



**International Network of Training Centres
for Water Professions**
**Réseau International des Centres de formations
aux métiers de l'Eau**

Constitutive Assembly of the Network

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Introduction to plenary session 1 and 4,

The study carried out in the first half of 2008 by IOWater on behalf of AFD had for overall objective to analyse the situation and identify the main lines for support to the Water Training Centres (WTCs) in 19 PSA countries¹.

The findings are alarming:

- The investments, and especially those of the French Assistance to Development (404 Million Euros in 2007 in the water sector), mainly concern infrastructures.
- The situation is much contrasted from one country to another; thus the solutions to be implemented for improving skills in water professions often require a case-by-case approach.
- The strategic decision-making processes and professional training in the water supply and sanitation sector encounter difficulties in the PSA countries.
- Including professional training in a project-based approach improves the situation but is not enough to guarantee the sustainability and correct operation of infrastructures.
- Many historical training centres did not reach a sufficient level of professionalism to keep afloat. Often the donors' step-by-step commitment regarding training activities lacks accompaniment and progressiveness, all the more so as it is not relayed, in the medium term, by local strategic willingness.
- The training plans and training courses carried out have some difficulty to prove their effectiveness in the absence of follow-up and systems for evaluating the abilities acquired through learning at the end of the training courses. Greater effectiveness of trainee/trainer/training centre trio must be looked for.

¹ PSA: priority solidarity area, AFD area for action

- Basic training for water professions seems a disaster in many countries. Thus, the process of upgrading vocational training for new recruits is all the more relevant.
- An adequate professional training policy is all the more effective when it is accompanied by a consistent human resources management policy, associating, among other things, career plan and training plan; which is not the case in most of the studied countries.

Thus, most of the organisations in charge of meeting training needs have low effectiveness for the following and non-restrictive reasons:

- limited commitment from the local supervising authorities,
- insufficiency in taking into account the customers' quality requirements,
- failure at the level of the operational organisation of the centres,
- insufficiency of technical and educational infrastructures,
- defective commercial approach,
- gaps in pedagogy,
- limited financial resources,
- unsuited and little motivated human resources,
- profile of the director of the training centre, etc.

What guarantees of sustainability for the Training Centres?

The factors guaranteeing sustainability can be classified in three categories:

- Inducing the WTCs to structure themselves to meet the market and training needs (in-house process),
- Inducing the training needs of this potential market to be expressed (process with interfaces outside the WTC),
- Inducing the development of an enabling environment for vocational training for water professions (external process).

Among the above-mentioned conditions to comply with for the WTCs' sustainability and development as a counterpart for financial support, we can firstly outline four criteria:

- o Centre statute: the statutes of "autonomous association" and of "belonging to a water and sanitation company" seem to be most favourable whereas the statutes of "dependence of a public administration" are obviously less advisable.
- o Concept of "accountability" and management capacity of the Centre: it promotes efficient operation, supports the positioning of professional training on the market and increases the sustainability of the provided support to investment.
- o Financing mechanisms: expressed by the existence or not of financial resources but also by the capacity of the stakeholders to mobilise them.
- o The existence of a management incentive context for water supply and sanitation utilities with obligation of performance.

Identified lines for support...

1. Analysis and upgrading of the WTCs' environment

At the national level, the development of professional training master plans for the water sector and their implementation in water supply and sanitation utilities should allow the development of a shared vision of this sector in order to organise the building of a training offer.

Training activities should also be induced at the national level through assistance to the governance of water supply and sanitation utilities for example, with the development of twinning arrangements and technical assistance.

2. Educational assistance

These actions consist in increasing the WTCs training offer, based on pre-identified needs. They rely on:

- training of the teaching staffs (training of trainers),
- reinforcement of qualifying training.

3. Upgrading of infrastructures

The upgrading of the administrative and logistic buildings requires specific studies and work according to the local contexts in collaboration with architects from the countries concerned.

The educational infrastructures for practical work (educational units) and the equipment, allowing the training centre to develop training programmes focusing on teaching job practices, aim at putting the trainees in a working situation.

4. Assistance to the WTCs' operation and development

One of the significant stakes for efficient and lasting operation of the training centre is the good management of the centre itself. It is proposed to accompany the above products with support to the operation and management of the WTC in particular by:

- upgrading customer services: market study, building of the training offer, etc,
- auditing the management, organisation and the teams, economic optimising of the exploitation of the centre and accompaniment in the quality management approach.

5. Long-term support to the training centres

A supporting process can be proposed in the form of reciprocal commitment from IOWater and affiliated WTCs for a significant length of time of 5 years, which can lead to an affiliation or certification of the concerned WTC activities. The affiliated WTC is committed to comply with a partnership charter and IOWater is committed to provide the best resources.

6. Co-operation and networking of the Water Training Centres

An increase in exchanges between the training institutions and the development of common tools are necessary to meet the unceasingly changing needs.

At the end of 2007, the French initiative led to a project aiming at promoting an International Network of Professional Water Training Centres.