



# STANDARD

**Document information**

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# European Water Stewardship (EWS)

## Standard document

### 0. Guidance on document

#### 0.1 Notes to this edition

- This edition is the result of the revision of the EWS standard launched in November 2011.
- It takes into account all the comments made after one year of public availability.
- The content is essentially the same as the originally launched version but the organization and presentation of indicators has been modified in an effort to be more user-friendly. For more information on the changes please refer to the document First EWS standard revision.

#### 0.2 Notes on use of language

- The standard does not adopt ISO's usage of the words 'shall' (for requirements) and 'should' (for recommendations). These contain ambiguities when used outside of a technical standards-specific context and are confusing for many non-English speakers. Instead the clauses of the standard are written in the indicative mood to indicate requirements. Thus when the standard says that 'x is the case', or that 'x has taken place' this is understood to indicate a requirement that must be (or has been) satisfied in order to demonstrate conformity with the standard (equivalent to the use of the word 'shall' in ISO standards). If 'x is not the case', or 'x has not taken place', then this would mean there is non-conformity with a requirement of the standard.
- For terms, definitions and abbreviations please refer to the adherent "Glossary" document. Words and abbreviations that can be found in the Glossary are underlined and marked with an \*.

#### 0.3 Guidance documents adherent to Standard

- Please refer to the Glossary and the Guideline document, with included annexes, to find more information on definitions, templates, formulas, measures, best management practices, and others to reach compliance with the referring indicators.

### 1. Introduction

#### 1.1 The European Water Stewardship\* (EWS)\* comprises:

- The European Water Stewardship (EWS) standard\*.
- The referring glossary and guideline, with annexes.
- The EWS group certification standard.
- The certification outline.

#### 1.2 For whom is this standard applicable?

The EWS standard aims to be applicable to a broad range of water users that may affect the availability and quality of water while still respecting the complexity of impacts linked to water use and therefore:

- Comprises environmental, social and economic aspects.
- Is valid on global scale but based on local assessment with focus on Europe\*.
- Is valid across all sectors.

### 2. Background

The European Water Stewardship has been developed within the stakeholder process coordinated by the European Water Partnership (EWP). The European Water Stewardship (EWS) operates within the context of EU Policy and will ultimately contribute to the current flagship activities of the European Commission to achieve "Resource Efficiency" and to follow the "European Blueprint".

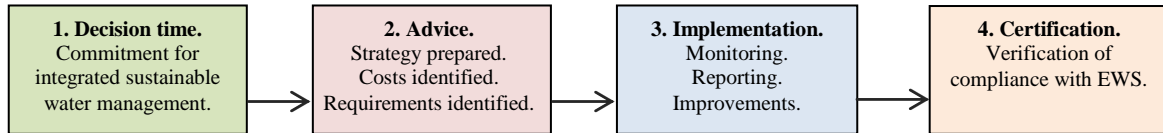
#### 2.1 Objectives of European Water Stewardship

- To assess sustainable water use.
- To build positive incentives to promote a change in behavior and practices of water use, management and governance\*.
- To provide a tool for water users to demonstrate corporate responsibility.
- To provide a tool to achieve integrated sustainable water (resource) management.
- To optimize the use of water on operational and river basin basis.
- To prepare the private sector for the implementation of the European Water Framework Directive\*.
- To support water users in general to communicate and report on their water use.
- To evaluate the use of water pertaining to a local and business basis.

- To establish legitimacy via a third party verification of the water user's compliance.

### 3. Delivering the objectives

All activities that utilize water resources be they very small farms or multi-national industries; have a very clear interest to minimize the use of natural resources and to optimize their resources efficiency. There are clear steps that need to be completed prior to the possibility, commercially viable or even desirability of certification.



#### Step 1

The decision, not only to reduce water use, but to aim for a sustainable water management, must be taken at the highest possible level of management as the investment can be high at the outset with long periods before return on investment. Irrespective of business size, the decision to reduce water AND to consider all other aspects of water use in management decisions also demonstrates clear corporate social responsibility – the value of which must not be under-estimated.

#### Step 2

Technical advice can range from discussions with colleagues, observations of other practices, experience, independent technical expertise or support through membership of an association or group. The important aspect is that a clear strategy is prepared and fully costed with benefits clearly identified.

#### Step 3

The EWS standard is implemented on-site and the compliance with the standard requirements are monitored and reported in the internal system plan. Points of improvement shall be identified and taken over in the management strategies.

#### Step 4

Certification is an independent verification that the water management system is compliant with EWS requirements. The decision to go through with certification must be taken for the correct reasons – whether it be for access to new markets, corporate responsibility or legal requirements, etc. Certification can be performed as individual certification or as part of group scheme.

## 4. The European Water Stewardship (EWS) Standard

### 4.1 General

The EWS Standard aims to give indicators for the whole water cycle: from extraction to re-allocation. The main aim is to map, grade and evaluate water management based on redesign, reuse, recycle and re-allocate measures.

This standard includes

- 4 principles\*, which outline the overarching aims of the EWS Standard, and associated criteria.
- The 15 criteria\* are further divided into indicators which shall be used to evaluate compliance with the principles and criteria.
- 49 Indicators\* are classified as major indicator (◆◆), minor indicator (◆) or as recommendation. This classification acknowledges that some indicators might require more time in order to achieve compliance.

### 4.2 EWS principles and criteria

The principles cover the following areas of sustainable water management:

**Principle 1-** Achieve and maintain sustainable water abstraction in terms of water quantity. The criteria are established as follows: information is first provided on water use (quantities) and sources, and then the impact of this water use is assessed followed by the actions being taken to mitigate such impact.

**Principle 2-** Ensure the achievement and maintenance of good water status in terms of chemical quality and biological elements. The criteria are established as follows: first information is provided on water discharge and potential pollutants existing on site (quality), and then the impact of these pollutants and effluents is assessed followed by actions to mitigate the identified impact.

**Principle 3-** Restore and preserve water-cycle related High Conservation Value (HCV) areas. The criteria are established as follows: first information is provided on HCV areas around the site, and then the impact of the site's activities and services on these HCV areas is assessed followed by the establishment of actions to mitigate those impacts.

**Principle 4-** Achieve equitable and transparent water governance. It includes basic water stewardship concepts such as the need to engage with stakeholders, transparency (internal and external), continuous improvement and integrated resource management.

#### 4.3 Bronze, Silver, Gold status

The classification in bronze, silver and gold enables to visualize development in performance and provides incentives for upgrading. The classification is achieved if a production site has achieved compliance with ALL indicators classified as major (●●) plus:

- >50% compliance with all indicators classified as minor (●) = **BRONZE**
- >70% compliance with all indicators classified as minor (●) = **SILVER**
- >90% compliance with all indicators classified as minor (●) = **GOLD**

#### 4.4 Non Compliance

- Non-compliance with an indicator that is shown as “major” (●●) will result in major non-conformity.
- Non-compliance with an indicator that is shown as “minor” (●) will result in minor non-conformity.
- A certificate of compliance will only be awarded when all major indicators (●●) and 50% of all minor indicators (●) have been met to the satisfaction of the certification body.
- Major non-conformities raised during a surveillance assessment must be dissolved, to the satisfaction of the certification body within 30 days. Failure to do so will result in the suspension of the certificate. Failure to dissolve the major non-conformity after this suspension period will result in the withdrawal of the certificate and the requirement of a new main compliance assessment.
- Minor non-conformities must be addressed in a timely manner as determined by the certification body. Failure to do so will result in a minor non-conformity with the associated implications given in the referring certification scheme.

#### 4.5 (Non) applicability

Applicability of the indicators is not related to size or kind of the production site unless stated otherwise.

#### 4.6 The audit process

- Application form is completed.
- Offer is made.
- Offer is accepted and contracts signed.
- Client completes a system plan and prepares for the audit.
- Audit dates are agreed.
- Audit plan is sent to client.
- Audit is conducted on-site.
- Audit checklist and report is completed.
- The certification body reviews the documents and makes a certification decision.
- A certificate of compliance is awarded for a period of 3 years.
- Annual surveillance audits are conducted to ensure continual compliance.

For more information on the certification scheme refer to the document “Certification Outline”.

## **The European Water Stewardship (EWS) standard**

### **Principle 1. Achieve and maintain sustainable water abstraction in terms of water quantity.**

**Explanation:** Sustainable Water Management shall achieve and maintain sustainable water abstraction from all sources, and maintain or restore environmental flow\* regime in all river basins\* where it has a significant influence. Therefore, the water steward shall evaluate the abstraction and use of water from all sources\*.

#### **Criterion 1.1**

**The total and the net water abstraction shall be quantified and monitored by source.**

	<b>Indicator</b>
1.1.1 Major ♦♦	<b>All sources used for water abstraction are documented (documentation regularly updated).</b>
1.1.2 Major ♦♦	<b>The water volume abstracted from each source is quantified, monitored and reported.</b>
1.1.3 Major ♦♦	<p><b>The <u>water discharge</u>* of the production is quantified according to the type of contribution:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The water steward is a “minor contributor” when discharged water accounts for less than 40% of the water abstracted.</li> <li>• The water steward is a “major contributor” when discharged water accounts for more than 40% of the water abstracted.</li> </ul>

#### **Criterion 1.2**

**Impact\* of water abstraction and water discharge (quantity) shall be described and evaluated appropriate to the scale of the source, to the intensity of water management and to the uniqueness of the significantly affected sources\*.**

*Out of scope: Indirect water use for purchased electricity and energy production, e.g. hydropower (on hold); Purchased water\* (not included in assessment but should be quantitatively monitored); Water in products and material for production (ref. Criteria 4.2).*

	<b>Indicator</b>
1.2.1 Minor ♦	<p><b>All water sources are classified in terms of their <u>sensitivity</u>* according to one or more of the following criteria:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Abstractions from water bodies that are recognized by professionals to be particularly sensitive due to their relative size [m<sup>3</sup>].</li> <li>• Whether or not the source is designated as a <u>protected area</u>* (nationally and/or internationally) regardless the amount of abstraction.</li> <li>• Groundwater is considered as <u>sensitive source</u>* per se.</li> </ul>
1.2.2 Minor ♦	<p><b>For each <u>sensitive water source</u>* (as identified in 1.2.1) the <u>water steward</u>*:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Defines suitable and relevant periods of <u>water stress</u>*.</li> <li>2) Links periods of water stress to abstraction and discharge rates.</li> </ol>
1.2.3 Major ♦♦	<p><b>The <u>impact</u>* of abstraction and discharge is described (by source). This description includes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Environmental impact</u>* (e.g. loss of wetlands, biodiversity, protected areas, reduction of <u>environmental flow</u>*, desertification, seawater intrusion, changes in river morphology, decline in groundwater level, etc.).</li> <li>• Socio-economic impact (e.g. water shortage, interruptions of water supply, restrictions, imports, etc.) and the regional population potentially affected downstream by water abstraction and discharge (flooding).</li> </ul>

<p>1.2.4 Major ●●</p>	<p>In case a meaningful maximum abstraction rate is NOT defined by legal authorities and NOT included in an official abstraction <u>permit</u>*, the water steward* has to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Define the water stress level of the referring sources (e.g. by calculating the <u>Water Stress Index WSI</u>*). If the source is classified as water stressed, define the <u>sensitive periods</u>* of the source and calculate a maximum abstraction rate per period.</li> <li>2) Define the contribution to the joint abstraction of the associated source as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If <u>minor abstractor</u>* (water withdrawals account for an average of less than 5% of the renewable freshwater resource) define a maximum abstraction rate.</li> <li>• If <u>major abstractor</u>* (water withdrawals account for an average of 5% or more of the renewable freshwater resources) then define sensitive periods per source and define a maximum abstraction rate per period.</li> </ul> </li> </ol>
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<p><b>Criterion 1.3</b>  <b>Actions taken to improve water efficiency, reduce water losses and mitigate detected and potential impacts of water abstraction shall be described and implemented. All actions should be integrated in the Water Management Strategy (Criteria 4.8).</b></p>	
<p><b>Indicator</b></p>	
<p>1.3.1 Minor ●</p>	<p>Action is taken to mitigate actual and potential <u>impacts</u>* caused by water abstraction and discharge (as defined in indicator 1.2.3).</p>
<p>1.3.2 Major ●● &gt; 50% Rec. &lt; 50%</p>	<p><b>Only applicable when one of the sources of water is an external water supplier: The water user evaluates the performance of its external water supplier (WS) in terms of Sustainable Water Management.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Indication is given whether the volume of water supply, provided by a water treatment plant, is more than 50% of the water stewards' total water use [m<sup>3</sup>].</li> </ul>

**Principle 2. Achieve and maintain good water status\* in terms of chemical quality and biological elements.**

**Explanation:** Sustainable Water Management shall ensure the achievement and maintenance of the good water status, meeting legal and/or agreed quality standards in all affected river basins\*. Therefore, the quality of all effluents\* shall be evaluated by the water manager.

**Criterion 2.1**

**The total inputs on site shall be disclosed and the total effluent\* quality shall be determined, monitored and documented.**

	<b>Indicator</b>
2.1.1 Major ♦♦	<b>There is a complete and up-to-date inventory of all applied substances, indicating the frequency and amount/volume applied. Substances are classified according to following schemes:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Classified as <u>hazardous</u>* to the Aquatic Environment (H-phrases).</li> <li>• Considered a main pollutant* according to the EC Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC).</li> <li>• Considered a <u>priority substance</u>* or <u>specific pollutant</u>* in river basin according to the EC Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC).</li> <li>• Considered as pollutant by the local/national legislation.</li> </ul>
2.1.2 Major ♦♦	<b>For each of the potentially polluting substances, the type of <u>pollution</u>* (i.e. point of diffuse pollution*) is described and potential <u>destinations</u>* are identified.</b>
2.1.3 Major ♦♦	<b>Only applicable when recycled, re-use, rain-harvested, desalinated or grey water is used: Analyze, monitor and report on the quality (e.g. nutrient concentration, salinity, pathogens, etc.) of water.</b>
2.1.4 Major ♦♦	<b>The quality of the <u>effluent</u>* discharged by the production site is analysed, monitored and reported. Only when required: <u>Statutory monitoring reports</u>* are completed.</b>
2.1.5 Major ♦♦	<b><u>Main pollutants</u>* and <u>priority substances</u>* (as identified in 2.1.1) in the effluent are identified and, if possible, quantified.</b>
2.1.6 Rec.	<b>The <u>eutrophication</u>* potential is identified and evaluated.</b>

**Criterion 2.2**

**Impact on destinations\* that are affected by the production sites' effluents shall be identified and described. Measures shall be set in place to mitigate these impacts\*.**

	<b>Indicator</b>
2.2.1 Major ♦♦	<b><u>High risk areas</u>* are identified at the production site and indicated on maps.</b>
2.2.2 Major ♦♦	<b>All <u>destinations</u>* which are potentially affected by the production sites' pollutants (e.g. by discharging, <u>leaching</u>* or <u>drainage</u>* water, or by <u>erosion</u>* and <u>run-off</u>*) are compiled in a list.</b>
2.2.3 Major ♦♦	<b>All potential destinations (as defined in 2.2.2.) are classified in terms of their sensitivity according to one or more of the following criteria:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognized by professionals to be particularly sensitive due to their relative size, function, or status as a rare, threatened, or endangered system (or support endangered plant or animal species).</li> <li>• Designated as a <u>protected area</u>* or <u>vulnerable area</u>* (nationally and/or internationally).</li> <li>• Groundwater is considered as sensitive per se.</li> </ul>



2.2.4 Major ●●	<b>The impact of the discharge is assessed and described by destination. This description includes:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Biodiversity value of the destination (e.g. species diversity and endemism, number of protected species).</li> <li>• <u>Environmental impact</u>* from pollutants to water (e.g. biodiversity, protected areas, etc.).</li> <li>• Socio-economic impact.</li> <li>• Regional population (negatively) affected down-stream by effluent water.</li> </ul>
2.2.5 Rec.	<b>Local issues (e.g. sediments, odour, foam, etc.) caused by non-chemical pollution are identified, quantified (if possible) and reported.</b>

<b>Criterion 2.3</b> <b>Actions taken to mitigate detected and potential impacts of water discharge shall be described and implemented. All actions should be integrated in the Water Management Strategy (Criteria 4.8).</b>	
	<b>Indicator</b>
2.3.1 Minor ●	<b>With reference to indicators 2.2.1 – 2.2.4: Action is taken to mitigate possible <u>impacts</u>*.</b>
2.3.2 Major ●● > 50% Rec. < 50%	<b>Only applicable when the productions site discharges to external waste water treatment plants (WWTP): The performance of the WWTP is evaluated in terms of Sustainable Water Management.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The water steward indicates whether the contribution to the WWTP is higher than 50% of the total waste water volume treated in the WWTP [m<sup>3</sup>].</li> </ul>

**Principle 3. Restore and preserve water-cycle related High Conservation Value (HCV) areas\*.**

**Explanation:** Sustainable Water Management shall restore and conserve biological diversity and its other associated values in areas that are directly linked to its water-cycle.

**Criterion 3.1**

**HCV areas in a 25km radius around the production site, water sources and points of discharge are identified and described.**

	Indicator
3.1.1 Major ♦♦	HCV areas mapped in vicinity of the production site (including both sources and discharge points) within a radius of 25 km.
3.1.2 Major ♦♦	The HCV areas documented in 3.1.1 are listed and protection goal(s) identified (e.g. flora and fauna, water quality, birds, bathing waters, recreational, etc.)

**Criterion 3.2**

**Impact\* on water status, ecological processes, and social values in HCV areas shall be identified and evaluated.**

	Indicator
3.2.1 Minor ♦	Impacts on the water status of HCV areas, outside the natural range of variation, caused by the production sites' activities or services, are identified, described and, if possible, quantified.
3.2.2 Minor ♦	The impacts on social and cultural values of HCV areas caused by the production sites' activities or services are identified, described and, if possible, quantified.

**Criterion 3.3**

**Actions taken to mitigate detected and potential impacts of HCV areas shall be described and implemented. All actions should be integrated in the Water Management Strategy (Criteria 4.8).**

	Indicator
3.3.1 Minor ♦	Action is taken to mitigate the impacts described in indicator 3.2.1 and 3.2.2.
3.3.2 Rec.	The <u>water steward*</u> identifies, monitors and reports actions and measures taken, with regard to <u>wetland*</u> habitat management and other innovative actions taken to restore or protect natural areas.

**Principle 4. Achieve equitable and transparent water governance\*.**

**Explanation:** The water steward shall achieve an equitable system for its water use\*, make its Water Stewardship\* policy publically available and raise awareness for Water Stewardship by pro-active measures. Therefore, the water user shall establish, implement and maintain procedures in the management plan and operational practice based on the following points.

*This principle refers explicitly to a 'continuous improvement'\* approach rather than a 'performance level' approach in relation to river basin sustainability, unless additional minimum performance requirements are specified.*

**Criterion 4.1**

**The water management shall ensure compliance with all legal requirements linked to water use.**

	<b>Indicator</b>
4.1.1 Major 💧💧	<p><b>1) A person or department is identified who ensures compliance with legal requirements linked to water.</b></p> <p><b>2) Procedures are established, implemented and monitored which ensure that legal aspects and compliance with the law by the production sites on water abstraction, reuse or discharge are entirely disclosed and kept up-to-date.</b></p>

**Criterion 4.2**

**Water management in the supply chain shall be evaluated on long term. The purchase of products and material from water sustainable suppliers shall be achieved over time according to the possibilities of the organization.**

	<b>Indicator</b>
4.2.1 Rec.	<p><b>The water steward classifies its supply chain of products and materials according to:</b></p> <p><b>1) Location</b></p> <p><b>2) Transparency on <u>water use</u>*. The suppliers are classified according to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Their possession of an approved / certified water management.</li> <li>• Their possession of a water management system with internal audit.</li> <li>• Having no transparency on water management.</li> </ul> <p>For agriculture: This indicator is only applicable for farms with animal production (Explanation: As first part of the supply-chain, farmers have no general obligation to prove the water in products and materials used for production)</p>
4.2.2 Rec.	<p><b>The water steward describes whether its suppliers are certified according to a Water Stewardship standard and whether there are referring certificates available.</b></p>

**Criterion 4.3**

**Water use shall be managed in an integrated approach taking the management of other resources into account.**

	<b>Indicator</b>
4.3.1 Major 💧💧	<p><b>The (quantitative) relation of water and energy use is identified and optimized.</b></p>
4.3.2 Minor 💧	<p><b>The (quantitative) relation of water and other resources than energy is identified and optimized.</b></p>

**Criterion 4.4**

**Efficiency of water consumption\* shall be increased by water re-cycling, higher water savings and the reduction of water losses\*.**

Out of scope: Water in products and material for production (ref. Criteria 4.2), storage on site and diffuse water losses.

	<b>Indicator</b>
4.4.1 Minor 💧	<p><b>Recycling is included in the water management strategy and the volume of <u>recycled/re-used water</u>* is monitored.</b></p>

4.4.2 Major ♦♦	<b>Water losses are identified. Type and <u>destination</u>* of losses are described.</b>
4.4.3 Major ♦♦	<b>A strategy is in place and described to achieve optimized water efficiency.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The water steward describes the water savings which have been achieved by increasing efficiency and reducing losses.</li> <li>• Steward describes, maintains and optimizes any irrigation system to different crops and climatic and on-site conditions.</li> </ul>
4.4.4 Minor ♦	<b>Water consumption per unit (e.g. of product) is quantified.</b>

**Criterion 4.5**  
Sustainable Water Management shall be achieved by internal and external transparency and raising awareness.

	<b>Indicator</b>
4.5.1 Minor ♦	<b>A person or department is identified who participates and reports on River Basin Committee activities.</b>
4.5.2 Minor ♦	<b>Internal transparency: Sustainable water management is disseminated within the operation.</b>
4.5.3 Minor ♦	<b>External transparency: The water management is publically available for customers, the public and authorities, e.g. by a water report.</b>
4.5.4 Rec.	<b>Campaigns or partnerships to inform stakeholders on water topics are described and implemented.</b>
4.5.5 Major ♦♦	<b>Management of incidents:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Procedures are established, implemented and monitored to respond to accidents, security incidents, emergency situations, disasters and the like.</li> <li>2) The impacts of such an occurrence to the environments, employees, the regional population and communities are described or estimated.</li> </ol>
4.5.6 Major ♦♦	<b>Only applicable for irrigation: Measures or facilities to deal with unforeseen climatic conditions and system breakdown are implemented and monitored.</b>

**Criterion 4.6**  
Continuous improvement\* of Sustainable Water Management shall be achieved on operational and River Basin level by implementation of BMPs\* and by innovation and development on long term.

	<b>Indicator</b>
4.6.1 Major ♦♦	<b><u>Best Management Practices</u>* (BMPs*) are in place and integrated in a water resource management strategy.</b> If no recognized BMPs are in place the water steward him/herself identifies appropriate BMPs.
4.6.2 Major ♦♦	<b>The implementation procedures and the evaluation of BMPs (or alike) are described.</b>
4.6.3 Rec.	<b>The water steward implements and documents innovative measures to improve the sustainability of the internal and the river basin water management.</b>

<b>Criterion 4.7</b> Transparency on economic aspects of water management shall be ensured.	
<b>Indicator</b>	
4.7.1 Minor ●	Investments made for maintenance and improvement of the water management are fully reported.
4.7.2 Rec.	An environmental cost analysis is in place.

<b>Criterion 4.8</b> A water resources management strategy shall be available at the production site as it is a crucial tool to integrate all activities related to water use. It initiates and supports management decisions on water management performance and facilitates the public and internal transparency.	
<b>Indicator</b>	
4.8.1 Major ●● <u>SMEs*</u> Minor ●	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) An exhaustive water resources management strategy, which covers all 4 Water Stewardship principles, is established, implemented and monitored.</li> <li>2) A person or department is identified who ensures the implementation of the water resources management strategy.</li> </ol>