

3D	
TRUST AND ENGAGEMENT	Principle 12. Monitoring and evaluation
Target group / Relevant stakeholder: National Policy-Makers, Municipal Governments, Regulators, Urban Water Utilities, Medium Water Utilities, Rural Service Providers, Watershed or River Basin Organisations, User Groups, Networks or Platforms, and/or Private Sector	
DESCRIPTION	
Promote regular monitoring and evaluation of water policy and governance where appropriate, share the results with the public and make adjustments when needed (OECD, 2024, 56).	
EXPECTED RESULTS	
<p>Outputs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dedicated institutions for monitoring and evaluation are endowed with sufficient capacity, appropriate degree of independence and resources as well as the necessary instruments (OECD, 2024, 56). Reliable monitoring and reporting mechanisms effectively guide decision-making (OECD, 2024, 56). Assessments of how water policy fulfils the intended outcomes and water governance frameworks are fit for purpose (OECD, 2024, 56). Timely and transparent sharing of evaluation results and adaptation of strategies as new information becomes available (OECD, 2024, 56). 	
CONDITIONS FOR SUCCESS	
For effective water policy support, monitoring and evaluation (M&E) should include (OECD, 2021):	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sector policy and strategy: A clear national strategy mandating regular M&E, with defined indicators and reporting mechanisms. Institutional arrangements: Clearly defined roles and coordination among agencies to ensure accountability and data sharing. Sector financing: Adequate, long-term funding for data collection, analysis, and capacity development. Planning, monitoring, and review: A structured approach to gathering, analysing, and applying data for adaptive planning and performance reviews. Capacity development: Continuous training and technical support to strengthen data collection, interpretation and use in improving WASH services. 	
BARRIERS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complexity of multi-stakeholder systems: Challenges arise when policy development involves a collaborative effort among several actors (Hermans et al., 2012). Data limitations, expert variability, and temporal comparability across time (OECD, 2018). Establishing meaningful indicators often requires years to show measurable results (de Stefano, 2010), and measuring governance aspects like integrity and transparency, remains difficult (Bertule et al., 2018), as does reducing complex governance dynamics to a single index. Limited resources, including institutional capacity, skills shortages and financial constraints can undermine effective M&E implementation in municipalities (Jili and Mthethwa, 2016) and Payment for Water Services programmes (Brownson and Fowler, 2020). Water quality monitoring: Faces limitations due to insufficient capacity for detecting contaminants, high analytical costs, and constrained investment. Diffuse pollution and its effects on human and ecosystem health remain under-reported and under-regulated (OECD, 2017). Water quantity monitoring: Challenges persist in tracking water use, particularly for aquifers due to technical and cost constraints (OECD, 2017). Well metering is a recent development, making groundwater markets harder to establish than surface water ones (OECD, 2021). 	

- Water risks monitoring: Coastal hazards receive less assessment and oversight compared to other water risks, despite their potentially greater damage (OECD, 2021).

SOLUTIONS

- Mapping of diverse perspectives and identification of critical assumptions can expand the monitoring scope (Hermans et al., 2012).
- Monitoring of the performance of WASH systems rather than outputs. This requires a detailed and systematically organised evidence of system-level changes, which is broader than keeping track of the infrastructure or services that the system is expected to deliver (UNICEF, forthcoming).
- Indicators should be relevant, participatory, practical, and realistic, aligning with measurement goals, resource constraints, and intended use (OECD, 2018).
- Leveraging of information and communication technologies can address water-related data gaps, including sensor monitoring, satellite imagery, and data processing for improved water quality monitoring and management (OECD, 2021).
- Proactive and systematic stakeholder engagement in water monitoring by leveraging new technologies like smartphone apps and social networks can expand citizen contributions to research and knowledge production (OECD, 2021).
- Use of monitoring and reporting platforms for stakeholder engagement and cross-sectoral coordination as well as data exchange.
- Development of system-wide incentive structures, multi- and inter-disciplinary in orientation and with clear policy implications.
- Stronger early-warning systems, enhanced monitoring, and improved evaluation systems can address water-related risks in urban areas (OECD, 2021).

EXAMPLES

France's Information System on Public Water and Sanitation to Monitor Utility Performance



Water risks



Launched in 2009, France's Information System on Public Water and Sanitation Services (SISPEA) is a national database that tracks utility performance using 36 standardised indicators. Managed by the French Biodiversity Agency, SISPEA enables local authorities to report pricing and service quality data, ensuring compliance with regulations and supporting public policy development. The system also facilitates benchmarking and transparency, helping utilities identify leakages, inefficiencies, and areas for service improvement. While large municipalities have been required to report data for years, a recent regulation extended this obligation to smaller communities. Despite data gaps and fragmented service structures, SISPEA remains a valuable tool for improving efficiency, affordability, and accountability in France's decentralised water sector.

Linkages to Governance Principles

SISPEA enhances monitoring and evaluation, enabling evidence-based policy-making and performance benchmarking among service providers. It strengthens data and information management by standardising performance indicators and ensuring public access to utility data, promoting transparency in service provision. Stakeholder engagement is encouraged by increasing accountability to users, while capacity building is supported through state technicians, who provide technical assistance to local authorities, particularly in rural areas where reporting challenges persist.

Latvia's Online System for Annual Reporting in the Water and Sanitation Sector

SDGs linked



Water risks



The Public Utilities Commission of Latvia (PUC) launched an online reporting system in 2016 to streamline the financial and technical reporting process for water and sanitation service providers. Previously, reporting relied on Excel and PDF submissions, causing inefficiencies due to manual data processing, staff turnover, and communication delays. The new platform enables electronic submission, automated data validation, and real-time feedback, significantly improving efficiency and transparency. Service providers can import financial data directly, while regulators can compare historical data and assess trends. The platform also helps identify tariff adjustments. With 649 water supply and 550 sewerage systems now reported through the system, the initiative has strengthened data accuracy, governance, and regulatory oversight, ensuring a more reliable and accessible reporting framework.

Linkages to Governance Principles

The platform enhances M&E by enabling real-time data validation, trend analysis, and automated reporting. It strengthens data and information management, ensuring structured, transparent, and accessible financial and technical records. Stakeholder engagement is supported through designated experts who provide ongoing assistance to service providers, fostering collaboration and trust. Additionally, capacity building has been integrated through training, manuals, and continued support, ensuring effective use of the system by both service providers and regulators.

Enhancing Service Quality through Robust Data Validation and Performance Benchmarking in Portugal

SDGs linked



Water risks



Ensuring high-quality water and wastewater services requires robust data validation and performance benchmarking. In Portugal, the Water and Wastewater Regulation Authority (ERSAR) has developed a structured service quality assessment system to enhance data reliability, regulatory compliance, and transparency. The latest 4th-generation Water and Waste Service Quality Assessment Guide, published in 2023, refines performance indicators, strengthens data validation procedures, and aligns service assessments with climate resilience and sustainability goals. By implementing a multi-step verification process, including benchmarking and comparative analysis, the guide ensures that service providers comply with national and EU regulations while continuously improving performance. The updated framework helps safeguard consumer interests, promote environmental sustainability, and support sector-wide capacity building.

Linkages to Governance Principles

This case study strongly aligns with M&E, as ERSAR's methodology enables systematic data verification, performance benchmarking, and regulatory oversight. The initiative also advances data and information by introducing structured reporting protocols that enhance transparency and accountability. By strengthening regulatory frameworks, ERSAR ensures that Portugal's water and wastewater management aligns with EU standards and national adaptation goals. While stakeholder

engagement plays a supporting role, the iterative guide development process highlights the value of operator and regulator collaboration in enhancing governance tools.

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