



EUROPEAN SCIENTIFIC JOURNAL
by European Scientific Institute



Paper: **“Wastewater Treatment in Italy: From Cost Centre to Strategic Investment”**

Submitted: 19 February 2026

Accepted: 10 April 2026

Published: 30 April 2026

Corresponding Author: Francesco Perri

Doi: 10.19044/esj.2026.v22n10p32

Peer review:

Reviewer 1: Enriko Ceko
Wisdom University, Albania

Reviewer 2: Fjona Zeneli
University of Milan, Milano, Italy

Reviewer 3: Ndirangu Ngunjiri
University of Nairobi, Kenya

Reviewer 4: Blinded

ESJ Manuscript Evaluation Form 2026

This form is designed to summarize the manuscript peer review that you have completed and to ensure that you have considered all appropriate criteria in your review. Your review should provide a clear statement, to the authors and editors, of the modifications necessary before the paper can be published or the specific reasons for rejection.

Please respond within the appointed time so that we can give the authors timely responses and feedback.

NOTE: ESJ promotes peer review procedure based on scientific validity and technical quality of the paper (not perceived the impact). You are also not required to do proofreading of the paper. It could be recommended as part of the revision.

The copyrights of the report are on the publisher and the data can be used for research purposes.

ESJ editorial office would like to express its special gratitude for your time and efforts. Our editorial team is a substantial reason that stands ESJ out from the crowd!

Date Manuscript Received: 25/02/2026	Date Review Report Submitted: 02/03/2026
Manuscript Title: Wastewater treatment: from cost centre to strategic investment	
ESJ Manuscript Number: 20658	
You agree your name is revealed to the author of the paper: Yes	
You approve, your name as a reviewer of this paper, is available in the “review history” of the paper: You approve, this review report is available in the “review history” of the paper:	

Evaluation Criteria:

Please give each evaluation item a numeric rating on a 5-point scale, along with a thorough explanation for each point rating.

<i>Questions</i>	<i>Rating Result</i> [Poor] 1-5 [Excellent]
1. The title is clear and it is adequate to the content of the article.	
<i>The title represents the article details, it is clear and well stated</i>	
2. The abstract presents objectives, methods, and results.	
<i>Provides an overview of the article in summary, making it easier to understand the study's purpose and key findings, though more clarity needs to be made on the findings</i>	
3. There are a few grammatical errors and spelling mistakes in this article.	
<i>A few spelling mistakes are noted, which do not affect the quality of the paper. These grammatical errors need to be corrected, for example, by using plural instead of singular. The formatting is poor, making the article to look untidy and disorganized.</i>	
4. The study methods are explained clearly.	
<i>Research design is clear, which increases the credibility of the study; however, giving more detailed information on data collection and the analysis process would make the article clearer.</i>	

5. The results are clear and do not contain errors.	
<i>The results somehow address the objectives of the study, making it realizable, though detailed findings need to be stipulated and supported by the data.</i>	
6. The conclusions or summary are accurate and supported by the content.	
<i>The conclusion supports the study objectives well and is based on the findings made. The conclusion needs to be detailed for better policy implementation</i>	
7. The references are comprehensive and appropriate.	
<i>All the references are appropriate as written in the article</i>	

Overall Recommendation (mark an X with your recommendation) :

Accepted, no revision needed	
Accepted, minor revision needed	X
Return for major revision and resubmission	
Reject	

Comments and Suggestions to the Author(s): The article is clearly written, accept the article with minor revision, especially on the formatting structure, detailed methodology, findings, and conclusion. The author needs to follow the given guidelines.

Reviewer A:

Recommendation: Resubmit for Review

The TITLE is clear and it is adequate to the content of the article.

The current title is clear, adequate, and well aligned with the manuscript's argument.

The ABSTRACT clearly presents objectives, methods, results, and conclusions.

The abstract is formally complete, but: (i) it reads more like a policy-oriented synthesis than a rigorous research article; (ii) the methodology lacks precision; (iii) the results are not sharply summarised; (iv) the contribution is not clearly positioned within the literature.

1. Objectives are clear but generic;
2. Methods are present but weakly specified: You state: qualitative methodology supported by quantitative evidence, based on institutional documents, indicators and case studies. There is no specification of analytical strategy (systematic review, structured cost synthesis, comparative policy analysis?).
3. Results are stated, but not concretely formulated: You write: expected results indicate a positive social balance...there are no expected results in a finished paper!

There are a few grammatical errors and spelling mistakes in this article.

Yes, there are several grammatical errors, awkward constructions, and spelling inconsistencies in the manuscript.

1. Articles and prepositions;
2. Several expressions sound translated rather than written in academic English;
3. "collect-trait-discharge" (should be collect-treat-discharge), "da fanghi" → Italian word left in English text, etc.
4. Some paragraphs are rhetorical rather than analytical, some sentences are very long and overloaded, and some constructions are persuasive but not academically neutral.

The study METHODS are explained clearly.

No, the Methods are described, but they are not explained clearly enough for a research article.

They are understandable at a general level, but they lack methodological precision and analytical transparency.

The section describes sources, but not a methodological design. For example: You list: EU directives, OECD estimates, WHO cost-benefit ratios, and case evidence. But you do not explain:

1. How documents were selected (criteria, timeframe?)
2. Whether the documentary analysis was systematic or exploratory
3. How quantitative evidence was synthesised
4. Whether there was any formal cost aggregation
5. How case studies were chosen (representative? illustrative? benchmark-based?)
6. Whether the analysis follows a specific framework (e.g., cost-of-inaction analysis, social cost framework, policy evaluation model)

This makes the methodology look more like: structured narrative synthesis rather than an explicit analytical research design.

There is a huge ambiguity of “...qualitative methodology supported by quantitative evidence”
This formulation is too generic. Is this a systematic literature review? A policy evaluation study?
A structured cost–benefit meta-analysis? A comparative institutional analysis? Conceptual paper
supported by empirical illustrations?

Conceptually, the design makes sense (The three-pillar structure is logically organised.). But
academically, it is under-specified.

The results are clear and do not contain errors.

The Results section: (i) does not contain major factual errors, (ii) is coherent and understandable.
But is analytically under-specified. And partially reads as strategic argumentation rather than
empirical reporting.

The CONCLUSION or summary is accurate and supported by the content.

Yes, the conclusion is coherent and broadly supported by the content, but it is more normative
and policy-driven than analytically demonstrated.

The list of REFERENCES is comprehensive and appropriate.

The references are relevant and appropriate, but they are not fully comprehensive for an
academic research article. They are stronger on institutional sources than on peer-reviewed
literature.

Please rate the TITLE of this paper.

[Poor] 1-5 [Excellent]

3

Please rate the ABSTRACT of this paper.

[Poor] 1-5 [Excellent]

3

Please rate the LANGUAGE of this paper.

[Poor] 1-5 [Excellent]

2

Please rate the METHODS of this paper.

[Poor] 1-5 [Excellent]

2

Please rate the RESULTS of this paper.

[Poor] 1-5 [Excellent]

2

Please rate the CONCLUSION of this paper.

[Poor] 1-5 [Excellent]

2

Please rate the REFERENCES of this paper.

[Poor] 1-5 [Excellent]

2

Overall Recommendation!!!

Reject

Comments and Suggestions to the Author(s):

The manuscript addresses a timely and policy-relevant topic and presents a coherent argument on reframing wastewater treatment as a strategic investment. The structure is clear, and the regulatory context is well documented. However, several improvements are recommended:

Methodology should be more clearly specified (analytical design, selection criteria, integration of quantitative evidence).

The analytical contribution and research gap need to be articulated more explicitly.

The results section should distinguish more clearly between empirical findings and normative interpretation.

The reference list would benefit from stronger engagement with peer-reviewed academic literature.

Minor language and stylistic revisions are necessary.

Overall, the paper has solid potential but requires strengthening in methodological clarity and academic positioning.

Reviewer B:

Recommendation: Revisions Required

The TITLE is clear and it is adequate to the content of the article.

The title is good. Just mention the country so the area of the study is not just a generic one, but related to Italy...

The ABSTRACT clearly presents objectives, methods, results, and conclusions.

The abstract presents the research objective, research questions clearly. Outlines the qualitative methodology. It would benefit from a more precise presentation of key quantitative outcomes and clearer distinction between findings and implications. Overall, it is coherent but could be made more concise and structured.

There are a few grammatical errors and spelling mistakes in this article.

Yes, there are several grammatical issues and stylistic inconsistencies. For example:

“trait” instead of “treat” in “collect-trait-discharge”

Inconsistent capitalization (e.g., “UE” vs “EU”)

Typographical inconsistencies in tables (e.g., “da fanghi”)

Occasional awkward phrasing (e.g., “negotiate” instead of “treat” in the EU framework section)

Some sentences are overly long and could be simplified for clarity.

A thorough language revision by a professional English editor is strongly recommended.

The study METHODS are explained clearly.

The methodology sclearly describes the qualitative approach, but when it comes to supported by quantitative evidence there is an issue of how author answer to research questions (hypothesis).

The three analytical pillars: documentary analysis, use of indicators, and case-based circular economy evidence should become as a single material showing the importance of the situation, while the research questions RQ1, and RQ3 are clearly stated and logically connected to the analysis, there is no any data collection, data analysis and data results made under any statistical approach. So this is missing at the paper. The paper would benefit from:

More explicit explanation of selection criteria for case studies.

Clearer indication of how quantitative estimates were synthesized or compared.

Clarification of analytical limitations.

Overall, the methods are understandable but could be more rigorous and structured.

The results are clear and do not contain errors.

The results are logically organized around the three research questions and are generally coherent, but there is no any indication how from data processing author goes to results. while based on logics, results are those authors stated, but this should be accompanied by results resulting from data processing and verifying hypothesis. Author doesn't show the way how hypothesis are verified statistically. . The integration of economic, environmental, and policy perspectives is a strength. The tables help synthesize information.

However:

Some figures are referenced but not fully explained (e.g., Figure 1, Fig.3).

Certain quantitative data lack methodological explanation.

Some data appear as secondary compilations without detailed sourcing transparency.

No major factual inconsistencies are evident, but clarity and precision could be improved.

The CONCLUSION or summary is accurate and supported by the content.

The conclusion is consistent. The emphasis on governance, multi-year planning, and Southern Italy is coherent with the discussion.

However, the section could be strengthened by:

Summarizing the main empirical findings more explicitly.

Restating how the research questions were answered.

Briefly acknowledging study limitations.

The list of REFERENCES is comprehensive and appropriate.

The references include relevant EU directives, institutional documents, OECD-related evidence, WHO-related cost-benefit literature, and sectoral reports. They are generally appropriate for the policy and economic focus of the paper.

However:

Some in-text citations (e.g., journalistic sources such as Eunews, 2025) may require stronger academic support.

There are minor formatting inconsistencies.

All in-text citations appear to be included in the reference list, but formatting standardization is required.

Overall, the references are relevant but need technical editing and possibly the inclusion of more peer-reviewed academic sources.

Please rate the TITLE of this paper.

[Poor] 1-5 [Excellent]

4

Please rate the ABSTRACT of this paper.

[Poor] 1-5 [Excellent]

4

Please rate the LANGUAGE of this paper.

[Poor] 1-5 [Excellent]

3

Please rate the METHODS of this paper.

[Poor] 1-5 [Excellent]

2

Please rate the RESULTS of this paper.

[Poor] 1-5 [Excellent]

3

Please rate the CONCLUSION of this paper.

[Poor] 1-5 [Excellent]

4

Please rate the REFERENCES of this paper.

[Poor] 1-5 [Excellent]

4

Overall Recommendation!!!

Return for major revision and resubmission

Comments and Suggestions to the Author(s):

Paper is interesting.

Hypothesis should be written as a question to be answered and not as a statement.

For example:

RQ1 a: There is not economic and social return on investments

RQ1 b: There is an economic and social return on investment (Whis is the hypothesis to be verified)

RQ2 a: there is not any contribution to the circular economy (water, energy, nutrients);

RQ2 b There is a great contribution to the

RQ3 a: there are not any costs related to non-intervention (fines, damages, waste).

RQ3 b: the costs of non intervene are highso the second question of every hypothesis is going to be answered and this by statistical process and not just by logic, since verifying hypothesis requires statistics implementation.
