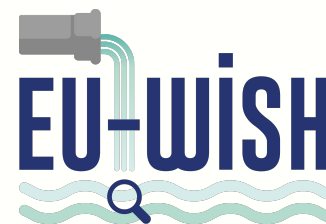


NEWSLETTER

November 2025



Dear readers,

Welcome to the latest edition of the EU-WISH newsletter, designed to keep our consortium members and the wider community informed about the Joint Action's latest developments and collaborative efforts.

This issue looks back at **the EU-WISH International Workshop** in Dublin, which brought partners and stakeholders together to discuss priorities and future directions for wastewater-based surveillance (WBS) for public health. The main highlights and outcomes from the breakout sessions are summarised below.

We are also pleased to introduce a new regular feature: **the EU-WISH Marketplace**.

A key message from the workshop was clear - there is a lot of positive work to be done, and collaboration inside and outside of EU-WISH is essential. To maintain momentum, we have transformed the breakout session outcomes into a series of short "marketplace" announcements. We invite partners to join and contribute to activities that align with their expertise, interests, and obligations under the Joint Action. Think of it as a space for "project classifieds", a place where partners can discover initiatives, connect, and collaborate. Although participation in these activities is limited to EU-WISH partners, we hope that external readers will find this section valuable, as it provides insight into the project's ongoing and upcoming activities. This section will continue in future newsletters, evolving as the project and its partnerships grow.

We hope this edition inspires new connections and engagement across the EU-WISH community and beyond.

Latest news from the inside

EU-WISH International Workshop: key takeaways from the breakout session

Below is a snapshot of the main highlights and takeaways from the breakout sessions, capturing the collective insights and priorities that will help guide the next steps and collaborative actions within EU-WISH.

Prioritization of wastewater surveillance targets

For full summaries of the first four breakout sessions, please visit the article published on the [EU-WISH website](#).



Respiratory Virus and Emerging Pathogens



Polioviruses and non-polio enteroviruses



Antimicrobial resistance (AMR)



Chemical substances, illicit drugs and health-related biomarkers



Building a sustainable training framework for EU-WISH: opportunities, needs, and topic prioritization



This session focused on identifying common principles and future directions for strengthening training material development and knowledge-sharing activities within EU-WISH. While pathogen prioritization remains central, participants highlighted that structured training and knowledge exchange are equally crucial for the long-term sustainability and effectiveness of WBS across Europe.

Four key pillars were emphasized:

- Open and inclusive access to training materials, adapted to diverse contexts and languages.
- Quality and continuous improvement, supported by standardized evaluation criteria and feedback loops (surveys, peer review, trainee evaluations), supported by accreditation
- Transparent knowledge sharing, including successes, failures, and practical case studies and use examples.
- Clear definition of target audiences to ensure trainings are relevant, legitimate, and applicable.

Participants also noted shared challenges. These included unclear ownership of materials, overlapping resources, limited visibility and outreach, and funding constraints. AI tools were identified as a potential enabler to improve accessibility, organization, and ongoing refinement of training.

Finally, strategic partnerships with organizations and networks such as WHO, ECDC, GLOWACON, universities, public health institutes and the private sector were highlighted as essential to ensure coordination, credibility, and long-term impact.

Integration in public health



Integrating wastewater surveillance for decision-making



This breakout session explored the challenges and enablers for embedding WBS into national public health systems. Discussions focused on technical, organizational, and political barriers that hinder WBS integration. Participants identified and prioritized key technical challenges to be addressed to ensure integration of WBS into national surveillance systems, such as the lack of harmonised sampling protocols and difficulties regarding data interpretation.

Organizational fragmentation and weak intersectoral coordination further complicate integration into existing surveillance frameworks. Political obstacles include the absence of legal mandates and long-term funding.

Proposed solutions included EU-WISH's support for technical standardisation, sharing case studies and best practices for integrations of surveillance approaches, and providing WBS sustainability supporting the implementation of the revised Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive (UWWTD). The importance of sustainable funding and regulatory clarity was also strongly emphasized.

To strengthen the use of WBS data in decision-making, the session called for the development of clear thresholds, indicators, and communication strategies. It was agreed that the aim of WBS is to provide insights into the public health status rather than dictate public health actions *per se*. EU-WISH was recognised for its work in threshold development (Task 6.2), stakeholder communication (WP2), and preparedness planning (WP3), supporting WBS as a stable element of public health infrastructure across Europe.

Value & Necessity of wastewater surveillance



WP3 of EU-WISH is advancing the integration of WBS into national and EU-level public health preparedness plans. Recent achievements include the development of the Evaluation Plan, identification of WBS-specific evaluation attributes and gaps, and a literature review on existing preparedness frameworks across Europe and internationally.

During the first EU-WISH International Workshop in Dublin, WP3 hosted a breakout session titled "Value & Necessity of Wastewater Surveillance", engaging over 25 experts to co-develop key messages for policymakers.

The session explored scientific, operational, and ethical dimensions of WBS. Participants emphasized WBS as a cost-effective, non-invasive early warning tool that complements clinical data and enhances population-wide coverage. Key themes included the need for legal clarity, cross-sector and cross ministerial coordination, harmonised methods, AI-driven innovation and community trust. The session outcomes position WBS as a routine, long-term element of Europe's public health infrastructure.

Comparability of wastewater results across European countries



This breakout session focused on the challenges and strategies for comparing WBS data across countries. Participants explored why comparability matters, what kinds of results can be meaningfully compared, and how to overcome differences in surveillance goals, methods, and contexts across Europe.

The session emphasized that comparability is not binary but exists on a spectrum - from foundational shared concepts to fully harmonized protocols.

Participants discussed examples ranging from trend assessments (e.g., SARS-CoV-2, influenza) to presence/absence detection (e.g., polio), and long-term indicators (e.g., AMR, drug use). Methods for comparison included visual tools, descriptive statistics, and mathematical modeling. Key challenges included differences in lab methods, data presentation, environmental conditions, and cultural or behavioural factors influencing surveillance targets like drug use.

To improve comparability, the session recommended focusing on harmonized trend calculations, standardised categorisation and aggregation practices, and promoting the exchange of protocols and case studies. Existing systems such as [ERVISS](#), [EUROMOMO](#), [EUDA](#), and [EEA PFAS monitoring](#) were highlighted as useful models. While full harmonization may not always be feasible, the group underlined the importance of transparency, clear goals, and pragmatic solutions to support reliable cross-country interpretation of WBS data.

Designing effective sampling strategies for WBS programs



We aimed to test a draft general framework for sampling design through two case studies: a measles outbreak in a vulnerable traveling community and an international extreme sports event.

Participants applied the framework to develop tailored WBS strategies, identifying both its strengths and areas for improvement. Feedback confirmed the framework's broad applicability but also highlighted the need to integrate financial feasibility, refine specific steps for greater clarity, and expand guidance to better address chemical and drug monitoring.

The importance of including practical examples and best practices to enhance usability was strongly emphasized. Moving forward, we plan to refine the framework by incorporating expert input, ensuring it effectively supports a wide range of WBS applications across the EU-WISH program.

Upcoming events

2nd Capacity Building Workshop | 3 – 4 June 2026, Riga, Latvia

Following the success of previous EU-WISH workshops, the second Training and Capacity Building Workshop will be held in Riga, Latvia, on 3 - 4 June 2026.

The workshop is being designed to strengthen technical and analytical capacities for WBS, with a likely emphasis on antimicrobial resistance and chemical analysis. It is expected to include hands-on laboratory and bioinformatics sessions, possibly in parallel tracks, and explore topics such as data contextualization, automation of reporting, and integration with public health systems, reflecting needs identified through EU-WISH system mapping and training surveys.

Participation will primarily target technical experts, including laboratory staff and bioinformaticians, to ensure deep practical engagement and skill development.

A "Save the Date" announcement will be shared soon through the EU-WISH website and communication channels.

EU-WISH – 2nd International Workshop | 6 – 8 October 2026, Vienna, Austria

The second EU-WISH International Workshop will take place from 6 – 8 October 2026 at the Austrian Agency for Health and Food Safety (AGES) in Vienna, Austria.

Building on the outcomes of the first workshop, this edition will further explore progress and collaboration in WBS, public health preparedness, and capacity building across Europe. More information will follow soon.

Broader context

The Osaka World Expo, 18 September 2025

As part of Osaka Expo in Japan, The European Commission's Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Authority (HERA) and The European Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC) organized a GLOWACON guiding event about strengthening preparedness through wastewater and environmental surveillance (WES).

In the event at Pavillion of EU Delegation Japan on Sept 18, 2025, the role of WES was underscored as an innovative, scalable, and non-invasive surveillance system capable of detecting infectious threats early.

The European Joint Action EU-WISH was represented by Chief Specialist, Prof. Tarja Pitkänen from the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare, who discussed in a panel from a multi-national public health context with Prof. Maasaki Kitajima from University of Tokyo, Japan and Senior Director Andrew Engeli from Ginkgo Bioworks, USA, how to perform wastewater surveillance at strategic locations.



From left to right: Prof. Maasaki Kitajima, Prof. Tarja Pitkänen and Senior Director Andrew Engeli



A snapshot of the dynamic Osaka Expo area, taken right in front of the EU Pavilion.

IPSN CoP – WES, 29 October 2025

On 29 October 2025, EU-WISH coordinator Pikka Jokelainen gave a presentation about EU-WISH to the Community of Practice (CoP) on Wastewater and Environmental Surveillance.

The community is part of the International Pathogen Surveillance Network (IPSN) set up by the WHO Hub for Pandemic and Epidemic Intelligence. The audience included experts in the field of wastewater environmental surveillance from around the world looking to hear more about international initiatives, learn from best practices, and identify opportunities for collaboration.

The GLOWACON event in the EU Pavillion was followed by a tour of Site Visits kindly organized for the GLOWACON group by Dr. Bernd M. Gawlik from JRC and the EU Organizing Team, and hosted by colleagues from Osaka Public Health Institute, the municipality of Osaka City, the Osaka Water Utility and VEOLIA Japan Ltd.

The group visited at Wastewater Treatment Plant of Osaka, the Sample Collection Point for the EXPO Wastewater Surveillance Programme, and the Sludge Processing Facility, an architectural landmark of Osaka.

EU-WISH x GLOWACON joint meeting, 28 October 2025

EU-WISH connects with initiatives beyond the EU region.

On the 28th of October, the EU-WISH training and capacity building workgroup, GLOWACON's Technical Work Group 3, EU Commission colleagues, and UNEP's WBS for Africa Initiative came together to share updates on their current training and capacity building activities. During this second 2025 session, the group explored opportunities to co-design and pilot new training resources, making them accessible through shared platforms and tailoring them to key user groups. Members emphasised the value of sharing best practices in order to strengthen collaboration, expand knowledge exchange and build capacity across regions and contexts.

7th Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol on Water and Health, Budapest, Hungary | 5 – 7 November 2025 "Health emergency preparedness, from policy to practice: Sustainable WBS"

The Norwegian Institute of Public Health (FHI), in collaboration with RIVM (Netherlands) and NNGYK (Hungary), led a side event on behalf of EU-WISH during the Seventh Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol on Water and Health in Budapest.

The session featured contributions from WHO Europe and DG HERA, bringing together experts from national ministries, health institutes, and international organisations. This interactive session explored how wastewater-based surveillance can support health emergency preparedness under Article 17(2) of the revised UWWTD. It translated technical concepts into accessible messages for policymakers to foster dialogue between the health and environmental sectors, a strong example of translating science into policy.

The Marketplace Edition

Your gateway to engage, share and contribute

November 2025



Why launch a special Marketplace Edition?

Because engagement fuels collaboration and collaboration drives impact.



Each card below represents a small but meaningful initiative open for collaboration. Some are already underway, others are waiting for your ideas and energy! Pick your favorite and join in!

Please note that participation in Marketplace activities is limited to EU-WISH partners only. However, we hope that external readers will find this section informative, as it provides an overview of the project's ongoing activities.

WP4

Help us build EU-WISH training materials



WP4 is looking for training champions, colleagues with experience in developing or delivering trainings who can help transform the technical outputs from EU-WISH WPs into accessible learning materials that support countries in building their own capacities.

This work complements ongoing T4.5 efforts to establish the EU-WISH online training platform and aligns with parallel initiatives led by the WHO Community of Practice (CoP) and the EU Wastewater Observatory for Public Health to create a shared repository of training resources. It also builds on and complements broader capacity-building initiatives such as GLOWACON and UNEP WWS for Africa, ensuring coherence and mutual learning across regions.

Do you have experience designing trainings or translating technical content into practical learning formats? Would you like to help countries benefit from the lessons and outputs generated within EU-WISH?

Join us to champion the development of EU-WISH learning materials!

Join us !

WP4

Experts wanted: costing the future of WBS



What would it take to sustain WBS across Europe.

We are assessing the possibility of collaborating with WHO to test their plans for developing a costing tool for WBS, building on their existing approach for clinical laboratory systems. This could help project operational needs, estimate costs, and model funding scenarios to support long-term sustainability under Article 17 of the revised UWWTD.

In parallel, we are considering a future survey to assess citizens' willingness to pay for WBS through public funds, primarily via taxes. This is an idea to be discussed with policymakers during the MoP's meeting.

Does this sound interesting to you?

Contribute to discussions about the costing tool or share ideas for the survey.

Join us !

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WP6

Scoping reviews: feedback and editing skills needed



For Task 6.1 - "Guidance for Designing Wastewater Surveillance Sampling Strategies to Monitor Public Health", expertise is needed to support work on scoping literature reviews.

Currently, two reviews are in progress on "wastewater surveillance programmes for public health" and "optimal sampling frequencies for wastewater surveillance".

Join us !

WP6

Integration of WW data into public health: Expert interviewers needed



In Task 6.3, qualitative interviews are used to collect and synthesize knowledge on integration of wastewater data into public health from both within and outside the EU-WISH consortium.

To propel this important work forward, we need your expertise to conduct interviews and distill insights – if you're interested in contributing to this task next year, we'd be happy to hear from you!

Join us !

Educational

The importance of Ethics: when powerful tools require thoughtful use

A recent article in [Science](#) reminds us that, while powerful, WBS comes with great ethical responsibilities that should not be ignored. The author highlights how wastewater can reveal the presence of chemical compounds linked to reproductive behaviour or sexual health, and that misusing or misinterpreting this data could lead to stigma and harm, rather than support. Although the article focuses mainly on the United States, the issues it raises are universal.

How can we ensure that wastewater data are used to inform, rather than stigmatise? Who owns and governs the data? How do we balance the benefits for public health with the protection of individual privacy?

These reflections are critical everywhere, from high-income to low- and middle-income countries. In LMICs, where sanitation infrastructure and governance frameworks are often less developed, the challenges are even more acute. Without strong ethical guidance and transparent oversight, the very tools designed to protect populations could unintentionally deepen inequalities.

Organisations such as the World Health Organization (WHO) have long provided the ethical foundations for public health surveillance, notably through the [WHO guidelines on ethical issues in public health surveillance \(2017\)](#), and continue to advance this discussion. Global initiatives like GLOWACON build upon these principles, promoting international dialogue and collaboration on wastewater monitoring. As a European initiative, we, as EU-WISH project contribute to this broader effort by strengthening national capacities, harmonising protocols, and promoting knowledge exchange, thereby helping to establish responsible, transparent, and trustworthy surveillance systems that serve the common good.

As wastewater surveillance expands worldwide, we should ask ourselves: how are these ethical principles addressed in our own country's approach? Ensuring that data are used wisely, fairly and for the benefit of all is a collective responsibility.



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