



EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION  
OF PUBLIC WATER OPERATORS

## JOINT STATEMENT - WORLD TOILET DAY 2020

# WATER AND WASTE WATER SERVICES CANNOT LEAVE ANYONE BEHIND

COVID-19 is having a significant impact on the health and economic conditions of European citizens, thus generating fear and uncertainty. By ensuring the continuity of water and sanitation services for all, public water and sanitation services have contributed to reduce this uncertainty and fight the spread of COVID-19.

The United Nations establishes access to safe water and sanitation as human rights. COVID-19 is exponentially increasing the number of people facing socio-economic vulnerability, which makes it even more urgent to guarantee universal access to water, sanitation and adequate hygiene in order to stop infections and put an end to the pandemic. For this reason, we, European public operators gathered in **Aqua Publica Europea (APE)**, call on governments and institutions to take – where needed – all necessary actions to ensure that everyone has access to essential water and hygiene services, leaving no one behind.

We remind that a recent report by the United Nation's Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights to safe drinking water and sanitation points out the risks that the privatisation of essential services can entail for the achievement of universal access to water. The report analyses how the commodification of water can exacerbate inequality and discrimination for those who cannot pay, and recommends a series of measures governments should take to ensure that no one is excluded when services are privatised

COVID-19 has highlighted the critical role of public water operators for public health not only through the continued provision of essential water and sanitation services throughout the emergency, but also in light of the great potential of waste water analysis to detect and track the circulation of the virus early and to serve as a tool for public health decisions. The members of **Aqua Publica Europea** are proud to be actively involved in the protection of people's health by taking part in coordinated collaborative research efforts at local, national and international levels.

**Aqua Publica Europea** believes that COVID-19 is an opportunity to strengthen and improve water and sanitation management models. Therefore, on this World Toilet Day, **APE** calls on all governments and European institutions to make the appropriate legal changes to ensure that the necessary safeguards are in place.

In the face of our global challenges, including pandemics and climate change, we need to strengthen our societies' resilience. This calls for integrate and sustainable management of water that enables investment and leaves no one behind. The time has come to say it loud and clear: the commodification of health and water, sanitation and other goods and services related to human rights will exclude many people and therefore it is necessary, more than ever, that European States and administrations defend public management.