

Commissioner Paolo Gentiloni
Economy
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 broad 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 Commissioner for the Economy, water-related challenges have a direct impact on your mission regarding taxation and economic affairs.

If solutions to the addressing of water-related challenges are not identified, Europe will suffer from additional extreme events and disease which, in all probability would have a highly negative impact on the economy and thus, create financial instability which in turn would prove detrimental for employment creation, growth and investment.

Therefore, this large coalition of water-related stakeholders kindly request a meeting with you to discuss the following challenges and opportunities. Water is a key element if your directorate is to have a positive impact on society in Europe and beyond:

- Water-related risks represent the principal challenges of the coming decade. To ensure that the economy will remain stable and to guarantee fundamental rights, Europe must ensure the correct implementation and achievement of the UN SDGs. The United Nations throughout the descriptions of the SDGs stress the importance of water when addressing climate change. If high standards are not maintained and if the Water Framework Directive is not fully implemented by Member States, Europe will be not be capable of securing economic stability. The European Semester process and all EU funding programmes could fulfil fundamental roles in the addressing of these challenges, whilst demonstrating how water can contribute to the reduction of pollution emissions.
- The Green Deal and Digitalisation are two priorities which support the achievement of a Water Smart Society¹ and ensure macroeconomic stability. This signifies that investment in hybrid green-grey infrastructure and nature-based solutions is a priority

¹ A society in which the true value of water is recognised and realised, and all available water sources are managed in such a way that water scarcity and pollution of groundwater are avoided, by applying the technological and non-technological innovations.

EU Water Alliance

capable of mitigating the effects of extreme events. Water-related infrastructures must be adapted to address the issue of emerging pollutants and support an upstream approach in order to make society more resilient to catastrophes caused by water-related risks.

- Lastly, the Energy Taxation Directive provides a positive impetus to encourage green energy in Europe. However, water-related challenges and opportunities must also be considered in order to ensure that the aforementioned Directive plays an appropriate role within the Green deal. Additionally, the *polluter-payer* principle should be fully applied in Europe. The EU Water Alliance thus encourages the directorate you lead to consider the relevance of the water sector for the future of the economy.

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