

Commissioner Virginijus Sinkevičius
Environment, Oceans and Fisheries.
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 Environment, Oceans and Fisheries, the issue of water has a direct impact on your mission to enable citizens to live well based on a sustainable and innovative economy and to enhance society's resilience, resource efficiency and respect of biodiversity.

Therefore, this large coalition of water-related stakeholders kindly requests a meeting with you to discuss the following points of interest:

- The opportunity of the Green Deal to make water-related challenges truly visible and to break the silo-approach by establishing a clear picture of the connections between water and health, education, economic development, innovation, security, digitalisation, gender equality, agriculture and oceans, (with regards to the latter in order to specifically contribute to a sustainable fisheries policy). 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 need for an inclusive and systemic approach with regards to all relevant EU policies in order to reinforce the resilience of our ecosystems and society, particularly through the conservation of peatlands or the development of nature-based solutions as a carbon storage tool.
- The need for inclusive governance with the full value chain, including NGOs, CSOs, local authorities, businesses, water users, citizens with specific emphasise on the involvement of youth and women encompassing the full diversity of the

aforementioned sectors in order to integrate water as a central issue with the creation and implementation of initiatives designed to achieve the carbon-neutral objective of the Green Deal. Tools such as water stewardship may be of great use but require high-profile promotion to be become known and be employed.

- The full implementation of Europe's ambitious legislation regarding inland water is indispensable to achieve climate neutral ambitions. A circular economy approach and the reuse of water should be encouraged in all activities aimed at reducing pressure on groundwater resources and protecting aquatic biodiversity especially in inland waters. Pollution (pathogens) in runoff and wastewater, particularly in urbanised areas, must be tackled at its source and substances and energy must be extracted as much as possible in order to fully exploit the value in water.
- Education regarding water and training in line with the major current challenges can support green jobs, entrepreneurship, and leadership, particularly when one considers youth and women. For instance, intra-generational dialogues between decision-makers/experts and young leaders, can contribute to the fostering of the exchange of experience and the consideration of priorities as discerned from the perspective of the younger generations.
- The EU/EC is capable of undertaking a vital (horizontal coordination) role in connecting fresh water and maritime issues including that of fishery. Currently however such a mechanism within the EC/EU does not exist and it is mere coincidence if the responsible civil servants in member states are identifying such links. Therefore, one must ask, 'How can this dialogue be enhanced?'.
- Tackling issues such as *the plastic soup* should be a joint effort undertaken by both fresh and saltwater organisations whilst also involving businesses that understand the link.

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