

Statement on the hearing of the Commissioner-designate for DG RESEARCH, SCIENCE and INNOVATION

1. The new Commissioner should

- support the quintessential importance of water by guaranteeing a complete innovation value chain covering all technology readiness levels.
- reinforce the high visibility of water as a cross-cutting theme in the H2020 structure. Water needs to be integrated across the different pillars and challenges of the Horizon2020 Work Programmes.
- ensure that water remains an independent focus area itself among societal challenges of H2020. The commercial value of innovations in water shall be strengthened within the EU and internationally.

The actual importance of water is often underrated by the fact that water appears in so many different sectors of society. Water is also a crosscutting theme in many research and innovation policy priorities. Strengthening innovations in water, will make companies more competitive, will contribute to solving global social challenges, will secure resources, and will contribute to climate change mitigation and adaptation, including the innovative solutions addressing the risks caused by extreme water events. Water is also a crucial component for smart cities and creates new smart specialisation employment with more than 136,000 SMEs directly involved in the value chains of the water-related economy.

2. The new Commissioner should continue to build on the achievements of the EIP on Water and the other EIPs, in particular

- strengthen the capabilities of all EIPs to drive large scale systemic changes with long term impacts;
- secure committed high-level leadership of EIP Water; adequately resource it and adopt an effective governance model.

The European water sector has a prominent position in economy and society, but it is very diverse and fragmented and one needs to revolutionise the way public and private actors work together so as to address water-related challenges and seize on opportunities strengthening a demand-driven approach. In a short time the EIP on Water has already demonstrated its ground-breaking potential by creating resounding dynamics for collaborative research, innovation, and technological development throughout Europe in the water sector. This dynamic should be secured on long term to maximise the impact of the initiative.

3. The new Commissioner should

- ensure a closer coordination of actions of the EIPs and the existing financial mechanisms such as Horizon2020 with calls orientated towards demonstration activities, Structural funds, EUREKA, and
- foster the creation of new innovative financial mechanisms for an innovative water sector.

The need to attract more public and private money for innovation in the sector through tariffs, subsidies, and investments remains a priority. In order to boost economic acceptability of innovation in the water sector there is a need to ensure that the cost of water is transparent including all those external services.

