



European  
Benchmarking  
Co-operation



## CALL TO REGISTER

EBC's 15<sup>th</sup> international benchmarking exercise for drinking water- and wastewater services (IB2020)

Western Europe

### EBC PARTNERS



Norsk Vann



# Introduction

The Hague, February 2021

Dear Colleague,

I cordially invite you to participate in the 15<sup>th</sup> edition of EBCs' improvement programme for water- and wastewater utilities. (IB2020).

Society today asks for effective, efficient, transparent, sustainable and resilient water services; therefore, it is essential for water utilities to get engaged in continuous benchmarking- and improvement efforts.

EBC's benchmarking programme offers utilities:

- an objective, sound performance assessment and –comparison;
- knowledge exchange events in a safe learning environment;
- access to a unique European utility network.

We welcome your (continued) participation!

Yours sincerely,



Peter Dane,  
Managing director  
Stichting EBC Foundation



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EBC's international benchmarking exercise IB2020

FEBRUARY 2021

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# Project objectives



General objective of the **IB2020 benchmarking exercise** is to assist drinking water- and wastewater utilities in their continuous efforts to improve their services by **benchmarking\***, using data of 2020. Next to an **objective, sound assessment** of your utility's **performance** and a comparisons with European peers, EBC offers you a platform (utility network) **to learn** from leading/best practices and innovations.

## Specific goals are:

- raising transparency of drinking water- & wastewater services;
- piloting performance measuring against the UN SDG's.

\*EBC uses the following definition of benchmarking: *"Benchmarking is a tool for performance improvement through systematic search and adaption of leading practices"*







“ The annual participation in the EBC exercise is very enriching, it really helps to understand the keys of the service and how the sector evolves in Europe. It is passionate to share experiences with other companies and the professionalism of the EBC team is highly qualified. I encourage “sharing to learn” and thus be able to advance in good management!

**Mariano Blanco Orozco | Director International tenders FCC Aqualia - Spain**



“ The EBC programme has been a great way for us to find collaborations with other utilities around topics like efficiency, energy, quality, sustainability and water pricing. It has helped sharpen our use of key performance indicators that are important within the water sector.

*EBC has also shown a great capacity to engage water utilities that normally work locally in sector-wide discussions and promote the development of new ideas, such as creating the SDG pilot report.*

**Joel Olthed | Director VA SYD - Sweden**





# Target group



EBC and its partners encourage **European water utilities** (drinking water- as well as wastewater services) who are interested in improving their performance, to join this leading-edge programme.

**Utilities from outside Europe** are also welcome to join. In this case, performance comparisons should be interpreted extra carefully because of differences in the operating environment, however joining the group can still be valuable as most added value of the benchmarking is in the learning from leading/best practices from the utility network.

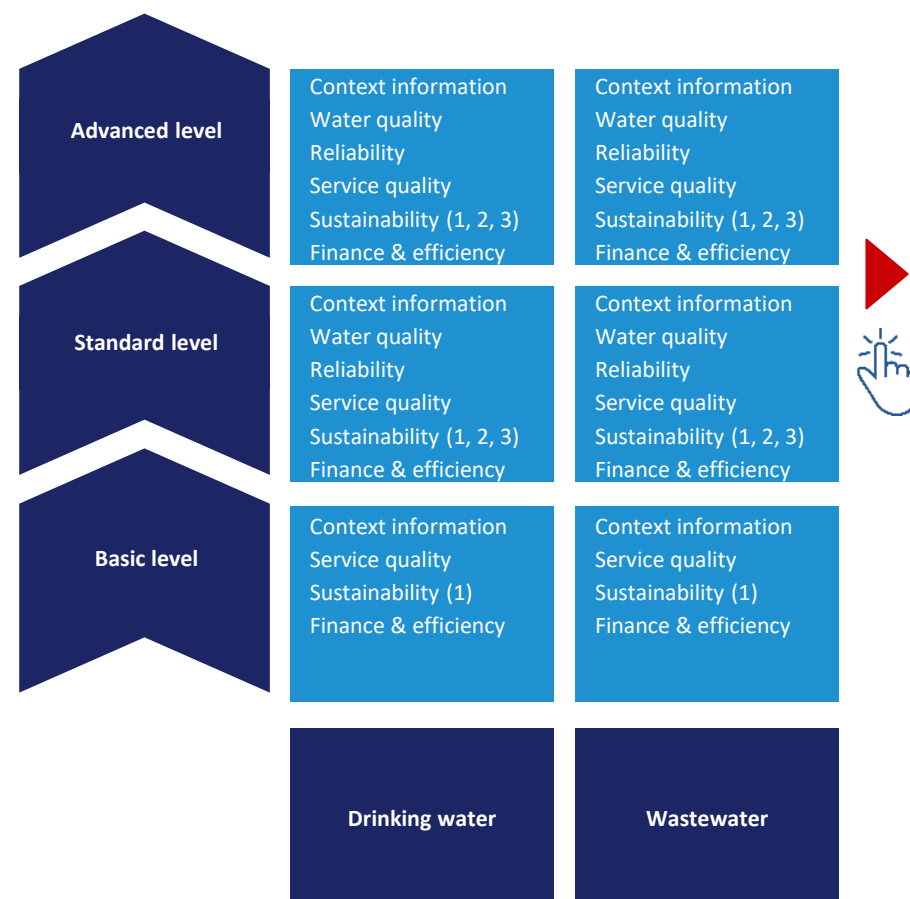




# Starting points

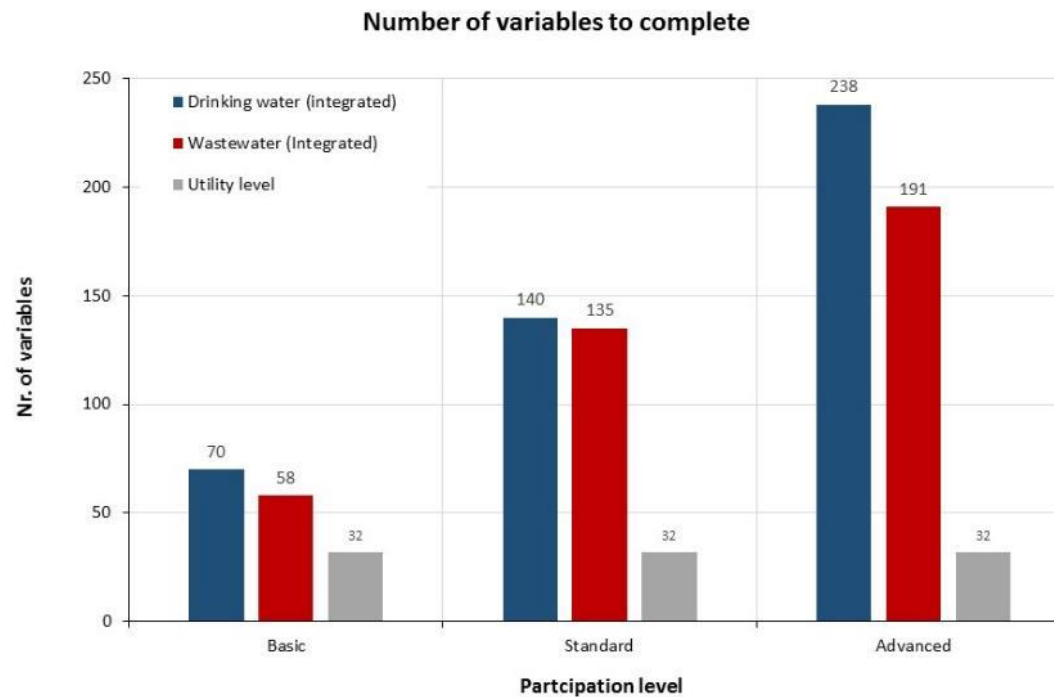


- **Scope:** drinking water- & wastewater services in 2020.
- **Planning:** registration is open as of 1 March 2021; final results will be available by 11 December 2021.
- **Performance assessment:**  
EBC's benchmarking programme is fully aligned with the IWA/AWWA-benchmarking framework.  
The programme offers **three different assessment levels** (basic, standard and advanced). For maximum added value, participants are encouraged to choose the highest possible level. Which level best fits a utility depends on the availability of reliable data, benchmarking experience and ambition.

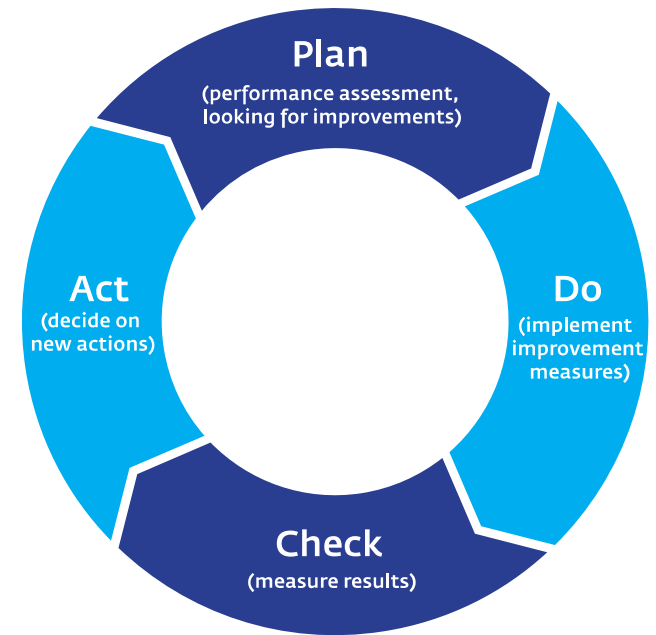




- **Data collection efforts:** the most extended level requires about 240 data items for drinking water and 190 data items for wastewater, which takes on average about 2-3 weeks of labour to collect depending on experience and data availability. The basic level takes considerably less effort; however, one should take into consideration that benchmarking is not so much about the data collection effort but about the benefits you may expect in terms of a more detailed performance analysis and a better insight in the respective business processes.



- Benchmarking is a **management tool** for **continuous improvement**. It is most effective if a utility embeds the benchmarking in its annual business planning cycle.
- **Ownership of the data:** The ownership of the submitted utility data stays with the participating utilities.
- **Meetings:** The number of face-to-face meetings is as limited as possible because of time, travel and accommodation expenses. Furthermore, it depends on the actual COVID-19 situation.
- **Project language:** The project is conducted in English. This holds for all communications, documents and tools.
- EBC's **Terms and Conditions\*** apply to the project.



\* Available at [www.waterbenchmark.org](http://www.waterbenchmark.org)





“ The EBC project is the only benchmarking project I know of that allows knowledge to be gained between water utilities from different European and non-European countries. For me personally it has allowed to optimize costs and to avoid investments in areas that did not need improvement. On the other hand it is a project that provides reliable data and allows to develop contacts between companies. I have been participating in this project for more than 10 years and there is still a lot to learn.

Paweł Chudziński | CEO Aquanet SA - Poland



“ Participation in EBC benchmarking allows, thanks to the absence of barriers and borders, a long-term follow-up based on a continuous improvement process. The voluntary and active collaboration between the different members allows the implementation of the best practices encountered in order to increase its performance, in a spirit of sound management. In short, a win-win situation for all.

Laurence Bovy | CEO VIVAQUA, Belgium



European  
Benchmarking  
Co-operation

Improvement programme for water services

- Focus on profit water industry in Europe
- Strong focus on continuous improvement
- Annual benchmarking exercises & workshops
- Support utility networks

The European Benchmarking Co-operation:  
Lifelong learning  
for utilities





# Deliverables



- At the start, an online **Kick-off event** addressing the process, methodology, changes compared to previous years and a brief introduction EBCs online environment.
- Access to an **online platform** for **data submission** and **reporting** and a **discussion forum**. By default, access to the platform is granted till 1 July of the following year.
- An **individual company report** in which performance is analysed in six areas: Access, Water Quality, Reliability, Service Quality, Sustainability, Finance & Efficiency. The report shows Key Performance Indicators, trends and comparisons with other participants to identify performance gaps. It also contains a **water balance**, a **cost-and revenue model** and **scores against the UN Sustainable Development Goals**.



- A **benchmarking workshop\*** where utility representatives can meet to discuss the benchmarking results, share good practices and innovations, network and discuss improvement actions. **Attendance of 3 delegates** per utility is included in the participation fee\*.
- An (anonymous) **public report**, to inform stakeholders about the benchmarking programme, the group of participants and some of the key findings. The report will be made available on EBC's website [www.waterbenchmark.org](http://www.waterbenchmark.org).
- Access to optional **Knowledge Picnics**: short expert meetings (with small groups of max 15-20 people), hosted by one of the participating utilities, to discuss experiences/best practices around one specific theme.
- To acknowledge utilities for their benchmarking- and improvement efforts, after each exercise EBC grants **Certificates** to qualifying utilities, depending on the period of engagement and the way benchmarking- and improvement activities are carried out and “internalised”.

*\* The exact form of this years workshop depends on the COVID-19 situation at that time*





## 4.2.4 Potential improvement areas

The performance assessment that has been carried out identifies where – in comparison with colleague utilities – a utility performs well and where it could do better. This information can help utility management.

The table below displays – out of the full list of indicators – the top 3 and the bottom 3 indicators. The column Mark shows the mark and the column Trend if the performance is improving or deteriorating. This information together indicates – with the necessary reservations – the necessity of further action.

Table 2: Potential improvement areas

### Top 3 indicators

[xzOp-EBC-002] Standardized Average Network Age Index (SNAI)

[QS-029] Continuity complaints

[F-EBC-005] Residential properties receiving intermittent supply

### Bottom 3 indicators

[zOp-EBC-073] Distribution losses per total length of mains and

[zOp-028] Distribution losses per main

[zOp-025] Non-revenue water per property

Mark 1-2 Mark 3-5 Mark 6-7

Positive trend compared to last year (difference less than 5%)

Negative trend compared to last year (difference more than 5%)

*“I'm a part of the EBC's benchmarking programme for 6 years now, either as benchmarking coordinator or as company representative, so I've got years' experience in working with EBC team.*

*The EBC team is supportive: I can't forget their immediate answers the very first year, when I had to clarify a lot of my colleagues' questions and fill the platform in 3,5 stressful months!*

*The EBC team is always a step ahead: the team has recently improved the platform of inserting and presenting data and PIs, so the companies can choose the particular fields they are interested in and elaborate them in their way (comparisons, presentations etc). The EBC team is also very open in opinions, suggestions and remarks and definitely promotes communication.*

*In my opinion, the above have lead over 100 water and wastewater companies from 3 continents (the majority from Europe) to remain to EBC's benchmarking programme.*

**Katerina Konstantopoulou | Dep. Director of Coordination and Control EYDAP - Greece**





# Timeline



## The Process

The benchmarking exercise starts halfway May. The actual process comprises five main steps. In the following pages these steps are briefly addressed.

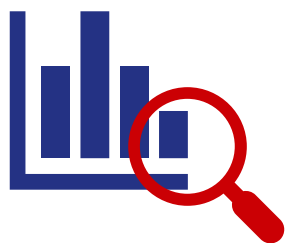
### 1. Orientation

In March and April, depending on demand, EBC organizes an orientation session to introduce the programme to interested utilities.

### 2. Training & Data collection

Data collection starts **18 May with a Kick-off meeting**. Participants receive login details for the platform and 'Quick start manuals' to swiftly begin with the data collection and - submission. From this moment on participants can contact the online helpdesk with questions regarding the data entry. Participants can submit data till **31 July**.





### 3. Data validation

In this step, the quality of the data is verified and improved where necessary. On top of the automated checks during the submission process, the EBC-team reviews the dataset of each utility and provides feedback to participants on **14 August** with a **Validation report**, which provides a visual check and insight in possible mistakes and outliers.



### 4. Benchmarking workshop

After validating the submitted data, Draft Reports are produced on **25 September** and made available to the participants as input for the benchmarking workshop. The workshop is tentatively planned for **11 - 12 November**. The exact form (online or in-person) of the workshop depends on the COVID-19 situation by that time.



### 5. Final reporting

After the workshop, two more weeks are available for final corrections in the datasets. Following, Final Reports are produced and made available to the participants by **11 December** at the latest. The (anonymous) Public Report follows in the beginning of the next year.



# Conditions for participation



- complete and return the signed [Registration form](#);
- comply with EBC's confidentiality protocol;
- master the English language sufficiently (for involved utility staff);
- have an internet connection and Office software available;
- pay the applicable participation fee within 30 days after invoicing.



In order to assure a successful benchmarking exercise for all, EBC expects participants to:

- provide the EBC-project team with the necessary context information to understand the operating environment (company profile, annual report, etc.);
- submit the required data in time, with sufficient confidence grade;
- adequately respond to questions of the EBC-project team;
- attend the benchmarking workshop and actively contribute to it;
- inform colleagues and utility management about the benchmarking results and exchange opportunities such as workshop and Knowledge Picnics, stimulate them to contribute and initiate follow-up actions.





# THE BENCHMARKING TEAM

Improving water services requires the active involvement of a broadly based team in the benchmarking process. Improvement will only happen as a shared effort with support and input from all.

To kickstart the improvement- and knowledge sharing process and to get most out of the benchmarking exercise the team should, ideally, include at least (but not limited to) the following functions:



## **A strategic contact/knowledge coordinator:**

- Has an understanding of the actual situation and the challenges the organisation faces, as well as the best practices and innovations at the utility
- Shared responsibility with the benchmarking coordinator for the engagement of the utility in the annual workshop and knowledge picnics



## **A managing contact (CEO or senior management level):**

- Officially represents the utility
- Receives the executive summary
- Responsible for possible follow-up activities (improvement efforts)



## **A benchmarking coordinator:**

- Manages the data collection, data quality and data entry
- Responsible for the internal dissemination of the company report(s)
- Shared responsibility with the knowledge coordinator for the engagement of the utility in the annual workshop and knowledge picnics



# Subscription options & Fees



EBC offers three different options to subscribe for its Western European benchmarking programme:

1. subscription for **one year** (IB2020 only); fee for 2021: 9.975 euro
2. subscription **until further notice**, with the right to end participation annually; fee for 2021: 9.450 euro
3. subscription for **multiple years**:
  - 3 years contract; fee for 2021: 9.200 euro/year \*
  - 5 years contract; fee for 2021: 8.925 euro/year \*

Utilities with **less than 100.000 inhabitants** can participate at the basic level for a reduced fee; fee for 2021: 1.575 euro/year.

The (not-for-profit) fee paid by participants covers the common project costs, like labour-, travel- and accommodation costs of the EBC-project team; external assistance of the EBC-project team by a consultant; organisation of the orientation & training workshop and the benchmarking workshop; IT-costs (website, database, tools, certificates, licenses, etc.). Next to common project costs, the exercise brings own costs for the participant, like labour costs for data collection & validation; travel and accommodation costs for attending the orientation & training workshop and the benchmarking workshop. Participants need to cover these costs themselves.

\* EBC holds the right to annually adjust the fees with the Dutch consumers price index (inflation).



If, unexpectedly, the number of registered utilities at the closing date would be too few to cover the common project costs, EBC has the right to cancel the project or (in consultation with participants) continue it in an alternative way.

Interested utilities can **register by completing the online [Registration form](#)**. After submitting the form you will receive a confirmation by mail. **Please sign this document** and **return it** to [administrator@waterbenchmark.org](mailto:administrator@waterbenchmark.org)







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“ HSY is around 20% of the total volume of Finnish water services sector. That means that in Finland our possibilities to a reliable benchmarking are very limited and thus EBC is a good “benchmarking family” for us

Jyrki Kaija | Head of Unit HSY & president FIWA - Finland

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“ Beyond working with the data and comparing our performance in every area of business, we value the possibility to learn directly from others on how to improve our work on a daily basis

Fernando Arlandis | Deputy Director of Studies Canal de Isabel II - Spain

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# About EBC



The European Benchmarking Co-operation (EBC) is an industry-based, not-for-profit benchmarking initiative to improve water services.

EBC was initiated in 2005 by the national water utility associations DANVA (DK), FIWA (FIN), Norsk Vann (N), Svenskt Vatten (S) and Vewin (NL) and several utilities from the 6-Cities Group (Copenhagen, Helsinki, Oslo, Stockholm). After two pilot exercises, EBC started carrying out annual benchmarking exercises for water utilities from Europe and even beyond.

In 2014, EBC was converted into EBC Foundation, a legal entity under Dutch law. This conversion enables strengthening the governance of the programme and better focus on the core business: improving water services.

*“Our mission is to assist water utilities in the continuous process of improving & innovating water services and raising transparency, by offering an international benchmarking programme, providing a platform for exchanging leading/best practices of management and operations and by sharing knowledge and experiences”*

Peter Dane, managing director EBC



**European  
Benchmarking  
Co-operation**







**Peter DANE**  
Managing director



**Tom BIJKERK**  
Programme manager  
Western Europe



**Peter GEUDENS**  
Methodological expert

SUPPORTED BY







# EBC's confidentiality protocol



To balance the need for a safe learning environment and the call for transparency, EBC applies the following confidentiality protocol:

- I. as a general rule, EBC-partners and -participants handle individual utility data/-results that are submitted/exchanged in the framework of the project confidentially;
- II. utilities can choose to participate transparently or anonymously:
  - transparent option: the results for my utility may be shared with other participants. This means that in your company report the results of all affirmative participants will be shown with their utility name. All other participating utilities will be shown anonymously;
  - anonymous option: the results for my utility must be presented in an anonymous way. This means that in your company report the results of all participating utilities will be shown anonymously;
- III. in the (closed) benchmarking workshop, results of the performance comparisons are shown in a transparent way, to be able to discuss outliers, performance gaps & best practices more effectively;
- IV. public reporting:
  - EBC is entitled to report externally about the results of the exercise;
  - names of participants and their general characteristics are considered to be public information;
  - all other individual utility data/results are confidential and will only be shown in an anonymous way;
- V. comparisons with other data sources will be anonymous, unless agreed otherwise;
- VI. for the remaining, EBC, its partners and participants endorse the [EFQM European Benchmarking Code of Conduct](#) and act accordingly.





## IBNET

At registration, Participants are explicitly asked if they give permission to EBC to share collected IBNet-indicators with the World Bank. This permission only holds for these specific indicators.

Background information: [IBNet](#) is the global largest open database with statistical- and performance information from water- and sanitation services around the world. At present, the database mainly contains data from utilities in developing countries and emerging countries; the number of data from utilities in developed countries is still limited. For a more representative picture and for balanced policy making by the different stakeholders, the World Bank aims to include more information from utilities in developed countries. Therefore, the World Bank has requested EBC to share IBNet-indicators, as these are also collected in the EBC-programme. According to the confidentiality protocol, EBC does not exchange data with third parties without explicit permission of Participants.



# Contact & more information



[administrator@waterbenchmark.org](mailto:administrator@waterbenchmark.org)



[www.waterbenchmark.org](http://www.waterbenchmark.org)



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Public Report



Participants experiences

Stichting EBC Foundation

Repsol

Nederlandse Bond voor Pensioenbelangen

Bureau Bosma

Zuyderzee Capital B.V.

The Eco Sensitive Creative Innovators B.V.

Smulder & Clotscher B.V.



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