the formation of public preferences. In this regard, avoiding jargon, acronyms, and unnecessary negative terms is important. The use of

a positive, clear and direct language can contribute to the public acceptance of water reuse. Framing reused water as 'being the logical acceleration of a natural process in a world where much of the drinking water is already derived

from unplanned reuse' is an appealing example in this regard.

Educational material and messages about water reuse should wherever possible tap into personal experiences and address water concerns and

challenges of the locality, while at the same time recognising global and long-term challenges associated with water scarcity. Therefore, an understanding of the perceptions and concerns of the target audience is a precondition for an effective communication strategy.

Example X: Public acceptance in Sabadell, Spain

In Sabadell regenerated wastewater is used for urban purposes, mainly in commercial areas (flushing toilets), street cleaning and public parks and private gardens irrigation. The principal motivation for reuse derives from the challenge of water scarcity. Sabadell is a demonstration site that aims to show that the reuse scheme is safe for public health. Both local administrative and general public confidence must be built and consolidated. In a focus group meeting, citizens expressed a positive attitude towards water reuse for a large range of practices. People felt effective communication through the use of multiple channels was needed to educate a wider audience and dispel negative stereotypes about recycled water. A video showing that in fact all water on earth is recycled water, clearly raised the awareness of citizens. The use of more active public engagement methods was suggested, such as site visits to water recycling facilities and water tasting events to expose people to different water types (mineral, tap, reclaimed). An information campaign and an education programme has started.

It is, however, important to look beyond information provision. Raising the public's knowledge of water reuse alone is generally insufficient to ensure acceptance and therefore will need to be accompanied by other mechanisms to build trust in water reuse.

5 Good practices contextualised within EU policy making

Water reuse is not only the central topic of the DEMOWARE project, but also a priority of the European Commission. This section relates the good practices derived from the governance analyses in the DEMOWARE project to EU policy making.

5.1 CIS Guidelines on integrating water reuse into water planning and management in the context of the WFD

Water reuse is a top priority area in the Strategic Implementation Plan of the European Innovation Partnership on Water, and its maximisation is a specific objective in the communication "Blueprint to safeguard Europe's water resources". Exploring the prospects of EU policymaking on water reuse through a series of studies, an impact assessment and a public consultation round, the European Commission has committed itself to a number of actions to promote the further uptake of water reuse in member states (see its recent communication "Closing the Loop – An EU Action Plan for the Circular Economy"). Besides generating better access to EU funding for water reuse and ensuring a better integration of water reuse within other EU policies, the commission is working on a legislative proposal that sets out minimum quality requirements for reused water for irrigation and groundwater recharge in the EU. This proposal is accompanied by a Common Implementation Strategy (CIS),

to inform relevant Member State authorities about the process of planning and implementing a water reuse scheme for treated wastewater.

In view of the contextualisation of the DEMOWARE project, the identified good governance practices offer some specific insights to the different planning steps for water reuse outlined in the CIS guidance document, summarised in Figure 1. The planning steps entail among others an assessment of water reuse needs, treatment requirements, costs and control. Although public participation is not placed in a specific step, the guidance explicitly underlines its importance throughout all stages. Indeed, a whole chapter (8) is devoted to public participation, which underscores that public involvement and information can increase trust in and acceptance of water reuse options. Except for a few general insights and recommendations, the chapter concludes that public involvement should be tailored to the situation at hand.

5.2 Contribution from DEMOWARE good practices

The good practices derived from the governance analyses in the DEMOWARE project may contribute to the successful integration of the different steps, including the integration of a more structural and tangible consideration of stakeholder involvement and public participation in the planning and implementation of water reuse

schemes. In Table 1, the DEMOWARE good practices are linked to the steps outlined in the CIS guidance document. When the good practices have relevance for more than one step, these steps are bundled in the table.

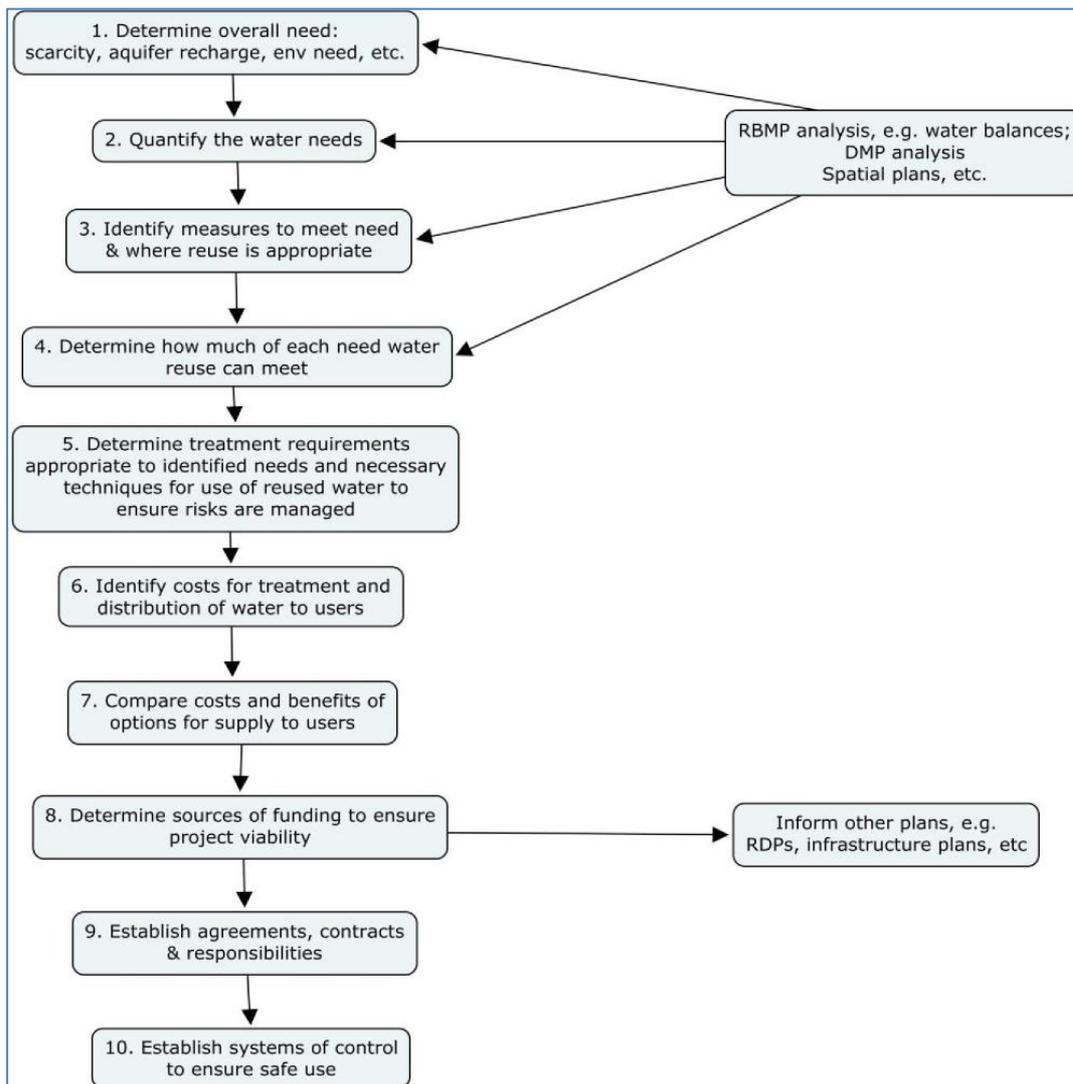


Figure 1: Summary of the steps in planning for reuse of treated wastewater set out in the CIS Guidelines

CIS Guidance step	DEMOWARE good practice
#5: Determine treatment requirements appropriate to identified needs and necessary techniques to ensure risks are managed	#1: Establish realistic water quality standards
#6 to #8: Identify costs, compare cost and benefits and determine sources of funding	#3 & #4: Facilitate access to capital financing; Set competitive recycled water tariffs
#9: Establish agreements, contracts and responsibilities	#2: Establish clear institutional roles and responsibilities
#1 to #10, starting with step #1 Determining the need for and potential of water reuse - to step #10 Establish systems of control	#5 & #6: Promote stakeholder and public collaboration and involvement; Inform, raise awareness and educate

Table 1. Links between the CIS guidance steps and the DEMOWARE good practices for water reuse

The set of proposed good governance practices were validated during two DEMOWARE water reuse governance workshops with policy makers and stakeholders in Capitanata and Sabadell: all six good practices are considered important to realise the widespread implementation of water reuse schemes. For the successful adoption of good practices for water reuse, stakeholders at these workshops felt that most EU support would be needed to determine and regulate quality standards and provide access to capital financing. The promotion of stakeholder and public collaboration, as well as efforts involved with providing information and raising awareness, were seen a first and foremost national or regional responsibility.

As such, the good practices presented here can be instrumental in the EU's ambitions to facilitate wider adoption of water reuse practices.

6 For more information

This brief, providing a policy relevant summary of the research findings on water reuse governance in the form of good practice guidance is developed as part of DEMOWARE, and is based on literature research and the analysis of six European water reuse schemes.

- **D5.1 Issues maps and problem-potential response strategies maps for European water reuse demonstration sites**

This document (restricted) presents issues maps and a response strategies map of the key governance challenges in European water reuse demonstration sites.

- **D5.2 Trust in Water Reuse: Review report on international experiences in public involvement and stakeholder collaboration.**

This report (public) presents international experiences on public perception, support, opposition and involvement in international water reuse practices. The report discusses how water reuse organisation may build trust and public acceptance for water reuse through public education, involvement and communication strategies.

- **D5.3 Tailored advice on public engagement and stakeholder collaboration strategy for water reuse**

This document (restricted) presents the tailored advice on public engagement and stakeholder collaboration strategy for the water reuse schemes of Capitanata and Sabadell. An outline for focus group meetings is described as a suitable method to engage with citizens and stakeholders and to discuss perceptions, responses, engagement and communication.

Information on EU water reuse policy development, and the “CIS Guidelines on Integrating Water Reuse into Water Planning and Management in the context of the WFD”:

- <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/water/reuse.htm>
- <https://circabc.europa.eu/sd/a/4bba82bd-65b0-42d1-aa8f-19c230e0d517/> CIS%20Guidelines%20on%20Water%20Reuse-final.pdf

For more information on, and deliverables of, the DEMOWARE project, see:

- <http://demoware.eu>
- www.water-reuse.eu