

## Towards a water-related human capital agenda for the Green Deal

With 75% of jobs depending on water<sup>1</sup>, the importance of the water sector goes far beyond utilities' services. Water Europe and the European Junior Water Programme are of the opinion that the European union cannot build a sustainable society and ensure a green growth without considering the full value chain and achieving a Water Smart Society through an inclusive approach at all levels. Therefore, we need to invest in:

- ◆ Diversity to create new ways of thinking,
- ◆ Social and innovative solutions to maximize the impacts,
- ◆ Life-long learning to get the right experience, skills and knowledge to realize the value of water in a changing society.

Despite welcomed initiatives from the European institutions and water-related stakeholders such as the Climate Pact, Europe doesn't fully embrace the potential of human capital in the water sector. We need therefore to identify the challenges and set up a European Agenda for human capital in this sector to support the Green Deal actions.

Based on a survey carried out in July 2019, the EJWP and WE have identified the good practices and the challenges of a strong human capital agenda for the water sector. A selection of the most significant results of this research is introduced in a living document (see below) under four categories: general overview, education, demography and indirect investments. The EJWP and WE would suggest below some recommendations as outcomes of this consultation:

- ◆ Set up a European strategy on water-related human capital. This initiative can be an additional opportunity for the European Union to contribute to tackle climate change by identifying the key skills and knowledge that Europe needs to find innovative solutions and implement them.
- ◆ Support additional analysis from the JRC and European Environmental Bureau to include human capital research in their reports on European water sector and furthermore encourage the exchange of data and cooperation through its WISE platform on this topic.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.unenvironment.org/news-and-stories/press-release/three-four-jobs-global-workforce-depend-water-says-un-world-water>

- ◆ Encourage professional training to make sure that Europe remains a competitive economy in the water sector and creates the right innovative solutions to achieve a water smart society
- ◆ Encourage and support diversity to provide flexibility and dynamism to the sector and therefore increase its competitiveness for the future
- ◆ Increase investment in European citizens' human capital to raise the importance of the value of water in our society. Water security will be the most important challenge of this decade and citizens play a key role to achieve a water smart society
- ◆ Encourage participation of citizens in the decision-making process, particularly through LivingLabs to make sure that innovative solutions are accepted and fit according to citizens needs and behavior.

Water Europe and the European Junior Water Programme remain ready to further discuss these recommendations with the European Institutions' representatives and offer their support to enable an efficient implementation.



The European Junior Water Programme<sup>2</sup> aims to build a community of young European water management professionals who share a deep commitment to addressing today and future water and climate change issues. It is designed to provide participants with the tools, the skills and the appropriate co-creation and cooperation network to find new solutions and share knowledge for building and maintaining a sustainable and safe water management system in Europe.



Water Europe (WE)<sup>3</sup> is the voice and promoter of water-related innovation and RTD in Europe. WE is a membership-based multi-stakeholder organisation representing over 200 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"<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://juniorwaterprogramme.eu/>

<sup>3</sup> <http://watereurope.eu>

<sup>4</sup> Water-Smart Society is 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. Water and resource loops are largely closed to foster a circular economy and optimal resource efficiency, while the water system is resilient against the impact of climate change events. (cf. Water Europe definition)