



German Water
Partnership



Water and Sanitation Utilities are key partners in the European COVID-19 Response

The following public statement towards the European Union have been prepared and endorsed by:
Global Water Operator Partnership Alliance
German Water Partnership e.V.
WaterWorX
Aqua Publica Europea
WaterAid

The COVID-19 crisis is pushing governments, societies, and economies to **extraordinary limits**. The pandemic is a health emergency, but is evolving into a social and economic disaster as well, that will play out for months and years to come.

Water and Sanitation Service Providers in developing economies are in **the frontline** of the COVID-19 response. The availability of a sufficient water and sanitation services is essential to slow the spread of the virus and become resilient to the COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically vulnerable people in poor areas are in need of sufficient water, sanitation and waste disposal services. Massive emergency interventions of service providers are rolled out as we speak, including communicating about handwashing, ensuring access to WASH services in vulnerable communities and halting disconnections.

In the long run, well performing and adequately funded service providers are critical for the economic **recovery of developing economies**. Water, Sanitation and Waste services are necessary conditions for social and economic development of a country. To have these services delivered, the financial and organizational capacity of service providers need to be secured for the years to come: Service providers need to be resilient, inclusive and financially robust.

However, service providers are among those likely to be the hardest hit by the economic crisis. The expected income losses of developing economies are to exceed 220 billion USD. The pandemic will affect utility workforces, ask for additional expenditures and utility revenues will drop significantly. Several national regulators have expressed their worries regarding the **cash flow shortages and organizational weaknesses of Utilities**.

A **coordinated European Solidarity Response** is needed to help ensuring water and sanitation utilities remain afloat. Both the financial and organizational capacities of service providers are in need of financial aid and technical support. As the European Union – including EU Member States, European Commission, European financial institutions and European Utilities – further expand and elaborate their external COVID-19 responses, we urge them to prioritize the water and sanitation sector and support water and sanitation utilities to play their full part in protecting health and social and economic recovery. A coordinated European Solidarity Response should include:

- Financial aid and technical assistance to the Water and Sanitation Sector and the service providers is needed urgently **to ensure that everyone has access to essential water sanitation services**, and in particular those living in poor urban areas that are not connected yet to water networks. In the short term this can slow down the spread of the COVID 19 virus. Financial aid and technical assistance will also be essential in the medium term, to avoid that the expected economic crisis affect services that are essential to ensure health and economic recovery



German Water
Partnership



- European Utilities welcome partnering with European Institutions. The European Union – including member state government, European Commission, European Development Finance Institutions and European Service Providers – should capitalize on its **track record** in Operator-to-Operator support and Water Operator Partnerships
- The European Union should support and work with existing **platforms, networks and partnerships** of utilities, that enable remote support between peers during the COVID 19 crisis. Service Providers around the world are already showing tremendous capacity and readiness to share lessons, good practice and share equipment through the existing partnerships. Cooperation and exchange can continue effectively through remote exchange – webinars and learning and virtual platforms. GWOPA, German Water Partnership (GWP) and WWX – and many others – have examples of practical guidance, webinars, exchange meetings etc to facilitate the exchange
- The European Commission is encouraged to establish as soon as possible the planned **EU WOP Programme**. This programme is an important window to support platforms and networks of utilities in developing countries and facilitate the technical assistance between peers. Through the EU WOP Programme the European Union and European Utilities can partner and pool their resources to scale financial aid and technical assistance to Utilities in developing economies
- The European Union is encouraged to provide financial aid resources to the Water and Sanitation sector in developing economies from their development programmes and COVID-19 Response programmes. These resources are urgently needed to support Utilities with a **liquidity shortages and cash flow problem**. Utilities need to bridge their financial gap to maintain and sustain the service levels in the years to come.
- **Capitalize on the European track record through the EU WOP Programme**. Coordination and alignment of the different aid resources of the European Commission, European member states and the European Investment Bank is needed. And partnering of these European institutions with Utilities and their Water Operator Partnerships is welcomed. The planned EU WOP Programme offers the platform to facilitate and enable this and work on a coordinated European Solidarity Response to the water and sanitation sector in developing economies
- **Build more resilient, inclusive and financially robust utilities**. As the immediate crisis subsides, European technical assistance and operator-to-operator support must provide dedicate support to utilities to be better prepared for future shocks. European utilities are already sharing approaches and good practices with other utilities from Europe and the rest of the world alike. They would be eager to partner with the European Union to increase even more their effort to strengthen peer utilities' capacity , thus ensuring that services are more inclusive and resilient to future crises including that of climate change, by strengthening utility governance, planning, financial, technical and operational capacity. Such support should also help utilities to improve their financial positions in order to access funding from local capital markets for operational improvements and new infrastructure investments.

For further information:

Global Water Operator Partnership Alliance – Julie Perkins, Acting Head
Julie.perkins@un.org

German Water Partnership e.V., Ms Julia Braune, Managing Director
Sekretariat@germanwaterpartnership.de

Aqua Publica Europea, Mr Milo Fiasconaro, Executive Director
milo.fiasconaro@aquapublica.eu



German Water
Partnership



EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION
OF PUBLIC WATER OPERATORS



WaterWorX, Dr. Marco Schouten, CEO Vitens Evides International
marco.schouten@vei.nl

WaterAid – Dan Jones, Advocacy Coordinator
danjones@wateraid.org