



# The perception of the Supply System Managers, the Aqua Publica Europea point of view

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# Importance of public water management in Europe and worldwide

- **More than 90 % of water and sanitation services worldwide are under public management.** Private water companies ensure only less than 10% of the total. For example:
  - **Association of Metropolitan Water Agencies (USA) : 127M** consumers served
  - **Veolia**, world leader in water treatment services : **67 M**
  - **Suez Environnement**, number 2 : **68 M**
- **120 000 operators** within the 27 States of the EU, of which a very large majority are under public management with mixed situations:
  - **UK**: completely private with an all-powerful regulator,
  - **Netherlands**: public water management written into the law,
  - **France**: birthplace of the major water companies and the country of the delegated operating utilities.

In terms of population, the private operators manage 72 % of the drinking water services and 55 % of the sanitation services
- **Observation**: over-dispersed public operators. They have no federation to represent them, whereas the private groups do.

# Aqua Publica Europea: Promoting public management of water

**Aqua Publica Europea** has vocation to bring together European public water companies.

- Federating European public operators
- Promoting public water management
- Exchanging information and expertise
- Collaboration between public companies and local authorities
- Representing public companies vis-à-vis the EU

**From:** Belgium, France, Italy, Portugal, Switzerland...

Interest has been shown by Germany, Spain, Netherlands...  
as well as the United States of America, Morocco... and the  
International Water Association

# APE Charter

## ① Water, a common good

- Water, the source of all life, constitutes a **fundamental**, inalienable, universal and imprescriptible **right**.
- Water **must be managed in a responsible and interdependent manner** so as to ensure that it is shared between users with a view to preserving its use for future generations.
- Water is a **public good of general** interest which cannot be considered as mere merchandise subject to commercial rivalry and private appropriation.
- Water must be organised and supervised by the public authority under the responsibility of the elected representatives at all territorial levels.

# APE Charter

## ② For a public water service

- **The regional authorities** must be able, without let or hindrance of any kind, to organise the water utilities, conceived as public services of general interest, by setting up **public companies operating under the authority of elected representatives**.
- To improve **on a permanent basis the performance** of the water utilities in a spirit of cooperation and partnership, exchange of experience and skills between public water services.
- To respect **the transparency** of the procedures of public procurement / tenders.

# APE Charter

## ③ Management in the general interest

- **Rejection of the liberalisation of water services** based on a commercial logic dominated by short-term, indeed speculative, private financial interests.
- **Responsible, efficient, interdependent and sustainable** management of water resources calls for:
  - water resources conservation
  - a heritage-based approach on a long- term vision
  - regulation of users conflicts (agriculture, industry, drinking water...)
  - democratic participation and strengthened role of users as regards governance
- The revenue from the tariffing of water services must be wholly and efficiently allocated to them.
- To assert the specificity of water as a common good, **the management of water must not serve to remunerate private shareholders.**

# Performance of public management

- **Challenging the pre-conceived notion which dissociates the idea of performance from that of public management:** the participation of the private sector is not necessary to guarantee a more efficient management and quality service
- **Substantial capacity for innovation and research** within the public water companies so as to enhance performance
- A willingness on the part of public operators to **assess themselves with a view to improvement:** success of the comparative evaluation carried out by the North European Benchmarking Cooperation (NEBC)
- **High-performing public management possible in a developing country:** e.g. *Phnom Penh Water Supply Authority (Cambodia)*,
  - Rigorous management is compatible with public status,
  - Its public status guarantees a quality of service and a price that takes into account the social constraints of the population.

# Advantages of Public Management

- A public management must rely on the values of transparency, with tight control from the local authority. This control is generally missing or inadequate in the case of private utilities.
- Whenever a delegation of water service is given to a private operator, the technical know-how is lost by the public sphere.
- The time-scale in public management, with unlimited duration facilitates investments forecasting and long-term management of the assets. Private operators are on the other hand necessarily limited in their management strategy by the end of the contract.

# Developing public/public partnerships to fulfil the MDG's

- Having at one's disposal high-quality water in sufficient quantities is a **strategic challenge** in particular outside Europe
- The public-private partnerships, so highly praised by the proponents of delegated management and encouraged by the international institutions, have not so far shown themselves to be effective on the ground
- **Affirmation of the “not for profit” WOP's**  
Backed by the greater representation of the public sector in the world of water (90% compared with 10% for the private sector), and the failure of the Public-Private partnerships, the **Water Operator Partnerships** are moving towards Public-Public partnerships.

## **Examples of successful partnerships**

- EPAL (Portugal) in Mozambique, in Angola, in the Cape Verde
- Vitens (Netherlands) in Indonesia
- National Water and Sewerage (Uganda)  
with Vitens (Netherlands) and Rand Water (South Africa)



**Thank you for your attention**