

Task Force on Interactions with Horizon Europe

Response to the consultation on the EU Action Plan “Towards a Zero Pollution Ambition for air, water and soil – building a Healthier Planet for Healthier People”

29th October 2020

The Water JPI welcomes and supports the Commission’s roadmap proposal « Towards a Zero Pollution Ambition for air, water and soil » considering the effects of pollution on human health, ecosystems and ecosystem services, and social and economic systems as it complements very well the Water JPI Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda.

The Water JPI strongly **supports the ambition of the Commission to better prevent, remedy, monitor and report on pollution, and mainstream the zero-pollution ambition into all policy developments**. It is particularly content with the intention of the Commission to coordinate the Zero Pollution Action Plan with other initiatives and to rely on existing evidence. In this sense, the **Water JPI is willing to exchange with the Commission** both expertise and outputs from relevant activities and funded projects as a way to **build upon accumulated knowledge** and respond more efficiently to emerging pollution issues in water and aquatic ecosystems. We are particularly proud of the work that is being done within the field of contaminants of emerging concerns and antimicrobial resistant organisms due to e.g. pharmaceutical production, which has been the object of two joint calls and a **knowledge hub**. The latter, which has gathered experts from many Member States, has produced a number of policy briefs that have found ample diffusion and interest from both the scientific and policy communities in Europe.

The Water JPI community agrees with the 4 pillar-based Action Plan as it combines enforcement, governance, technological development and social innovation measures. **These measures should be strengthened by collaborative research and innovation actions in a number of areas**. In particular, the Water JPI calls the Commission to collaborate with existing and future initiatives in supporting actions on the following issues:

- Development of methodologies and strategies to prevent, remediate and reduce pollutants at point (e.g. wastewater treatment plants, farmyards) and non-point sources (e.g. land spreading of biosolids, fertiliser applications, run-off from agricultural lands);
- Development and roll-out of innovative cost-effective wastewater technologies to enhance the removal of pollutants in wastewater. Special attention should be given to the treatment of contaminants of emerging concern;
- Development of tools for pollution detection, monitoring, prevention, removal and risk prediction. Pollution monitoring and modelling, regarding water in particular, raise scaling challenges: combination of local-, regional- and large-scale (e.g. Earth observation) measurements or modelling tools; comparability/interoperability of various data sources (local/regional/national/European) to have consistent evaluations and predictions of the ecological status at European scale or worldwide. Proper pollution management also calls for (near-)real-time monitoring and assessment tools;

- Better understanding of pollution and climate change interlinkages (e.g. understanding and predicting opportunistic pathogens in water due to more favourable climate change conditions);
- Better understanding of the behaviour of emerging pollutants on humans and aquatic ecosystems.

The Water JPI further **strongly supports the improvement of the health and environment acquis**, since the immediate threats posed by pollution and climate change call for a strong commitment to research that will deliver possible solutions to our policy and decision makers. To this end it is suggested to consider the following important themes:

- Sharing as much as possible the available resources between agriculture, industry and civil society, improving access to data and the assessment of uncertainties related to increasing pollution, climate change mitigation, climate adaptation strategies and the monitoring of the global water cycle;
- Strengthening socio-economic approaches integrating economic and social analyses into decision-making processes. Setting up risk management strategies considering socio-economic needs, environmental dynamics/risks;
- Developing people-centered monitoring, including both expert and local knowledge;
- Preparing strategies for improving the handling of extreme weather events and their consequences in terms of soil and water pollution, through the collection and analysis of post-disaster data (including practices/measures), the training of decision-makers in terms of needs to adaptation to climate change impacts (e.g. water utilities / infrastructures management).

End.