

Brussels, 12 January 2022

Open Letter to Ursula Von der Leyen, president of the European Commission, calling for clarifications on water-related dossiers in the EC Work Programme

Dear President Von Der Leyen,

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

The Alliance has addressed [key messages to the College of Commissioners](#) to ensure that water is fully considered to achieve a green and digital transition and leave no one behind. Fifteen meetings with different Commissioners, cabinets and the Slovenian presidency of the Council have confirmed good awareness on the role and importance of water to the various portfolios and related risks of inaction.

Europe needs to remain a key enabler to achieve a Water-Smart Society in which enough water of the right quality is available, while ensuring protection from floods and reducing our impact on the environment. Circular water economy, nature-based solutions, implementation of legislative standards, digitalization, and water smart governance are key to tackling pressing challenges, regarding both water quantity and quality.

On October the 19th, the European Commission released the [work programme for 2022](#). The document includes several initiatives with direct or indirect impacts on water-related dossiers, namely:

- the initiative on integrated water management – revised lists of surface and groundwater pollutants,
- the revision of the urban wastewater treatment directive,
- measures to reduce the release of microplastics in the environment,
- the sustainable use of pesticides – revision of the EU rules,
- the revision of the pharmaceutical legislation,
- the proposal for a directive on corporate sustainability reporting

We would like to reiterate some of the important aspects that we feel should be addressed within the WP2022 activities and would welcome your clarification particularly on the following topics that are not explicitly translated into the work programme 2022:

Concerning the initiatives in line with the European Green Deal:

- the importance of water efficiency particularly in the context of the urban wastewater treatment directive and the industrial emissions directive.
- the implementation of the Fit for 55 Strategy in the water sector and foreseen action to exploit the potential of the water-energy nexus.

- the need for a coherent water-smart strategy between different initiatives and a holistic approach to water management in European policy. In particular, there is a risk for inconsistency between the revision of the pharmaceutical legislation and the objectives of the Zero Pollution Action Plan.
- The importance that all investment decisions are in line with a water-smart policy.

Concerning the initiatives for a stronger Europe in the world:

- the implementation of water and sanitation-related actions in the gender action plan III.
- the deployment of the water diplomacy in EU external relations, to make Europe stronger in the world, for which the World Water Forum 2022 in Dakar and 2023 UN Conference on the Water Action Decade provide a platform.
- the incorporation of water in the EU trade policies and agreements.

Promoting our European Way of Life:

- the inclusion of the Youth into the debate on innovative approaches towards the pressing water challenges, to leave no one behind and go beyond the EU skills agenda.
- the support to vocational training and capacity building to enhance the capacity in general of the water sector.

We look forward to your views and remain at your disposal for a meeting to exchange further on those questions and discuss ways EUWA can be supportive.

Yours Sincerely,

Water Europe Director
Durk Krol

On behalf of:



Aqua Europa 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 a Partner organisation within CEN and participates directly in about a dozen CEN Technical Committees. (Volker Meyer – meyer@figawa.de ; aqua-europa.eu)



Created in 2005, AquaFed is the International Federation of Private Water Operators. AquaFed represents more than 400 private operators 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 daily. (Thomas Van Waeyenberge - thomas@aquafed.org; www.aquafed.org)



CDP is a global non-profit that runs the world's environmental disclosure system for companies, cities, states and regions. Founded in 2000 and working with over 590 investors with \$110 trillion in assets, CDP pioneered using capital markets and corporate procurement to motivate companies to disclose their environmental impacts, and to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, safeguard water resources and protect forests. Over 10,000 organizations around the world disclosed data through CDP in 2020, including more than 9,600 companies worth over 50% of global market capitalization, and over 940 cities, states and regions, representing a combined population of over 2.6 billion. Fully TCFD aligned, CDP holds the largest environmental database in the world, and CDP scores are widely used to drive investment and procurement decisions towards a zero carbon, sustainable and resilient economy.” (Mirjam Wolfrum - Mirjam.Wolfrum@cdp.net ; www.cdp.net)



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. (Michiel Blind - chair@eur aqua.org ; www.eur aqua.org)



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 a technical and scientific level. (Wendy Francken – wendy.francken@vlario.be ; www.ewa-online.eu)



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. (Richard Elelman - richard.elelman@ctm.com.es ; www.netwerch2o.eu)



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. (Hasmik Barseghyan - hasmik.official@gmail.com ; www.sie-see.org)



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 250 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”. (Charpentier Loïc – loic.Charpentier@watereurope.eu ; www.watereurope.eu)



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. (Lea Appulo - lea.appulo@wetlands.org ; europe.wetlands.org)



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 SDGs with a focus on women and universal access to water for all, for all uses. WfWP is also co-lead of the European Pact for Water (EPfW), a Europe-wide informal coordination and advocacy network focused on water governance. The network’s aim is to disseminate information, build knowledge and capacities and, through collective efforts, highlight the importance of water and sanitation on international and European agendas. (Lesha Witmer - wima@witmer.info ; www.womenforwater.org ; europeanpactforwater.org)