



Report on scoping activities

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D2.11 Report on scoping activities

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D2.11 Report on scoping activities

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ACRONYM	FULL TITLE
EC	European Commission
ECR	Early career researchers
EU	European Union
FPO	Funding Partner Organisation
JPI	Joint Programming Initiative
JTC	Joint Transnational Call
KH	Knowledge Hub
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
R&I	Research and Innovation
SRIA	Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda
TAP	Thematic Annual Programming
UN SDGs	United Nations Sustainable Development Goals
Water4All	European Partnership on Water Security for the Planet
WFD	Water Framework Directive

SUMMARY

The Water4All Partnership, co-funded by the European Union within the frame of the Horizon Europe programme, aims at enabling water security for all on the long-term by boosting systemic transformations and changes across the water research and innovation pipeline. The partnership engages in a broad range of activities organised into five interconnected operational Pillars, principally dedicated to:

- Development of the joint vision and the Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda of the Partnership (Pillar A)
- Research and innovation development through implementation of joint transnational calls (Pillar B)
- Science – Policy - End-users interface (Pillar C)
- Demonstrating solution efficiency through living labs and demonstration sites (Pillar D)
- Internationalisation of the Partnership (Pillar E)

As part of Water4All operational pillars, Pillar B on “Developing new knowledge and innovative solutions for a systemic and inclusive approach of water challenges at operational scale” aims at developing knowledge and innovation capacity to address the water challenges identified in Water4All Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda, by aligning and leveraging national programmes to overcome the current fragmentation. The abovementioned objectives are being achieved by pooling together financial resources from the participating national and regional research and innovation funding programmes towards the definition and implementation of co-funded transnational and multi-disciplinary calls for research and innovation proposals.

This report contains the information on the preparation, implementation and the outcomes of the scoping activities for the 1st and 2nd Joint Transnational Call within the Pillar B.

REPORT ON THE SCOPING ACTIVITIES

Introduction

The Water4All Partnership, co-funded by the European Union within the frame of the Horizon Europe programme, aims at enabling water security for all on the long-term by boosting systemic transformations and changes across the water research and innovation pipeline. Water4All represents a long-term commitment and engagement of the European Union and partners to promote research and innovation through several consecutive years, starting in 2022 until 2028.

The Water4All consortium (Figure 1) is composed of public and/or non-profit organisations, representing a variety of stakeholders to cover the chain of water Research and Innovation (R&I) and connect to the end-users, decision-makers, policy-makers or economic sector. Concretely, Water4All counts **six categories of partners**:

- Research and Innovation programme owners and funders from Ministries in charge of Research and Innovation policy and agencies.
- Ministries in charge of Environmental policies and Environmental / Water Protection agencies.
- Public authorities funding thematic research and innovation in relevant thematic areas for Water4All, at regional or local level.
- European-scale networks and associations representing water innovation, water operators or water basin managers.
- National associations and regional clusters connecting to the national and regional R&I communities and market actors.
- Research performing organisations that bring a specific contribution (Living Lab, demonstration infrastructure, research equipment, monitoring network or datasets, education programmes...) to the Partnership to reach its objectives.

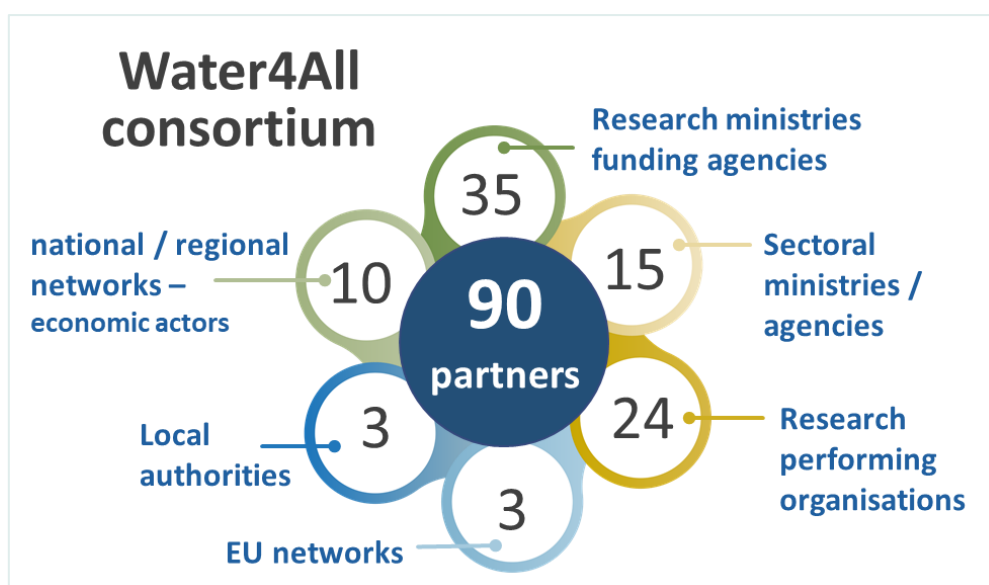


Figure 1. Water4All consortium composition as of June 2024.

This consortium brings together a variety of competencies, expertise and points of view, allowing the performance of the activities planned under all five operational Pillars of the Water4All Partnership:

- **Pillar A:** Ensuring coordination and alignment of EU / National / regional programmes and a continuum in actions from Research & Innovation to implementation, guided by a commonly agreed vision and a Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda.
- **Pillar B:** Providing new knowledge and innovative solutions at the relevant scales of implementation from local to regional and global scale. The production of knowledge and data mainly results from Joint Transnational Calls for projects looking at effective impact at European scale and beyond.
- **Pillar C:** Fostering the uptake of R&I results by engaging industries, users and policy makers while developing skills and capacity building at the EU and international scale, both for water R&I professionals and for water stakeholders, including citizens.
- **Pillar D:** Demonstrating the efficiency of innovative solutions and leveraging with “downstream” funding programmes (equipment investments, demonstration) through replication, such as living labs and demonstration sites.
- **Pillar E:** Developing international collaborations, in order both to enhance the dimension of the activities of the consortium, augmenting its critical mass, and to support the achievement of the UN SDG by accelerating the transfer of solutions in foreign contexts, where specific challenges can be encountered.

The activities of the **Pillar B on “Developing new knowledge and innovative solutions for a systemic and inclusive approach of water challenges at operational scale”** include a number of actions that are being launched depending on the needs identified by the partnering funders and their funding capacity:

- Joint Transnational Calls for research and innovation projects, co-funded by the EU;
- Thematic Annual Programming (TAP) action;
- Call for interest for researchers to participate in a Knowledge Hub;
- Calls targeted to specific performers groups or activities, such as young/ early career researchers call.

Within the Pillar B, the **Task B.1 “Scoping activities for preparation of joint actions”** aims at identifying research needs that can be translated into joint actions, either Joint Transnational Calls or additional joint actions. Links with other Pillars, in particular with Pillar A, as well as with the Water4All expert bodies such as Advisory Boards, are being sought to ensure the coherence with the strategy of the Water4All partnership, avoid overlaps and provide a good balance between the strategic and operational level. The task is cross-cutting to both Tasks B.2 “Development & implementation of annual co-funded Joint Transnational Calls” and B.3 “Development & implementation of other joint actions” and includes:

- The scoping of topics and identification of individual challenges for the Joint Transnational Calls to be launched under Task B.2.
- The preparation of call scope for additional joint actions that will be further developed and implemented under Task B.3.

Due to the particular nature of the Pillar B where the Joint Transnational Calls are developed and implemented, special attention has been paid to the to the **prevention of conflicts of interests** with the objective to:

- Separate the partners developing the call from those that might apply;
- Prevent the access to information related to the calls for the partners that might apply to the call;
- Avoid any influence from the partners that might apply in the decision-making relating to the calls.

Only ministries and agencies funding Research and Innovation and Water4All partners committing to not apply to the calls can participate in the Pillar B. The decisions regarding the content of these calls are taken by the Call Steering Committee, the main decision-making body for the call and internal to this Pillar, and remain confidential until the call has been publicly announced. Therefore, the Water4All partners that are not funding organisations do not have access to specific information regarding the calls. In this sense, the research performing organisations that are beneficiaries of Water4All are eligible to apply to the calls under the same conditions as any other research organisation. Individuals acting in the preparation of the calls or in the management of the pillars, as well as the experts from the Water4All Advisory Boards are requested to sign a confidentiality agreement and to declare any potential conflict of interest. Detailed procedures for addressing this issue, including for ensuring the fair treatment of complaints related to the call, have been developed by the Partnership.

The first period of activities implemented as part of Pillar B consisted of the preparation and launch of two Joint Transnational Calls for proposals, respectively opened in September 2022 and September 2023. This report introduces the call preparation process with the implementation of the scoping activities and their outcomes for these two calls.

Role of the Water4All Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda in the development of the Joint Transnational Calls

One aim of the Water4All partnership is to develop new knowledge and innovative solutions for a systemic and inclusive approach of water challenges at operational scale. This is being achieved through the implementation of joint competitive research calls: Joint Transnational Calls (or JTCs). Six calls are tentatively planned over the whole duration of the Water4All partnership. The Water4All Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda¹ (SRIA) plays an instrumental role in the development process of the Joint Transnational Calls. The SRIA is therefore conceived as the “strategic backbone” of the Water4All Partnership.

The Water4All’s SRIA establishes water topics for which research and innovation activities are recommended in order to ensure the provision of water for all in the future. These topics, grouped together into seven themes and 25 sub-themes (Figure 2), have been identified following an exhaustive literature review of other water related strategic agendas such as the Water JPI, Water Europe and the EurAqua network. The launch of a public consultation, targeted interviews with selected stakeholders and discussions with the Advisory Boards of the Water JPI came to complete the development process. All Water4All members were also invited to provide their feedback on the contents of the SRIA through several rounds of consultations.

The SRIA therefore results from a participatory concertation process that reflects scientific issues from the perspective of national funding agencies, research operators, water utilities, associations, water management authorities and end-users. At the same time, the SRIA is a living document and as such the object of an update process in order to collect additional key research and innovation topics that may arise in a continuously evolving environmental, economic and political context.

¹ Water4All Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda 2022-2025. Water4All Media Library. https://www.water4all-partnership.eu/sites/www.water4all-partnership.eu/files/2023-02/Water4All_SRIA-2022-2025_A4_2311_bd.pdf

As such, the overarching aim of the SRIA is to guide the strategic framework of Water4All’s activities including calls for research and innovation proposals, demonstration activities, capacity building and international cooperation.

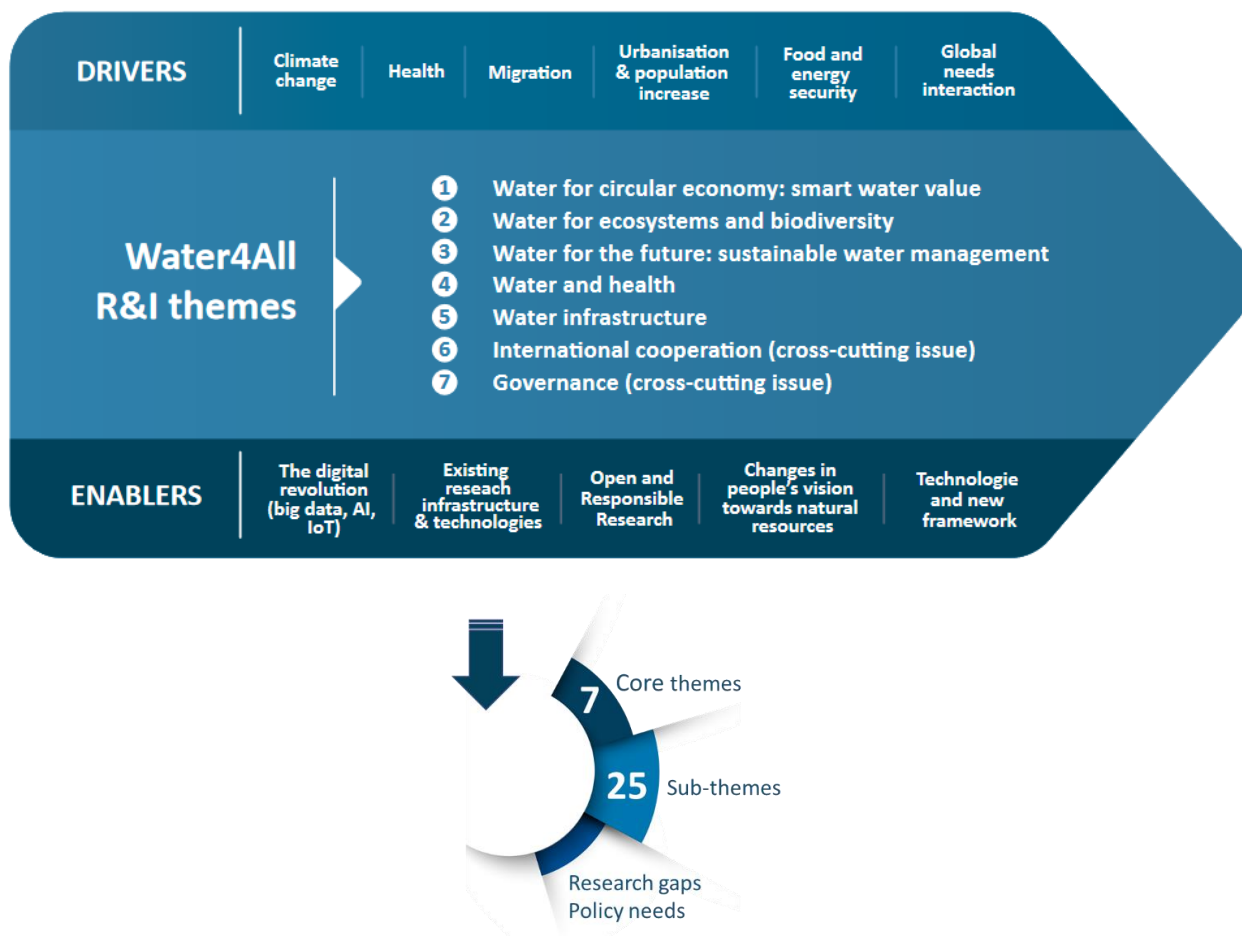


Figure 2. Water4All SRIA 2022-2025: research and innovations themes, drivers and enablers.

Scoping process in the development of Joint Transnational Calls

The SRIA has been instrumental in the preparation of the first two calls for proposals to be launched in the framework of Water4all activities. At the end of 2020, a questionnaire sent to all funding partner organisations involved in Water4All (representatives of research / sectoral ministries and funding agencies) allowed the identification of the Water4All SRIA themes and sub-themes on which the topics for the first call (2022 Joint Transnational Call) and second call (2023 Joint Transnational Call) themes would be based on:

1. The call topic for the first Joint Transnational Call was identified as **Management of water resources: resilience, adaptation and mitigation to hydroclimatic extreme events and management tools**. It broadly covered the **Theme 3 of the Water4All SRIA “Water for the future: sustainable water management”**. The Joint Transnational Call was launched in September 2022.

2. The call topic for the second Joint Transnational Call was identified as **Aquatic Ecosystem Services**. It broadly covered the **Theme 2 of the Water4All SRIA “Water for ecosystems and biodiversity”**. The Joint Transnational Call was launched in September 2023.

The following elements were considered when further developing the call scope and individual challenges:

- The tools developed should go beyond the conceptual and methodological approaches developed in projects funded in similar calls in the past, i.e. the proposals should focus on different concepts or tools, providing substantially new and improved options and capabilities for management;
- Approaches must be ambitious regarding the spatial level, considering regional and river basin levels instead of local level cases (e.g. cities);
- Governance and international cooperation were identified as a cross-cutting topic in SRIA, hence they would be subject of the proposals in relation to water resources management;
- The proposals might include development of new knowledge through basic research and/or implementation of solutions;
- The Call text was further detailed with the help of the Advisory Boards provided they agree in writing that they will personally not be applying for funding;
- Coordination with other partnerships and similar initiatives that are launching Joint Transnational Calls in order to minimize the overlaps and highlight the synergies.

For each call, a **Working Group** composed of nominated experts by the participating Funding Partner Organisations and relevant participants of the Advisory Boards, along with members of the Water4All Call Steering Committee (CSC), was appointed in order to work on the technical part of the call text by taking as a basis the contents of the SRIA. The Working Group of the first Joint Transnational Call included around ten experts and the Working Group of second Joint Transnational Call gathered around 20 experts.

CALL TEXT PREPARATION TIMELINE

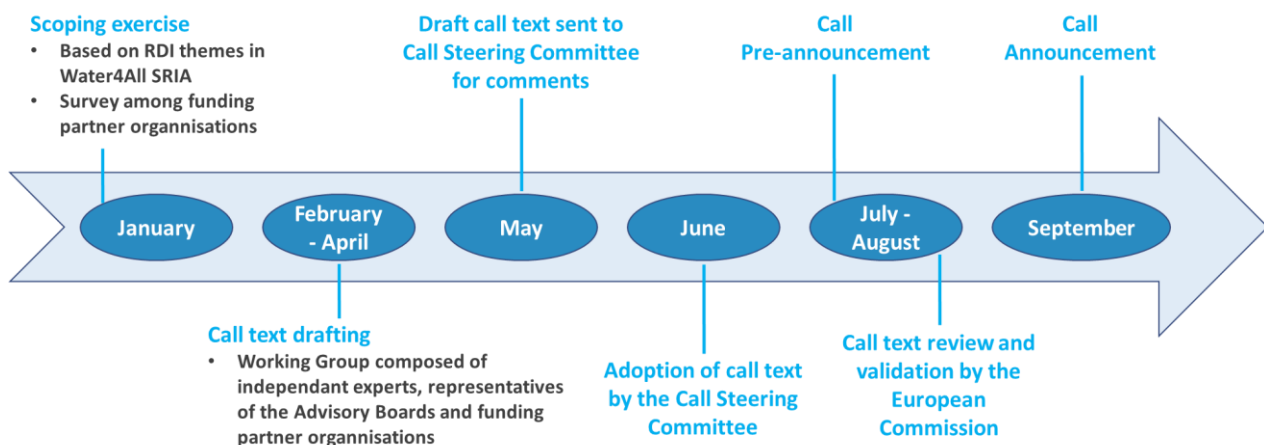


Figure 3. Scoping process implemented in Water4All Pillar B for the development of the call text.

The experts participating in the Working group were required to sign a Declaration of conflict of interest, confidentiality and non-disclosure of information (Annex 3). In addition, for the members of the Water4All Advisory Boards participating in the Working Group, the rules on their participation applied (see Annex 4).

The Working group experts, with the support of the Pillar B leader, dedicated around four online meetings, with simultaneous work on the document in a cloud, to the drafting of the technical part of each call text.

The following sections of the call text, denominated **Call Announcement** in the final publication on the Water4All website, were drafted by the Working group (the bullet point indicate the focus of each chapter or sub-chapter):

1. Introduction

1.1. 2022 Joint Transnational Call in the context of Water4All partnership

- *Water4All's vision*
- *Description of calls as a core activity of Water4All based on SRIA*

1.2. Objectives of the Joint Transnational Call

- *Challenges related to the main theme and type of call's output expected to address challenges*
- *Challenges include: environmental, societal, economic, etc.*
- *Consider Governance and International Cooperation as cross-cutting themes in SRIA*

2. Joint Transnational Call Description

2.1. Strategic aim of the Joint Transnational Call

- *Relationship with other agendas, directives, etc.*

2.2. Theme of the Joint Transnational Call

- *Consider the selected SRIA theme as the main theme of the call*
- *Subtopics: not more than 4 for easier management of the call*
- *Consider Governance and International Cooperation as subthemes or part of them*

2.3. Expected approach from the proposals

- *Type of approaches and outputs expected*
- *Consistent with the subtopics description*

2.4. Impact of the proposal

- *Examples of the type of impacts expected*
- *Recommendations to applicants to create impact pathways*

A dedicated Call Steering Committee meeting gathering representatives of funding partner organisations participating in the call was also held to complete the call development process. The final approval of the technical part of the call text, with some minor comments, was done by the Call Steering Committees of the 1st and 2nd Joint Transnational Calls, respectively.

Prior to its official publication on the EC funding and Tender portal and Water4all website, the technical part of the call was reviewed by representatives from the Directorate-General for Research and Innovation (DG RTD) and for Environment (DG Env) to ensure that the calls are in line with EU priorities, that existing EU projects and initiatives of relevance are considered, and to avoid any overlap with other calls launched in the framework of Horizon Europe (see Annex 1 and 2). For each call, the complete call text in the form of a Call Announcement is available for download on a dedicated webpage of [Water4All website](#).

ANNEX 1 - CALL TEXT OF THE FIRST JOINT TRANSNATIONAL CALL (TECHNICAL PART)

1. Introduction

1.1 2022 Joint Transnational Call in the context of Water4All partnership

The **Water4All partnership** is starting in 2022 under the auspices of the European Union Horizon Europe programme for research and innovation, to concentrate research and innovation on water in Europe and beyond. Water4All's Vision is to “**boost the systemic transformations and changes across the entire research – water innovation pipeline, fostering the matchmaking between problem owners and solution providers for ensuring water security for all in the long term**”.

Water security stands for the capacity of a population to safeguard sustainable access to adequate quantities of acceptable quality water for sustaining livelihoods, human well-being and socio-economic development, for ensuring protection against water-borne pollution and water-related disasters, and for preserving ecosystems in a climate of peace and political stability. Water security and ‘Just’ access to clean water for all of society are an essential aspect for Sustainable Development. This is reflected specifically in the UN Sustainable Development Goals² (SDGs), in first instance SDG 6 “Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all”, which is interconnected with SDGs addressing Poverty (1), Hunger (2), Health (3), Clean Energy (7), Cities (11), Responsible Consumption and Production (12), Climate (13), Life below Water (14) and on Land (15), Peace, justice and strong institutions (16).

Reaching Water4All's objectives require an inclusive and systemic approach, with a logical chain from problem analysis and the identification of knowledge gaps to the uptake of solutions and their concrete applications by the relevant stakeholders. The direct connection between stakeholders and problem owners with solution providers from the RD&I field is required to make decisive contributions towards the objectives of Water security: *improved access to water; availability of adequate water supplies for all economic uses; ecosystems health and delivery of ecosystem services; resilience to global changes and water-related hazards*. This approach will be implemented through a broad range of activities, aiming together at achieving the following outcomes:

- Deliver sound knowledge, tools and evidence basis on water for policy- & decision-making;
- Improve consideration of water impacts in all relevant policies;
- Enhance the field/market use of innovative solutions to water challenges;
- Increase citizens' awareness and engagement for an inclusive water governance.

Among its activities to produce these outcomes, Water4All will launch a series of **annual Joint Transnational Calls** (JTCs) pooling national financial resources through the participation of ministries, authorities and funding organisations. These calls primary aim at strengthening the water RD&I collaboration and producing and sharing top class water-related knowledge and data. The topics for the calls will be drawn from the water challenges identified in the Water4All Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda (SRIA, publication foreseen February 2022; see figure 1).

² <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>



Figure 1 – Water4All RD&I's themes, drivers and enablers

The 2022 Joint Transnational Call is the first of these calls. It is implemented by 34 research and innovation funding organizations from 29 countries responsible for funding research and innovation actions in the field of water, with the financial support from the European Commission.

1.2 Objectives of the 2022 Joint Transnational Call

The increase in the number of hydrological extreme events in the last few decades³ has motivated the research community to investigate their spatial variability and underlying processes. Evidence suggests that for properly supporting water management and tackling future and emerging challenges, it is necessary to make progress in understanding the spatiotemporal complex systems that drive hydrological events. Approaches for the characterisation of relationships between such complex systems and economic, organisational, policy, social and regulatory conditions need to be developed to bring systemic change.

Water4All's 2022 Joint Transnational Call will therefore seek to deliver knowledge, models, approaches, tools and methodologies to better understand hydrological processes at different scales and to respond more efficiently to emerging water issues related to extreme events. The results will support the implementation of EU water policies (Green Deal, Water Framework Directive (WFD) and its daughter Directives, etc.) and EU plans and strategies related to water management (e.g., zero pollution action plan, and strategies, EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030) for resource efficiency and protection, water use and adaptation and resilience to hydroclimatic extreme events.

Governance plays a key role in each of the water challenges, as good governance is a key element in the identification and implementation of the best available measures for people, water and other systems. Therefore, the 2022 Joint Transnational Call will seek for innovative governance models, and enhanced participation of stakeholders, communities and society at large in water management issues related to extreme events. Addressing governance will require participation and engagement of stakeholders in the problem analysis and the identification of relevant knowledge gaps. The co-design of solutions, and the co-management of decisions related to water will require activities in the field of communication, public awareness and education. Direct involvement of stakeholders and citizens in research, e.g., through citizen science, is encouraged.

Attention will be paid in the 2022 Joint Transnational Call to barriers, to the adoption of proposed solutions and to the application of key lessons from other disciplines in the implementation of results. The proposals will be required to describe how results from the research can be applied and which stakeholders should be involved to achieve the desired impact. The broad topic of Management of water resources has received

³ [World Atlas of Mortality and Economic Losses from weather, climate and water extremes 1970-2019, WMO](#)

ample attention in previous Horizon 2020⁴, Water JPI⁵ and PRIMA⁶ calls, among others, and research and development of tools for supporting related policy in EU-funded projects has been extensive. Proposals must not duplicate past efforts and results. Approaches built on the results of previous projects must demonstrate that they include improved and/or new ideas and approaches. Collaboration with active projects on the topic will be welcomed in order to achieve synergies and avoid duplications. The proposed approaches should focus on regional and river basin level solutions. To demonstrate the feasibility of (scalable) approaches local level cases may be used.

2. Joint Transnational Call Description

2.1 Strategic aim of the Joint Transnational Call

The 2022 Joint Transnational Call “**Management of water resources: resilience, adaptation and mitigation to hydroclimatic extreme events and management tools**” within the Water4All Partnership is aimed at research and innovation to improve water security in the long term. In line with the strategic objectives of Water4All, the results should contribute to the implementation of evidence-based, global, EU and national water management policies and strategies, within the frameworks of the Green Deal, WFD, Just Transition and the Sustainable Development Goals.

2.2 Theme of the Joint Transnational Call

The call will focus on solutions for hydroclimatic extreme events, as described in the Water4All Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda (version 08/02/2021)⁷ Theme III “Water for the future: sustainable water management”, as well as address the cross-cutting Theme VII “Governance” and Theme V “Water Infrastructures”. Research & innovation proposals submitted under the Water4All 2022 Joint Transnational Call are required to address at least one of the following topics:

Topic 1. Resilience, adaptation and mitigation to hydroclimatic extreme events

1.1 Addressing knowledge gaps in our understanding of the causes of water scarcity, drought events, seasonal variability in climate impacts to develop adaptation and mitigation measures, taking climate change into account.

1.2 Developing and demonstrating innovative (or improved) societally acceptable adaptation and mitigation strategies to cope with hydro-climatic extreme events and their increase in length and duration. This includes floods and droughts, although is not limited to them, adopting a regional or a basin scale wide approach.

1.3 Improving resilience and adaptation capacity of water infrastructure (e.g., industrial water facilities, urban networks, wastewater treatment facilities, stormwater management systems and rural systems) to hydroclimatic extreme events.

Topic 2. Tools for water management - in the context of hydroclimatic extreme events

2.1 Developing tools (e.g., multi-risk approach, decision support tools, monetary/non-monetary costs valuation) to support the design and implementation of strategies for adaptation and mitigation to hydro-climatic extreme events, especially floods (including “flash-floods”), heat waves and droughts in a catchment to sea perspective.

2.2 Generating new methodologies, tools and models for water resources assessment/modelling for water bodies in scarcely monitored /data scarce areas. A combination of physical and digital solutions is expected, and opportunities provided by citizen science should be seized.

⁴ [Horizon 2020 projects database](#)

⁵ [Booklets of projects funded under Water JPI Joint Transnational Calls](#)

⁶ [PRIMA website](#)

⁷ [Water4All Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda draft](#)

2.3 “Smartening the water system” and use of innovative digitalization, including improved/new sensors, models, communications and computing technologies.

Topic 3. Improved water governance in the context hydroclimatic extreme events and international contexts

3.1 Undertaking an analysis and developing robust Governance models for the management of water resources in the context of extreme events, is critical increasing the decision-making capacity of institutions and involvement of citizens. This should include ways of improving coordination between water managers to increase our capacity to reduce vulnerability to extreme events, as well as effectively respond to them.

3.2 Addressing and encouraging international cooperation in the field of water, including management of transboundary water resources and contribution to Water Diplomacy.

It should be noted that within the area of water governance there is an extensive framework already set by the OECD Principles on Water Governance. This framework could be used as a starting point for preparing project proposals.

Please note:

The effects of hydroclimatic extreme events can relate to both water quality and/or quantity.

It is not compulsory to address all subtopics within a topic in the proposals.

It is possible to submit comprehensive proposals addressing more than one topic and subtopic.

ANNEC **CErreur ! Source du renvoi introuvable.** of this document provide a matrix of the topics funded by each participating country/region and the national regulations.

2.3 Expected approach from the proposals

The proposals can focus on the development of new knowledge through basic research and/or the implementation of solutions and tools. In all cases, knowledge transfer and impact of the deliverables must be clearly demonstrated. Delivered new knowledge should have the potential to be used in new and improved options and tools for governance, management and evidence-based policy making. Problems related to hydroclimatic extreme events to be tackled can be both related to water quality and quantity. Both surface and groundwater can be included.

Applicants are invited to look at systemic processes of planning, control and management of water resources within the river basin in the face of climate change and extreme events. The proposals are also expected to contribute to the acceleration of the adoption of measures and to connect actors in management to improve coordination, thus increasing capacity to reduce vulnerability to extreme events and effectively respond to them. This should include an evaluation of effectiveness of current mitigation and adaptation measures and/or to what extent improvements are being offset by increased extreme events.

The proposals should help to develop a better understanding of the socio-economic aspects, governance and behavioural changes associated with the impact of extreme events on water resources and people. Thus, strengthening socio-economic approaches to protect and restore water resources, covering governance issues, such as public participation and tools to transfer the scientific knowledge into decision-making and facilitating / supporting "just transition for all" should be included. This may include developing new participatory approaches and tools for water management and systemic change, e.g., co-creation and co-production, integration of different kinds of knowledge (indigenous, local and technology), increased participation from underrepresented groups, novel ICT tools, etc.

2.4 Impact of the proposals

In line with the European Commission’s (EC) aims for Horizon Europe to create significant societal and environmental impact proposals will be required to describe what impact their research is expected to achieve in the long run and how they contribute to the overall impacts defined for this call:

Improved water availability and optimisation of water quality and quantity for all uses in Europe, while maintaining ecosystems needs.

Improved resilience of European populations to water-related hazards, extreme events and climate change.

Supporting the implementation of the UN SDGs and ensuring a Just Transition for all.

Credible societal impact will require input from stakeholders when formulating the knowledge gaps to be addressed in the proposal (co-design) and actively working together on the project with those stakeholders while exchanging knowledge (co-creation). Diversity of stakeholders, spanning the entire research and innovation chain, is important to accurately describe the problem and to best implement the results, e.g., representatives from water agencies, the business and financial sectors, water authorities, NGOs, ministries, academia, citizens etc. Consortia should also crosscut scientific disciplinary boundaries (multi- or interdisciplinarity), combining exact sciences with social sciences and humanities.

Applicants are highly encouraged to use a “Theory of Change” to help define their project, both for analysis of the problem to be addressed and to indicate via what route the expected results of the project could eventually lead to societal impact.

ANNEX 2 - CALL TEXT OF SECOND JOINT TRANSNATIONAL CALL (TECHNICAL PART)

1. Introduction

1.1 The Joint Transnational Calls in the context of Water4All partnership

The [Water4All partnership](#) started in 2022 under the auspices of the European Union Horizon Europe programme for research and innovation, to concentrate research and innovation on water in Europe and beyond. Water4All's Vision is to “boost the systemic transformations and changes across the entire research – water innovation pipeline, fostering the matchmaking between problem owners and solution providers for ensuring water security for all in the long term”.

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Reaching Water4All's objectives require an inclusive and systemic approach, with a logical chain from problem analysis and the identification of knowledge gaps to the uptake of solutions and their concrete applications by the relevant stakeholders. The direct connection between stakeholders and problem owners with solution providers from the RDI field is required to make decisive contributions towards the objectives of Water security: *improved access to water; availability of adequate water supplies for all economic uses; ecosystems health and delivery of ecosystem services; resilience to global changes and water-related hazards*. This approach will be implemented through a broad range of activities, aiming together at achieving the following outcomes:

- Deliver sound knowledge, tools, and evidence basis on water for policy- & decision-making.
- Improve consideration of water impacts in all relevant policies.
- Enhance the field/market use of innovative solutions to water challenges.
- Increase citizens' awareness and engagement for an inclusive water governance.

Among its activities to produce these outcomes, Water4All will launch a series of annual co-funded Joint Transnational Calls (JTCs) pooling national financial resources through the participation of ministries, authorities and funding organisations, together with the support of the European Commission (EC). These calls primarily aim at strengthening the water RDI collaboration and producing and sharing top class water-

⁸ <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

related knowledge and data. The topics for the calls are drawn from the water challenges identified in the [Water4All Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda](#) (SRIA) (Figure 1).

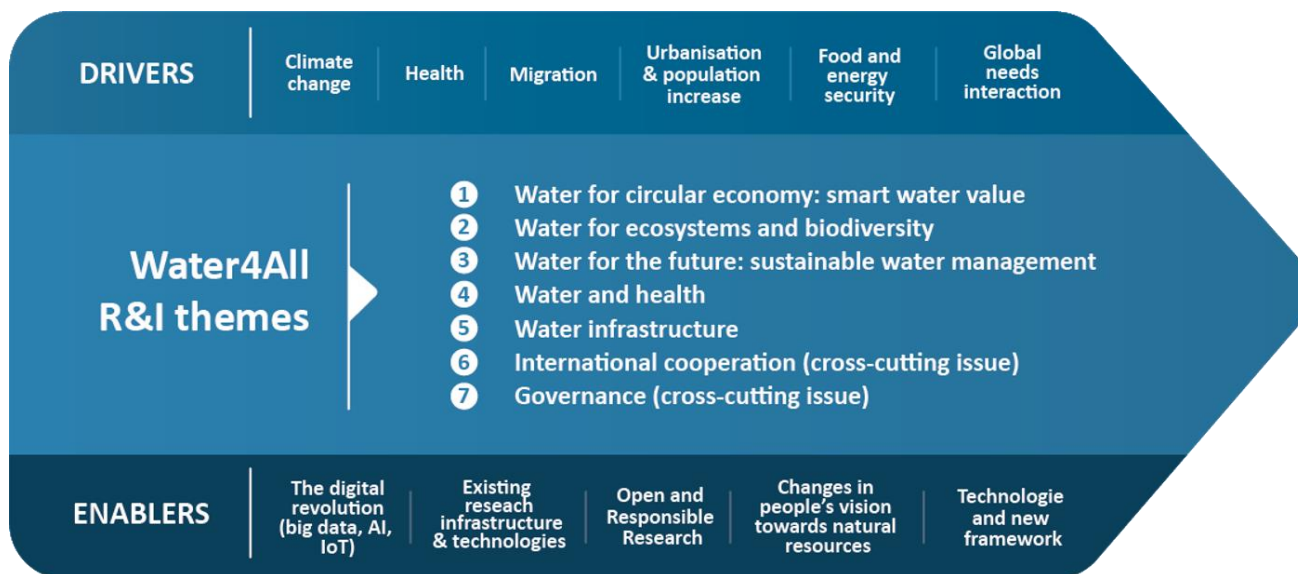


Figure 1 – Water4All RDI themes, drivers and enablers

The 2023 Joint Transnational Call (JTC) is the second in the series of the Water4All co-funded calls. It is jointly launched by 36 Funding Partner Organisations (FPOs) from 30 countries responsible for funding research and innovation actions in the field of water, with the financial support from the EC.

With the aim of developing the capacities of the talented young researchers and giving them the opportunity to act as leaders of the project consortia, Water4All also integrates an independent modality of the Early Career Researchers (ECR) in this JTC. The thematic focus of the ECR modality is aligned with the JTC topics. The applicants can choose whether to apply under the regular JTC or under the modality of ECR, provided they comply with the requirements.

This call also foresees a modality to support the activities of the Knowledge Hub (KH) for the researchers from Transnational Projects funded in the JTC and the ECR modality. The KH will function as a networking platform for the researchers with the aim to synthesize and disseminate the JTC and ECR projects' outcomes in various formats to support evidence-based decision-making processes for targeted stakeholders. The thematic scope of KH is bounded by the JTC topics. The applicants submitting their proposals under the regular JTC and the ECR modality can choose if they wish to include the KH activities in their proposal, provided they comply with the requirements.

1.2 Objectives of the 2023 Joint Transnational Call

Ecosystems provide environmental, health, social and economic benefits to humans called ecosystem services (Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MEA) in 2005). Goods and services provided by ecosystems are diverse, including i) Provisioning services, such as the production of food and water; ii) Regulating services, e.g., flow regulation during flooding episodes; iii) Supporting services, e.g., nutrient cycles and retention; and iv) Cultural or recreational services, such as navigation or bathing. The value of healthy and functioning ecosystems in providing these free services to beneficiaries has been demonstrated and there

is growing recognition of their importance to human well-being at multiple scales (TEEB, 2010, Dasgupta, 2021).

Ecosystem services and water security are closely related, as healthy ecosystems provide services related to water availability and quality, playing a critical role in the regulation of water cycles and flows. There are no clear boundaries in the type of ecosystems contributing to services, such as nature-based solutions, ecological infrastructure, built or hard infrastructure, etc. However, in this case the call focuses specifically on ecosystem services relevant to water security. At the same time, water quality and availability are fundamental for ensuring the ecosystem services and ecosystem health, considering that many ecosystems are not only water-related but also water dependent. This applies for both surface water and groundwater dependent ecosystems.

The degradation of aquatic ecosystems due to climate change, pollution, biodiversity loss, hydrological alterations, the overexploitation of resources for rising demands and the combination of multiple stressors is currently jeopardising their ability to deliver essential goods and services to beneficiaries. Measures for coping with pressure(s) include mitigation through reduction of stressors, adaption to stressors, and providing solutions to increase resilience for going back to functioning. Some of the mechanisms are developed naturally as an evolutionary response to pressure, whereas in other cases intervention such as restoration is mandatory for ecosystems continuing to provide services to beneficiaries. Likewise, the creation of new aquatic habitats, e.g., in urban areas where natural ecosystems are already lost, can serve as a partial compensation, and effectively fulfil similar roles as natural habitats depending on how they are managed.

Given the importance of ecosystem services to human well-being, environmental quality, and economic prosperity, it is crucial to consider them in all the different stages of the decision-making process, i.e., definition of policy targets at the conception phase, prioritisation of investments, and the systematic review of the consequences of policy measures for services beyond conventional assessments. In this context, the assessment/mapping of ecosystem services as well as their status and social and economic valuation are of particular relevance. Whereas the biophysical status of aquatic ecosystems is regularly monitored, the status of aquatic ecosystem services is not ([Water JPI AquaTAP-ES Policy Brief, 2020](#)). Integration of ecosystem services approach into policy and management requires recognition of their values at appropriate scales. Also, transboundary regulations related to water, biodiversity and habitats do not always take into consideration ecosystem services due to diplomatic and governance issues. Despite the progress made to map, monitor, assess and achieve good ecosystem conditions, there are still significant gaps as regards the status and trends of aquatic ecosystems⁹.

Water4All's 2023 Joint Transnational Call aims to deliver knowledge, models, approaches, tools, and methodologies to better achieve:

- The integration of ecosystem services into the governance and management of water resources in the context of changes, from local to global.
- Mitigation, adaptation and resilience of aquatic ecosystems and the corresponding ecosystem services.

⁹ The MAES (Mapping and Assessment of Ecosystems and their Services) initiative was launched in 2012. MAES has benefited from the work carried out in several EU-funded projects such as ESMERALDA, OpenNESS or OPERA, and the ERA-NET Cofund BiodivERsA.

- Support to the implementation of EU and international water and biodiversity policies and strategies, such as the European Commission 'Biodiversity Strategy to 2020', the United Nations Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030, the EU proposal for a Nature Restoration Law, and the establishment of an international natural capital accounting initiative.
- Enhancement of the participation of stakeholders, communities, and society at large in the co-design of water governance and management systems related to ecosystem services. This includes activities in the field of communication, public awareness and education, and involvement of stakeholders, indigenous communities, and citizen scientists in research.
- More comprehensive approaches for the valuation of ecosystem services, with mapping and assessment as a crucial step in the achievement of policy objectives.

2. Description of the aims and themes of the 2023 Joint Transnational Call and its modalities

IMPORTANT: The aim and the thematic framework are the same for the proposals submitted in the regular 2023 Joint Transnational Call and for the proposals submitted under the Early Career Researchers modality, both with the optional expression of interest for participation in the Knowledge Hub. **More information on the call structure is included in Chapter 3.**

2.1 Strategic aim of the Joint Transnational Call and its modalities

The 2023 Joint Transnational Call "Aquatic Ecosystem Services" within the Water4All partnership is aimed at research and innovation to improve water security in the long term. In line with the strategic objectives of Water4All, the results should contribute to the implementation of evidence-based, global, EU and national water management policies and strategies, including the Green Deal, the Water Framework Directive (WFD), Just Transition and the Water Action Agenda for UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Proposals should show cognisance of appropriate legislation and policy frameworks at national and international levels that are meant to alleviate global change impacts on aquatic ecosystem services.

2.2 Theme of the Joint Transnational Call and its modalities

The general theme of the call is "Ecosystem Services", with aquatic ecosystems as the focus, including inland surface water, groundwater, transitional and coastal water, and having water security on top of the objectives.

Research and innovation proposals submitted under the Water4All 2023 Joint Transnational Call and its modalities are required to address at least one of the following topics:

Topic 1. Mapping, monitoring, and assessment for a better understanding of ecosystem services in a context of changes, from local to global change. Proposals may cover the following subtopics:

1.1 Enhancing the added value of data on the state and trends of ecosystem services: promoting meta-analyses across scales and syntheses of existing data sets.

1.2 Supporting a transnational network of harmonized monitoring schemes building upon the work conducted under other initiatives (MAES -

<https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/handle/JRC120383>; TEEB - <https://teebweb.org/>) and previous EU projects.

1.3 Developing, testing, and comparing methodologies for the biophysical and monetary valuation of ecosystem services in aquatic ecosystems, including intrinsic social and economic values. Valuation methodologies should reflect stakeholders' perceptions of value and ensure that users of ecosystem services are involved in the process.

1.4 Identifying operational ecosystem services metrics that consider the interactions between people and ecosystems.

Topic 2. Understanding and predicting multiple pressures (including anthropogenic pressures) - impact – response relationships in ecosystem services through advanced methods and techniques. Proposals may cover the following subtopics:

2.1 Assessing the effect of different anthropogenic pressures from human activities and cumulative effects on ecosystems and ecosystem services.

2.2 Improving/Developing approaches aimed at improving our understanding of the impacts of policy interventions for the protection or restoration of ecosystem services at relevant temporal and spatial scales.

2.3 Developing innovative approaches for the restoration of aquatic systems (e.g. habitat dynamics, nutrient cycling, trophic relations, morphological conditions, river continuity and connectivity, sediment flows, hydraulic connectivity, groundwater flow, and ecological flow) and ecosystem services. Opportunities provided by new technological developments should be seized.

2.4 Analysing the potential for upscaling in space and time successful ecosystem services restoration approaches.

Topic 3. New tools and solutions for a better integration of ecosystem services into the management of water resources. Proposals may cover the following subtopics:

3.1 Innovative management and governance strategies for integrating ecosystem services into conservation policies and restoration measures. Proposals should build upon the ecological knowledge of indigenous and local communities to enable their involvement in the co-design and co-implementation of proposed solutions, as well as the “One Health” approach to better understand existing links between ecosystem services and human well-being.

3.2 Assessing the performance of different governance systems in supporting ecosystem services (resilience, adaptation to global changes, key lessons, failures) and of developing our understanding of existing barriers or resistance in the implementation of ecosystem services frameworks.

The context for the general call topics are described in Theme II of the [Water4All Strategic and Innovation Agenda \(SRIA\)](#), “Water for ecosystems and biodiversity”. Likewise, Themes VI and VII in the SRIA on “International cooperation” and “Governance”, respectively, must be considered as they are cross-cutting issues to all other themes. Applicants are encouraged to check links in the SRIA between ecosystem services and themes, subthemes, drivers and enablers. This comprehensive approach must be reflected in the proposals.

Please note:

- These call topics are overlapping and non-exclusive. Proposals can therefore address one or several topics;
- It is not compulsory to address all subtopics within a topic in the proposals;
- It is possible to submit comprehensive proposals addressing more than one topic and subtopic.

- ANNEX A provides a list of national contact points (NCPs) and a matrix of the topics and modalities funded by each participating country/region.

2.3 Expected approach from the proposals

The proposals can focus on the development of new knowledge, solutions, and tools through basic research and/or the implementation of new solutions and tools for governance, management, and evidence-based policy making leading to mitigation, adaptation, and increased resilience of aquatic ecosystems and ecosystem services to global changes, from local to global. Proposals built on existing solutions must demonstrate additional progress and impact.

New knowledge should help to develop a better understanding of the socio-economic aspects, governance and human well-being associated with the impact of global changes on ecosystems services and people. Thus, supporting strengthening socio-economic approaches to assess ecosystem services and actions to cope with pressures. Delivered knowledge needs to cover existing gaps and have the clear potential to be used in new and improved options and tools for the integration of ecosystem services into the management of water resources. Consideration should be given to understanding the social and governance barriers that prevent or delay adoption and implementation of existing ecosystem services frameworks and how to overcome these.

The proposals are also expected to contribute to the acceleration of the adoption of measures and to connect actors to improve coordination of actions. In all cases, knowledge transfer and impact of the deliverables must be demonstrated. Likewise, it should be clearly indicated how local scale projects could/should 'scale up' (e.g., local to regional, national to transboundary/international, etc.) and also consider cross-scale interactions.

Proposals are expected to address barriers to the adoption of proposed solutions and to the application of key lessons from other disciplines in the implementation of results. The proposals will be required to describe how results from the research can be applied and which stakeholders should be involved to achieve the desired impact. Collaboration with active projects on the topic will be welcomed to achieve synergies and avoid duplications. Links with other projects funded by Horizon Europe, the LIFE Programme, Partnerships and Missions are encouraged. Projects can build upon the results of previously funded projects such as ESERALDA or DRYVER, or of self-funded initiatives, e.g., PEER's PRESS project. Applicants are encouraged to use existing resources and infrastructures for their project. However, proposals must not duplicate past efforts and results delivered by projects and other actions funded by other instruments, e.g., Horizon 2020, Water JPI, Biodiversa+ and PRIMA calls. Therefore, approaches built on the results of previous projects must demonstrate that they include improved and/or new ideas and approaches.

2.4 Impact of the proposals

Proposals are expected to identify challenges and provide solutions to beneficiaries at local to global scale. Furthermore, EC aims for Horizon Europe to create significant societal and environmental impact. Therefore, proposals are expected to clarify the impact their research is expected to achieve in the long term and how they contribute to the overall impacts defined for this call:

- Integration of ecosystem services approach and accounting approaches in policy and practice;

D2.11 Report on scoping activities

- Improved governance of ecosystems for the delivery and protection of their ecosystem services;
- Mitigation and adaptation to global changes, and improved resilience of aquatic ecosystems for securing delivery of services;
- Supporting the implementation of the UN SDGs and ensuring a Just Transition for all, EU Green Deal, Biodiversity Strategy;
- Maintenance or restoration of natural ecosystems for preservation of ecosystem services;
- Providing guidelines for the creation and management of habitats in regions where they were previously lost (e.g., in urban areas) to restore lost ecosystem services.

Credible societal impact will require input from stakeholders when formulating the knowledge gaps to be addressed in the proposal (co-design) and actively working together on the project with those stakeholders while exchanging knowledge (co-creation). Diversity of stakeholders, spanning the entire research and innovation chain, is important to accurately describe the problem and develop solutions to better guarantee policy implementation of the results, e.g., representatives from water agencies, the business and financial sectors, water authorities, NGOs, ministries, academia, citizens etc. Consortia should also crosscut scientific disciplinary boundaries (multi- or interdisciplinarity).

Applicants are highly encouraged to use a “Theory of Change” to help define their project, both for analysis of the problem to be addressed and to indicate via what route the expected results of the project could eventually lead to societal impact.

ANNEX 3 - DECLARATION OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST, CONFIDENTIALITY AND NON-DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION

Declaration of conflict of interest, confidentiality and non-disclosure of information

Preamble

This declaration applies to the Water4All Working Group members tasked with the drafting of the technical part of the [enter year] Joint Transnational Call on the general theme of [enter call theme or title], under the Pillar B of the Water4All partnership.

The Working Group is composed of the experts appointed by the Water4All Funding Partner Organisations (FPOs) participating in the [enter year] Joint Transnational Call and of the Water4All Advisory Board members.

The experts appointed by the Funding Partner Organisations may include own staff, in-house consultants, or external collaborators.

The experts from the Water4All Advisory Board may be the Scientific and Technological Board (STB) or the Stakeholder Advisory Group (SAG) representatives.

Purpose

The purpose is to set forth the terms and conditions for the non-disclosure and protection of the confidential information shared between the Working Group members, as well as to ensure the absence of the conflict of interest.

Conflict of interest

The persons acting as members of the Working Group are not allowed to apply for funding in the Water4All [enter year] Joint Transnational Call, since the access to the inside information and the co-writing of the call text constitutes the conflict of interest.

For the Water4All Advisory Board members acting as members of the Working Group in particular, the following limitation is put in place:

- The STB members (physical persons) are not allowed to apply for funding in the Water4All [enter year] Joint Transnational Call.
- The SAG members (physical persons or the entities represented in the SAG) are not allowed to apply for funding in the Water4All [enter year] Joint Transnational Call.

Confidentiality and non-disclosure of information

All information disclosed during the Working Group meetings and in shared documents, as well as the related correspondence, must be treated as confidential.

The information shared within the Working Group must not be exploited for personal benefit nor made available for the benefit of any other individual or organisation.

The Working Group members hereby agree for a period until the resolution of the [enter year] Joint Transnational Call:

- not to use confidential information otherwise than for the purpose for which it was disclosed;
- not to disclose or reproduce confidential information to any third party;
- to take all measures to comply with the duties linked to confidentiality.

Rules for the prevention of conflict of interest and ensuring confidentiality and non-disclosure of information

The Working Group members must sign a conflict of interest, confidentiality and non-disclosure declaration to confirm that they will comply with the principles stated herein.

Term of Agreement

The declaration shall be effective from the date of signature and shall expire when the [enter year] Joint Transnational Call is resolved.

YOUR CERTIFICATION

Your Potential Conflicts.

I have read and understand what constitutes the Conflict of Interest in my role as a Water4All Working Group member for the [enter year] Joint Transnational Call. I will personally not apply for funding in the [enter year] Joint Transnational Call. In case of the Water4All SAG members, the entity represented in the SAG will also not apply for funding in the [enter year] Joint Transnational Call.

Maintaining the Confidentiality and Non-disclosure of Information.

I have read and understand the information on confidentiality and non-disclosure and promise to take all necessary measures to fulfil my obligations in my role as Working Group member in this respect.

Name of the expert:

Affiliation:

Date:

Signature:

ANNEX 4 - WATER4ALL RULES ON PARTICIPATION OF ADVISORY BOARDS IN JOINT RESEARCH CALLS

These rules are extracted from Water4All Terms of Reference, Appendix 2.

PARTICIPATION OF ADVISORY BOARD PARTICIPANTS IN A WATER4ALL JOINT TRANSNATIONALCALL

The Governing Board, Executive Board and Activity Steering Committees of the co-funded European partnership Water4All - Water Security for the Planet are assisted in their work by two groups of advisors; a Scientific and Technological Board (STB) and a Stakeholders Advisory Group (SAG). The former is composed of pre-eminent scientists from any part of the world who are international expert in some aspects of water quantity or quality and who contribute scientific advice to Water4All activities. The latter is made up of nominees from water industry, water users, non-governmental organisations and local or national authorities and they provide a user's perspective of the work of the partnership. Representatives in both groups are appointed for a term of three years and are expected to contribute a maximum of two weeks per year to the work of the partnership. Their role is clearly defined in the Terms of Reference of the co-funded European Partnership Water4All.

In order to avoid any possible conflict of interest between the Joint Transnational Call (JTC) for research projects organised by the Partnership Water4All and the participants of the Advisory Boards, the table below lists each step in the process of a JTC and indicates whether or not a participant in the Advisory Boards can contribute to each step. The aim is to get as much advice as possible from these experts without compromising their own or their institution's opportunity to participate in the research.

Participants of the Advisory Boards can apply to a JTC launched by the partnership Water4All as participant in a project proposal for funding, but not as project coordinator/leader. If so, the direct involvement of the Advisory Board participant in proposals in JTCs launched by Water4All will further limit their potential role as advisors to the Partnership's activities related to the JTCs.

Therefore, the involvement of Advisory Boards participants in Water4All JTCs and activities will be fully tracked and monitored.

Step	Description	STB input	SAG input
1	Initial idea for research call	Yes	Yes
2	Developing a short description of the call (general description - call topic level) and scope of the call (down to the subtopics)	Yes ⁽¹⁾	Yes ⁽⁴⁾
3	Preparing the call documentation	No	No
4	Elaboration of call announcement	No	No
5	Call publicity	Yes	Yes
6	Suggest name of potential Evaluators to form the initial pool of reviewers	Yes ⁽²⁾	Yes ⁽⁵⁾
7	Evaluation of pre-proposals (step 1) and full proposals (step 2) and ranking of applications	Yes ⁽²⁾	Yes ⁽⁵⁾
8	Selection of projects to be funded	No	No
9	Mid-term and final evaluation of funded projects	Yes ⁽³⁾	Yes ⁽⁶⁾
10	Impact assessment of the Call and its projects	Yes ⁽³⁾	Yes ⁽⁶⁾

Notes

⁽¹⁾ STB participants can contribute provided they agree in writing that they will personally not be applying for funding.

⁽²⁾ As long as they are not personally participating in an application to the call.

⁽³⁾ As long as they are not personally involved in one of the funded projects.

⁽⁴⁾ SAG participants can contribute provided they agree in writing that neither they personally, nor the entity they are representing in the SAG will be applying for funding.

⁽⁵⁾ As long as neither they personally nor the entity they are representing in the SAG is participating in an application to the call.

⁽⁶⁾ As long as neither they personally nor the entity they are representing in the SAG is involved in one of the funded projects.

Advisory Boards participants will be requested to sign a confidentiality agreement and to engage to declare conflicts of interest as soon as necessary, according to the principles set in Appendix 3 of Water4All Terms of Reference.

End.



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