

## PRESS RELEASE

### The EU must further protect water resources and the environment and strengthen public trust

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The next five years are critical to the future of Europe's water and sanitation – and the EU must show strong leadership to protect the future of these essential services, which are every citizens' human rights.

Europe's water resources face severe challenges including low investment in infrastructure, migration of people and communities, and potentially catastrophic climate change impacts. If these challenges are not met, public health, the environment, economic growth and social cohesion are all at major risk.

AquaFed's manifesto for water, published today, puts forward solutions that the new EU leaders should put in place with the new term. The Manifesto indicates essential, but difficult decisions must be taken at EU-level, for example to further harmonise performance standards of all utility operators and increase their transparency.

Factors such as full cost recovery of utility services remain essential, and needs to happen across the EU. The forthcoming reviews of existing water legislation, also enable the EU to more strongly enforce principles such as polluter-pays, so that wastewater is appropriately treated before being released into nature.

Mamadou Dia, President of AquaFed, said: “The challenges that we are facing in Europe are complex and carry huge risk of damaging public health and the environment.

“It is essentially now or never for the EU – they can either take bold and decisive actions to further protect water resources and strengthen services, or it is likely that everyone's hard work over the decades will start to be reversed.

“A crucial role for EU leaders is to be the catalyst for transparent dialogue between decision-makers and the public on water and wastewater. EU citizens need to be supported to truly understand the scale of the challenges and the true cost of the solutions needed. They then need to be empowered to participate more actively in the actions and decisions taken.

“Ultimately, we need straightforward and honest information and debate with the public, and not politically-motivated polemics.”

# AquaFed

THE INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF  
PRIVATE WATER OPERATORS

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Various pieces of substantial and significant EU water-related legislation will be reviewed and developed in the next five years. AquaFed's Manifesto calls for EU decision-makers to improve the existing legislation through a more holistic approach, that:

- 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.

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## *About AquaFed*

AquaFed is the international federation of private water operators. We bring together more than 300 water companies operating in more than 40 countries including European member states. Collectively our members serve around 100 million people in the EU. Over 1 billion people count on private operators to serve them on a daily basis. AquaFed and its members are strongly committed to provide continuously the best quality services to all its customers. We are a UN accredited body and are in the EU transparency register.