EU Water Alliance

OPPORTUNITY AND NECESSITY FOR EUROPE TO BUILD A WATER-SMART SOCIETY AND CIRCULAR ECONOMY

The EU Water Alliance is a coalition of European members-based organisations representing the wide range of water stakeholders across the entire value chain (associations, NGOs, universities, large water users, SMEs, water operators and local authorities).

WATER CHALLENGES IMPACT
THE WHOLE EUROPEAN SOCIETY

Every aspect of our lives depends on water and through the **Paris Agreement**, the **Sustainable Development Goals**, the **Aichi Agreement** and more recently the **European Green Deal**, countries strive to address water-related issues[1]. However, according to the 2019 UN Water Report, Europe still has work to do to achieve SDG6, providing clean water and sanitation for all. In fact, the more recent 2020 report underlines that **European society is facing pressing challenges regarding both water quantity and quality**[2].

[1]*For the 9th consecutive year, the World Economic Forum has ranked water crises as a top global societal risk.*
[2] *2020 UN Water Report, p.134*

♦ **Extreme Events including water scarcity, droughts and floods.** The increasing frequency of extreme weather events due to climate change, as well as population growth and pressure on resources reduce water availability through scarcity and contamination, threatening our ecosystems. Water security represents one of the greatest challenges that citizens, governments, businesses and investors will face in the upcoming decades. Innovative solutions for water management are needed to prevent water shortages, reduce hazards and adapt to the effects of climate change.

♦ **Pollution.** Pollutants such as micro(nano)plastics and pharmaceuticals impact our ecosystems and pose risks to our health. Only part of the EU's rivers and lakes achieved the goals set by the Water Framework Directive and the degree of progress, based on local responses, varies significantly from place to place. Covid19 crisis is also a wake-up call stressing our dependence on water and the importance of monitoring and tackling pollutants.

♦ **Ageing infrastructures.** Water and wastewater infrastructures in Europe are ageing and require important investments to prevent even more expensive and potentially dangerous system failures, as well as to guarantee their resilience in the face of extreme weather.

♦ **Transversality.** Water security is an international issue in need of local solutions and a vital, often overlooked element in a wide variety of sectors and policies. The fragmentation of responses and regulations, paired with a lack of awareness of its value, makes water a hard to manage and easily neglected resource. Furthermore, public awareness remains too low to support long-term and costly investments for water management. Moreover, water scarcity in some of the world's regions could spur migration and spark conflict inevitably affecting the European continent.

OPPORTUNITIES EXIST
TO OVERCOME THESE CHALLENGES
DURING THIS LEGISLATURE

Europe needs to remain a key enabler to **achieve a Water-Smart Society** where enough water of the right quality is available for all the different usages while reducing our impact on the environment. **During the new legislature some key water-related legislation may be revised**. **The following targets are critical to overcome the challenges we face:**

Circular Water Economy. Resource efficiency and recovery are paramount to ensure water of the right quality for everybody. A potential revision of the Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive and more water reuse driven legislation (industrial, urban, aquifer recharge) give the EU institutions **an opportunity to develop Multi-Water Sources**, incentives to encourage reuse, increase sustainability and recycle the substances embedded in used water streams.

Nature-based solutions. Nature based solution can help to avoid drought and flood risks, and simultaneously support the Green deal's policy efforts on biodiversity. Furthermore, nature based solution can reduce resource needs and lower the carbon footprint and enhance citizens' well-being. Policy developments should seize opportunities to promote nature bases solutions achieving transversal goals.

Meeting High Standards. Europe has an **ambitious water legislation** which encompasses environmental imperatives and represents a unique regulatory driver for innovation. Europe must strive to reach the set goals in all areas by **improving knowledge** and most of all by **implementing the outcomes of research**. EU water policy should combine pollution source control with the polluter-pays principle and preventive solutions.

Digitalisation. Digitalising the water sector can be a solution to survey the infrastructure and **achieve full transparency on water quality and quantity**. Paired with adequate adaptation and training to new skills, it can also support stringent compliance monitoring, faster penalization and optimize infrastructure use to **maximize resilience**, easing off the necessity for renovation investments and reducing the pressure on water resources.

Water Governance. To properly organise resources and local responses, Europe should establish an **inclusive, transparent, multi-stakeholder governance for water**, able to coordinate the efforts of different actors in compliance with the Water Framework Directive. To this end, the European Commission should also support the development of **Water-Oriented Living Labs**.

SUPPORTERS OF THE MANIFESTO

The association exists to promote the commercial and technical interests at the EU level of the supply chain of the European water and wastewater industry within the EU and globally. It collaborates with other trade bodies representing the interests of sectors with some level of interest in water- and environment-related matters, eg, chemicals, construction, plastics, rubber, resins et al. Aqua Europa is Partner organisation within CEN and participates directly in about a dozen CEN Technical Committees.

AquaFed
THE INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF PRIVATE WATER OPERATORS

Created in 2005, AquaFed is the International Federation of Private Water Operators. AquaFed represents more than 400 private operator providing water and sanitation services in more than 40 countries worldwide. According to GWI (2013), over 1 Billion people count on private operators to serve them on a daily basis.

CDP Europe is part of the global CDP non-profit network, that drives companies and governments to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions, safeguard water resources and protect forests. Over 2.100 European companies representing approximately 76% of the European market capitalization disclosed environmental data through CDP in 2019. This is in addition to over 215 European cities and regions who disclosed – making CDP's platform one of the richest sources of information globally on how companies and governments are driving environmental change.

EurAqua is a network of freshwater research institutes. Partner institutions are leading, generally public, research institutions in the EU Member States and the European Economic Area (EEA). These institutes are key advisors to 'water management' ministries and other regional water authorities, have an international profile, and have strong links to water management industry. Founded in 1993, EurAqua brings together today 26 members from the European Union and the European Economic Area. At a national level EurAqua members are closely connected to a range of relevant research institutes and centres of innovation.

European Water Association (EWA) is the pan-European, non-governmental, non-profit-making, technical and scientific umbrella organization of and for national member associations bringing together all professionals involved in the water cycle. It is the voice of water in Europe as a platform and turntable for exchange and transfer of information and know-how in Europe on technical and scientific level.

The Network for Water in European Regions and Cities is an association of European municipal and regional governments whose objective is the promotion and development of sustainable practices related to the management of water. Founded by universities, research centres and various other bodies, NETWERC H2O is a channel of communication, a forum for the exchange and publicising of experiences as well as a platform for the creation of European and transatlantic projects.

Founded by Solidarity Water Europe in 1998, the European Youth Parliament for Water aims to promote youth involvement in the water sector, both by increasing their awareness of water resource management issues and by fostering understanding of citizenship and democracy. Solidarity Water Europe (SWE) is committed to ensure a universal access to safe drinking water and sanitation. SWE and EYPW are joining forces to give voice to a new generation of water leaders in Europe.

Water Europe (WE) is the voice and promoter of water-related innovation and RTD in Europe. WE is a membership-based multi-stakeholder organisation representing over 200 members from academia, technology providers, water users, water service providers, civil society, and public authorities. WE activities and positions are guided by its Water Vision "The Value of Water: Towards a Future-Proof European Water-Smart Society".

We are the global not-for-profit organisation dedicated to the conservation and restoration of wetlands. Wetlands are the source of water that supports all forms of life. Despite our efforts to promote their importance, loss and damage to wetlands and their biodiversity continues. Our vision is a world where wetlands are treasured and nurtured for their beauty, the life they support and the resources they provide.

Women for Water Partnership (WfWP) is a unique partnership of women's organizations and networks, uniting women leadership. All member organizations are rooted in society and are active in the areas of water, sanitation, sustainable development and women's participation. WfWP positions women as active leaders, partners, experts and agents of change in water to implement the Sustainable Development Goals with a focus on women and universal access to water for all, for all uses.