PRESS RELEASE
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Policy Brief: *The potential of the wastewater sector in the energy transition*

A newly released Policy Brief from the EU-funded project PowerStep demonstrates that turning wastewater treatment plants into efficient renewable energy generators firmly complements the current goals of strengthening the European economy, coupled with securing its energy system and making a significant contribution to Europe's international climate and sustainable development commitments. The Brief puts forward a set of policy recommendations at the EU level aimed at enabling the full potential of energy neutral or energy positive wastewater treatment plants using the PowerStep concept.

Today, European wastewater treatment plants consume the equivalent of more than two power plants' worth of energy every year and consume a considerable chunk (a fifth) of municipalities' electricity bills. The costs incurred by society equate to approximately €2 billion a year. Nonetheless, these plants could be producing up to twelve power plants' worth of efficient, renewable, flexible energy to contribute towards a low-carbon, circular development of the European economy.

The PowerStep project has demonstrated a range of full-scale lab-tested innovations for energy-positive wastewater treatment. At its heart, the concept is based on the extraction of increased organic matter from wastewater which is converted into biogas and subsequently applied to new or existing plants at a similar cost to conventional treatment, resulting in a reasonable payback time.

Boris Lesjean, Innovation Director of Veolia Germany, said: *"PowerStep has demonstrated the energy potential of wastewater as a local renewable energy. The industry is prepared to support European countries that wish to embrace this forward-thinking concept. Appropriate and stable European and national policy frameworks are required to fully exploit this potential."*

By detailing exactly which factors should be considered in influencing and directing future EU policy, the Brief explores and outlines the benefits of facilitating projects such as PowerStep. For example, the recognition of biogas from sewage as a renewable energy source and prioritising public support for it, the European Union can bolster the adoption of PowerStep technologies in wastewater treatment plants to support Europe in becoming a renewable energy leader.

The Brief also touches upon the necessary changes needed to be made vis-à-vis green public procurement criteria for wastewater treatment plants as well as investments and public subsidy policy. If extended and access simplified, the pair can unlock the full potential of energy neutral or energy positive wastewater treatment plants using the PowerStep concept.

In summation, the Brief highlights some of the major prospects and benefits the PowerStep concept can deliver for Europe, if EU policies are adapted and shaped to enhance the uptake of innovative wastewater technologies. By adhering to the 'Juncker Plan' as well as the Energy Union's five pillars,

PowerStep fully aligns with the EU's Energy Efficiency First commitment and it has the potential to aid the EU in reaching its renewable energy targets along with ensuring a flexible, affordable and secure energy system. This will lead Europe towards having a climate neutral water sector which produces greener, more sustainable energy as well as fostering innovation, green job growth and a circular economy.

"The POWERSTEP Policy Brief is a strong statement from the project consortium to policy-makers that energy-neutral or even energy-positive WWTPs are no longer a dream."

Christian Loderer, PowerStep Project Coordinator,
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Notes to Editors:
Join the final PowerStep conference at IFAT 2018, 16 – 17 May 2018, Munich, Germany.
Find out more about the event at http://powerstep.eu/powerstep-final-conference

Download the full policy brief *'THE POTENTIAL OF THE WASTEWATER SECTOR IN THE ENERGY TRANSITION'* at http://powerstep.eu/potential-of-wastewater-sector-energy-transition-policy-brief-published

The new policy brief published by the project shows how turning wastewater treatment plants into efficient renewable energy generators is a good fit with the current goals of strengthening the European economy and its energy system.

To enable the full potential of energy neutral or even energy positive wastewater treatment plants using the PowerStep concept, the main recommendations of the policy brief are that EU policymakers:

- #01 Recognise biogas from sewage as a renewable energy with a lower environmental footprint than other forms of biogas and biofuels.
- #02 Prioritise renewable energy from sewage for public support.
- #03 Extend green public procurement (GPP) criteria for wastewater treatment plants so that they promote energy neutral or energy positive plants as well as energy efficiency.
- #04 Grant access to cohesion/structural funds contingent on energy efficiency investments, including in wastewater treatment plants.
- #05 Make public subsidies for energy production at wastewater treatment plants contingent on the application of energy management systems.
- #06 Define power-to-gas (P2G) as a form of energy storage.