

ABOUT THE PROJECT

References

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About InnWater

InnWater is funded by the European Commission. It aims at promoting social innovation to renew multi-level and cross sector water governance.

- 1 France, Réunion 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



InnWater is coordinated by the International Office for Water and run from 2023 to 2026.

InnWater activities

- **What the initiative does in practice**
Co-creation and testing of governance models in five pilot territories, addressing issues such as droughts, water quality, pricing policies, and ecosystem services.
- **Integration of the WEF-E+H Nexus**, ensuring that water policies consider links with food, energy, ecosystem, and health dimensions.
- **Development of digital tools and services**, including the InnWater Governance Platform, which centralises knowledge, tools, and data to support transparent and evidence-based decision-making.
- **Capacity building and peer learning**, providing stakeholders with training materials, guidelines, and best practices for more inclusive governance.
- **Policy alignment and knowledge transfer**, promoting the replication of successful governance practices at regional, national, and European scales.

Realisation

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- Date: January 2026

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REINVENTING COLLABORATIVE WATER GOVERNANCE IN EUROPE



Water governance in Europe faces increasing complexity due to fragmented institutional responsibilities, climate pressures, and limited mechanisms for coordination and transparency. The **InnWater Governance Platform** responds to these challenges by providing a shared digital and methodological environment that enables decision-makers, researchers, and citizens to collaboratively design, compare, and improve water governance strategies.

The Platform serves as a central gateway to knowledge, tools, and good practices supporting integrated and participatory governance. It connects **multiple levels of water management**, from local to European, and links actors through shared information, interactive resources, and structured process of co-decision.

By bridging scientific, technical, and social dimensions, the Platform helps build more coherent and inclusive water governance processes across Europe. It promotes water resilience and social equity through collective action, knowledge exchange, and evidence-based policymaking.

A DIGITAL AND COLLABORATIVE ECOSYSTEM FOR INCLUSIVE WATER GOVERNANCE

The InnWater Governance Platform embodies social innovation by transforming how institutions, stakeholders, and communities interact in water management. Social innovation refers to the design and implementation of innovative solutions which ultimately aim to **improve the welfare and wellbeing** of individuals and communities.

The Platform translates this concept into practice by integrating **collaborative governance models**, **co-design processes**, and **inclusive digital tools** that enable open dialogue and joint decision-making across governance levels.

Social innovation within the Platform unfolds through a progressive and iterative process:

1. **Identifying governance gaps and emerging needs**, such as limited participation or fragmented responsibilities;
2. **Co-designing solutions** with stakeholders through Pilot Sites, participatory frameworks and supporting tools;
3. **Testing and refining approaches** in real-life water governance contexts;
4. **Sharing and scaling successful practices** through the Platform as a long-term, open-access resource.

This dynamic approach ensures that technological advances go hand in hand with social learning and institutional transformation. By combining participatory methods, open knowledge, and collaborative governance mechanisms, the Platform strengthens legitimacy, transparency, and inclusiveness in water decision-making, turning social innovation into a tangible driver of systemic change.

SOCIAL INNOVATION FACTSHEET

InnWater Governance Platform

Box #1

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 communities. Social innovation means tackling societal, water-related challenges by combining the technological & non-technological dimensions (governance, capacity building and economic) of innovation.

KEY MESSAGES

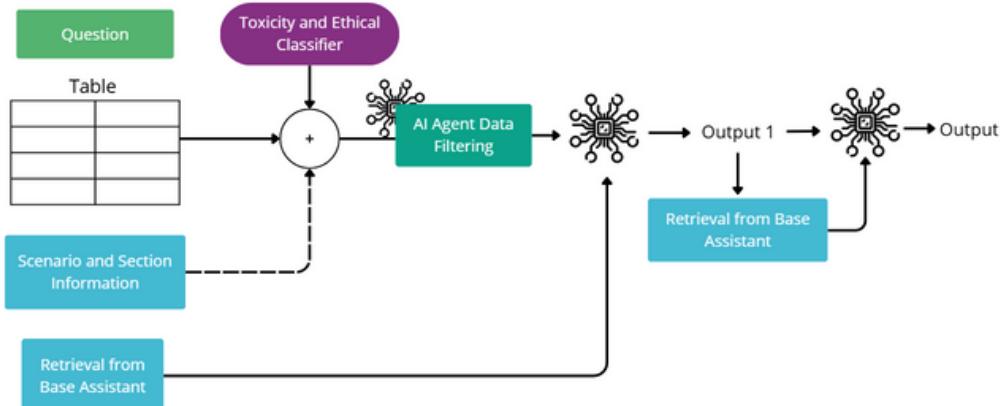
- Water challenges in Europe are multifaceted, complex and pressing.
- Fragmented water governance approaches have hindered effective management, emphasizing the need for coordinated action at all levels.
- Local governance is key for stakeholder.
- Innovative, multi-level, and cross-sector water management is essential to tackle society's complex challenges and reach international and EU water policy goals.
- Social innovation can help to embrace multifaceted water challenges in Europe. It is a powerful method for stakeholders to collaborate, develop and test governance solutions.
- InnWater tools and services aim to make water management inclusive, resilient and more sustainable to support policy implementation

TECHNOLOGICAL SOLUTIONS

The InnWater Governance Platform is a modular digital environment designed to facilitate knowledge sharing, coordination, and co-decision in water governance. It provides a single-entry point to structured information, interactive tools, and guidance materials on how governance processes can be made more inclusive, coherent, and evidence-based.

Technically, the Platform combines three core functions:

- Knowledge integration: gathering and structuring governance-related outputs, from policy tools to best practices and analytical frameworks;



- Interactive exploration: enabling users to navigate across governance scales and themes through visual dashboards and mapping interfaces;
- Collaborative learning: offering participatory resources that connect stakeholders, pilot sites, and governance models across Europe.

Built on open-access principles, the Platform is designed as a living system that evolves with user feedback and new contributions. Its modular structure allows future integration with other European initiatives and datasets, ensuring continuity, interoperability, and long-term impact.

BUILDING COLLECTIVE CAPACITY

The InnWater Governance Platform strengthens the capacity of institutions, practitioners, and communities to engage in transparent and evidence-based water governance. It serves as a dynamic learning environment where stakeholders can access methodologies, case studies, and participatory tools to better understand and improve governance processes.

By combining digital resources and participatory learning modules, the Platform encourages knowledge exchange and mutual learning among users.

It supports the uptake of inclusive governance practices by providing:

- **Guidelines and methods** for multi-level collaboration and stakeholder engagement;



- **Interactive learning materials** on governance assessment, co-decision, and citizen participation;
- **Access to examples and success stories** from InnWater Pilot Sites demonstrating real governance innovation in practice.

Through these features, the Platform empowers decision-makers, technical staff, and citizens alike to co-create more adaptive, transparent, and resilient governance models. It is both a tool for daily decision-making and a long-term resource for capacity building and social learning.

GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

The Platform also strengthens horizontal collaboration between sectors, linking environmental agencies, water utilities, research bodies, and civil society, to overcome fragmentation and build trust. Its governance model is guided by key principles: **transparency, accountability, open dialogue, and local ownership**.



By operationalising these principles, the Platform helps institutionalise participatory governance as a standard practice in water management, enabling evidence-informed decisions that are legitimate, equitable, and widely supported.

The InnWater Governance Platform supports an inclusive and multi-level governance model that connects local, regional, national, and European actors in a continuous dialogue. It serves as both a framework and a space where different governance layers can interact, align objectives, and co-develop strategies for water resilience.

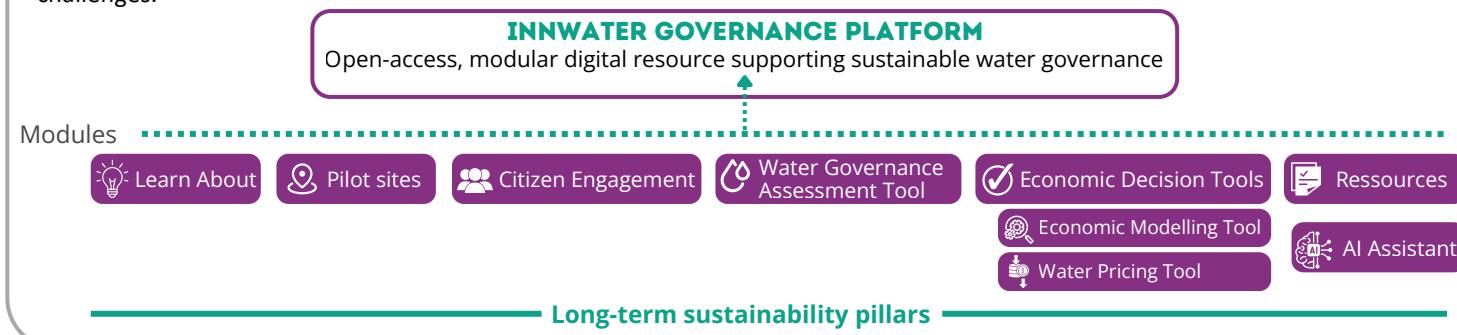
Participation is structured through dedicated mechanisms such as **Citizen Engagement framework** and **Pilot Sites communities**, which feed their experiences and insights into the Platform. These communities ensure that governance approaches are tested, refined, and replicated based on real needs and collective learning.

SOCIAL INNOVATION SOLUTIONS

ENSURING LONG-TERM SUSTAINABILITY

The InnWater Governance Platform is conceived as a long-term, open-access resource designed to remain useful beyond the project's duration. Its modular architecture allows for continuous updates, user feedback integration, and adaptation to new governance contexts and policy needs.

Its **value proposition** lies in providing a digital and methodological service that enhances coordination, transparency, and participation in water management. By linking knowledge, practice, and policy, the Platform helps decision-makers and institutions align their strategies, share insights, and co-develop solutions to complex governance challenges.



The sustainability of the Platform relies on three main pillars:

- **Partnerships and institutional embedding** to ensure ongoing maintenance and strategic ownership;
- **Integration into capacity-building programmes** and educational initiatives to extend its use;
- **Open access and interoperability** enabling replication and scaling in other regions and sectors.

Through this forward-looking approach, the Governance Platform positions itself as a lasting enabler for collaborative, transparent, and resilient water governance across Europe.