

Beyond The Upcoming EU Regulation On Water Reuse – What Else Is Needed For Bridging The Gap Between Policy, Perception And Practice?

The INCOVER stakeholder dialogue regarding the proposal for a new EU Regulation on minimum requirements for the reuse of treated wastewater in agricultural irrigation attracted representatives from water utilities, regional government, the agricultural and the private sector who engaged in a lively debate.

Discussions were triggered by an overview on the proposal for the new Regulation presented by Valentina Bastino of DG Environment. She emphasised the expected impacts of climate change on the water cycle which will make water reuse an increasing necessity in the times to come. Although water reuse has a big potential it is still applied at a rather low level. The EU therefore aims at a six fold increase by 2025, compared to the value of 2015.

The proposal for the new Regulation is one of the EC's answers to facilitate reuse in the agricultural sector by lifting potential barriers in the cross-border trading of agricultural products while health and safety are to remain at the centre of attention.

Before Ms Bastino's presentation Luz Herrero Castilla from AIMEN, a well-known technology centre in Spain and also coordinator of INCOVER, explained how the project's research during the past three years helped expand the options for extracting resources from wastewater and treating the water itself to high standards making it fit for irrigation.

In the panel discussion following the introductory presentations Bertrand Vallet of EurEau, the European Federation of National Associations of Water Services pointed out that the upcoming Regulation might leave the major burden for the responsibility of assessing the risk and for the application of the risk management plan to the reclamation plant operators as they are the only ones requested to have a permit for the water reuse practice. It is hoped that further improvements and national implementation of the new Regulation will allow for a better share of responsibilities and costs between the different actors in the value chain of the water reuse practice, including the end-user.

Adriano Battilani from CER in Italy, also representing Copa-Cogeca and thus the agricultural sector, argued that farmers are highly dependent on a stable and continuous supply of good quality water, but they can do little by themselves to influence the water quality. A critical issue is who will pay the price for the use of reclaimed water since customers are not necessarily ready to pay more for their food, especially if the environmental benefits of water reuse are mainly felt in regions far away from their own home.

Francisco Pedrero Salcedo from CEBAS-CSIC, a Spanish centre for applied biology and soil sciences concluded that more assessments of the economic implications of the use of reclaimed water are needed which will also be key for making water reuse an effective component of the circular economy. Furthermore, a higher uptake of water reuse can only be achieved by better informing both stakeholders and the public more widely about the mounting impacts of water scarcity and what everyone can contribute to help mitigate these impacts.

The stakeholder dialogue was organised by ICLEI in the context of the INCOVER project. It took place in the ICLEI Brussels Office on 21 May 2019.

More information on water reuse including the new EC regulation under development can be found here: <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/water/reuse.htm>.

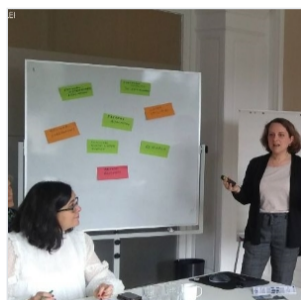
Information on the INCOVER project is available here: <http://incover-project.eu/>

Links:

<https://twitter.com/INCOVERproject>

<https://www.linkedin.com/company/incover-project>

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCrsdRBflzAn3UgtO3WfSUpA>



Organisation/acronym:

ICLEI - Local Governments for Sustainability

Organisation type:

Local government association,

Location:

Bruxelles, Belgium

Event type:

Stakeholder dialogue workshop,

Date:

21/05/2019 - 21/05/2019

Themes:

Circular economy, Water, Implementation of legislation,

Target audience:

Local or regional authorities, NGOs, Business sector, Agricultural sector,

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