

Commissioner Margrethe Vestager
Executive Vice-President for Europe Fit for the Digital Age
Competition
European Commission
B-1049 Brussels – Belgium

Brussels, 9th June 2020

Subject: Main priorities for water under the Commission 2019-2024

Dear Commissioner,

For nine consecutive years, the World Economic Forum has ranked water crises as a top global societal risk in terms of impact on every aspect of our lives. The post COVID19 situation in Europe is a wake-up call to switch to a new paradigm in which consideration for water security and risk management are prerequisites.

The EU Water Alliance, composed of a wide range of water-related stakeholders, has therefore addressed key messages to Von der Leyen's Commission (see annex 1). As you are entrusted with the role of Vice-President for Europe Fit for the Digital Age, the water-related challenges have a direct impact on your mission to strategically ensure that Europe is prepared for the digital age and to further guarantee legislation regarding competition in order to achieve a strong European industrial presence throughout the World.

If the search for solutions to water-related challenges is not considered as a priority, European industry will not be in a position to compete at a global level and the threat of insecurity due to a lack of water quality and quantity will be ever present.

Therefore, this broad coalition of water-related stakeholders kindly request a meeting with you to discuss the challenges and opportunities described below. Water is a key element within your portfolio that will have an important impact on European society and beyond:

- Water-related risks represent the principal challenges of the decade for industrial strategy and economic models. No effective climate policy or strategy can afford to omit water issues within a truly holistic approach to the addressing of the challenges presented by climate change. The Circular Economy Action Plan offers new opportunities for the reuse of water from industry. This further presents solutions that will permit industry to face the future with confidence. However, the absence of water-related challenges in the industrial strategy of the directorate leads one to question the capacity to ensure that industry and SMEs would be sufficiently resilient to climate change. SMEs are of paramount importance for the European economy and the directorate's strategy should fully encompass the value in water to efficiently prepare SMEs within a long-term approach.
- Industry has a significant impact on the environment. The Green Deal is an opportunity to promote the visibility of water-related challenges and dismantle the silo-approach by

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presenting a full picture of their connections to health, education, sustainable economic development, industry, innovation, security, digitalisation, gender equality, agriculture and oceans, to name but a few examples. By investing in a European Water Smart Society, Europe will contribute to ensuring the resilience of both SMEs and industry whilst fostering the single market. Water-oriented Living Labs (WoLLs) are a powerful tool that should be included in SME and industrial strategy by strengthening cross-sectoral cooperation between stakeholders, local authorities and citizens and who combined can contribute to a strong European industrial presence in the World.

- The digitalisation of the water sector through, for example the use of optimisation and management software will guarantee both the security of water quality and quantity and have a positive impact on water-based economic activity. The EU Water Alliance would therefore suggest that the directorate carefully considers the idiosyncracies of the water sector and ensures that this critical resource is well prepared for the future.

We are determined to form a proactive part of the solution.

Therefore, we look forward to scheduling a meeting to discuss these issues at your earliest convenience. The contact point for further communication is Durk Krol, Water Europe Executive director, durk.krol@watereurope.eu, tel: +32 2 7068292

We would like to take this opportunity to thank you in advance for your time and consideration.

Yours sincerely,

Water Europe Director
Durk Krol



On behalf of:



Enclosed:

- Annex 1: EUWA Manifesto