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Feasibility of a Public-Private Partnership (PPP) for Treated Wastewater Reuse in Mediterranean Countries: Lessons from Southern Tunisia and Experience Sharing across the Region

Mediterranean Water Institute (IME)

Euro-Mediterranean Water Forum 2026 · 29 September – 2 October · La Nuvola, Rome

KEY INFORMATION

Date	1 October 2026
Time	16:30 – 18:00
Room	Rodano
Format	Roundtable
Language(s)	English / French

SUMMARY

How can treated wastewater reuse become bankable? Lessons from a PPP feasibility study in southern Tunisia, compared with experiences across the Mediterranean.

AGENDA & SPEAKERS

Speaker Name & Title	Organization	Role / Topic
Jean-Marc Philip, President	EcoViso – IME expert	Moderator – introduction and framing
André Viola (tbc)		Keynote speaker
Ms Ayda Jridi	Secretariat of State for Water Resources, Ministry of Agriculture (Tunisia)	Speaker
Mr Abdelmajid Bettaieb (tbc), CEO	ONAS – National Sanitation Utility (Tunisia)	Speaker
Mr Olivier Stintzy, Founder and Managing Partner	Sinople International (France) – IME	Speaker
Mr Dabanat Eissa, Executive Director	Tubas Joint Water and Sanitation Service (Palestine)	Speaker
Ms Habiba El Alami, Director of the Water Department	SRM – Casablanca Region (Morocco)	Speaker

Speaker Name & Title	Organization	Role / Topic
Ms Kahina Meziani, Managing Director	SCAST (Tunisia)	Speaker
Mr Nicolas Mourlon, Director General	AERMC – Rhône Méditerranée Corse Water Agency (France)	Speaker
Mr Hassane Belguenani	AFD – French Development Agency (France)	Speaker
Open debate with the audience	—	Q&A moderated by Jean-Marc Philip

BACKGROUND & RATIONALE

The Mediterranean is one of the world's main water-stress hotspots. In this context, Tunisia – with less than 450 m³ of available water per capita per year – illustrates the challenges faced by many countries in the region. Treated wastewater reuse is one of the main levers chosen by the Tunisian government to counter the effects of climate change.

The feasibility study of a PPP for treated wastewater reuse in agriculture, conducted by the Mediterranean Water Institute (IME) with funding from the Rhône Méditerranée Corse Water Agency (AERMC) in the governorates of Sfax, Gabès and Médenine, has produced decisive conclusions for structuring bankable projects:

- **Multi-use demand is the most decisive factor.** The sectoral structure of demand is what determines operating balance and economic viability. Agriculture-only scenarios are not viable without substantial public subsidies, whereas scenarios including a significant share of industrial, urban or environmental uses (scenarios B and C) are the only ones to achieve both operating balance and economic viability. Cross-subsidisation is a structural necessity: industrial and tourism uses must finance protected-tariff access for agricultural irrigation.
- **Distance between treatment plants and points of use is a key, though secondary, parameter.** The financial model is extremely sensitive to this variable: increasing the distance from 5 to 10 km can make an otherwise well-structured project unviable. For long distances, structures with a strong industrial and urban share should be favoured.
- **Photovoltaics must be integrated as a structural economic component,** particularly for any distance above 5 km. Solar acts as an OPEX corrector, improving bankability without being sufficient on its own to guarantee viability.
- **Price-mix optimisation is an essential lever.** The model includes a dedicated module to determine the optimal combination of tariffs per user category (farmers, industry, tourism, local authorities, environment), reaching economic balance while minimising the tariff burden.
- **User trust is the primary limiting factor, well ahead of price.** Negative perceptions of treated wastewater, fuelled by past incidents and a lack of regulatory clarity, can only be overcome through independent quality control and an ambitious communication strategy.

This roundtable will compare the Tunisian, Moroccan, Palestinian and French approaches, with the possibility of widening the discussion to other countries through the French Development Agency (AFD). The stakes are high: how can these lessons be translated into innovative economic models adapted to each context, while guaranteeing the bankability and social acceptability of projects?

OBJECTIVES

- To identify and discuss viable economic models for scaling up treated wastewater reuse projects, building on the concrete results of the Tunisian study.
- To define bankable solutions that mobilise both public and private financing.

- To share operational experience by comparing the approaches of different Mediterranean countries.

KEY THEMES

Treated wastewater reuse, resilient agriculture, water infrastructure, public-private partnerships, innovative financing, carbon and water credits, catalytic finance.

GEOGRAPHICAL SCOPE

The session builds on the study conducted in Tunisia (Sfax, Gabès, Médenine), with an opening onto Mediterranean-wide issues. The lessons learned are transferable to other water-stressed contexts in the Mediterranean and beyond.

TARGET AUDIENCE

Public authorities (ministries, water agencies), operators (ONAS, SCAST), financial institutions (AFD, AERMC, EIB), agricultural and industrial stakeholders, and sustainable finance experts.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- Presentation of the key lessons of the Tunisian study on treated wastewater reuse, in particular the crucial importance of multi-use demand, treatment-plant-to-user distance, the price mix and photovoltaics.
- Identification of the economic and financial levers for structuring bankable projects at scale.
- Sharing of concrete examples of innovative economic models (PPPs, climate funds, water/carbon credits).
- Priority recommendations for public and private actors.
- Highlighting of the specificities and points of convergence of the Tunisian, Moroccan, Palestinian and French approaches, and of the scope for extension to other contexts through AFD.

SESSION FORMAT

- **Moderator:** Jean-Marc Philip (President, EcoViso – IME expert).
- **Total duration:** 1h30.
- **Introduction and framing (5 min):** presentation of the issues and objectives by the moderator.
- **Presentations and discussion with the speakers (60 min):** each speaker has 7 to 10 minutes to present their perspective, experience or proposal.
- **Open debate with the audience (25 min):** questions and answers, facilitated by the moderator.