WATER INNOVATION EUROPE

13-14 October 2026

Dublin Royal Convention Centre, Ireland

Water Innovation Europe 2026

This year, Water Innovation Europe heads to Dublin, Ireland. Under the theme "**Raising the Bar for the Water Framework Directive**". With less than two years remaining to achieve the Water Framework Directive's 2027 objectives, the pressure is on. Europe has no shortage of ambitions for water. The challenge now is implementation. How do we move faster? How do we improve data-driven decisions? And how do we ensure that water resilience becomes a reality across sectors, regions and value chains?

The discussions will open with a simple but uncomfortable question: Where is the money? Water is increasingly recognised as a strategic asset for Europe's resilience, competitiveness and security, yet investment continues to lag behind needs. The EU Commission speaks about €23bn of structural underinvestment annually, while Water Europe estimates that more than **€255 billion is needed** to comply with the **pre-2020 EU water legislation**. Is the problem really a lack of money, or are we missing the right frameworks, incentives and investment signals? Participants will explore how **blue finance** can move from concept to reality and how public and private capital can better support Europe's water ambitions and reduce long-term water-related risks.

The debate will then turn into one of Europe's most immediate water challenges: securing sufficient water in the face of recurring droughts and growing demand. **Water scarcity** is increasingly becoming a structural challenge, putting pressure on water availability for citizens, food production, ecosystems and economic activities. Europe needs to move beyond emergency responses towards management of both water demand and supply. As the European debate on water efficiency and the future of water reuse gains momentum, how can we make better use of available water and diversify our water sources? From efficiency and cascading to reuse and alternative water resources, the discussion will explore how Europe can build a more resilient water mix, balance competing needs and make circular water management a structural response to water scarcity.

Water availability is also increasingly becoming a question of production continuity, supply-chain resilience and competitiveness. Just as energy, labour, data and capital are recognised as strategic production factors, water is increasingly shaping investment decisions and business performance. From droughts and water scarcity to pollution and regulatory pressures, water-related risks are becoming business risks. The discussion will therefore examine how businesses can accelerate their investment and transition towards a Water-Smart economy, better understanding and managing their **water dependencies and risks**, while contributing to resilience beyond the boundaries of individual facilities. Can "Water Efficiency First" become for water what "Energy Efficiency First" has become for energy policy?

Co-organised with the European Commission, the morning will close with a workshop on the **Water Resilience Investment Accelerator**. The workshop will seek the active participation of the audience to discuss how the Accelerator should be shaped, which needs and barriers it should address, and what mechanisms could help accelerate investment and bring water-resilient solutions to scale.

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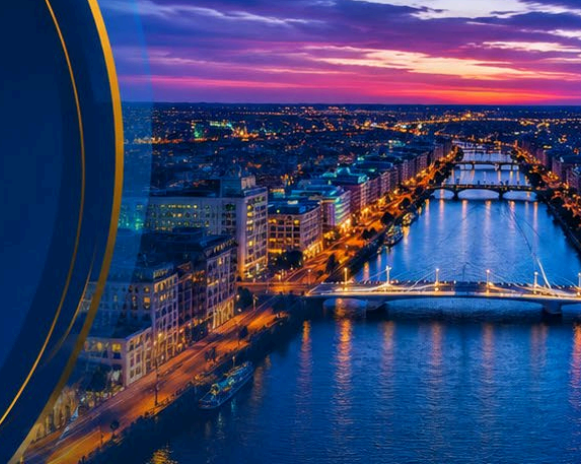

13 October 2026, 9:00-18:45

08:30-09:00 - Registrations

09:00-10:20 - **International Water Dialogue (part I)**

Welcome

- **Durk Krol**, Executive Director, Water Europe

Presentation of WE White Paper on international cooperation

- **David Smith**, Director, WE&B & Chair of the WE Expert Group on international cooperation

Different Global Perspectives - Panel discussion

1. **Sareen Sareen Malik**, Executive Secretary of the African Civil Society Network on Water and Sanitation (ANEW) (online)
2. Dr **Chrysoula Papacharalampou**, Impact Director, World Waternet
3. **Oriana Romano.** Water Governance initiative, OECD (online)

Debate with the audience

- **Jan Hofman,** Professor of Water Science and Engineering, Deputy Head of Department Co-Director of Water Innovation and Research Consortium & WE board Member

10:20-10:50 – Coffee break

10:50-12:30 - **International Water Dialogue (part II)**

Strategic Approach of the UN Water conference

- **Anne Le Guennec**, CEO, Veolia Water Technologies

Presentation of the EU Commission Action during the UN Water Conference:

- **Pernille Weiss-Ehler**, Member of Cabinet of Commissioner Jessika Roswall, European Commission

Other leading initiatives

- **Alexi de Kerchove**, Senior Director, Sustainability, Product and Customer, Xylem & WE Board Member
- **Loic Charpentie**r, Head of Advocacy, Water Europe

Q&A with the audience - moderated by **Durk Krol**, Executive Director, Water Europe

12:30-13:30 – Lunch

13:30-14:30 – **Water Innovation Europe 2026**

Welcome and Keynote Speech

- **Ilari Aho,** Head of Global Business Sustainability, GF Building Flow solutions & President, Water Europe
- **Jessika Roswall**, Commissioner for Environment, Water Resilience and a Competitive Circular Economy, European Commission
- **Fiona Felix**, Head of Public Affairs, Hansgrohe & Vice-President Advocacy, Water Europe
- **Anne Le Guennec**, CEO, Veolia, Water Technologies
- **Geoffrey Bourke**, Head of Customer Operations, Uisce Éireann

14:30-15:45 - Session I: Financing Europe's Water Future - Closing Europe's Water Investment Gap

Achieving the objectives of the Water Framework Directive will require investment at an unprecedented scale. While public funding remains essential, it will not be sufficient to bridge the gap alone. How can Europe attract private capital into water resilience, innovation and infrastructure? This session will explore the barriers preventing investment, the role of blue finance, and how public and private actors can work together to turn water resilience into an investable opportunity.

Introductory presentation: **Sylwia Lyskawka**, Director, Climate Future Institute

Discussion on Financing Europe's Water Future

Moderator: **Magdalena Rzeczkowska**, Vice President for European Affairs at the Federation of Polish Entrepreneurs (FPP), Member of the EESC, and leader of the Water and Finance Expert Group within Water Europe, Member of the EESC

Panel Discussion:

- **Edouard Perard**, Head of Water Division, EIB
- **Vylon Ooms**, Senior Policy Advisor – Sustainability and Climate Coordinator, Dutch Association of Insurers

Video: **Christian Ehler**, Member of the European Parliament, Rapporteur on the ECF

15:45-16:15 – Coffee break

16:15 - 17:30 - Session II – Adapting to Water Scarcity - Securing Water for Europe's Future

Recurring droughts and growing demand are turning water availability into a structural challenge for Europe. Securing sufficient water for citizens, food production, ecosystems and a competitive economy requires moving beyond emergency responses towards long-term management of both water demand and supply. As Europe steps up the debate on water efficiency and it is looking at a potential revision of the water reuse regulation, how can we make better use of available water and deal with scarcity? From efficiency and cascading to reuse and alternative water resources, this session will explore how Europe can build a more resilient water mix, balance competing needs and make circular water management a structural response to water scarcity.

Introductory presentation**: Loic Charpentier**, Head of Advocacy, Water Europe

Moderation: **Fiona Felix**, Head of Public Affairs, Hansgrohe & Vice-President Advocacy, Water Europe
Speakers:

- **Blanca Salgado**, Strategic Manager, Dupont & WE Board member
- **Dominique Gatel**, Global Director of Public Affairs on Water, VEOLIA & WE Vice-President
- **Joaquim Bellvert**, Head of the Efficient Use of Water in Agriculture program, IRTA
- **Geoffrey Bourke**, Head of Customer Operations, Uisce Éireann

Closure: **Durk Krol**, Executive Director, Water Europe

17:40 - 18:40 - Cocktails

19:30 - 22:00 – **Water Europe Water-Smart Awards Ceremony Dinner**

Winners and finalists of the Water Europe Water-Smart Awards will be awarded for the following categories:

- Water-Smart MEP Award
- Water-Oriented Living Lab (WOLL) of the year Award
- Water-Smart Agriculture Award
- Water-Smart Industry Award
- Water-Smart River Basin Award
- Water-Smart Investment & Finance Award
- Water-Smart City and Regions Award

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08:30-09:00 - Registrations

09:00-09:45 - **Water Innovation Europe 2026**

Welcome and Keynote Speech

- **Ilari Aho**, Head of Global Business Sustainability, GF Building Flow solutions & President, Water Europe
- **Christopher O'Sullivan**, Minister of State with responsibility for Nature, Heritage and Biodiversity
- **Water-Smart MEP Award Winner 2026** (video)
- **Friedrich Barth**, Member of the Board, Chelsea Capital AG

09:45 – 10:45 - Session III: The Water-Smart Industry Challenge - The Next Competitiveness Frontier

Water is increasingly becoming a strategic production factor alongside energy, labour, data and capital. Yet many businesses still underestimate how water scarcity, droughts, pollution and regulatory constraints can affect operations, supply chains and future investments. As Europe seeks to strengthen its competitiveness, understanding and managing water-related risks is becoming a business imperative. This session will explore whether European industries are prepared for this new reality, how water risks can be better identified and assessed, and whether "Water Efficiency First" can become a cornerstone principle for a more resilient and competitive European industry.

Introductory presentation: **Madalena Cepeda**, Policy Officer, Water Europe

Moderator: **Pernille Weiss-Ehler**, Member of Cabinet of Commissioner Jessika Roswall, European Commission
Speakers:

- **Paul Conheady**, Co-Founder and Head of Programmes & Advisory, 20FIFTY Partners
- **Geoff Townsend**, Industry Fellow, ECOLAB & Leader of the COP Water-Smart industry
- **Jakob Gamrot,** EU Public Affairs Lead Corporate Affairs, Grundfos
- **Alain Coheur**, Chairman of CCMI, European Economic and Social Committee

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10 :45-11 :15 - Coffee Break

11:15-12:45 - **Workshop on the EU Water-Resilience Investment Accelerator, co-organised with the European Commission**

The Water Resilience Investment Accelerator aims to accelerate investment in innovative and scalable solutions for water resilience by connecting project owners, solution providers and investors. The workshop aims to collect input from the audience on how innovative financing approaches, good practices and EU advisory support can help projects become investment-ready and scale across Europe. It will also provide an opportunity to discuss how stakeholders can contribute to identifying and disseminating successful projects and strengthening connections across the water investment ecosystem.

Welcome and setting the scene on implementation
Arthur Valkieser, Vice-President for Implementation, Water Europe & Chair of CEN/TC 478 on Water Resilience and Efficiency

European Commission presentation – Scope and objectives of the Accelerator, current actions and next steps
Pernille Weiss-Ehler, Member of the Cabinet of Commissioner Roswall, , European Commission

Key stakeholder perspectives

- Best Practice: **Andrea Rubini**, Director of operations, Water Europe
- Utilities perspective: **Brian Murphy**, Eureau vice-president and co-chair of their Legal and Economic Affairs Committee
- Financial/investor perspective: **Job van Schelven**, Partner, PuraTerra Ventures, & Member of Water Europe COP Water-Smart Economy representative

Structured discussion with the audience
Moderation: **Durk Krol**, Executive Director, Water Europe

Wrap-up and closure

- **Pernille Weiss-Elher**, Member of the Cabinet of Commissioner Roswall, European Commission
- **Durk Krol**, Executive Director, Water Europe

12:50 - 14:00 – Lunch

14:00-15:30 – **Water-Oriented Living Labs network Annual Event**

Opening remarks

- **Andrea Rubini,** Water Europe
- **Caroline Wynne**, Environmental Protection Agency Ireland

Strategic keynote – **Helena Alegre,** Vice-Chair, Water4All

Featured keynote: WOLLs Impact Award 2026 winner – From local innovation to systemic impact
Presentation by the winner of the WOLLs Impact Award 2026

Presentation of the WOLLs Atlas 2026 and outlook for the next phase of the Network

- **Andrea Rubini,** Director of Operations, Water Europe

Panel discussion 1 - Water resilience: building resilient water systems through innovation and adaptation
How can WOLLs and innovative projects strengthen the resilience of water systems and territories, enabling them to anticipate, adapt and respond to climate change, extreme events and evolving water-related challenges?

Moderator: **Andrea Rubini**, Director of Operation, Water Europe
Panelists:

- **Martón Pesel** – DALIA project
- **Lydia Vamvakeridou-Lyroudia** – RECREATE project
- **Angel Encinas** – CIRSEAU project
- **Inge Genné** – WaterClimate Hub
- **Marisa Fernandez** – ZINNAE
- **Maarit Liimatainen –** Water Management Innovation Living Lab

Panel discussion 2 - Water Sustainability: accelerating the transition towards sustainable water systems
How can WOLLs and innovative projects accelerate the transition towards sustainable water systems by advancing circularity, ecosystem restoration, resource efficiency and sustainable water management?

Moderator: **Andrea Rubini**, Director of Operation, Water Europe
Panelists:

- **Pierre Lovera** – UNIVERSWATER project
- **Hans van Leeuwen** – PCP-WISE project
- **Avraam Kartalidis** – Attica Water Lab
- **Patrizia Ragazzo** – VeniVE

15:40 – 16:10 – Coffee break

Panel discussion 3 – Water Security: securing Europe's water future
How can WOLLs and innovative projects contribute to securing Europe's water future by safeguarding water availability and quality and accelerating the deployment of solutions that strengthen long-term water security?

Moderator: **Andrea Rubini**, Director of Operation, Water Europe
Panellists:

- **Pepe Puchol-Salort** – SOLUCIR project
- **Guillermo Zaragoza** – Sustainable Desalination Living Lab
- **Yannick Vanhaegenborgh** – Port of Antwerp-Bruges
- **Jordi Moreno** – WaterCampus

Connecting water innovation with investment opportunities
Magdalena Rzeczkowska, Water Europe CoP Water & Finance

- Introduction to Water Europe's CoP Water & Finance, its objectives and opportunities for cooperation with the WOLLs Network.
- Key challenges and opportunities to financing the water transition

- Main outcomes and reflections from the Water Resilience Investment Accelerator workshop held earlier in the day.
- Interactive exchange with WOLLs and the audience (open discussion on financial challenges faced by WOLLs and their territories, the barriers to wider implementation of innovative solutions, and how cooperation with the CoP Water & Finance could help identify common needs and opportunities for future collaboration.

Closing remarks

- **Andrea Rubini**, Director of Operation, Water Europe