

Commissioner Stella Kyriakides
Health
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, particularly for health-based challenges.

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 Health, water challenges directly impact your mission to ensure that food in Europe is safe and nutritious and to reduce possible health risks to a minimum.

Therefore, this large coalition of water-related stakeholders kindly requests a meeting with you to discuss a number of challenges and opportunities. Water is a key element for your portfolio which will have an important impact on European society and beyond:

- The opportunity of your missions to encourage an awareness that water is an essential element in the fostering of public health. As the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrates, access to clean water and appropriate sanitation including hand washing facilities is essential to combat such crises.
- The Green Deal provides significant opportunities to strengthen the *One Health* approach, enforcing in particular the environmental dimension. Not only with respect to Antimicrobial Resistance but also other emerging pollutants, pathogens, and vector-borne diseases, improving measures that demonstrate a proven positive impact on public health.
- Public health can also greatly benefit from the *Farm-to-Fork* approach within the Green Deal. Each step in the food supply chain is dependent on access to good quality water and our productive agroecosystems require the proper management of used water. As water resources are under pressure, and taking into account *inter alia* the European regulation on water re-use, your active consideration of water-related challenges would prove to be both welcome and much-needed.

- A serious concern is the increasingly high quantity of pharmaceuticals and other organic compounds / micropollutants through residential, industrial, and agricultural wastewaters emitted to the environment that can negatively affect public and environmental health. We would suggest that discussions with inter alia the pharmaceutical industry and water treatment operators should be instigated.
- Smart nature-based solutions can contribute to combating heat stress in cities, but may also play a role in capturing excess water, thereby playing a role in regulating the impacts of droughts and floods on public health, and the prevention of waterborne diseases.
- Beyond the European Union, connecting water management and public health, can lower post-event health impacts of extreme weather (droughts and floods), especially in low and middle income countries. Furthermore, when addressed strategically in the long term, the opportunity for enhanced peace and security in affected regions is increased (e.g. by implementing the UNECE Water & Health protocol. The EU is party to the UNECE). Horizontal coordination between portfolios in this respect is crucial.
- As in all cases we recommend fully inclusive approaches that involve all stakeholders of the Quadruple Helix and which result in the true joint ownership of the solutions. The National Dialogues under the aforementioned UNECE Water & Health protocol set a good example in this sense.
- Lastly, the opportunity offered by Water-oriented Living Labs (WoLLs) to actively support the implementation of the directorate's missions by creating a Water Smart Society, in which the true value of water is both recognised and acted upon, and where by applying both technological and non-technological innovations, all available water sources are managed in such a way that water scarcity and pollution of groundwater are avoided, constitute a powerful tool to increase the impact of the directorate's actions in supporting national or regional authorities.

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



EU Water Alliance

On behalf of:



Enclosed:

- Annex 1: EUWA Manifesto