

Press release
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International network of regional governments reinforces the need for cooperation and coordination between different levels of government at the World Water Forum in Brasilia

Members of the [Network of Regional Governments for Sustainable Development - nrg4SD](#) participate in the 5th International Conference of Local and Regional Authorities for Water to be held during the Water Forum to strengthen the key role of state governments in planning and managing water cycles.

Water policy is part of regional government's strategic decisions. Water is an essential resource for life and for the development and progress of society, but it is a finite and fragile resource. The increase in population and consumption, as well as the drop in water supply due to climate change obliges subnational governments to manage this fragile and finite resource more efficiently, more sustainably and in a more integrated way.

Nevertheless, facing the challenges of growing urbanisation in the context of climate change requires water cycle planning that goes beyond the administrative boundaries of cities. This clearly affects urban planning and management of cities, which has to take water cycle infrastructures and services into account.

Managing water services while protecting and improving the conditions of the aquatic environment are the responsibilities of the regional governments, exercised in conjunction with local government.

Through specific regulation, regional governments are to guarantee quality water and help local councils exercise their powers of supply and treatment. **It is therefore essential to strengthen cooperation and coordination with regard to water, based on criteria of environmental, economic and social sustainability. This requires maximum political consensus to ensure we all pull in the same direction.**

It is also important to remember that the impacts of climate change and their influence on the increase of hydroclimatic risks are felt mainly at the subnational level. To emphasize this aspect, nrg4SD presented, on March 20, at the 8th WWF, the "[RegionsAdapt 2017 Report: regional governments accelerating adaptation to climate change](#)", with a special focus on the climate impacts on water availability and quality (water scarcity, drought and flooding), and how subnational governments tackle those challenges through their innovative territorial management. The report brings territorial realities and solutions of more than 30 regional governments from all continents, working united within the [RegionsAdapt](#) initiative, led by nrg4SD and envisaged by the governments of Catalonia and Rio de Janeiro.

"The RegionsAdapt report reveals regional governments' commitment to protect their territories and populations from the undeniable impacts of climate change, with over 270 adaptation actions reported, addressing several physical and water supply risks" explains Natalia Vera, nrg4SD Secretary General.

Six members of nrg4SD are participating in the World Water Forum: Brittany, Catalonia, Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, Rio Grande do Sul, in its capacity of coordinator of the water working group of RegionsAdapt and the Catholic University of Santos.

Catalan Case

The Catalan government according to the European Union (EU) Water Framework Directive draws up the Water Management Plans for the Catalan River Basin District every six years. These management plans identify pressure and impacts on water bodies and the necessary measures to ensure the good environmental and quantitative status of rivers, aquifers and coastal waters. Thus, regardless of

whether cities carry out specific action in local treatment and supply, it is the regional government that determines the measures for water management.

It is on the basis of this regional planning that the Catalan government plays a key role in urban development plans, through its public regulatory body for the Catalan hydrographic area, the Catalan Water Agency. The Agency draws up binding reports that specify the resources needed for supply, where the resources are to be extracted and how wastewater generated by new developments is to be treated, as well as flood risks in areas intended for urbanisation.

Rio de Janeiro's Case

After experiencing its worst drought in history in 2015, the Government of the State of Rio de Janeiro has launched a [Water Pact](#), aiming at improving water security through the combination of medium and long-term approaches. Rio's Water Pact includes a wide array of actions, such as: mapping strategic springs and forests whose conservation and restoration should be prioritized; regulating rural properties under a state-wide Environmental Registry; and paying for ecosystem services related to forest conservation initiatives that are vital to water supply.

Among other objectives, the Water Pact expects to restore and conserve 22 thousand hectares of natural landscapes by 2022, which will ultimately foster Rio's water security. This goal involves the plantation of about 42 million seedlings and a two-percentage point increase of the tropical forest coverage in the State.

Rio Grande do Sul's Case

Rio Grande do Sul is one of the Coordinators of the Water Resources and Management Working Group within the [RegionsAdapt Initiative](#). From a regional government perspective, this subnational partnership has been pivotal for pushing forward the climate change adaptation agenda in Rio Grande do Sul. Since joining the initiative, the state has been implementing a program which comprises seven different projects that include: expanding its hydro-meteorological monitoring system, building a disaster risk reduction policy, integrating the concept of resilience into watershed management plans, as well as developing an innovative matrix of indicators for evaluating measures of adaptation to climate change.

The exchange of expertise and knowledge with other regions and also the cooperation with federal level institutions, such as the National Water Agency, have proven to be a key factor for the success of the projects under implementation. Hence, one of the main objectives of Rio Grande do Sul's participation in the Forum is pursuing multi-stakeholder integration and exchanging solutions on a regional level to tackle hydro-climatic risks and promote integrated water resources management policies that are sensitive to local scale realities.

São Paulo's Case

The regional environmental policy of the state of São Paulo focuses on adjustment processes to face climate change through 5 main guidelines. First, strengthening and modernization of the Regulatory Legal Framework of Macro-metropole Regional Water Supply Areas, enforcing municipal legislation and strategies for the prevention and removal of irregular settlements in areas of permanent preservation and risk. Second, provision of technological tools and technical support to municipalities for adaptation to urban risks of extreme climatic events based on an Integrated System of weather forecasting, hazard maps, risk and soil susceptibility on a local scale, with the support of the State Civil Defense. Third, strategic enhancement of the protection of water source areas with sustainable ecological restoration projects through the promotion of mandatory environmental compensations, bringing together landowners, private investors, public enterprises and municipalities to ensure the increase of water quality and protecting biodiversity. Fourth, restructuring the Integrated Metropolitan Public Supply System, interconnecting the main production systems with large engineering works to guarantee the variability of the impact of rainfall and recharge of aquifers in the different sub-basins. And finally, prioritize actions aimed at the different segments of population: public incentive to use saving devices; massive environmental education campaigns; economic incentives in household water bills for the reduction of water use in urban households; control of the use for agroforestry systems close to the regions of the metropolitan fountains, among others.

Brittany's Case

Brittany was recently elected as President of the Basin Committee of Loire-Brittany: a Water Parliament where water decisions are discussed collectively together with all stakeholders. The Basin Committee gathers 190 members including political authorities, civil servants, stakeholders and economic actors and helps to water decision-making affecting 28% of France, including 36 departments and more than 7000 towns. Brittany meets the challenge with strong leadership and bringing its own expertise in social dialogue with regards to water management, in particular the substantial progress made towards water friendly agriculture practices as result of many negotiations and agreements with farmers and other economic stakeholders. The Basin Committee main challenges at present are the revision of the Water Development and Management Master Plan - that plans 70% of water bodies achieving good status by 2021- and the accurate quantification of climate change effects in water availability and quality, with a particular focus in urban settlements and economic development.

"Water policy must be agreed together with local governments, political authorities, farmers and associations. Regional governments need to lead collective agreements capable of been accepted and therefore, respected by all". Thierry Burlot, vice-president of Brittany, in charge of environmental, water and biodiversity issues in the territory.

UNISANTOS Case

The Catholic University of Santos (UNISANTOS) develops researches related to water, especially in themes like assessment of aquifers water availability, development of pollution markers, estuarine impacts by sea level variation, among others, in courses like Biological Sciences, Law Environmental, Collective Health, Chemical and Environmental Engineering.

The University acts as the vice-president of the Baixada Santista Basin Committee through the director of the Institute of Scientific and Technological Research (Ipeci), professor Adriana Florentino de Souza.

Media contact

Thais Ferraz,
Communications Officer, nrg4SD
M: +34 633 235 432
tferraz@nrg4sd.org

About nrg4SD

The Network of Regional Governments for Sustainable Development - nrg4SD - was established in 2002, and currently has over 50 members from almost 30 countries in four continents. The Network acts in three main fields: sustainable development, biodiversity and climate change, and seeks greater international recognition of regional governments, especially in the context of the global agendas at UN and EU levels. In addition, nrg4SD promotes cooperation among members, fostering exchange of information, know-how and best practices. In the field of climate change, nrg4SD runs *RegionsAdapt*, an initiative designed to inspire and support regional governments to act, collaborate and report efforts on climate change adaptation. Launched at UNFCCC COP 21, the initiative expanded from 27 founding members to almost 70 members from all continents.

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