

2D	
EFFECTIVENESS	Principle 8. Capacity building
<b>Target group / Relevant stakeholder:</b> 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	
<b>DESCRIPTION</b>	
Adapt the level of capacity of responsible authorities to the complexity of water challenges to be met, and to the set of competencies required to carry out their duties (OECD, 2024, 29).	
<b>EXPECTED RESULTS</b>	
Outputs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identification and address of capacity gaps allows the implementation of integrated water resources management, notably for planning, rulemaking, project management, finance, budgeting, data collection and monitoring, risk management and evaluation (OECD, 2024, 29).</li> <li>• Matching of the level of technical, financial and institutional capacity in water governance systems to the nature of problems and needs (OECD, 2024, 29).</li> <li>• Adaptive and evolving assignment of competences upon demonstration of capacity, where appropriate (OECD, 2024, 29).</li> <li>• Hiring of public officials and water professionals that uses merit-based, transparent processes and are independent from political cycles (OECD, 2024, 29).</li> <li>• Education and training of water professionals strengthens the capacity of water institutions as well as stakeholders at large and fosters cooperation and knowledge sharing (OECD, 2024, 29).</li> </ul>	
<b>CONDITIONS FOR SUCCESS</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deploying the levels of competences and skills of public servants in the water sector requires a supportive environment, including adequate financing, structures, strategic vision, material resources, governance and autonomy, organisational culture, leadership, human resources policies, coordination, accountability, and capacity of collaborating partners.</li> </ul>	
<b>BARRIERS</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Capacity development activities focus primarily on the individual level.</li> <li>• Training often emphasises knowledge acquisition over ensuring its practical application.</li> <li>• Despite over 40 years of discussion, there is still debate over definitions, approaches, determinants, and how to measure long-term capacity development results.</li> <li>• Historically, the water and WASH sectors have prioritised infrastructure over institutions, social behaviours, and environmental considerations.</li> <li>• The UN-Water GLAAS Report (2022) highlights a significant shortage of trained personnel in the WASH sector, with only a third of countries meeting 75% of staffing needs for essential functions. More than 80% of countries lack professionals for managing onsite sanitation and small drinking water systems. Gender disparities persist, as women represent one in five water sector employees, with even fewer in leadership roles (World Bank, 2019). Furthermore, utilities often lack the capacity to maintain service efficiency (Cetrulo et al., 2020).</li> </ul>	
<b>SOLUTIONS</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individual level: Training, coaching, peer learning, exchange visits, and experiential learning.</li> <li>• Organisational level: Change management, strategy development, cultural and values alignment, reorganisation, material support, efficiency and quality improvements, and innovation processes.</li> <li>• Inter-sectoral level: Platform development, coordination mechanisms, joint sector reviews, mutual accountability, entrepreneurship programmes, NGO/local private sector support, decentralisation programmes, intersectoral dialogues, and awareness campaigns.</li> <li>• Structural level: Establishment of education and training centres for water, promoting gender equity policies, strengthening state governance, and supporting civil society groups.</li> </ul>	

- Effective capacity development principles: Locally-led and owned, context-framed, participatory, adaptive, innovative, and long-term.

## EXAMPLES

### Capacity Building for River Basin Management in the Pilica River Basin, Poland

#### SDGs linked



#### Water risks



The Pilica River catchment area has long struggled with water quality issues, particularly in the Sulejów Reservoir, where nutrient pollution has caused harmful algal blooms. The LIFE Pilica project (2020-30) builds on earlier initiatives to implement a River Basin Management Plan by fostering stakeholder engagement and capacity building. Through a structured multi-stakeholder platform, the project engages approximately 170 institutions, including water management authorities, agriculture representatives, and local governments. Regular workshops and meetings at different administrative levels ensure knowledge exchange, joint problem-solving, and co-creation of solutions. The initiative has led to national funding for pollution control measures and provided 33 municipalities with pilot applications to control wastewater collection from rural areas.

#### Linkages to Governance Principles

Capacity building has strengthened institutional coordination, equipping stakeholders with the skills and knowledge to implement river basin management effectively. Stakeholder engagement has ensured diverse voices contribute to decision-making and the development of pollution reduction strategies. The project also reinforces appropriate scales within basin systems by aligning water governance structures with ecological and administrative boundaries. Integrated strategies and local empowerment are achieved by ensuring local authorities and community actors play an active role in shaping water management policies, leading to long-term sustainable outcomes.

## REFERENCES

Cetrulo, T., Marques, R.C., Malheiros, T.F. and Cetrulo N.M. (2020) "Monitoring inequality in water access: challenges for the 2030 agenda for sustainable development". *Science of the Total Environment*, 727. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.scitotenv.2020.138746>

OECD (2024) *A handbook of what works*. OECD iLibrary. [https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/urban-rural-and-regional-development/a-handbook-of-what-works\\_bf54627e-en](https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/urban-rural-and-regional-development/a-handbook-of-what-works_bf54627e-en)

World Bank (2019) *Women in water utilities: breaking barriers*. World Bank, Washington DC. <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/166011566504966480/pdf/Breaking-Barriers-Executive-Summary.pdf>