

International Water Resources Association

IWRA

IWRA World Water Congresses

Value Proposition for Potential Hosts

2026

www.worldwatercongress.com

International Water Resources Association

IWRA



Table of Contents

Policy impacts	4
Economic benefits	7
Lasting legacy	8
Funding and budget	9

INTRODUCTION

Hosting an IWRA World Water Congress offers cities, regions and countries a unique opportunity to position themselves at the centre of the international water and development agendas.

For over 50 years, IWRA World Water Congresses have brought together decision-makers, researchers, practitioners, international organisations, civil society and the private sector to advance solutions to some of the world's most pressing freshwater challenges and priorities.

For host destinations, our World Water Congresses generate significant international visibility, strengthen policy and institutional networks, showcase national and regional water expertise, generate economic returns and create lasting legacies through new partnerships, initiatives and programmes.

With a global network of over 6000 members from every region of the world, including Africa, Asia, Europe, Oceania, and the Americas, spanning across disciplines, levels and sectors, IWRA works closely with each host to deliver a Congress that responds to both local and global realities.

The following sections outline the policy, economic, legacy and financial dimensions of hosting such an impactful and well-known IWRA World Water Congress.

Policy impacts

IWRA World Water Congresses have served as a worldwide forum bridging water science, policy, and practice since 1973.

The World Water Congresses give host nations a platform to elevate regional and national water priorities globally, foster inter-institutional and international collaboration, and shape broader policy debates.

Previous IWRA Congresses, including World Water Congresses and Islands Water Congresses, have contributed significantly to policy and institutional outcomes.

VIII WORLD WATER CONGRESS - 1994 | CAIRO, EGYPT

The World Water Congress played a key role in the establishment of the World Water Council following a resolution in one special session, creating an institutional legacy that continues more than three decades later. Today, the Council is a highly-respected think-tank and an international platform at the forefront for water cooperation and dialogue.



Ministerial Roundtable during XIX World Water Congress

XIII WORLD WATER CONGRESS 2008 | MONTPELLIER, FRANCE

The World Water Congress strengthened collaboration across France's water sector and contributed to the creation of the French National Water Cluster, helping to build stronger connections between research, innovation, institutions and industry.

XV WORLD WATER CONGRESS 2015 | EDINBURGH, SCOTLAND

Hosting the World Water Congress provided an international platform for Scotland's Hydro Nation Programme, significantly raising its global profile and showcasing Scotland's approach to water governance, innovation and expertise to an international audience.



2025 World Water Envoys - the third cohort since its onset in 2021



XVII WORLD WATER CONGRESS 2021 | DAEGU, REPUBLIC OF KOREA

The World Water Congress launched the IWRA World Water Envoys Programme, establishing a new initiative for engaging early-career professionals in addressing water challenges and connecting local action from their communities with international knowledge and experience.

1ST ISLANDS WATER CONGRESS 2024 | FAROE ISLANDS

The Islands Water Congress translated international dialogue into a concrete framework for continued cooperation through the adoption of the Tórshavn Dialogue on Sustainable Freshwater Management on Islands, establishing a framework for continued collaboration among island communities. It also established an international water law expert group and a new Water Forum in the Faroes, both of which helped to promote discussion of the Water Act in this archipelago, and launched a new IWRA Task Force on Water & Islands.

XIX WORLD WATER CONGRESS - 2025 | MARRAKECH, MOROCCO

The Congress culminated in the adoption of both the Marrakech Declaration and Ministerial Declaration, translating high-level dialogue into a shared international commitment to:

- accelerating progress towards Sustainable Development Goal 6;
- strengthening Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM);
- positing Morocco towards the 2026 UN Water Conference;
- promoting integrated approaches linking water, climate, energy, food, and health systems;
- and, addressing the future of water.

Economic benefits

By drawing a substantial global audience to the host location, an IWRA World Water Congress stimulates economic growth as a major event across hospitality, tourism, local business, and many other sectors.

For instance, the World Water Congress typically features:

- **1,500 - 3,000 international participants**
- **500 – 700 speakers**
- **250 – 350 regular sessions**
- **200 - 300 special sessions**
- **150–200 exhibitors**
- **2,000–3,000 m² exhibition space**

The event brings together international delegates representing governments, academic institutions, public utilities, international organisations, NGOs, and private sector entities.

Hosting the World Water Congress elevates the global profile of both the host city and country, highlighting the destination to an audience of water professionals, decision-makers, and key institutions worldwide.

In addition to increased visibility, the World Water Congress drives local economic impact by stimulating demand for accommodation, dining, transportation, and related services. Technical excursions along with pre- and post-event tourism options further extend economic benefits across the broader region.

For additional insights into funding structures and budget details, please see *Section 5*.



Retno Marsudi, UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy on Water, speaking during a High-Level Panel at the XIX World Water Congress

Lasting legacy

IWRA World Water Congresses are designed to create value that extends well beyond the event itself.

Working with each host, IWRA supports the development of initiatives and partnerships that build on the World Water Congress and its outcomes.

Depending on host priorities and destination context, the legacy of a World Water Congress can include:

- new national and international partnerships;
- international declarations, agreements and frameworks for continued cooperation;
- strengthened institutional networks and expertise;
- long-term youth engagement and capacity building;
- local community programmes;
- establishment of IWRA Geographic Chapters and thematic Task Forces;
- participation in the World Water Envoys Programme; and,
- initiatives supporting progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals and the future of water.

This approach has received international recognition. In 2022, the IWRA World Water Envoys Programme received the ICCA–BestCities Incredible Impacts Award for its lasting impact.

Example: *Legacy of the 1st Islands Water Congress, Faroe Islands*

The inaugural Islands Water Congress also led to a series of concrete outcomes supporting continued cooperation on island water management. Legacy outcomes included:

- Tórshavn Dialogue on Sustainable Freshwater Management, as mentioned in Section 2;
- establishment of an international legal expert group drawn from the Congress' International Scientific Committee;
- a new local Water Forum to bring all stakeholders together in the archipelago;
- creation of the IWRA Islands & Water Task Force; and,
- the development of the Faroe Islands Water Act to address at Parliament.

Funding and budget

Financial arrangements for each IWRA World Water Congress are agreed individually between IWRA and the host organisation, allowing the financial model to reflect the local context, scale and goals of each World Water Congress.

The host organisation develops and manages the World Water Congress budget and secures the resources required for its delivery. World Water Congresses can generate income through a range of sources, including:

- Registration fees
- Sponsorship and public/private funding
- Exhibition and booth sales
- Institutional and government support
- Other locally generated revenue streams

The budget should also account for the principal costs associated with delivering a high-quality international World Water Congress, which typically include:

- IWRA hosting fee
- Venue and meeting room rental
- Catering
- Registration systems
- Communications, promotion and printing
- Conference operations and staffing
- Technical and interpretation services, where required
- Field and technical visits
- Costs associated with invited speakers and IWRA representatives
- Social and networking events
- Other operational and logistical requirements

Beyond direct Congress revenue, the host city or region may benefit economically from increased visitor spending on accommodation, dining, transportation, tourism and other local services.

INDICATIVE BUDGET EXAMPLES FROM PREVIOUS WORLD WATER CONGRESSES

Income

Revenue Streams	World Water Congress A (based on 1500 attendees)	World Water Congress B (based on 1500 - 2500 delegates)
Registration Fees	€ 320,000	€ 480,000
Sponsorship & Public/ Private Funding	€ 510,000	€ 650,000
Exhibition Booths	€ 130,000	€ 260,000
Total Projected Revenue	**€ 960,000**	**€ 1,330,000**

These examples illustrate how previous World Water Congresses have combined registration revenue with sponsorship, public/ private funding and exhibition income to finance the event on top of any other ticketed social gathering.



Session at the XVIII World Water Congress

Expenditure

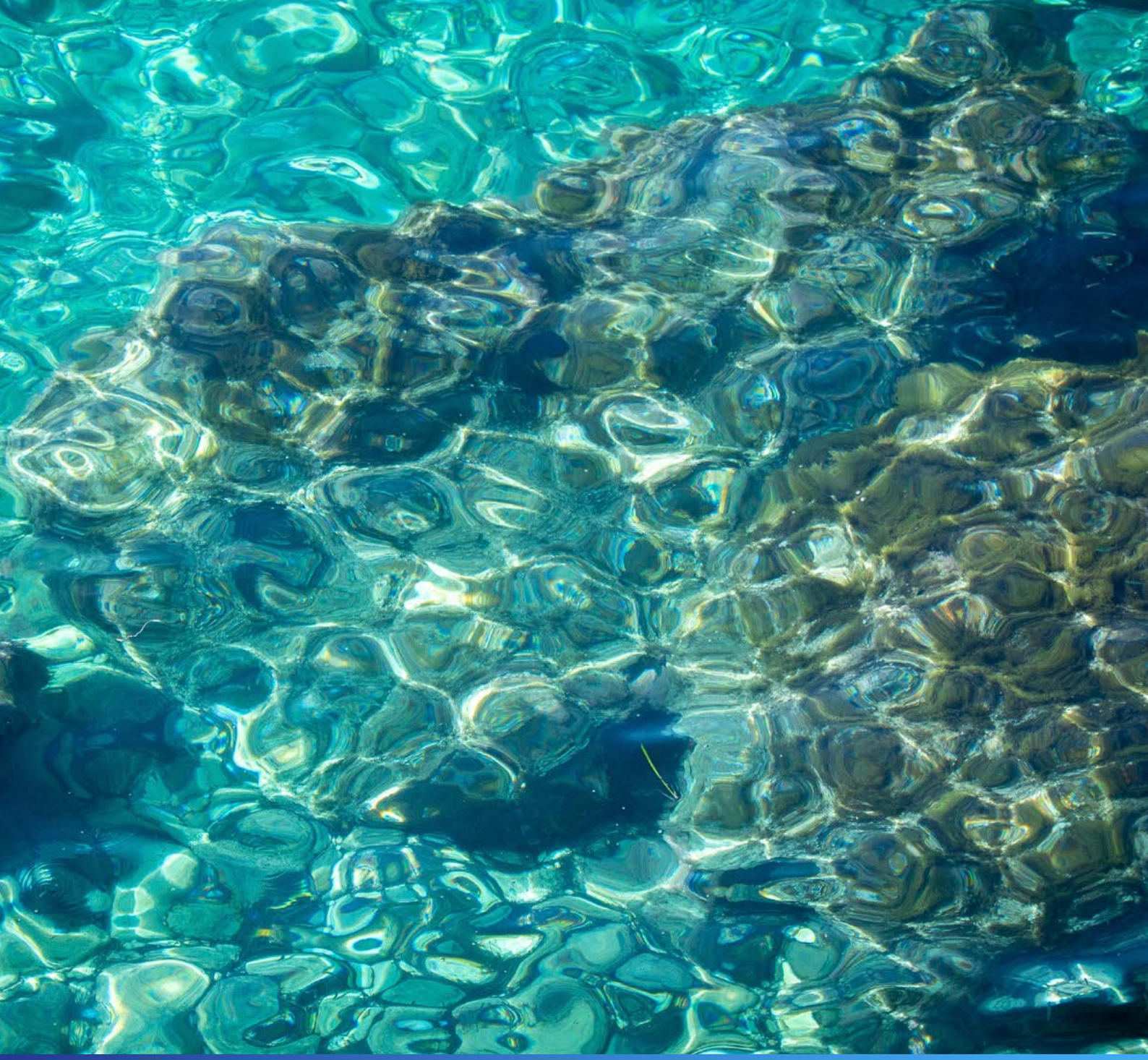
Budget Category	World Water Congress A	World Water Congress B
IWRA Hosting Fee	€ 650,000	€ 650,000
Venue / Convention Centre Rental	€ 37,000	€ 60,000
Invited Speakers / IWRA Representatives	€ 81,000	€ 140,000
Catering	€ 76,300	€ 150,000
Registration System	€ 5,400	€ 20,000
Printing / Congress Materials	€ 13,000	€ 30,000
Promotion / Communications	€ 7,500	€ 15,000
Staff	€ 8,300	€ 55,000
Products / Decoration / Materials	€ 14,100	€ 30,000
Conference Operations / Management Services	€ 29,300	€ 100,000
Site / Technical Visits	€ 15,000	€ 30,000
PCO / Management Fee	€ 22,500	€ 50,000
Subtotal expenditure	**€ 959,400**	**€ 1,330,000**

Important: The figures are indicative and average estimates only. They do not represent local costs, fixed expenses, minimum financial requirements or any guaranteed revenues.

Actual income and expenditure will vary according to the host location, venue arrangements, participant numbers, programme design, allocated funding, sponsorship packages, among other important variables.

The IWRA hosting fee and respective financial responsibilities will be agreed with the host organisation and defined in the Terms of Reference and subsequent hosting agreement.





International
Water Resources
Association
IWRA

Executive Office:
International Water Resources
Association (IWRA)
22, rue de Madrid
75008 Paris
France

Contact:
Email: office@iwra.org
Phone: +33 6 44 20 57 53

www.iwra.org