
A manifesto for water in the EU beyond 2019

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Introduction

The EU has to overcome a wide range of major complex challenges to ensure access to good quality drinking water and wastewater services to all EU citizens, for now and for the future. Private water operators call on the new EU Commissioners and Members of the European Parliament for the next term (2019-2024) to:

- Maintain public health through the very best drinking water quality.
- Protect the environment and water resources in the long term.
- Ensure all users' rights to water and sanitation are upheld and they have trust and confidence in their water and sanitation operators.
- Remember that water is too vital and too long term to become an opportunity for polemic debates.

AquaFed, the International Federation of Private Water Operators, stands ready to help EU institutions and public authorities to support these objectives. AquaFed represents more than 400 private operators providing water and sanitation services in more than 40 countries worldwide, including EU Member States.

A manifesto for water in the EU– 2019 and beyond

The EU has enabled fast progress on water management: Very few Member States would be where they are in terms of safe water supply or environmental protection, without the EU's capacity to debate pan-European standards for water quality or wastewater treatment. The EU's controls, financing and enforcement mechanisms, relayed by Member States and national organisations, have also been critical in implementing these norms.

Between 2011 and 2013, 98.5% of tests carried out on drinking water samples met EU standards¹. These achievements were also enabled by the daily commitment of public and private actors, providing evolutive, integrated or modular, hard to soft solutions, all along the value chain. The average cost to supply quality drinking water and waste water services

¹ European water policies and human health, EEA, 2016

for each EU citizen is around €200 per capita per year².

Nevertheless, all Member States are or will be impacted by global changes: Europe is facing severe challenges including low investment in infrastructure, migration of people and communities, and climate change impacts. All of these are making it even more difficult for Member States to manage renewable but finite water resources.

For example, today already 23 million EU citizens do not have access to safe drinking water³ 24/7. By 2070, 300 million Europeans could be impacted by water scarcity. Also, water pollution remains an issue for 25,000 out of 40,000 surface water bodies⁴.

Private Water Operators are fully committed to act on the instruction of public authorities to build and operate water and wastewater facilities and services, delivered through a variety of contractual or licensing, national or local, settings.

Legislative creativity will be needed: Various pieces of substantial and significant EU water-related legislation will be reviewed and developed in the next five years. These include the Water Framework Directive, Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive, Water Reuse Regulation and even the Common Agricultural Policy, which have huge impacts on water.

Through this work, it is essential that EU decision-makers improve the existing legislation through a more holistic approach:

- Takes a risk-based approach to ensure the safety and accessibility of drinking water.
- Better protects water resources and biodiversity.
- Strongly supports the cost recovery principle.
- Recognises the potential for water and sanitation to strengthen local circular economies.
- Ensures industrial and urban wastewater is appropriately treated before being released in the nature.
- Frames climate-proof solutions such as water reuse or leakage reduction programmes.
- Champions transparency and increases access to reliable information, so citizens understand the challenges of water and sanitation provision.

² EU28 average for Water supply and sanitation, OECD analysis based on Eurostat, 2018

³ Impact assessment of the future Drinking Water Directive, EC, 2018

⁴ Chemical in European water, EEA, 2018

Therefore, AquaFed remains at the service of public institutions to:

- Find concrete translations of the Human Right to water and sanitation
- Progress the rule of law, equality of treatment and transparency
- Share best practices of its members' activities around the globe.