

The implications of the mandatory character of the Dutch drinking water benchmark

Additional Thesis

Department of Sanitary Engineering
Faculty of Civil Engineering and Geosciences
Delft University of Technology

Andrea Elshof

Assessment Committee

Prof.dr.ir. J.P. van der Hoek
Ir. M. de Goede
Dr. E. Mostert

Delft University of Technology, Waternet
Delft University of Technology
Delft University of Technology



Final version
Delft, Friday 13th October, 2017

Abstract

The Dutch drinking water benchmark has been carried out every three years since 1997. In 2011, the benchmark was incorporated into the Drinking Water Act. As a result the benchmark switched from a voluntarily benchmark executed by the Association of Dutch water companies to a mandatory benchmark executed by the Human Environment and Transport Inspectorate. In addition, the drinking water companies have to hand in an improvement plan 6 months after the benchmark publication. Based on interviews with benchmark coordinators of drinking water companies the influence of the inclusion of the benchmark into the Drinking Water Act on the improvement driven part of the benchmark is studied. For this purpose, the following four issues are discussed: changes experienced as a consequence of the shifting from a voluntarily to a mandatory benchmark, influence of mandatory character of the benchmark on the drivers, identified by de Goede et al. (2016), the role of the improvement plans and a new instrument to stimulate improvement.

The differences between the voluntarily and mandatory benchmark are identified: the benchmark switched from being only an improvement driven instrument to an instrument for accountability as well and the drinking water organizations lost control over the development of the benchmark. The influence of the mandatory character on the drivers for performance improvement have been determined: only the driver 'enhanced transparency' is (positively) influenced. In order for the improvement plans to be able to have a positive effect on the stimulation of improvement, a feedback system should be implemented and the publications of the benchmark and improvement plans have to be faster. The benchmark is still thought to be useful, although an adaptive benchmark could stimulate improvement again.

Contents

1	Introduction	1
1.1	Drinking water in the Netherlands	1
1.2	The Drinking Water Act	2
1.3	The Dutch drinking water benchmark	2
1.4	Drivers for improvement in the Dutch drinking water benchmark	3
1.5	Thesis aim	4
2	Research methods	5
3	Results	6
3.1	Changes experienced as a consequence of the shifting from a voluntarily to a mandatory benchmark	6
3.2	Influence of mandatory character of the benchmark on the drivers	7
3.3	The role of the improvement plans	8
3.4	An new instrument to stimulate improvement	9
4	Discussion and conclusions	11
4.1	Discussion	11
4.2	Conclusions	11
	Bibliography	14
	Appendix	15
A	Questionnaires	15
A.1	Interviews	15
A.2	Survey	19

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Drinking water in the Netherlands

The Netherlands used to have more than 200 different water supply companies. Over the years, this number has decreased to 10 water supply companies. Each of these ten Dutch drinking water organizations supplies clean drinking water to customers in their own distribution area 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, see Figure 1.1. Clean and safe drinking water is seen as one of the basic needs for human kind and of great importance for the public health (Rijksoverheid, 2009). Since 1957 the supply and inspection of drinking water in the Netherlands is regulated by law (Overheid.nl, 2009). The Water Supply Act was established to ensure safe and clean drinking water for all inhabitants.



Figure 1.1: The Dutch drinking water companies and their distribution areas (VEWIN, 2013)

1.2 The Drinking Water Act

The Water Supply Act was replaced by the Drinking Water Act in 2009. The purpose of the new Drinking Water Act was to guarantee the water quality, and a continuous supply of water, to increase the efficiency of the drinking water companies and to improve the position of the customers (VEWIN, 2009). The drinking water companies have the duty and obligation to supply drinking water to all households and industries within their distribution area (Overheid.nl, 2015a).

During the 1990s, the Dutch government considered to privatize the drinking water supply sector. They wanted the costs in the drinking water sector to be more transparent. Another reason for privatization was due to a lack of market forces. Since the Dutch drinking water companies are monopolists, consumers cannot compare and choose, based on quality and price, the product of their preference. Because of this the drinking water organizations are not challenged to produce good drinking water for a fair price. The drinking water sector opposed privatization and in order to avoid direct government interference, they introduced the voluntarily drinking water benchmark in 1997 to be more transparent and as an alternative for market forces (VEWIN, 1999). Benchmarking is used as an instrument to compare the performances of organizations.

The drinking water benchmark has been incorporated into Chapter 5 of the Drinking Water Act (Overheid.nl, 2015b). As a result the benchmark switched from a voluntarily to mandatory benchmark. The Drinking Water Act also includes that shares of the Dutch drinking water companies must be owned by public parties (Overheid.nl, 2015a). This means that privatization is no longer a possibility.

1.3 The Dutch drinking water benchmark

From 1997 until the benchmark of 2009 participation in the Dutch drinking water benchmark was voluntary. It was organized every three years by the Association of Dutch water companies (VEWIN) and was made public (VEWIN, 2010).

Since then the drinking water benchmark, as part of the new Drinking Water Act of 2009, has become mandatory for all drinking water supply companies. The Ministry of Infrastructure and the Environment (IenM) is responsible for the benchmark (Overheid.nl, 2015b). The execution of the benchmark is delegated to the Human Environment and Transport Inspectorate (ILT). The benchmark has to be executed conform a protocol, which has to be approved by the Minister of IenM (ILT, 2014). Five years after the implementation of the Drinking Water Act, the effectiveness of Chapter 5 of the Drinking Water Act has to be evaluated by the Minister of IenM (Overheid.nl, 2015c). The Dutch drinking water companies also have to hand in an improvement plan within 6 months after the benchmark publication. In the improvement plans the drinking water companies state their intentions to improve their performances (ILT, 2016). The Dutch drinking water benchmark focuses on four themes: 'water quality', 'customer service', 'environmental impact' and 'financial performance'.

In addition to the 3-yearly mandatory Dutch drinking water benchmark, two more benchmarks are carried out by the Dutch drinking water companies. A voluntarily 'small' benchmark, focused mostly on 'financial performance', is carried out annually. The results of this benchmark is available to the drinking water companies only. Since 2007 the Dutch drinking water companies participate in the European benchmark for European water- and wastewa-

ter utilities. In 2016, 45 utilities, of which all 10 Dutch drinking water utilities, from 20 different countries participated in the annual European benchmark (European Benchmarking Co-operation, 2016).

The Dutch drinking water benchmark has always had two main objectives: transparency and improving of business processes (VEWIN, 2010). Even though these are still the main objectives, the mandatory character of the benchmark has changed the character of these objectives.

The voluntarily executed benchmark was used as an instrument to provide transparency to stakeholders and to give insight what business processes the companies could improve. Since the benchmark is now legally mandatory, it has changed from an improvement driven instrument to an instrument for accountability (VEWIN, 2013).

1.4 Drivers for improvement in the Dutch drinking water benchmark

The benchmark contributed to the performance improvements in the Dutch drinking water sector. The results show, however, that the improvements are getting smaller over the years (ILT, 2016; VEWIN, 2013). In order to know why the improvements are getting smaller, the drivers of the Dutch drinking water benchmark have to be known.

In research by de Goede et al. (2016) five drivers that motivate organizations for performance improvement of the Dutch drinking water benchmark were identified (de Goede et al., 2016):

- Learning effect: low scoring organizations learn from higher scoring organizations in the benchmark
- Enhanced transparency: the government and customers get insight into the performances of the participating organizations
- Managed competition: the participating organizations compete with each other for the best position in the benchmark
- Avoidance of negative consequences: in order to prevent government control, organizations want to show good performances
- Personal honour of director: directors want to score high in the benchmark due to personal honour

1.5 Thesis aim

The research question of this thesis is:

What is the influence of the inclusion of the benchmark into the Drinking Water Act on the improvement driven part of the benchmark according to the Dutch drinking water companies?

The sub-questions are:

- What changes are experienced as a consequence of the shifting from voluntarily to mandatory?
- What are the consequences of the mandatory character of the benchmark on the drivers for performance improvement?
- What part do the improvement plans play?
- What is needed to keep the drinking water organizations stimulated to improve and not only focused on accountability?

Chapter 2

Research methods

The analysis of this research is based on documents, interviews and part of a survey. Seven (out of ten) Dutch drinking water companies participated in semi-structured interviews. From five participating drinking water companies the benchmark coordinators were interviewed. From one organization the old benchmark coordinator was interviewed and from one organization an assistant of the benchmark coordinator was interviewed. The interviews took 30 to 90 minutes.

It was decided to interview the benchmark coordinators of the drinking water utilities because these people are familiar with how the benchmark is used in their organization and how the change from voluntary to mandatory is experienced.

The interviews were recorded with the use of an audio-recorder and transcribed. This was done to improve the reliability of the research. The questionnaire of the interviews is found in Appendix A.1. The semi-structured interviews were guided by the following list of themes:

- Differences in execution of the benchmark by VEWIN and ILT
- Differences between the use of the voluntary and mandatory benchmark in their organization
- The improvement plans
- A new possible improvement driven instrument

First, the relevant answers from the transcribed interviews were selected and then labels were assigned to the answers. The labels were grouped and analysed.

The survey is part of the PhD project 'Improvement and broadening of the Dutch drinking water benchmark' at the TU Delft. The survey was distributed along the management team, board of directors and the shareholders of three drinking water companies. In total 28 people from these companies participated.

The questions of the survey about the benchmark were used in this research. The participants were asked if the changes have influence on how they experience the benchmark and what they think are the most important aspects of the benchmark. The questionnaire of the survey can be found in Appendix A.2.

The relevant questions of the survey were selected. The answers were labelled and grouped.

Chapter 3

Results

3.1 Changes experienced as a consequence of the shifting from a voluntarily to a mandatory benchmark

Five of the seven interviewees state that the character of the benchmark has changed. Whereas it was first only an improvement driven instrument, the drinking water companies see it now also as an instrument for accountability (Source: Interviews).

The drinking water companies experience that the benchmark, after it was adopted into the Drinking Water Act, is getting more attention within their organization. One of the interviewees stated: ‘The good thing about the whole process, including the mandatory character of the benchmark, is that it is taken more seriously.’ This has increased the reliability and transparency of the benchmark (Source: Interviews).

This could be explained by the fact that the Dutch drinking water companies are monopolists, so the survival of the organization is not dependant of the performances compared to the other organizations. Therefore they might be less inclined to use the benchmark information to improve (van Helden and Tillema, 2005). Still, the drinking water companies wanted to show an acceptable level of performance to prevent interference from higher authorities. By enforcing the participation by law the performances are getting more important. The supervising authorities can emphasize the importance of improving the efficiency and lowering the costs (Nutt and Backoff, 1993).

By shifting the responsibilities from VEWIN to ILT, the Dutch drinking water companies have less control over the development of the benchmark. When the VEWIN was responsible for the execution of the benchmark, it needed the approval of the drinking water companies before things could be changed in the benchmark. The interviewees all agree that having a say about the development of the benchmark is important, because they are the ones that have to use the benchmark (Source: Interviews).

The ILT does not need approval from the Dutch drinking water companies to make changes in the benchmark. The protocol, which is approved by the Minister of IenM, presents what information the organizations have to send to the ILT (ILT, 2014). However, the interviewees indicate that it is still possible for the Dutch drinking water organizations to get together with VEWIN to discuss new ideas for the benchmark. VEWIN, in turn, consults with the ILT about these new inputs. The interviewees believe that the ILT is open to their opinion and that the ILT wants to have a productive working relationship with the drinking water

sector, although it is still too early to confirm this (Source: Interviews).

3.2 Influence of mandatory character of the benchmark on the drivers

The mandatory character of the benchmark is one of the identified issues that can lead to stagnation of further improvement (de Goede et al., 2016). The consequences of the issue on the five drivers was explored in the research by de Goede et al. (2016). The interviewees, using their experience after two mandatory benchmarks, have indicated the consequences of the mandatory character on the five drivers. An overview of these results are shown in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1: Consequences of the issue 'mandatory character' on the five drivers in 2013 and 2017

Driver	2013	2017
Learning effect	–	0
Enhanced transparency	– –	+
Managed competition	++	0
Avoidance of negative consequences	+	0
Personal honour of director	+	?

The mandatory participation of the benchmark was first considered to be a negative development (de Goede et al., 2016). Whereas now six interviewees and 22 out of 28 people participating in the survey think about it as a neutral or even positive development (Source: Interviews, Survey).

As said before, the drinking water companies think the benchmark changed from an improvement driven instrument to an instrument for regulation. Even though this can lead to too much focus on the regulation objective compared to the learning objective (de Bruijn, 2002; van Helden and Brouwer, 2005), the interviewees do not indicate that the learning effect is negatively influenced by this.

Another reason the learning effect was considered to be negatively influenced by the mandatory benchmark was that the sharing of knowledge may become lower (de Goede et al., 2016). However, in the public sector organizations do not compete with each other and therefore there is no barrier to exchange knowledge (Tillema, 2006). All the interviewed drinking water companies acknowledged that they still work cooperatively and share their knowledge (Source: Interviews).

Transparency was thought to be negatively influenced by the mandatory character of the benchmark, because participating organizations could be encouraged to show strategic behaviour. This means that they would be too focused on showing good performance instead of executing good performance (de Goede et al., 2016). According to the interviewees the most important goal for their organizations is to have safe and clean drinking water for the lowest possible price. The benchmark is just a means to an end (Source: Interviews).

Since the benchmark is mandatory, the attention for the benchmark has increased. The benchmark is sent to the Minister of IenM, who in turn will send it to the House of Representatives and the Senate (ILT, 2014). If the performances do not meet an acceptable level,

the expected media and public attention for the benchmark will be higher than before. The fast growing social media also causes this. The drinking water companies are aware of this possible exposure and want to prevent any negative publicity (Source: Interviews). This has a positive influence on the driver 'enhanced transparency'.

In 2015 the seventh benchmark was organized. Over the years, the position of each company in the benchmark became clear. Although there are sometimes still some small fluctuations, the interviewed companies have all accepted their position in the benchmark. All interviewees state that the reason why they are at a certain position is more important than the position itself (Source: Interviews). They point out that the differences between the companies are mainly because of external factors, such as companies using groundwater and companies using surface water (Source: Interviews). The degree of competition has not changed since the benchmark became mandatory. In other words, the mandatory character has no influence on the driver 'managed competition'.

The opinion of the drinking water companies about the driver 'avoidance of negative consequences' deviates. Two out of seven interviewees state that the mandatory character has a positive influence on the driver. Since the benchmark is part of the Drinking Water Act, the benchmark is more important within their organizations. An interviewee said: 'The benchmark is getting more attention within our organization, because we fear negative publicity.' The others state that the mandatory character has no influence on the driver. They already want to perform the best they can and they do not need government control to accomplish this (Source: Interviews).

None of the interviewees is a director, so they cannot tell if the driver 'personal honour of director' is influenced by the mandatory character of the benchmark.

3.3 The role of the improvement plans

The drinking water companies use the benchmark to identify business processes that need improvement. In order to stimulate this improvement, they have to write this down in an improvement plan within 6 months after publication of the benchmark (ILT, 2016).

The majority of the interviewees believe that the improvement plans will stimulate improvement, but this will need time. They indicate that the improvement plans are already used within their organization to see if they are on track, or they are planning to use it in the nearby future (Source: Interviews). The improvement plans force the organizations not only to look back at their accomplishments but also to plan ahead. Although all of them state that their organization already looks forward, they are now obliged to report it.

The interviewees give two reasons why the improvement plans do not work properly yet. Firstly, the Ministry of IenM or the ILT does not comment on the improvement plans. The actual results of the benchmark are not compared to the expected results of the improvement plan. Since the drinking water organizations do not get any feedback, they think the improvement plans are just a burdensome duty (Source: Interviews). One of the interviewees described it as follows: 'We have delivered the improvement plan. We fulfilled our obligation. But what is done with it, we have no clue.'

Secondly, the improvement plans have to be handed in 6 months after the publication of

the benchmark. The publication of the benchmark is already 1 year later than the moment the drinking water companies have sent their data to the ILT. This means that they only have 1.5 years to accomplish the improvements. In order to increase the positive effect the improvement plans could have, the organizations plead for a faster publication of both the benchmark and the improvement plans (Source: Interviews).

3.4 An new instrument to stimulate improvement

The stimulation for improvement is mostly stagnated because of the decrease of variation in the performance indicators (de Goede et al., 2016). First of all, the variation decreased because the number of companies decreased from 23 drinking water companies in 1997 to 10 drinking water companies nowadays. The second reason is that the performances of the participating organizations converge to an average level as a result of the previous benchmarks, resulting in a decrease of performance variation. By comparing the same participants each time, the information will become of less value (van Helden and Tillema, 2005).

To increase the variability, either the drinking water companies could be compared on new themes in an additional voluntary benchmark or in the existing Dutch drinking water benchmark. The new themes could be fixed or adaptable. Although the interviewees agree that the benchmark is ready for some changes, they have concerns about both ideas.

First of all, the interviewees are not keen on introducing an additional benchmark, since it will take lots of extra time (Source: Interviews).

Secondly, the interviewed companies indicate that the current benchmark is still used as an instrument to compare performances. The themes, 'water quality', 'customer service', 'environmental impact' and 'financial performance', are the most important issues for the Dutch drinking water companies (Source: Interviews). The survey shows that 23 out of 28 people indicate that there is no need for new themes (Source: Survey). Six out of seven interviewees also believe that the benchmark still leads to improvements, although small, because technologies, like water treatment and digitisation, develop.

The idea of changing the benchmark into an adaptive benchmark is viewed positively (Source: Interviews). In an adaptive benchmark the themes are not fixed and could be changed based on developments that influence the Dutch drinking water sector (de Goede et al., 2016). The interviewees indicate that there are some indicators that are 'exhausted', although they also indicate that they do not know if the ILT has reasons to keep them in the benchmark. It is important that new indicators stay in the benchmark for a longer period, because then it is possible to compare and learn from each other. A new theme that is named by almost all interviewees that could be interesting for the sector is asset management.

As said before, the Dutch drinking water companies do not have a say in the development of the benchmark. So, even if they want to change themes or indicators, they first have to consult with and convince the ILT. Moreover, the drinking water organizations do not want the government to interfere more than necessary (Source: Interviews). If the organizations introduce a new topic for the mandatory benchmark and it turns out to be less helpful than expected, then the workload increases, but the drinking water companies will not benefit from it.

There are two alternatives for introducing a benchmark with new themes. Firstly, the Dutch drinking water companies have an annually 'small' benchmark focusing on mostly the theme 'financial performance'. This 'small' benchmark is voluntary and therefore the Dutch

drinking water sector is free to choose their own themes and indicators.

The second alternative is the European benchmark. It is easier to get the approval for new themes from the members of the European benchmark than from the Dutch government (Source: Interviews). The disadvantage of the European benchmark is that it is more difficult to compare the performances with drinking water supply companies from other countries.

Another possibility might be that the responsibilities for the benchmark will be shifting from the ILT to VEWIN again. The effectiveness of the implementation of the benchmark into the Drinking Water Act has been reviewed on behalf of the Ministry of IenM by Andersson Elffers Felix (2017). The assessment shows that the ILT is failing its duty and it advises to shift the responsibilities from the ILT to VEWIN again (Andersson Elffers Felix, 2017). However it should be noted that this is still a draft version of the report. If this would happen, the drinking water companies would have a greater say in the development and implementation of the benchmark.

Chapter 4

Discussion and conclusions

4.1 Discussion

This study identified the changes experienced as a consequence of the shifting from a voluntarily benchmark to a mandatory benchmark from the point of view of the benchmark coordinators of the Dutch drinking water companies. The benchmark coordinators are responsible for the benchmark within their organizations and therefore know how the benchmark is used. To be able to say with more certainty that this is the perspective of the Dutch drinking water sector, more employees of the drinking water utilities could be interviewed.

The differences between the influence of mandatory character of the benchmark on the drivers of this research and the research by de Goede et al. (2016) can be explained by two reasons. Firstly, in the research by de Goede et al. (2016) directors and benchmark coordinators were interviewed, instead of only benchmark coordinators. Directors are responsible for the policy of the company and therefore could have a different point of view. Secondly, the research by de Goede et al. (2016) was done just after the implementation of the mandatory benchmark. Whereas this research is done four years later. The perspective of the drinking water companies could have changed after the experiences of the past few years.

This study has focused on the perspective of the Dutch drinking water companies. In order to get a broader view on the topic, the Ministry of IenM, the ILT and VEWIN could be interviewed.

4.2 Conclusions

A couple of conclusions can be drawn from the study on the influence of the inclusion of the benchmark into the Drinking Water Act on the improvement driven part of the benchmark.

- The benchmark has changed from only being an improvement driven instrument to an instrument for regulation as well. This increases the reliability and transparency of the benchmark. It also means that the drinking water companies have no longer the only control over the development of the benchmark.
- The mandatory character has not really influence on the drivers for performance improvement. Only the driver 'enhanced transparency' is (positively) influenced by the mandatory character.

- The improvement plans could have a positive effect on the stimulation of improvement in the future. A feedback system should be implemented and the publications of the benchmark and improvement plans have to be faster.
- The Dutch drinking water companies still think the benchmark is of use, although they do believe that an adaptive benchmark could stimulate improvement again.

Bibliography

- Andersson Elffers Felix (2017). Evaluatie doelmatigheid Drinkwaterwet - Concept Eindrapport.
- de Bruijn, H. (2002). *Managing Performance in the Public Sector*. Routledge, London.
- de Goede, M., Enserink, B., Worm, I., and van der Hoek, J. P. (2016). Drivers for performance improvement originating from the Dutch drinking water benchmark. *Water Policy*, 18(5):1247–1266.
- European Benchmarking Co-operation (2016). 2016 Water & Wastewater Benchmark - Learning from International Best Practices.
- ILT (2014). Protocol Prestatievergelijking drinkwaterbedrijven 2015.
- ILT (2016). Prestatievergelijking drinkwaterbedrijven 2015.
- Nutt, P. C. and Backoff, R. W. (1993). Organizational Publicness and Its Implications For Strategic Management. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 3(2):209–231.
- Overheid.nl (2009). Waterleidingwet. Retrieved on August 2017 at <http://wetten.overheid.nl/BWBR0002246/2009-07-01>.
- Overheid.nl (2015a). Drinkwaterwet - Hoofdstuk II. Retrieved on September 2017 at <http://wetten.overheid.nl/BWBR0026338/2015-07-01#HoofdstukII>.
- Overheid.nl (2015b). Drinkwaterwet - Hoofdstuk V. De doelmatigheid van de openbare drinkwatervoorziening. Retrieved on September 2017 at <http://wetten.overheid.nl/BWBR0026338/2015-07-01#HoofdstukV>.
- Overheid.nl (2015c). Drinkwaterwet - Hoofdstuk X. Evaluatie. Retrieved on September 2017 at <http://wetten.overheid.nl/BWBR0026338/2015-07-01#HoofdstukX>.
- Rijksoverheid (2009). Schoon en betrouwbaar drinkwater. Retrieved on August 2017 at <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/actueel/nieuws/2009/07/08/schoon-en-betrouwbaar-drinkwater>.
- Tillema, S. (2006). Gebruik van benchmarkinginformatie in de publieke sector - Case-onderzoek onder waterschappen naar het gebruik van benchmarkinginformatie voor prestatieverbetering. *Maandblad voor Accountancy en Bedrijfseconomie*, 80(6):300–308.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- van Helden, G. J. and Brouwer, N. (2005). Benchmarking en prestatieverbetering in de publieke sector - Ervaringen met de bedrijfsvergelijking zuiveringsbeheer. *Maandblad voor Accountancy en Bedrijfseconomie*, 79(11):573–581.
- van Helden, G. J. and Tillema, S. (2005). In Search of a Benchmarking Theory for the Public Sector. *Financial Accountability and Management*, 21(3):337–361.
- VEWIN (1999). Water in zicht - Benchmarking in de drinkwatersector.
- VEWIN (2009). Hoogste tijd voor nieuwe wet. *Waterspiegel update*, (8):2–3.
- VEWIN (2010). Water in Zicht 2009 - Bedrijfsvergelijking in de drinkwatersector.
- VEWIN (2013). Water in zicht 2012: Bedrijfsvergelijking drinkwatersector.

Appendix A

Questionnaires

A.1 Interviews

Algemeen

- Hoe lang bent u al benchmarkcoördinator?
- Wat valt er in uw bedrijf onder deze functie?

VEWIN vs. ILT

Sinds 2012 wordt de benchmark uitgevoerd onder verantwoordelijkheid van De Inspectie Leefomgeving en Transport (ILT). De prestatievergelijking wordt nu uitgevoerd volgens een protocol dat wordt goedgekeurd door de Minister van Infrastructuur en Milieu (IenM).

- Is het doel van de benchmark volgens u veranderd (stimuleren om te verbeteren vs. verantwoording afleggen)?
- De benchmark wordt nu volgens een bepaald protocol uitgevoerd. Voert de ILT de benchmark anders uit dan Vewin? Merkt u verschil in uitvoering?
- Is er verschil tussen Vewin en de ILT in mogelijkheden tot inspraak in de ontwikkelingen van de benchmark?
- Heeft u of uw bedrijf weleens ideeën om de benchmark aan te passen (nieuwe thema's, thema's anders meten)?
 - Zo ja, werd/wordt er naar deze ideeën geluisterd? (Vragen naar de situatie zowel bij de oude Vewin benchmark als bij ILT benchmark)
- Heeft u het idee dat de ILT/overheid open staat voor veranderingen aan de benchmark?
- Heeft u het idee dat Vewin open stond voor veranderingen aan de benchmark toen Vewin de benchmark nog uitvoerde?
 - Zo ja, hoe vond het proces van veranderingen doorvoeren plaats?
- In hoeverre vindt u het belangrijk dat er in de (nieuwe) benchmark ruimte is voor inspraak?

- Is de ILT open over de plannen die ze in de toekomst hebben met de benchmark naar de drinkwaterbedrijven toe?
- Als u de Vewin- en de ILT-benchmark naast elkaar legt, ziet u dan het verschuiven van de verantwoordelijkheid van Vewin naar ILT als een negatieve of positieve ontwikkeling? Waarom?

Vrijwillig vs. verplicht

- Wordt er meer aandacht vanuit uw bedrijf aan de benchmark besteed nu de benchmark verplicht is? In welke opzichten?
- Is, door de verplichting, het voor uw bedrijf belangrijker geworden om goed te scoren op de benchmark? Waarom wel/niet?
 - Gaat dit ten koste van prestaties van themas die niet in de benchmark voorkomen?
 - Zou dit veranderen als er consequenties verbonden zouden zijn aan de prestaties van de benchmark?
- Is goed scoren op bepaalde themas van de benchmark een doel dat actief wordt nagestreefd binnen uw bedrijf? Zo ja, op welke themas?
 - Zijn dit themas die uw bedrijf belangrijk vindt of door de benchmark belangrijk zijn geworden?
- Heeft de verplichting van de benchmark ertoe geleid dat uw bedrijf andere themas belangrijker is gaan vinden?
- Vindt u dat door de verandering van vrijwillig naar verplicht de concurrentie tussen de drinkwaterbedrijven is toegenomen?
 - Zo ja, vindt u dit een positieve (virtuele concurrentie/prestige beter willen zijn dan je concurrenten) of negatieve (leereffect minder kennis delen door concurrentie) ontwikkeling?
- Denkt u dat de concurrentie (verder) zal toenemen als de overheid besluit om aan bepaalde resultaten consequenties te verbinden?
 - Zou u dit als een positieve of negatieve ontwikkeling zien?
- Als u de verplichte en vrijwillige benchmark naast elkaar legt, ziet u dan de verplichte deelname als een negatieve of positieve ontwikkeling? Waarom?

Verbetermechanismes

Uit de interviews van 4 jaar geleden is gebleken dat het verplichte karakter van de benchmark zowel positieve als negatieve gevolgen kan hebben op de verbetermechanismes.

Verbetermechanismes:

Leereffect = laag scorende bedrijven kunnen leren van hoog scorende bedrijven

Transparantie = overheid en consumenten krijgen inzicht in prestaties van de deelnemende bedrijven

Virtuele competitie = bedrijven concurreren met elkaar om de hoogste plek in de benchmark
Vermijden van overheidsbemoeienis = om overheidsbemoeienis te voorkomen, willen bedrijven laten zien dat ze goed presteren

Prestige bedrijf en directeur = vanuit een persoonlijk eergevoel willen directeuren een hoge plek in de benchmark

- Vindt u dat het leereffect van de verplichte benchmark is toegenomen of afgenomen t.o.v. de vrijwillige benchmark? Waarom?
- Vindt u dat de transparantie door de verplichte benchmark is toegenomen of afgenomen t.o.v. de vrijwillige benchmark? Waarom?
- Vindt u dat de virtuele competitie door de verplichte benchmark is toegenomen of afgenomen t.o.v. de vrijwillige benchmark? Waarom?
- Vindt u dat het vermijden van overheidsbemoeienis door de verplichte benchmark is toegenomen of afgenomen t.o.v. de vrijwillige benchmark? Waarom?
- Vindt u dat het verbetermechanisme prestige van bedrijf en directeur door de verplichte benchmark is toegenomen of afgenomen t.o.v. de vrijwillige benchmark? Waarom?

Verbeterplannen

De drinkwaterbenchmark wordt al enige jaren uitgevoerd. Uit de theorie is bekend dat het nut van een benchmark kan afnemen naarmate de benchmark langer gebruikt wordt. Het leereffect kan minder worden en de prestaties van de bedrijven kunnen dichter bij elkaar komen te liggen. Sinds 2012 moeten de drinkwaterbedrijven binnen 6 maanden nadat de rapportage is uitgebracht een verbeterplan opstellen. Dit zou moeten bijdragen aan het leereffect van de benchmark. Na de invoering hebben de drinkwaterbedrijven hun twijfels over de verbeterplannen.

- Welk doel hebben de verbeterplannen volgens u?
- Wordt dit doel bereikt?
- Wat vindt u van de verbeterplannen?
- Krijgen jullie feedback op de verbeterplannen?
- Wordt er (door de ILT) gecontroleerd of de verbeterplannen worden uitgevoerd?
- Zijn er consequenties als de verbeterplannen niet worden uitgevoerd? Zou dit helpen?
- Zou u weer terug willen naar de georganiseerde best practice bijeenkomsten?
- Denkt u dat er een beter alternatief is voor de verbeterplannen?

Toekomst van de benchmark

Het effect van de benchmark is de afgelopen jaren gestagneerd. Daarom moet de benchmark zich verder ontwikkelen om weer een positief effect te krijgen.

Enkele ideeën zijn:

Nieuwe vaste themas zorgt voor meer variatie waardoor de verbetermechanismen positief beïnvloed worden

Adaptieve benchmark met wisselende themas zie hierboven, met het verschil dat in een adaptieve benchmark de themas aangepast kunnen worden, gebaseerd op ontwikkelingen die invloed hebben op de drinkwatersector

Verhogen van aantal deelnemers cross-sector of internationaal, zorgt voor meer variatie

Verhogen van betrokkenheid klant de klant betrekken bij het bepalen van nieuwe themas of hoe zwaar bepaalde themas mee moeten tellen, verhoogt de transparantie en leereffect (drinkwaterbedrijven zullen beter begrijpen wat de klant belangrijk vindt)

- Vindt u dat de benchmark nog optimaal functioneert?
- Vindt u dat de benchmark toe is aan veranderingen?
- Heeft uw bedrijf interesse in vergelijking op nieuwe themas om van elkaar te leren?
 - Welke themas vindt u daarvoor interessant?
 - Hoe kan volgens u dit leer/verbeter proces het best plaatsvinden? (vergelijking via een benchmark/bijeenkomsten met alle bedrijven/bilateraal met ander bedrijf/andere mogelijkheid)

Stel, er komt een nieuwe vrijwillige benchmark, gefocust op lange termijn (met themas als asset management, risk management, innovatie + themas genoemd in antwoord op vorige vraag) en gericht op leer en verbetereffect i.p.v. verantwoord

- Heeft het uw voorkeur dat deze vrijwillige benchmark in plaats komt van de huidige verplichte benchmark of juist naast de huidige verplichte benchmark?
- Hoe belangrijk vindt u het om adaptiviteit (c.q. mogelijkheden voor veranderingen) in te bouwen in de benchmark?
- Hoe denkt u dat het best besloten kan worden over die veranderingen? Kies 1 of meer uit de volgende lijst :
 1. Objectief besluitvormingsmodel voor nieuwe themas based on future analysis
 2. Stemmen van directeuren, meerderheid beslist
 3. Specifieke stuurgroep waarin gestemd wordt, en meerderheid beslist
 4. Expert panel neemt besluit over nieuwe themas
 5. Vewin neemt besluit over nieuwe themas
 6. ILT of ministerie neemt besluit over nieuwe themas
 7. Heb je zelf nog andere ideeën hoe besluiten over benchmark plaats kunnen vinden?
- Wat vindt u van het idee om klanten meer te betrekken bij de ontwikkelingen van de benchmark (bijv. kiezen van nieuwe themas of hangen van gewichten aan themas)?

A.2 Survey

- Hoe gebruikt u de benchmark in uw functie?
 - Niet
 - Ter kennisgeving
 - Als belangrijk hulpmiddel bij mijn functie
 - Anders
- Vindt u de verplichte deelname aan de benchmark een positieve of negatieve ontwikkeling?
 - Positief
 - Neutraal
 - Negatief
- Hebben de veranderingen invloed op hoe u de benchmark gebruikt?
 - Ja
 - Nee
- Hebben deze veranderingen invloed op de waarde die u hecht aan de uitkomsten van de benchmark?
 - Ja
 - Nee
- Welk onderdeel van de benchmark vindt u het meest interessant?
 - Drinkwaterkwaliteit
 - Financien
 - Dienstverlening
 - Milieu
- Mist u thema's in de benchmark?
 - Ja
 - Nee