European Benchmarking Co-operation

Knowledge Picnic

(workshop) within the European Benchmarking program,
to collectively develop and learn, on the subject:

Finding relevant indicators for sustainable development in the European water sector

on September 13th in Malmö Hyllie, Sweden

The knowledge picnic explained:

Challenge

For transparent accountability and self-learning capability, an organization needs suitable indicators.
Sustainability is highly relevant and essential to the water sector, but has
no clear comparable indicators.

Goal

We want to solve a problem for our sector: Together we will develop suitable indicators for the Sustainable Development Goals that can be used in the day-to-day management of European water services.

What to expect

In a co-creative workshop with representatives from several European water utilities (you?), we will address the challenge.

Join the event!

You can register by sending an e-mail to: tom.bijkerk@waterbenchmark.org before the 31st of August.

There is a maximum of attendees, so don't hesitate!

Organised by VA SYD (host), Waternet and EBC

VASYD   water net   European Benchmarking Co-operation

Introduction

There is no life without water: clean water is important for our health and future. As representatives of the water sector, we all know that and understand how major responsibility we have. This is why we should be able to track how we contribute to sustainable development.

Therefore, we would like to gather our expertise in the field of water management and link this to the Sustainable Development Goals. We aim to collectively develop and learn in a co-creative Knowledge Picnic on the subject:

*Finding relevant indicators for sustainable development
in the European water sector*

Knowledge Picnics

The European Benchmarking Co-operation (EBC) encourages short expert meetings with small groups of 10 to 15 people, hosted by one of the participating utilities, in which experiences/best practices around a specific theme are discussed. The benchmarking program of EBC can help identifying the relevant topics for these Picnics, determine improvement potentials and signalling the best performers in the group to share good practices with.

Context

The United Nations adopted the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) framework in 2015, including 17 headline goals and 169 targets to be implemented by 2030. A key component is the use of a set of indicators in order to measure global progress on the Goals and targets in a process overseen by the UN Statistical Commission.

These goals are broken down into targets and indicators, to be found as pdf or excel at unstats.un.org. For example, the first few indicators for SDG 6:

Goal 6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all	
6.1 By 2030, achieve universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all	6.1.1 Proportion of population using safely managed drinking water services
6.2 By 2030, achieve access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all and end open defecation, paying special attention to the needs of women and girls and those in vulnerable situations	6.2.1 Proportion of population using (a) safely managed sanitation services and (b) a hand-washing facility with soap and water
6.3 By 2030, improve water quality by reducing pollution, eliminating dumping and minimizing release of hazardous chemicals and materials, halving the proportion of untreated wastewater and substantially increasing recycling and safe reuse globally	6.3.1 Proportion of wastewater safely treated
	6.3.2 Proportion of bodies of water with good ambient water quality
6.4 By 2030, substantially increase water-use efficiency across all sectors and ensure sustainable withdrawals and supply of freshwater to address water scarcity and substantially reduce the number of people suffering from	6.4.1 Change in water-use efficiency over time
	6.4.2 Level of water stress: freshwater withdrawal

As more business leaders recognize their role in creating a world that is peaceful, inclusive and environmentally secure, many businesses are aligning their strategies with the SDGs. When the SDGs were adopted back in 2015, 71% of business leaders surveyed were already planning to engage with the goals, although only 13% felt they had the tools with which to do so. Additionally, investors are increasingly interested in directing funds towards businesses that are leading the way on responsible business. However, these players lack concrete tools to drive action on the SDGs.

One of the SDG targets (12.6) encourages companies to integrate sustainability information in their reporting cycles. Currently, 92% of the world's 250 largest businesses report on sustainability measures. There is, however, an issue: there is no single, uniform methodology for measuring and reporting business progress and impacts on the SDGs. Most companies use reporting standards that predate the SDGs. The complexity and sheer volume of targets under the SDGs also hinders from reporting on their contributions to these goals.

The European water sector encounters additional problems involving these indicators:

1. The indicators have a focus on developing countries, underexposing progress on sustainability in regions with already established water systems.

2. The indicators are often measured on a national level, which makes them more difficult to relate to from an organisational perspective.

If we as representatives of the water sector want to deliver a meaningful impact, we need to be able to establish clear connections between our day-to-day activities and the SDG's. It would help us understand that sustainability is about everything we do and it is not an extra part of our organisations.

Therefore, we need to shift from traditional process-based indicators to leveraging new perspectives that define a more abstract way of performance insight, which enables to assess performance of water services from a sustainability perspective.

What makes an indicator a good indicator?

There is no perfect indicator that represents the entirety of a system. There is always a trade-off between different indicator values: integrality, availability, steerability – to name a few. Careful, transparent and deliberate orchestration makes the indicator choice manageable.

We're looking for a way that enables organizations in the European water sector to have a general insight regarding our performance, while taking the imperfections of generalization into account.

When selecting or constructing the indicator(s) for this purpose, we should take into consideration the following:

- The purpose and public of the PI: will the PI be used to learn and improve or is it used to become more transparent? Different aims and different stakeholders simply require different type of indicators. An average consumer is not necessarily interested in the kwh used to treat one m^3 of wastewater. Though this information and the comparison with PEER utilities might be of interest to the utility.
- Measurability, availability and reliability of the required underlying variables (measured, calculated, estimated guess).
- PI's are often ratios between variables. The use of denominators that vary greatly over the year and which are not (fully) under control of the utility should be avoided (for instance annual consumption which might be affected by a hot summer).[1]
- Context information (context information facts are data that provide information on the inherent characteristics of a utility and may account for differences between systems).
- Make sure not only to select the 'easy to measure' items (which are often easy to collect, look nice but are not showing relevant information.

---

[1] *Cabrera et al (2011). Benchmarking Water Services. Guiding utilities to Excellence. IWA Publishing, London.*

Goal

Ultimately, the goal is to contribute to a transparent common language which will help direct innovation, strategic leadership and capital towards the SDGs, thus accelerating progress towards the goals.

This Knowledge Picnic aims to:

- Develop suitable indicators for the SDGs that can be used in the day-to-day management of European water services;
- Jointly kick-start a community of practice for sustainable development of European water utilities;
- Have fun, while helping save the world!

This challenge calls for those who won't shy away from a chance to disrupt. Bring in your enthusiasm and creative ideas about how to make a coherent performance-based framework that can deliver meaningful impact. We're looking forward to having you on board!

Programme

We begin the picnic by introducing the challenge and how the picnic came to be, as well as the reasons for having it. The majority of the day is then dedicated to addressing the challenge in groups. There are no rules of how the challenge should be solved and no preparation is required before the event. It is up to each group to come up with solutions which addresses the main question during the Picnic. In the afternoon, each group presents its solutions and in a common discussion we will bring together our ideas to reach useful and applicable results.

Necessary working materials will be provided on-site. However, you can also bring a laptop and other materials if you expect them to help you.

Thursday, 12th September 2019

Arrival of participants

Friday, 13th September 2019

8:45 – 9:00   Registration and Coffee

9:00 – 9:15   Welcome and presentation-round of participants

9:15 – 9:30   Background and introduction to the challenge

9:30 – 12:00   Challenge-solving in groups

12:00 – 12:30 Lunch

12:30 – 13:00 Tour of stormwater solutions in the area

13:00 – 14:00 Challenge-solving in groups (continued)

14:00 – 15:30 Presentations of solutions and discussion

15:30 – 16:00 Summary and a look ahead

Practical details

The picnic will take place at Kretseum, VA SYD's knowledge centre where students can learn about the water cycle and sustainable cities. The venue is located in Malmö Hyllie, a fast-expanding district close to the Öresund-bridge and part of the Greater Copenhagen region.

Suggested hotels:

- Malmo Arena Hotel, 4 stars, (walking distance)
- Quality Hotel View, 4 stars, (walking distance)
- Hotel Garden, 4 stars
- Mayfair Hotel Tunneln, 4 stars
- Comfort Hotel Malmö, 3 stars

Weather conditions

September temperatures typically range between 9ºC and 18ºC, rainy and moist weather is not uncommon. Having a few layers of clothing is generally a good idea even on sunny days, because of the closeness to the sea. Bring a jacket and possibly an umbrella. Checking the weather forecast no sooner than a couple of days before traveling can also be very useful, for example at www.klart.se.
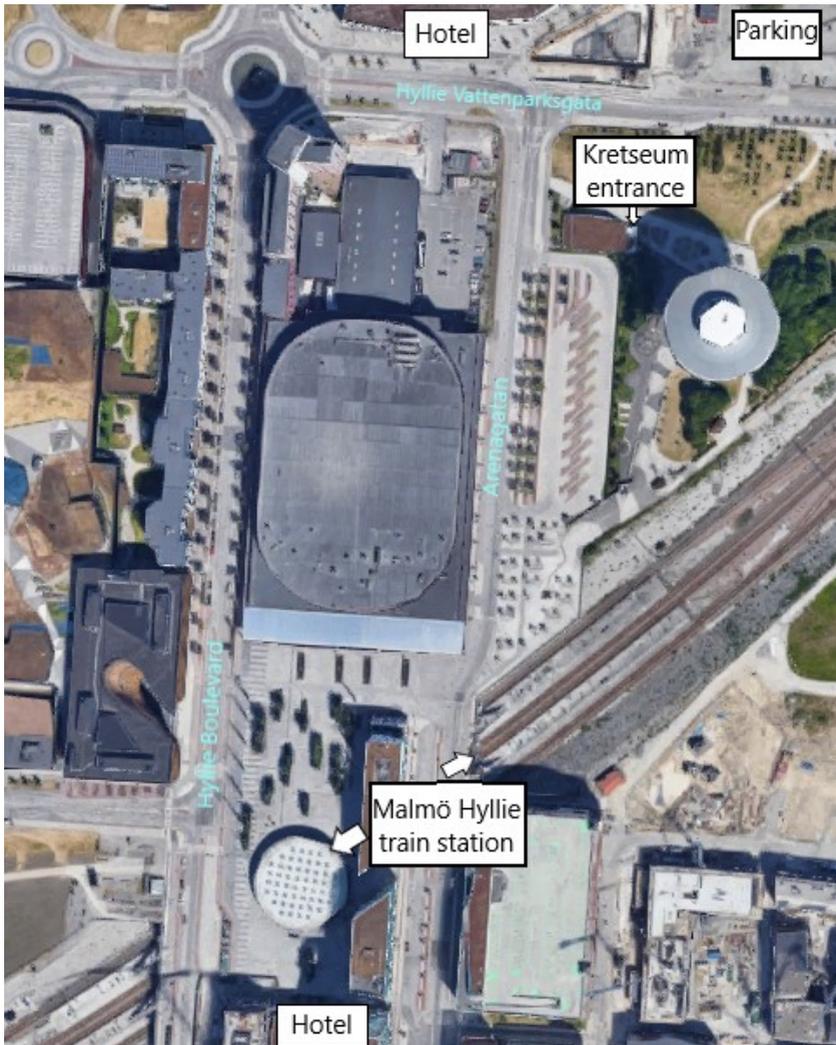
Location

The Picnic will be held at **Arenagatan 2, Malmö**, in VA SYD's educational centre Kretseum.

It takes approximately 5 minutes to walk from the venue to the closest train station, called Malmö Hyllie. From there you can easily reach the city centres of both Malmö and Copenhagen. The train-ride takes:

- 2-3 minutes to the centre of Malmö
- 12 minutes to the Copenhagen Airport
- 25 minutes to the centre of Copenhagen.

Malmö Airport (Sturup) is approximately 25 minutes away by car. There is also the possibility to rent a car or use taxi as alternatives to public transportation. There is parking available in the area of the venue against a fee of approximately 12€ per day.

Generally, public transportation is recommended and the venue has partially been selected due to its connectivity, being one stop away from Copenhagen Airport.

Contact information

The Picnic is hosted by VA SYD. Some relevant contact information and addresses:

Venue location: Educational centre Kretseum

Arenagatan 2, Malmö

Organisation EBC: Tom Bijkerk

+31 6 1244 8661

tom.bijkerk@waterbenchmark.com

Organisation VA SYD: Tsvetana Stoyanova

+46 40 635 0274

tsvetana.stoyanova@vasyd.se

Organisation Waternet: Jorik Chen

+31 6 4487 8742

jorik.chen@waternet.nl

Relevant documents

Following background documents give more information about the SDGs. They may be a first step to harmonize indicator sets and methodologies for companies to report on their contributions to the SDGs.

Reports on SDG

- The Sustainable Development Goals and their indicators:
    - unstats.un.org.

- The actual status on the SDGs by topic:
    - *Our world in data (University of Oxford)*

- The actual status on the SDGs summarized in a fact sheet:
    - *Fact sheet (United Nations)*

- How to interpret and apply indicators:
    - *Business & Sustainable Development Commission: Better Business, Better World*