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The benefits of international cooperation to Finnish water utilities

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International activities of utilities – in the past

- In larger utilities management staff has randomly participated in **international conferences** etc.
- **Individual experts** from utilities have participated in Finnish development cooperation projects – mainly until 1990s, but since then urban water projects have been scarce
- A few larger utilities had **twinning programmes** with foreign utilities, e.g. in the Baltic countries – also until 1990s
- Nowadays there are very few experts in Finnish water utilities who have significant international experience
- Study on development potential of Finnish water services sector import (VeVi) 1999-2000 → lack of “40+ experts”
- Now: at least another generation lost ?

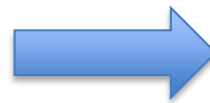
Why should water utilities participate more in international activities ?



- Continuous development of Finnish water services sector requires **active follow-up of international development and import of best international practices**
- International co-operation can **create interesting new jobs** for utility staff => more attractive sector
- WW utilities can potentially be good **partners in water sector export activities**
 - Peer organization for customer
 - Often utility operation and management experience is required in projects
 - Utilities have competence in institutional development and operation of utility functions needed in projects
- Finnish WW utilities are important **references** of Finnish technology

Motives for utilities (1)

- **Solidarity:** WW utilities can and should be involved in sustainable development (SDG) and CSR work



Motives (2)

- **Interesting new job descriptions** for staff => helps in new recruitments and in career development
- **Learning** from co-operation – Water Operator Partnership (WOP) is a relevant option
- **Financial benefits:** Costs to be covered, profit is not an issue
- **RDI-projects** offer possibilities to obtain and adopt new technologies and practices

Activities can be at several levels

- International activities cover a broad spectrum:
 - **Follow-up** of international development
 - Active participation in **international conferences**; presentations
 - Participating in **international networks**; benchmarking
 - **Hosting visits** of companies' guests; technology presentations
 - **Project partnerships**: development co-operation, export projects, RDI projects
 - **Utility partnerships**: Water Operator Partnerships (WOP), twinning



Project: Water utilities as partners in international activities

- A project in the Blue Bioeconomy program, funded by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry:
”Vesihuoltolaitokset kansainvälisen toiminnan partnereiksi”
- Implemented by VVY/FIWA and FWF, 2018-2019
- Key activity areas:
 - 1) Background studies and identification of interested utilities
 - 2) Training and activation of stakeholders
 - 3) Development of operational models
 - 4) Identification and launching of pilot projects
- Main objective: To strengthen international activities in the Finnish water sector by creating a framework and operational models for water and wastewater utilities



Potential market areas

- **Nordic cooperation** (including Baltic countries):
Nordic networks, EU-funded Cross-border Cooperation (CBC)
- **European cooperation:**
European networks and EU-funded projects
- **Other developed regions / countries:**
North America, Far East
- **Russia and former ICS-countries:** EU-funded European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI)
- **Developing countries:** Development cooperation and commercial projects

Potential modes for international cooperation for Finnish WW utilities

- Active participation in **international events**: presentations, poster exhibitions, participation in Finnish stand (e.g. IWA 2020), etc.
- Participation in **international networks**: e.g. Nordic cooperation, European networks (e.g. EBC, TAG, Water Europe), IWA expert groups
- **Hosting visits** of international groups and introducing Finnish solutions
- **Own projects**: e.g. WOP and twinning
- As **partners or sub-consultants** in development cooperation, export or RDI projects
- **Operation** of client utilities (higher risk)

Water Operator Partnership (WOP) – Finnish national funding

- **WOP funding by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF)**
 - First call was in October – December 2019, first projects in 2020-2021
 - Max 100 000 euros / WOP, max 50 % funding by MAF
 - Possibility for 2-stage application: planning → implementation
 - Planning stage max 15 000 euros; light application process; funding for implementation can be applied after planning stage.
 - If for developing country → contact Finnish Embassy
 - WOP possible also with developed countries
 - Eligible costs: Staff salary costs, travel costs, events, limited procurements
 - Self-funding: 50 % can cover own staff labour costs and monetary contribution

Water Operator Partnership (WOP) – EU funding



- **WOP-instrument by EU**

- EU-WOP under preparation; based on former EU-ACP Water Facility -instrument
- Piloting in 2020-2022(3);
 - max 3-year projects, possibility to extend if funding will continue
- Call for applications in 2020 (corona situation has delayed)
- New WOPs: funding max 300.000 euros; max 100 % grant (own/national funding recommended)
- Administered by Global Water Operator Partnership Alliance (GWOPA), under UN Habitat
- Possibility to cooperate with experienced European WOP-partners: e.g. Dutch utilities looking actively for Finnish utility partners

The EU WOP Programme Gets Rolling

The planned EU WOP programme, overseen by GWOPA and funded by EU Devco, will soon get underway, after having been put on temporary hold during the first months of the COVID pandemic.

The 4-year long initiative will provide funding and support to approximately 20 WOP projects in developing countries, identified through a call for proposals that will be launched in August or September.



The programme will contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals, most directly goal 6, but will also provide support to the current COVID-19 pandemic and recovery from it. Over the medium and long term, Water Operators' Partnerships can help strengthen the resident capacity of local utilities to abate such crises and protect communities when they arise.

What else is needed ?

- **Clear strategy:** both at national and municipality / utility level
 - Strategic goals, inputs, strategic partners, etc.
 - Strong and long-term commitment
- **Funding:**
 - Own funding: work + money; commitment from utility's owner
 - National support funding also needed (e.g. WOP-instrument)
- **Courage and determination:**
 - Long-term benefits outweigh the work and hardships of getting started



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