

Statement on the hearing of the Commissioner-designate for DG REGIONAL POLICY

1. Water Innovation is the solution to the different regional water issues. The new Commissioner should

- **support more effective integration of water innovation challenges focused on the specific needs of the regions fostering smart specialisation strategies for innovations in water;**
- **ensure the inclusion of water issues in the Urban Agenda for Europe as a driver for growth and resource efficiency.**

The variability of water challenges in different regions and urban areas creates the need for tailor-made innovative solutions and the encouragement of a best-practice exchange between regional and local authorities to facilitate optimal solutions to different issues.

Priority should be given to (a) the implementation of operational programmes, (b) a more conscientious selection of projects, and (c) funding for local industrial players, in particular SMEs, which are well aware of local conditions.

2. In order to speed up the innovation processes Europe needs to invest more and be more discerning with regards to water innovation in the regions. The new Commissioner should

- **speed up the innovation processes and the harmonisation of the legislation within the regions so as to minimize bottlenecks and barriers that often cause problems or slow down investments or initiatives.**
- **encourage a greater strategic investment focused on an integrated approach to water innovation with an emphasis on water management, services and infrastructures, including green infrastructures.**

The EU regional policy shall play an important role in supporting innovative solutions and ensuring coordination of the water sector across EU regions. The priorities should be given to (a) more and better investment in water innovation, (b) addressing water management, services and infrastructure, (c) other relevant sectors and policy areas such as ICT, Energy and Industrial Policy.

Investments will also benefit from a more mature water sector in Europe. This will be possible through better coordination notably in the allocation of funding, in conjunction with the water sector.

Collaboration should be built on the existing clusters and initiatives to foster participation of local actors, raise awareness and share best practices, such as the EIP Water and its Action Groups to accelerate and facilitate the innovation processes.

Investing resources in the EIP on Water is strategic and the European Commission should encourage an integrated approach to water across the European Commission in order to increase its impact on both Policy and Investments/Market side.

