

ANNEX 3: INTERVIEWS - Durk Krol



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Director of the WssTP - European Technology Platform for Water Research and Innovation.

Deputy-Secretary General of EUREAU

1 – What is the ultimate goal of the Water supply and sanitation Technology Platform (WssTP)? In your opinion, what has been the WssTP greatest achievement to date?

WssTP was created in 2004 in order to i) improve coordination and collaboration on RTD and Innovation, ii) to enhance the competitiveness of the EU water sector, and iii) to contribute to solving the EU's water-related societal challenges. WssTP has been very successful in laying out a vision for the water sector (2006) and gathering the water sector around a common Strategic Research Agenda (2007+2010) and related activities. By doing so WssTP has been very effective in addressing the fragmentation in the water sector. Currently WssTP represents 125 members from across water industry, research institutes and academia, utilities, the supply chain, and large industrial and agricultural water users who collaborate in a WssTP context to address water-related challenges for Europe's industry, society, and environment. WssTP also takes a unique position as it is the only European umbrella organization that represents the full water value chain.

2 – Given the number of organizations that contribute to “Achieving Sustainable Water Systems for a Sustainable Economy in Europe and Abroad”, what is the added-value provided by the WssTP?

The JPI Water has a unique potential for aligning the water dimensions of the different national research agenda's and funding mechanisms with the objective to achieve sustainable water systems for a sustainable economy in Europe and abroad. WssTP and the JPI water are very complimentary in that sense and can help each other by exchanging perspectives on water-related challenges, research priorities, and the best way to address these.

3 – WssTP strives to address the challenges related to an integrated and sustainable management of water resources. How effectively is this goal being pursued?

Very effective.

4 – How do you assess the present European scientific and technological cooperation in the water domain? What do you expect of cross-border cooperation concerning the matter?

Since the launch of WssTP in 2004 the European scientific and technological cooperation on water has strongly increased. Today we see a great deal of cooperation going on. Water is a very local issue and the water sector is consequently very fragmented. This means that there is a big risk for wasting of resources and missed opportunities in the form of doubling of efforts and lack of awareness of problems and solutions that exist elsewhere in Europe. Initiatives such as the JPI Water and WssTP have a crucial role to play in overcoming this fragmentation.

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5 – WssTP highlights that the European water sector needs to develop “a curiosity for innovation” and that “the water industry is too slow in studying and eventually adopting new technologies.” In your opinion, what are the largest barriers that hinder innovation and technology transfer in the water sector in Europe?

Water utilities are very conservative which can partly be explained by the fact that their services have a direct potential impact on human health but also by the fact how they are governed. Another issue is again the fragmentation of the water sector. For example, there is no single European market for water-related technologies; different countries apply different standards. There is also a huge financial challenge to recover the cost of water services and provide people an incentive to use the available water services wisely. Lack of funding availabilities hinders the potential to bring innovative solutions to the market.

6 –How do you evaluate the present level of cooperation between companies and research centres in Europe? How does WssTP contribute to this matter?

WssTP has an excellent track record of bringing research centres and companies together through its activities to jointly address water-related challenges.

7 – Based on your expertise and knowledge of the European RDI landscape, what are the key challenges that an integrated and effective water governmental policy faces today?

Coping with increasing water stress (quantity & quality), Reducing impact of extreme events (droughts and floods), Managing aging or lacking infrastructure, Facilitating technology transfer, Establishing an “Enabling Framework”, and the MDGs for Sustainable Water Supply and Sanitation Services in Developing Countries.

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