



RegNet

WHO International Network
of Drinking-Water and
Sanitation Regulators



Protecting and promoting public health through effective regulation

Why it matters

Regulation is a powerful tool to improve and ensure the quality and safety of drinking-water and sanitation services. Regulation ensures that service providers are supported and held to account. Without regulation, accountability and liability may be compromised, leading to increased risks to public health. Even when regulation is in place, it is not always used to its full potential to maximize public health benefits.

Sustainable Development Goal 6 (SDG 6) of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is “Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all”. A transition to professionally managed and regulated water supplies and sanitation services is central to achieving and sustaining the SDG 6 targets. In fact, regulation is a key component of the SDG 6 Global Acceleration Framework (🚰), which aims to drive faster progress towards the targets, at a larger scale. The five accelerators to support achievement of SDG 6 are:

- ✔ improved **governance** to establish clear institutional roles and align mandates;
- ✔ **financing** to optimize existing resources and close funding gaps;
- ✔ **data and information** for policy- and decision-making, and accountability;
- ✔ **capacity development** at all levels to ensure that services are professionally provided; and
- ✔ **innovation** to leverage and scale practices and technologies that can help extend services to hard-to-reach groups.

About RegNet

The World Health Organization (WHO) International Network of Drinking-Water and Sanitation Regulators (RegNet) is a global forum to share and promote best practice in the regulation of drinking-water and sanitation services to protect public health. The network is coordinated by WHO headquarters and uses the capacities of the WHO regional offices.



RegNet aims to protect public health as it relates to drinking-water and sanitation services by promoting regulatory excellence and the continual improvement of regulatory systems.

More broadly, RegNet seeks to catalyse the progressive implementation of the human right to water and sanitation, and achievement of SDG targets 6.1, 6.2 and 6.3 (👉).

Network objectives



Support the development and dissemination of internationally recognized guidance on regulations to protect public health as it relates to drinking-water and sanitation



Foster expansion of regulatory oversight to neglected aspects of service delivery that have the greatest consequences on public health



Provide a platform for peer support and capacity-building for regulators wishing to establish, update or amend their regulatory frameworks



Share experiences, good practice and innovation in drinking-water and sanitation regulation and the protection of public health



Facilitate establishment of reliable data management systems to support better decision-making and stronger accountability at local and national levels



Advocate for improved drinking-water and sanitation regulations to better protect public health



Water Kiosk in Kenya
WHO/Rory Misesi-McKeown

Becoming a member of RegNet

RegNet membership is open to professionals who are responsible for ensuring the safety and quality of drinking-water or sanitation services by setting or enforcing appropriate standards and regulations or undertaking independent surveillance at national and subnational levels. The network includes regulatory institutions across the globe, with members in the regions of Africa, the Americas, the Eastern Mediterranean, Europe and the Western Pacific.

Interested parties can contact WHO to request membership, who will confirm their roles and assess their requests. WHO may also undertake targeted identification of potential members and contact them directly, to ensure a diverse and engaged network¹.

¹ Download the Network terms of reference available at https://cdn.who.int/media/docs/default-source/wash-documents/regnet/regnet_tor_v1_dec2021.pdf?sfvrsn=aef71421_7&download=true.

What it means to be a member

Members share advice and good practice, participate in discussions, and cooperate with other members and WHO on various issues. To ensure a safe space to candidly discuss regulatory concerns, significant attention is paid to confidentiality. As one of the primary target audiences for WHO norms on the safety of drinking-water and sanitation, RegNet members also serve as a key resource for providing end-user feedback when norms are being developed.

Cooperation and exchange within RegNet includes:

- ✔ providing strategic input on the use of regulatory data for global monitoring of water and sanitation services under the SDG agenda;
- ✔ providing peer-to-peer support in the development and revision of national policies; regulations and supporting tools; and
- ✔ sharing experiences and inputs to inform the development of global guidance on management of drinking-water and sanitation services.

To accelerate learning and sharing of experience, WHO also collaborates with regional networks of regulators, such as the Asociación de Entes Reguladores de Agua Potable y Saneamiento de las Américas (ADERASA) in Latin America; the European Network of Drinking-Water Regulators (ENDWARE); and the Eastern and Southern Africa Water and Sanitation (ESAWAS) Regulators Association.

How RegNet works with other regulator groups

Through RegNet, WHO collaborates with other agencies and organizations working to strengthen regulation of water and sanitation services. These include:

- the International Water Regulators Forum of the International Water Association (IWA), which brings together regulators in economic, environmental and quality-of-service aspects;
- the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and the Stockholm International Water Institute, (SIWI) who are working to strengthen governance and accountability in the water and sanitation sector; and
- the World Bank, which supports policy and institutional reform in countries, including in economic regulation.

RegNet focuses on public health aspects of water and sanitation regulation. Collaboration and engagement with these other organizations aims to foster complementarity of efforts, particularly in the areas of economic and environmental regulation.



Desludging truck in Groß Körös, rural Germany
© WU-Ö/Österreichsmil

Frequently asked questions

Is RegNet only for regulators?

Individuals or organizations may perform aspects of regulation or oversight of services even if “regulator” is not in their job title or if the regulatory function is not fully independent. This is particularly common for sanitation, since regulatory mandates and accountability mechanisms are still under development in many countries. Any individuals whose functions include oversight, standards setting, surveillance or enforcement for provision of water supply and sanitation services are welcome to apply for RegNet membership.

How often does RegNet meet?

RegNet generally meets face to face at least once a year. It holds additional online meetings and webinars as needed.

What is expected of members?

Members are expected to contribute to the strategic planning of the network, participate regularly in meetings, share knowledge and peer advice on regulatory matters under discussion, provide feedback on technical matters and advocate for the network. Members are encouraged to raise specific regulatory concerns, or requests for advice and support, and to share their experiences on relevant issues.

Who attends RegNet meetings?

Meetings are exclusively for RegNet members and convening WHO staff. This “safe space” enables members to candidly discuss regulatory concerns and obtain practical advice. WHO also convenes an advisory group of external partners and a subset of RegNet members to ensure that meeting topics are coordinated with topics in other regulatory initiatives.

What’s in it for members?

The diversity of RegNet’s membership brings a wealth of unique knowledge and experience, and offers dynamic perspectives to support implementation of regulations. Members benefit from knowledge exchange and the opportunity to tap into the expertise of a global network of peers, as well as regional regulator networks such as ADERASA, ESAWAS and ENDWARE, in a “safe space” where they can exchange concerns and obtain practical advice. RegNet members can learn about recently developed international guidance and monitoring efforts, and have an opportunity to provide strategic input.



FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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🌐 www.who.int/groups/international-network-of-drinking-water-and-sanitation-regulators

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