

InnWater Article

#1 Social Innovation



Context

Climate change impact, maintaining the access to water (both in quality and quantity) are one of the key challenges that societies are facing in the 21st century. The emergence of these societal challenges has increased the importance of finding solutions which can reconcile both economic growth and social outcomes on one hand, and their technological, capacity building, governance and economic dimensions on the other hand. This is where social innovation comes into place.

What is social innovation?

Social innovation refers to the design and implementation of innovative solutions which ultimately aim to improve the welfare and wellbeing of individuals and communities¹. Social innovation means tackling societal, water-related challenges by combining **the technological & non-technological** dimensions (governance, capacity building and economic) of innovation. It consists of new combinations (or hybrids of existing and new) of products, processes and services.

These complementary dimensions of the social innovation cut across organizational, sectoral and disciplinary boundaries. They imply new patterns of stakeholders' involvement and learning fully aligned with the innovative and cross sector governance challenges. It is seen as a **complementary approach** to technological innovation, with the potential to address the complex, societal and environmental challenges by encouraging novel approaches, collaboration and cross-sector partnerships from all stakeholders including local communities, as well as from different expertise and skills^{2 3}.

¹ <https://www.oecd.org/regional/leed/social-innovation.htm>

² Amorsi N., Siauve S. (2018), Social Innovation factsheet on Monitoring "drinking water quality for improved health in Africa, AfriAlliance European project n° 689162, <https://afrialliance.org/knowledge-hub/afrialliance-socialinnovation/factsheets>

³ Wehn U., Vallejo B., Seijger C., Tlhagale M. Amorsi N., Kossi Sossou S., Bettina G. Kileshye Onema JM. (2021), Strengthening the knowledge base to face the impacts of climate change on water resources in Africa: A social innovation perspective, Environmental Science and Policy, 116, 292-300pp

Link with InnWater

InnWater’s approach is embedded in **social innovation**. It means that every single InnWater solution will be presented accordingly to their technological and non-technological dimensions. The figure below provides the overall view. InnWater is developing a digital platform (**technological** dimension) that will be composed of 3 key tools. To ensure these tools are used by stakeholders, a series of **capacity development** activities have already started. The main aim of InnWater is to renew multi-level and cross sector water governance by providing evidence-based assessment (based on the OECD Governance Assessment Framework) at the scale of 5 pilot sites (<https://www.innwater.eu/pilot-sites/general-presentation>). The **governance** dimension refers to the feedbacks and recommendations that will be delivered from the pilot sites and extended to a large scale through the replication exercise envisaged by the project. Finally, the **economics** dimension will envisage the sustainability of InnWater solutions through an exploitation plan during the second phase of the project (from August 2024 until December 2025).



By considering these four dimensions, InnWater aims to give to the stakeholders their plain role to co-develop and experience tailored governance solutions that they will use in an **autonomous** manner in the end, thus managing their own water resources effectively.

More

Check these video stories to find out what social innovation means to some European Interreg projects stakeholders: <https://socialinterreg.rem-consult.eu/voices/>

Authors: OiEau International Office for Water, j.magnier@oieau.fr, n.amorsi@oieau.fr

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