



# SETTING UP THE TOOLS FOR MAPPING THE WATER R&I SECTOR IN EUROPE

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Disclaimer: This document reflects the views only of the author, and the European Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein

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## LIST OF ACRONYMS

<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>JPI</b>	Joint Programming Initiative
<b>R&amp;I</b>	Research and Innovation
<b>SRIA</b>	Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda
<b>UN SDGs</b>	United Nations Sustainable Development Goals
<b>Water4All</b>	European Partnership on Water Security for the Planet
<b>WFD</b>	Water Framework Directive

Water4All partners mentioned in the report:

<b>ANR</b>	French National Research Agency (France)
<b>EPA</b>	Environmental Protection Agency (Ireland)
<b>FORMAS</b>	Swedish Research Council (Sweden)
<b>ISPRA</b>	Italian Institute for Environmental Protection and Research (Italy)
<b>MoES</b>	Ministry of Education and Science (Latvia)
<b>MZP</b>	Spanish Water Technology Platform (Spain)
<b>NCBR</b>	National Centre for Research and Development (Poland)
<b>UEvora</b>	University of Evora (Portugal)
<b>WRC</b>	Water Research Commission (South Africa)

## ABSTRACT

The Water4All Partnership is a funding Research and Innovation programme for scientific research in freshwater. Co-funded by the European Union (EU) under the framework of Horizon Europe, it aims at tackling water challenges and at enabling water security for all. The Partnership brings together a wide and cohesive group of 90 partners from 33 countries in the European Union and beyond.

As part of Water4All Pillar A activities, Task A.2.1 aims at mapping the water research and innovation sector in Europe. **This mapping exercise is a complex activity with a high strategic value for the Water4All Partnership.** This mapping will provide a better understanding of the European water-related research and innovation landscape by delivering an inventory of national and regional research strategies, policies and programmes. It will also make possible to identify projects funded at the national and regional level, infrastructures and mobility schemes whilst also exploring the coordination of activities taking place in Europe as well as existing barriers for cooperation.

To this end, the Water4All's mapping of the water research and innovation sector in Europe will be carried out during the second phase of the programme, starting off in June 2024. It will involve the collection of data through three sources of information: (i) **a questionnaire** that will be sent to national and regional funding organisations in Europe, (ii) **interviews will be performed**, and a (iii) **desk research will be conducted**. The desk research will illustrate the current status of water research and innovation in Europe in terms of scientific publications and patents.

All the information collected by Task A.2.1 will be instrumental in the update of the Water4All's Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda (SRIA) and annual implementation plans, as the thematic strategies of respondents will be considered. Results will also provide a better understanding of alignment (*i.e., to what extent the Water4All's SRIA guides the development of national/ regional water research and innovation strategies*) and funding modalities, which will be of particular interest for specific actions implemented as part of Water4All Pillar B for the development of research and innovation. Likewise, the mapping exercise will use the work done within Pillar C, in particular as regards mobility options and water-related research infrastructures, and it will feed the international cooperation strategy developed as part of Pillar E. This is therefore a clear example of the collaborative work within the Partnership, where partners strive to avoid the duplication of activities and the correct integration of data and information resulting from additional activities.

# SETTING UP THE TOOLS FOR MAPPING THE WATER R&I SECTOR IN EUROPE

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### WATER4ALL IN A NUTSHELL

The **Water4All Partnership** ([www.water4all-partnership.eu](http://www.water4all-partnership.eu)) is a funding Research and Innovation (R&I) programme for scientific research in freshwater. Co-funded by the European Union under the framework of Horizon Europe, it aims to tackle water challenges to i) improve access to water resources; ii) ensure that adequate water supplies are available for food and energy production, agriculture, industry, transport and tourism; iii) enhance the resilience of populations to global changes and water-related hazards including floods, droughts and pollution. To this end, the programme will boost systemic transformations and changes across the entire water research – innovation pipeline, fostering the matchmaking between problem owners and solution providers. The Water4All Partnership adopts a systemic approach from the source to receiving water bodies.

The programme is structured around six action pillars, encompassing a wide portfolio of multi-national and cross-sectoral activities, from physical and biological sciences to human and social sciences. Results from those action pillars will not only offer innovative solutions to address most pressing challenges in water supply and sanitation. They will also support relevant European policies and international frameworks, quite notably the EU Green Deal, the Water Framework Directive (WFD) and the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs).

As of June 2024, the Water4All Partnership brings together a group of 90 partners from 33 countries in the European Union and beyond (Brazil, Georgia, Israel, Moldova, Norway, South Africa, Switzerland, Turkey, Tunisia, United Kingdom). The Partnership is coordinated by the French National Research Agency (ANR, in French). The consortium has been strategically conceived in order to gather partners covering the whole water Research and Innovation (R&I) chain including academia, R&I funding partner organisations, water management authorities, water utilities and water associations. Moreover, partners will strive to collaborate with other R&I initiatives in the European Research Area in order to enhance the impact of planned activities. Amongst others, collaboration will be sought with EU Missions, like the Mission “Restore our Ocean and Waters by 2030”, and other Horizon Europe Partnerships such as the ones on Biodiversity, Sustainable Blue Economy and Driving Urban Transitions.

The overall aims of Water4All include:

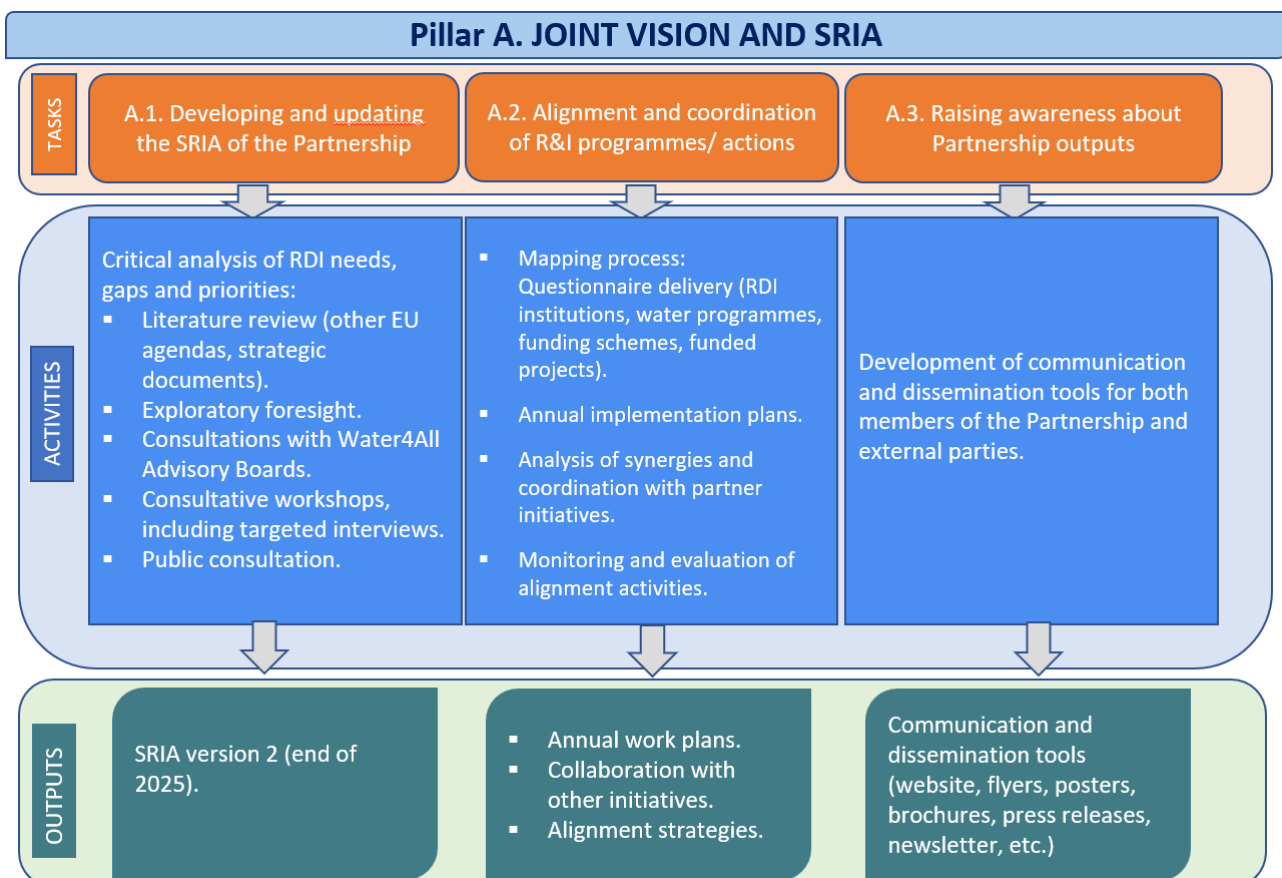
- Strengthening the water R&I collaboration and strategic coordination for the conservation, restoration, regeneration and best use of the natural functions of groundwater, surface water and dependent or associated ecosystems.
- Supporting and promoting demonstration and access to the market of innovative solutions.
- Communicating water-related knowledge and data through open access.
- Providing tools for water management through innovative knowledge, methodologies and tools.
- Designing and implementing approaches for the participatory development of innovation whilst ensuring their empowerment, capacity-building, accountability and transparency.

Launched in June 2022, Water4All will last seven years although some activities will extend till 2032. The programme will support a wide portfolio of multi-national and cross-sectoral activities, from physical and biological sciences to human and social sciences. All these activities have been grouped into different categories, leading to the structuring of Water4All into six different operational Pillars:

- Pillar A: aiming to define Water4All’s strategic orientations and establish communication, dissemination and exploitation tools.
- Pillar B: seeking to generate knowledge through the pooling of financial resources from funding agencies participating in the Partnership.
- Pillar C: promoting the uptake of results from research and innovation activities through science-policy interface actions and capacity building.
- Pillar D: supporting demonstration activities and enhance access to the market of R&I solutions.
- Pillar E: increasing the international cooperation and portfolio of Water4All’s activities.

## ACTIVITIES FOR THE MAPPING OF THE WATER R&I SECTOR IN EUROPE

The present report is developed in the frame of **Pillar A activities, which is responsible for the delineation of the strategic priorities of Water4All**. These priorities are set out in a commonly agreed Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda<sup>1</sup> (SRIA), for which a first version was published in September 2022. Pillar A is structured around three Tasks shown in the Figure 1 below, along with planned activities and expected outputs.



**Figure I.** Structure of Water4All Pillar A, activities and expected outputs.

<sup>1</sup> Water4All Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda (SRIA): 2022-2025 –Media Library [https://www.water4all-partnership.eu/sites/www.water4all-partnership.eu/files/2023-02/Water4All\\_SRIA-2022-2025\\_A4\\_2311\\_bd.pdf](https://www.water4all-partnership.eu/sites/www.water4all-partnership.eu/files/2023-02/Water4All_SRIA-2022-2025_A4_2311_bd.pdf)



The aim of **Task A.2 is to ensure the coordination and alignment with other water-related EU/National/regional programmes** in order to enhance cooperation, increase the critical mass of activities, reduce R&I fragmentation, and increase the overall impact of R&I activities whilst also avoiding the duplication of activities and the inefficient use of financial resources.

In practical terms, enhanced coordination with water-related R&I programmes will result in the sharing and exchange of information and best practices, the organization of joint activities, collaborative actions for the identification of knowledge gaps, and discussions on best available implementation instruments for water activities. **To gather, analyse common trends and share information there is a need to develop solid knowledge of the water R&I sector across Europe. This will be done in the frame of sub-Task A.2.1 “Mapping the water R&I sector in Europe”.**

Three more subtasks come to complete the Task A.2 “Alignment and coordination of R&I programmes/actions”: sub-Task A.2.2 “Annual implementation plans”; sub-Task A.2.3 “Analysis of synergies and coordination with partner initiatives”; and, sub-task A.2.4 “Monitoring and evaluation of alignment activities”.

**This deliverable describes the specific activities that will be conducted within sub-Task A.2.1 to develop a full understanding of the water R&I sector in Europe and abroad.**

A mapping exercise of water RDI in EU and associated countries was conducted by another partnership, the Joint Programming Initiative on ‘Water Challenges for a Changing World’ (Water JPI<sup>2</sup>) in 2014 within the framework of the WatEUr project<sup>3</sup>, which served as a basis for the first stages of the initiative. The mapping proved very useful in the framing of strategic actions. This mapping exercise was updated in 2019 as part of the IC4WATER project<sup>4</sup>. Efforts are now needed to update the mapping exercise and analyse if any relevant changes have taken place over the last decade. To this end, the experience accumulated by Water4All partners that also contributed to the Water JPI’s mapping will be put at the service of Task A.2.1.

The main difference between the Water JPI’s and the Water4All’s mapping exercise is that the Water4All’s questionnaire will only be sent to national and regional funding organisations, whereas the Water JPI’s questionnaire was largely distributed, including governmental institutions, private companies, NGOs, etc. On this occasion, partners have decided to **focus on just one type of respondents** as the main challenges identified by the Water4All Partnership so far are to bring onboard more funding institutions (as key actors for the implementation of Pillar B activities) and to secure the appropriate coordination between national and regional water research and innovation strategies. Furthermore, it should be noted that even though the mapping will primarily target funding organisations from EU countries, attention will also be paid to those located in non-EU countries. This will enable the collection of relevant information for the Water4All’s Pillar E on international cooperation.

This mapping exercise is crucial to guide the definition of Water4All’s strategic orientations, in particular:

- **Identification of research gaps:** By mapping ongoing research and innovation activities, Water4All will be able to tease out areas where there is a lack of attention or investment. This will help prioritise research topics that require further R&I to address critical water challenges effectively. Likewise, the mapping will also allow the identification of areas where multiple research projects address similar issues. By avoiding the duplication of efforts, resources can be allocated more efficiently, maximizing the impact of research investments.
- **Facilitating collaboration:** Understanding the landscape of water R&I will enable the Water4All Partnership to identify potential collaborators, both within and outside of Europe. This will facilitate

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<sup>2</sup> Water JPI - website: <http://www.waterjpi.eu/>

<sup>3</sup> Water JPI Mapping report, 2014. Mapping Water RDI in Europe.

<http://www.waterjpi.eu/images/WatEUr%20Mapping%20Report/Mapping%20Report.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Water JPI Mapping report, 2019. Identification of relevant international countries for RDI Cooperation.

<http://www.waterjpi.eu/implementation/supporting-projects/csa-ic4water/work-packages/d2-2.pdf>

collaboration between researchers, institutions and funding agencies, fostering knowledge exchange and accelerating progress towards common goals.

- **Informing strategic planning:** The mapping exercise will provide valuable insights for strategic planning within the Water4All Partnership by offering an understanding of emerging trends, research priorities, and areas where targeted investments can have the greatest impact on addressing water challenges and achieving the objectives of the programme. The analysis of the mapping exercise will bring new perspectives and ideas for the update of the Water4All's SRIA that will see the light at the end of 2025.
- **Monitoring progress:** The results of the mapping exercise will be compared to those obtained by the Water JPI - which conducted a similar activity in 2014 and 2019. Further information on the mapping exercise conducted by the Water JPI can be found here: <http://www.waterjpi.eu/mapping-agenda/water-rdi-mapping>. This comparison will allow the evaluation of the effectiveness of past investments, the identification of emerging research needs/ trends, and the adjustment of strategies to ensure full coherence with evolving priorities.

Overall, the mapping of research and innovation within Water4All is a valuable tool for optimizing investments, fostering collaboration, informing strategic decision-making and monitoring progress.

To this end, the Water4All's mapping exercise will develop solid knowledge of the water R&I sector across Europe. At a second stage, the mapping exercise will also compile information from countries beyond Europe; this information will support the strategy of Water4All in the international approach of the programme. Amongst other aspects, data will be gathered on water R&I programmes (main research themes and priorities), funding schemes, funded projects, research institutions and organisations involved in water research and innovation (including key players and areas of expertise), collaborative networks and partnerships within the water research community, mechanisms for knowledge transfer and capacity building, impacts and outcomes of activities, barriers and challenges hindering progress in water research and innovation, and international cooperation.

The **sub-Task A.2.1** is led by the University of Evora (UEvora, Portugal) with the support of the following partners (in alphabetical order): ANR, EPA, FORMAS, ISPRA, MoES, MZP, NCBR, WRC.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

Sub-Task A.2.1 objectives according to the Water4All's grant agreement were stated as follows:

*"The mapping exercise aims at developing solid knowledge of the water R&I sector across Europe e.g. water R&I programmes, funding schemes, funded projects, research infrastructures, mobility schemes, international cooperation. Data will be compiled through a questionnaire that will target national and regional R&I funders as well as leaders of relevant water initiatives/ programmes in Europe and abroad, such as the Water JPI, PRIMA, and coordinators of Horizon 2020 projects. The data and knowledge generated from the questionnaire will inform other actions within Water4All".*

Developing a good understanding of the water R&I sector in Europe will then require the collection of vast amounts of data. To this end, partners have decided to use different methodological approaches, that will complement the questionnaire initially proposed. **Figure II** summarises the different methodological approaches to be used by Task A.2.1 partners and the type of information that will be collected.



**Figure II.** *Methodological approaches and types of information to be collected in the mapping exercise.*

- The **questionnaire** will target **national and regional funding agencies**, both partnering in the Water4All Partnership and external to the programme. The objective is then to gather mainly data from EU-based and non-EU (at a later stage) national and regional funding agencies.

The questionnaire, available in the Annex, has been developed by Task A.2.1 partners, building upon the work done by the Water JPI, and tested by two members of the Water4All's Advisory Boards. This testing allowed the identification of confusing or misleading questions. The design of the questionnaire is simple. As such, most of the questions are close-ended (Yes/ No), limiting the open-ended questions to very specific cases. Respondents are required to identify themselves in case further information is needed at later stages.

It should be noted that the questionnaire will not include any questions on training and mobility as both aspects are covered by specific Tasks within Pillar C. **Nevertheless, the results obtained by Pillar C will be integrated in the final report of the mapping in order to offer a comprehensive view of the water R&I sector in Europe.**

The questionnaire will be sent to the targeted audience at the beginning of the second phase of Water4All (June 2024) and up to three reminders will be sent to collect as many responses as possible. In addition, Task A.2.1 will strive to collect data on the occasion of Water4All meetings such as Governing Boards, or international conferences gathering funding agencies with the organisation of bilateral meetings for the compilation of information for each one of the aspects included in the questionnaire.

The questionnaire will be sent by email and it will also be made available on the Water4All's website.

- **Interviews** to representatives of regional and national funding agencies in order to delve into the information provided in the questionnaire. Interviewees will be selected at a later stage of the project on the basis of the responses provided.

Each interview will follow the components of the questionnaire but it will allow acquiring different points of view, opinions and even realities insufficiently captured or undetected through the questionnaires and desk studies. Interviews will therefore promote the enlargement of the mapping focus, highlight several problems, barriers and expectations, and consequently will contribute to an enrichment of the material.

- **Desk research.** Finally, a desk research will be carried out to amass data on water calls for proposals / calls for tenders launched by other funding programmes. Attention will also be paid to the scientific publications and patents. Following a systemic approach, peer-reviewed publications since 2019 will be identified and analysed as a way to gain a better understanding of the water topics that have been the object of scientific works. Desk research will therefore be instrumental in the identification of water topics that have received much attention from funding programmes.

At the time of writing this deliverable, Water4All partners involved in Task A.2.1 are working on the definition of key criteria for the bibliometric analysis. Further refinement is still needed prior to the identification of key information sources.

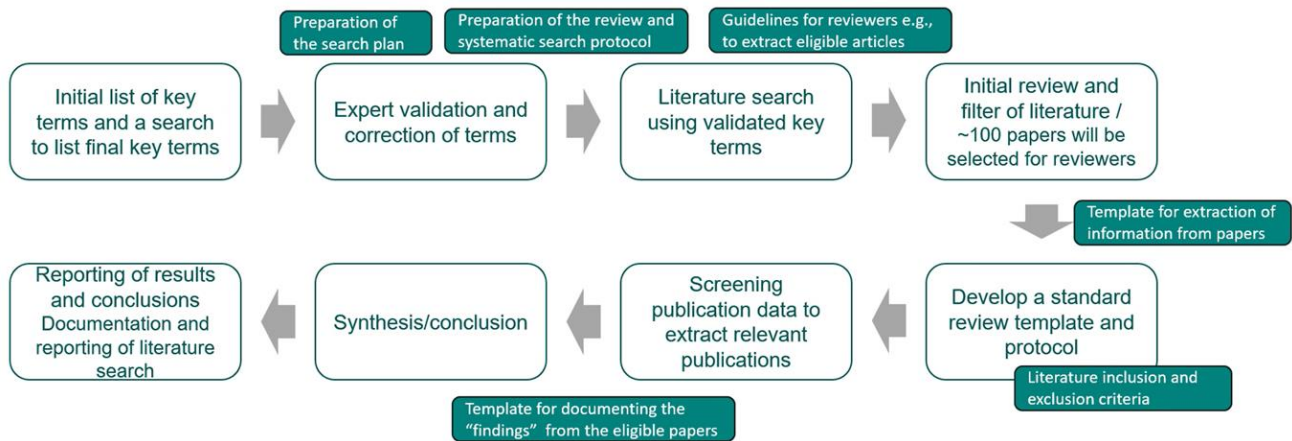
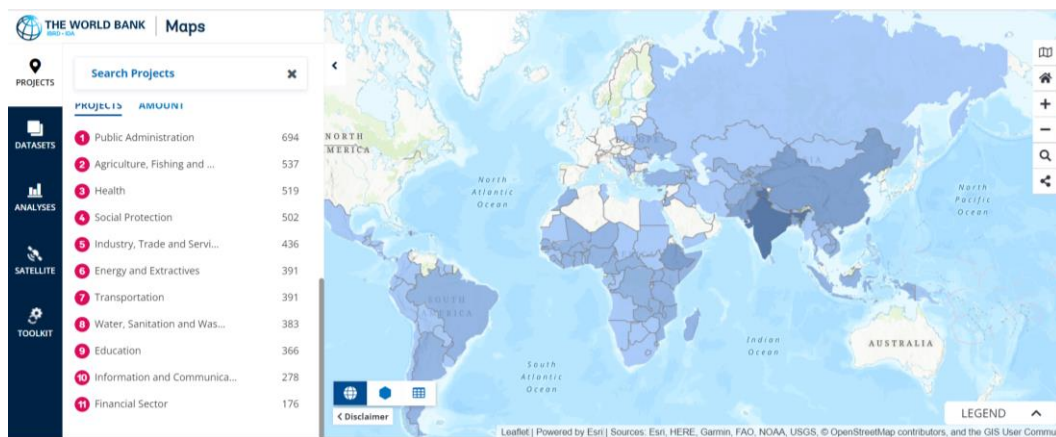


Figure III. Visualisation of the review process and literature research.

All the results obtained in the mapping exercise will be presented in a GIS-based platform, following the example of the World Bank’s platform<sup>5</sup> (a screenshot is provided below). Such a platform will enable all end-users to select the “layers” of information of interest (e.g., research and innovation actors, funding programmes or flagship projects) and to compare between regions and countries all over the world.



The following paragraphs outline the data to be gathered through the mapping exercise.

**Type of data 1:** Water R&I programmes and funding schemes. Expected outputs:

- Existing water R&I funding programmes at the regional, national, European and international levels, including a short description of each programme.
- Scope of these programmes e.g. collaborative research, excellent research, development, demonstration, networking, etc.
- Other characteristics of these funding programmes, including: Funding rate, eligible organisations, geographical area, eligible expenses, average financial envelop of the projects, relation to SRIA themes.
- Synergies between funding programmes.
- Other than funding programmes, national and regional water research and innovation strategies to determine thematic priorities or privileged partners.

<sup>5</sup> World Bank’s platform: <https://maps.worldbank.org/projects>

**Type of data 2:** Water related funded projects and research and innovation performers. Expected outputs:

- List of water-related projects funded by regional/ national funding agencies over the last 5 years (since 2019). This information will be collected through the dedicated questionnaire.

- Partners will strive to collect for each one of the water-related funded projects, the following information: Brief description and objective, project website, total funding and funding per partner, coordinator and members of the consortium (country of origin and typology of partner: research institutions, industry players, governmental and policy-making institutions, NGOs and advocacy groups), start and end date of the project, duration, typology of the project (research, education, technology transfer, network, etc.), and theme (s) of the SRIA linked to the project.

### 3. TIMEFRAME OF ACTIVITIES

The collection of data will take place during the second Grant Agreement period of Water4All. Activities will be organised as follows:

ACTIVITY	THIRD QUARTER 2024	FOURTH QUARTER 2024	FIRST QUARTER 2025	SECOND QUARTER 2025	THIRD QUARTER 2025	FORTH QUARTER 2025	FIRST QUARTER 2026	SECOND QUARTER 2026
Distribution of the questionnaire								
Collection of questionnaire data								
Design of interviews								
Interviews conducted								
Desk research (identification of publications)								
Desk research: analysis of patents + publications								
Write-up of the final report								

# ANNEX - QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THE MAPPING EXERCISE OF THE WATER R&I SECTOR IN EUROPE

This annex lists the questions that will be sent to national and regional funding bodies. The online questionnaire is designed to be comprehensive, covering all key aspects of the water research and innovation sector.

<b>Section 1: General information</b>
Q1. Name of your organisation:
Q2. Country:
<b>Section 2: Funding programmes</b>
Q3. Does your organisation have a specific programme for the funding of water research and innovation? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes</li> <li>• No</li> </ul>
Q4. If you replied “Yes” to the previous question, please indicate the name of the programme and the link where more detailed information can be accessed to (if you replied “No” to the previous question, please go to <b>Q6</b> ):
Q5. How often are calls for water research and innovation launched by your organisation? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• On an annual basis</li> <li>• Every two years</li> <li>• Another periodicity, please specify:</li> </ul>
Q6. The purpose of this question is to gather information on the funding provided by your organisation to successful consortia for research and innovation activities (independently of the thematic). You are thus kindly asked to indicate the type of organisations that are eligible to funding according to your organisation’s rules as well as the maximum funding allowed for each one of them: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Governmental</li> <li>• Universities</li> <li>• Research performing organisations</li> <li>• Industry/ company</li> <li>• NGO</li> <li>• Other, please specify:</li> <li>•</li> </ul>
Q7. Please indicate what type of activities are eligible to funding according to your organisation’s rules: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Basic Research:</li> <li>• Applied Research:</li> <li>• Innovation:</li> </ul>

Q8. Tick below which types of expenses are eligible according to your organisation's rules:

- Human Resources:
- Travel:
- Consumables:
- Equipment:
- Buildings Adaptation:
- Bibliographic reviews:
- Conferences/Workshops:
- Organization Fees (registrations, annuities):
- Overheads:
- Other, please specify:

Q9. Are you aware of any **operational programmes in your country** dedicated to the funding of water research and innovation? (If you are responding on behalf of a regional operational programme, please indicate others you may be aware of):

Q10. Do you know of any **other public or private organisation in your country** funding water research and innovation?

Q11. Based upon your experience, what challenges does your organisation face in securing funding for water research and innovation?

### Section 3: Research and innovation focus

Q12. Does your organisation have a **strategy for water research and innovation**? (*Where a strategy for water research and innovation is defined as a document that sets out thematic areas on water that should be funded to respond to specific organisational objectives e.g. addressing water scarcity, improve competitiveness at the national level, etc.*). If your organisation does not have a strategy for water research and innovation, please go to **Q15**.

- Yes
- No
- In progress

Q13. If you replied "**Yes**" OR "**In progress**" to the previous question (**Q12**), what are your strategic priorities for the next 5-10 years in water research and innovation?

Q14. Has the Water4All's strategic agenda been considered in the development of your organisational strategy for water research and innovation?

- Yes
- No
- I do not know

Q15. Could you indicate the name of **up to five research organisations performing** water research and innovation?

## Section 4: Evaluation and follow-up of funded projects

Q16. Does your organisation have access to a pool of international reviewers/ experts in water research and innovation?

- Yes
- No
- In progress

Q17. Does your organisation have a specific monitoring scheme for the evaluation of funded proposals? If “Yes”, please describe it briefly below:

- Yes
- No
- In progress

Q18. Does your organisation have a Technology Transfer Unit or Department to better connect with end-users AND enable the market uptake of project results/ solutions?

- Yes
- No

## Section 5: International cooperation

Q19. Does your organisation have a strategy on international cooperation for research and innovation? If you reply “No”, please go to Q22

- Yes
- No
- In progress

Q20. Does it fund water research? If you reply “No”, please go to Q22

- Yes
- No

Q21. Please indicate below which type of international cooperation for water research and innovation is managed by your organisation.

- Mainly bilateral
- Mainly multilateral
- Both bilateral and multilateral

Q22. In this question, you are kindly asked to indicate the **type/ -s** of programme/-s your organisation is involved in as well as the **average annual contribution** to each of those programmes:

- Horizon Europe Partnerships
- Bilateral cooperation
- Belmont Forum
- Other, please specify:

Q23. Please indicate up to three EU and non-EU countries with which your organisation cooperates the most (in terms of funding engaged) for water research and innovation.

EU countries:

Non-EU countries:



Q24. Which are, according your experience, the main barriers **hindering international cooperation** with other organisations for the funding of water research and innovation?

Q25. In the question below, you are asked to provide the **list/link of the projects financed in the** last five years involving **ONLY** regional/ national level involving international partners.

List/link involving regional/ national partners:

List/link involving international partners:

Q26. Is there anything else you would like to share about your organisation's work and funding in water research and innovation?



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