



Funded by the European Union



UK Research and Innovation



INN WATER

Promoting social innovation to renew multi-level and cross sector water governance

February 2026

Result Factsheet

SELF-SUSTAINING GOVERNANCE PILOT SITES COMMUNITY

Including how InnWater has improved water governance in each Pilot Site

[Link to the pilot sites](#)



RESULT Type:
Other

Owner: Westcountry  Rivers Trust

Contributors:



Ajuntament de Figueres
www.figueres.cat



ETIFOR
valuing nature



REKK



- 1** France, Reunion Island
Economic focus
- 2** Italy, Middle Brenta Basin
Ecosystem services & Drinking water sector
- 3** Spain, Figueres
Water scarcity
- 4** United Kingdom, West Country
Water quality
- 5** Hungary, Middle Tisza
Water allocation



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Description

The “Self-sustaining Water Governance” result demonstrates how local communities can independently manage their water resources through inclusive, bottom-up governance models. Developed and tested in the InnWater Pilot Sites, this approach shifts from centralized management to community-led systems, empowering local actors to co-design solutions and ensure equitable water access. By integrating economic, regulatory, and participatory dimensions, these partnerships strengthen local resilience and reduce dependency on external support. The model promotes environmental sustainability through improved stewardship, reduced pollution, and adaptive management of water ecosystems. Its flexible, replicable structure allows implementation in diverse European contexts, offering a practical roadmap for authorities and stakeholders seeking long-term, self-sustaining water governance.

TARGET AUDIENCES

EU and Member State policy-making intuitions

To **raise awareness and possibly influence policy** towards inclusive, community-based, and participatory water governance frameworks.

Other Actors who can help us fulfil our market potential

To **collaborate** in implementing self-sustaining governance partnerships at local and regional levels, ensuring long-term resilience.

Research and Technology Organisations

To **share knowledge and provide technical expertise** for scaling and adapting the InnWater governance model in other European contexts.

We specially need

Self-sustaining water governance partnerships/forum are crucial for implementing new governance mechanisms because they provide a forum for bringing society together. By focusing on the **economic, regulatory, and participatory** dimensions, the InnWaeter Pilot Sites have demonstrated how communities can manage their water resources effectively and independently. The InnWater supporting tools are vital for this process, as they provide the framework for these new approaches.



SDG's

Unique value proposition

This approach differs by shifting water management from a top-down, centralized government model to a bottom-up, community-led one. It empowers local stakeholders to create **self-sustaining** and **flexible** systems, promoting local ownership and long-term resilience rather than dependency on external authorities.

Use beyond the project life

A key marker of success is that Pilot Site communities are expected to continue to operate their new governance models after the initial project concludes. This long-term sustainability highlights the viability of the approach. Furthermore, establishing partnerships with additional water managers shows that the InnWater model is scalable and can be adopted by others, ensuring its impact extends beyond the pilot sites themselves. This expansion is essential for creating a broader movement towards more resilient and community-led water management.

Impacts

- **Scientific:** Improves governance research by generating comparative insights from pilot sites and validating innovative, community-led models for sustainable water management.
- **Economic:** Encourages cost-effective, self-reliant systems that reduce dependence on centralized infrastructure, stimulate local entrepreneurship, and create jobs linked to water management.
- **Societal:** Empowers local communities, builds trust, and enhances social equity through participatory governance and inclusive decision-making at the basin and community level.
- **Environmental:** Promotes pollution reduction, efficient water use, and ecosystem restoration by fostering local stewardship and adaptive management aligned with EU sustainability goals.

Key benefits



Community Empowerment: Builds local ownership and responsibility.



Economic Sustainability: New financing models, long-term viability.



Flexibility and Adaptability: Rapid, tailored responses to climate risks.



Improved Collaboration: Unites stakeholders, integrated water strategies.

Replicability

Replicability of this approach across Europe is high, though it will face challenges. Many regions, especially in Southern Europe, suffer from institutional fragmentation and outdated infrastructure. This model's bottom-up, flexible nature offers a promising solution. By demonstrating successful, self-sustaining pilot projects, it can be adopted across various contexts, from urban areas to rural communities.

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Legal requirements - IPR
This Result complies with ethical requirements in accordance with the Do Not Harm Principle.

PILOT SITE'S APPLICATION

The five Pilot Sites were selected to represent a broad range of **geographic and governance situations** ranging from small island communities to large regions and from Mediterranean biomes mountainous areas to lowland Baltic plains. These **Pilot Site Communities** have been the test bed for **new forms of governance** and **expanding** and **diversifying engagement** in the water sector decision making process.

Pilot Site #1: Reunion Island (FR)

Concrete changes observed: The Innwater project led to the setting of a local stakeholders WG involved in the WEFE nexus. The latter embarked on a process of co-constructing public policies on: (i) intersectoral sharing of water resources and (ii) protection of coral reefs, with a related production of policy briefs.

Use of InnWater tools: The feature of the Reunion Island WG was to benefit from dedicated economic tools to carry out some public policy assessments. The CGE model in particular was used throughout the process to quantify the effects (on the local economy) of the various public policies proposed by WG members.

Lessons learned and transferability factors: Economic tools enabled to support WG members who initially lacked insight into the impacts of the various public policies that are or may be implemented. By providing a common framework for reflection and analysis, it has also contributed to improve horizontal dialogue between local stakeholders involved in the WEFE nexus. Replication for the benefit of other river basins is possible, but it requires significant resources and, above all, a link with academic community (to capitalize on existing CGE Models).



Pilot Site #2: Brenta (IT)

Concrete changes observed: InnWater worked towards creating a community within the basin of local stakeholders, by adopting innovative methods and techniques (such as participatory workshops and art labs/ shows) which facilitated the active participation of entities and groups (formal or informal ones). InnWater created a bridge between the technical and non-technical worlds and improved trust and engagement in water management.

Use of InnWater tools: The InnWater governance assessment tool was tested for the Middle Brenta basin, and its results used to trigger the discussion during a workshop. Locally, a web platform to communicate the water tariff to the users was developed and presented.

Lessons learned and transferability factors: On one hand, the use of the governance assessment tool is very useful to start a discussion with the stakeholders (rather than providing absolute results); moreover, its use is time-consuming for water managers and decision makers. On the other, the use of art to link different groups of stakeholders and facilitate the communication between them worked well and can be easily transferred and adopted in other contexts



Pilot Site #3: Figueres (SP)

Concrete changes observed: InnWater has demonstrated the need for all stakeholders involved in water management to work in coordination and has been the trigger for promoting the creation of a joint working table. There was a latent desire for joint work among the stakeholders and InnWater has activated this desire.

Use of InnWater tools: Figueres has tested the Governance Platform developed during the InnWater project. This platform has proven to be a good tool for, on the one hand, collecting data on water management and, on the other hand, for having a quality vision of the management and governance of water in the pilot site.

Lessons learned and transferability factors: A shared crisis, like drought, increases the willingness to cooperate on solutions. Discussing diverse stakeholder viewpoints creates a global understanding of the problem, leading to more long-term solutions. Simply assembling stakeholders facing a new, common issue can be the trigger for joint work and better governance.

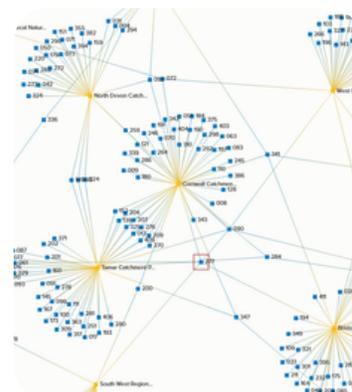


Pilot Site #4: West Country (UK)

Concrete changes observed: InnWater has allowed a wider grouping of water related partnerships to form into a regional network creating a River Basin Forum where connectors are identified as individuals who sit on multiple groups to increase integration and communication.

Use of InnWater tools: The Online Governance Assessment Tool was used across all the West Country Catchment Partnerships to evaluate individual and collective governance. This was helpful to identify areas of weakness both individually but also collectively.

Lessons learned and transferability factors: Governance assessments are a challenging activity especially when partnerships are formed with significant community interest groups who are not technical experts. The Governance Tool can be used to help trigger debate but this can also be done through a qualitative discussion with a facilitator.



Pilot Site #5: Middle Tisza (HU)

Concrete changes observed: The InnWater project analyzed competing water uses in the Middle Tisza region, noting that the 2025 drought emphasized the need for solutions due to rapid landscape drying. This led to a policy proposal for a near real-time water allocation regime covering both summer irrigation and off-season water retention using existing infrastructure.

Use of InnWater tools: Econometric analysis of water consumption data tested the microsimulation model's applicability, with results shared with experts. The project's water governance assessment tool also helped pinpoint critical governance issues for discussion with pilot area stakeholders.

Lessons learned and transferability factors: Farmers recognize drought but struggle to align practices with enhanced water infiltration needs, a spatial challenge current CAP subsidies don't effectively address. Short-term opportunities include promoting retention on non-cultivated lands and strengthening local management of tertiary water infrastructure.

