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UN 2023 Water Conference Side Event

Water & Health: Going beyond the WASH approach?

23 March 2023, 08:00-09:15 EST, Online

Organized by: Water Europe, Deltares, De Nora

TWO PAGE MAXIMUM

Background on the event (one paragraph)

In January 2023, the new European drinking water legislation enters in force. It opens a new era by guaranteeing to citizens access to drinking water and information related to its quality. The legislation is also updated in line with the new technologies offering opportunities for digital control of water quality. This example of legislation ensuring access to water for all at a continent level demonstrates the opportunities to recognise a human right to safe drinking water and sanitation. This process is still ongoing as Europe is encouraging circular processing for wastewater management. There is an opportunity for a paradigm switch to achieve a Water-Smart Society in which digitalisation and the inclusion of new techniques are part of an agile quality control. A risk-based control will become the new standard in Europe, but it stresses some question: How can we go beyond a WASH-silo approach? How can we ensure this agile monitoring? Which examples can we collect? As a member of the coalition Sanitation for all, Water Europe is committed to support the integration in the EU regulatory landscape access to sanitation and water for all. It is our societal responsibility to leave no one behind. By taking the best examples and solutions from European market, the partners will support impact and the acceleration of the implementation of technology and projects, contributing to achieving SDG 6 and the 2030 Agenda. The side event partners will invite stakeholders from civil society, research community, public and private sector, and government to discuss how the community is taking actions to ensure safe drinking water.

Water Action Agenda (one paragraph, if possible, please include the link to your commitment in the [Water Action Agenda database](#))

Build a Water-Smart Society in Europe: Water Europe envisions a European society driven by inclusive and open innovations with modern governance structures, solutions and pricing mechanisms reflecting the value of water, technologies to reduce, re-use, recycle and cascade water streams, a redesigned water infrastructure as well as more profound water stewardship programmes. These innovations will manoeuvre the water market towards a 50% reduction of pressure on our natural water system and a more effective resilience against the impact of demographic and climate change. Water Europe aims for this purpose to support the achievement of a Water Smart Society, in which the value of water is recognised and realised. This means that all available water sources are managed in a such way that water scarcity and pollution are avoided, and that the water system is resilient against the impact of demographic changes, droughts and floods which are exacerbated by climate change. Achieving a Water Smart Society requires involving all relevant to guarantee sustainable water governance, while water and resource loops are largely closed to foster a circular economy.

Key Issues discussed (5- 8 bullet points)

- How can a Water-Smart Society contribute to the achievement of SDG 6?
- How can we go beyond a WASH-silo approach?
- How can we ensure this agile monitoring?
- Which examples can we collect?
- How do we need to manage the risk while providing water and sanitation for all?

Key recommendations for action (5 - 6 bullet points)

- Support digital water and the implementation of BAT (best available technologies) through ad hoc regulation and public and private investment: digitalisation and the exploitation of state-of-the-art technology can make quality control and monitoring easier.
- Foster a holistic approach of the research sector to support the water policies: A strong clean water R&I strategy to support EU water policies, the EU Green Deal and its Zero-pollution ambition is needed.
- There is an urge to move from a reactive to a preventive approach in water management.
- It is needed to better consider cross-cutting effects.
- Utilities shall manage the risk with spring-to-sea approach to consider the whole panel of challenges.
- Moving to the basin level for better water management means gathering different entities from various sectors. Engage and activate citizens and local communities to co-create solutions, raise awareness, and strengthen socio-political consensus on water policies.