



EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION
OF PUBLIC WATER OPERATORS

PRESS RELEASE

WATER REUSE: PUBLIC WATER OPERATORS WELCOME APPROVED RULES FOR WATER REUSE IN A CIRCULAR ECONOMY

Brussels, 14 May 2020 – Following yesterday's vote in the European Parliament's plenary, Aqua Publica Europea, the European Association of Public Water Operators, **welcomes the adoption of the Water Reuse Regulation as a critical harmonised framework for the reuse of treated water for irrigation.**

The new legislation sets common European quality standards for water reuse and benefits all actors by allowing altogether the protection of health and the environment. On the one hand, it protects human health by **ensuring safety of reused water** and agricultural produce irrigated with it, and by contributing to **confidence throughout the supply chain** – from farmers to citizens. At the same time, environmental benefits stem from a needed boost to the **circular economy** as a response to intensifying drought periods affecting the entire EU; increasingly difficult summers for farmers; and important and growing pressure on limited freshwater resources. With this text, the EU confirms its green ambition and spearheads sustainability whilst protecting citizens.

In the implementation phase, we call on the competent authorities in charge of overseeing the water reuse practices, to pay particular attention to **all environmental impacts of water use and reuse**. In line with the **EU Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC)** and the need to conserve limited water resources, it is important to consider that water reuse might in some cases affect ecological flows – by not being returned to nature. Therefore, a truly sustainable approach needs to be coupled, first and foremost, with a **prudent use of water**, avoiding overuse of water in agriculture and elsewhere, and only when necessary moving to reuse as a solution in times of droughts.

Public water operators welcome the clear definition of responsibilities throughout the chain of reuse. We further remind that, as water is a shared resource, it is the duty of our society and all sectors to **protect water's natural balance**, for ours and future generations. **Coordination** between water operators and farmers, as well as citizen consultations, will be instrumental in ensuring a functioning and fair system that reflects actual needs.

Paolo Romano, Vice-President of Aqua Publica Europea and President of SMAT, the public water operator from Turin, Italy, said: *“European public water operators welcome the approach taken by the EU to protect our common water and address growing concerns of water scarcity by acknowledging the important role that water operators play in conserving resources, committing efforts to provide safe water of high quality, and finding effective solutions for the circular economy.”*

We hope that this new legislation will provide the **right incentive to choose the more sustainable available option** in the use of water, and will be supported by financial and political efforts to build upon the foundation of the regulation and make circularity ambitions a reality without impairing the affordability of water services.

Aqua Publica Europea is the European Association of Public Water Operators. For the past ten years, it has united publicly owned water and sanitation services and other stakeholders working to promote public water management at European and international levels. Aqua Publica gathers 65 members serving more than 70 million people, in an operator-led association that looks for efficient solutions that serve the public rather than corporate interests.

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