

FINLAND: A CASE STUDY ON COMMITMENTS-RELATED BEST PRACTICE OR LESSONS LEARNED IN WATER

1. Which specific WSSD or Agenda 21 commitment does your case study address?

The case study addresses WSSD PoI chapter IV Protecting and managing the natural resource base of economic and social development, paragraph 25.

2. Please briefly describe the essential characteristics of the case study you wish to share including the nature of activities undertaken.

Finland is a land with a surplus of water resources. However, municipal waste waters cause environmental concern and there has traditionally been little concern for saving water.

In order to decrease the amount of sewage waters, Finnish authorities have decided to charge consumers for both water use and water cleaning. The costs cover the whole sanitation expenses. Earlier the costs were received through municipal taxation, but now consumers pay what they use.

3. Please explain the nature and characteristics of particular challenges and constraints faced, if any.

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4. What are the lessons learned in the process, positive and/or negative?

The process has illustrated the effectiveness of fiscal incentives. Charges, even if nominal, do affect the way people consume. Therefore this "consumer-pays" principle could be used more widely.

5. What has been the impact of such a case in the area(s) concerned?

The waste water fees have effected the water supply quality and water consumption. The fee was adapted in 1972 and it enabled the building of sewage water treatment plants. The fees have also reduced water consumption significantly.

Water consumption was at its highest level in the beginning of 1970s. The record consumption took place in 1972 and was 335 liter/per person/ per day. Currently the consumption has decreased to 240 liters. Households consume about 150 liters.

There are also other reasons for reduction in water consumption. In addition to fees, new technology in household appliances and sanitary devices has helped to decrease water consumption.

As demand for water has decreased, waterworks have been able to concentrate on improving water quality instead of enhancing freshwater abstraction.

Industrial water consumption has also decreased. However, large part of the big industry is not connected to water works, but they abstract their water by themselves and thus it is not included in the national statistics.
