

COVID-19 AND THE WATER SECTOR



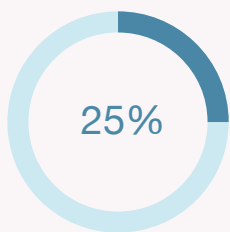
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The water sector is in the front line of the COVID-19 crisis. More than ever, water is a crucial resource to address the difficulties of this unprecedented situation. A simple gesture such as handwashing to limit the transmission of the virus requires water. It has been essential to evaluate the risks and identify the main services and populations impacted.

A GLOBAL WATER CRISIS



In 2019, about 25% of the world's population was confronted with a water crisis.

180 million people

living in the Mediterranean region are considered 'water-poor'.

The sixth Sustainable Development Goal (SDG6) adopted by the United Nations in 2015, reminds us the importance of the availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation.



IMPACTS ON THE WATER SECTOR

This pandemic is prompting questions for the water supply and sanitation sector especially in some areas of the Euro-Mediterranean region already under stress due to water scarcity.

Provision of safe water, sanitation and hygiene conditions are essential to protecting human health during all infectious disease outbreaks, including the COVID-19 outbreak.



Presence of the virus in water and wastewater

- ▶ The World Health Organization confirmed in the April Interim Guidance report, that the virus has not been detected in drinking-water supplies, in surface or groundwater sources.
- ▶ COVID-19 or SARS-CoV-2 virus, is likely to **inactivate in treated water**.
- ▶ It can survive in hospital wastewater or domestic sewage for 2 to 3 days, but is not actively spreading through wastewater.



Water shortages

- ▶ **2** litres of water are used on average for a single hand washing.
- ▶ **9 to 12** additional litres are required per day and per person to apply the sanitary measures.
- ▶ The lockdown situation had a significant impact on the water consumption. Overuse of water has led to water shortage and scarcity in many countries.



WASH (Water Sanitation and Hygiene) and Health-care

- ▶ Safely managed **WASH** services are critical to limit the spread of the virus.
- ▶ Water in hospitals and health facilities is a key component in tackling the COVID-19 pandemic.
- ▶ Adequate infrastructures are essential to apply **hygiene and sanitation** recommendations.

PROTECTION AND PREVENTION

The World Health Organization and Unicef have provided a series of Technical briefs on Water Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH), intended for health-care professionals and water and sanitation practitioners.

Recommendations and key points:



Safe management of drinking-water services.



Improving access to hand hygiene facilities.



Frequent and correct hand hygiene.



Water disinfection, wastewater and sanitation treatment.



Training and access to personal protective equipment (PPE).



Increase of capacities to ensure continuity of WASH services and improve IPC (Infection Prevention and Control) measures.



Safe management of health care waste.



Implementation of safe school protocols.



Hygiene promotion activities, availability of WASH services and products for households, vulnerable groups, in collective sites and public spaces.



Wastewater surveillance operations are being conducted worldwide to assist in monitoring the transmission of the virus among the communities.

Data collected from wastewater treatment plants allow authorities to have better estimations of the spread, considering that many people are not being tested.

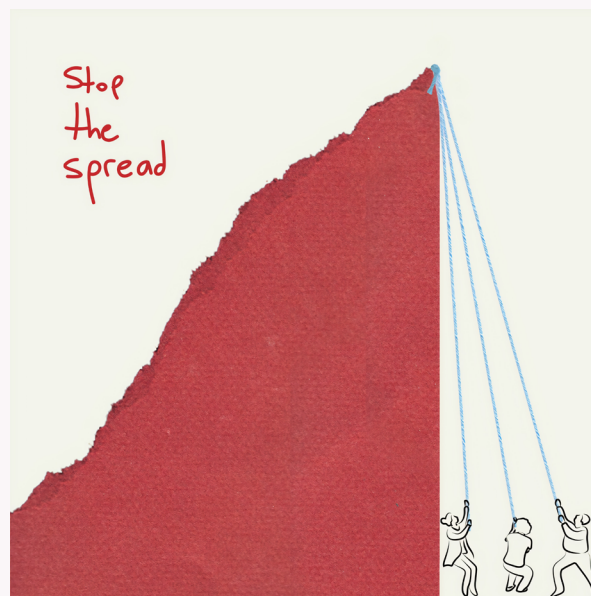
A JOINT EFFORT IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

In addition to the measures taken on an international level, **Mediterranean institutions** have also mobilised their resources.

The **UfM Secretariat** is engaged with its **Partners** to reflect on several water issues and to solve them collectively.

In this regard, they are developing a new clear **Nexus between Water and Public Health** and provide a road map to ensure that the WASH sector is at the forefront to fight against such pandemic.

The **UfM Water Community**, including GWP-Med, IME, UNESCO-WWAP, CMI Water, CEDARE, EWA, and all other Member states are working together to realise the response plan as per the **UfM Water Agenda**.



The **UfM policy recommendation**, aligned with the World Bank Water Global Practice and many international financial institutions, provide a menu of solutions, including concrete actions to mitigate secondary impacts and future resilience to similar epidemics:

- 1- Financial support to water and sanitation utilities to monitor and support cash reserves, the availability of water and wastewater treatment chemicals, the availability of electricity fuel for pumping and treating water, staffing levels and routine/capital maintenance.
- 2- Providing technical assistance to governments to strengthen country systems.
- 3- Financial support to beneficiaries to ensure the continuity of WASH services including financing for fee waivers to mitigate service disruption for households and institutions (schools, health care centers, government agencies). Ensure funding for WASH services and related products are included in Social Protection operations targeting poorer households.
- 4- Ensuring the viability of critical supply chains such as for hygiene product availability in markets (e.g. soap, disinfectant, point of use water treatment supplies, etc.), as well as import/export restrictions on critical equipment needed by utilities or households.

€2.8

billion have been provided to support research, health and water systems.

The **European Commission** is committed to support its partners and member states.

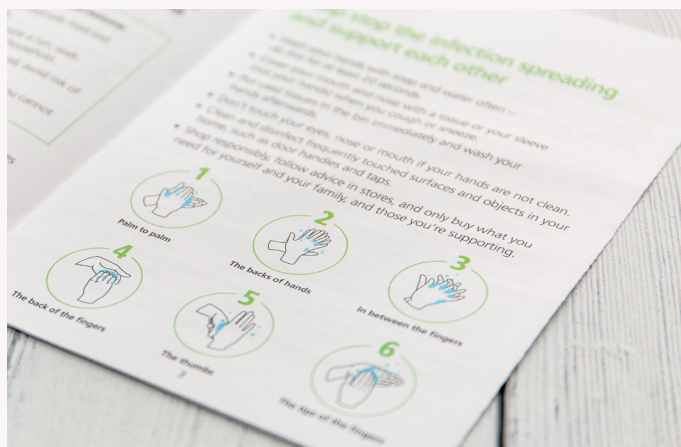
As part of its emergency response action, €2.8 billion have been provided to support research, health and water systems.

Financial assistance to MENA countries, western Balkans and Turkey, is ensuring **continuity of health services, trainings and surveillance.**



ENGAGING LOCAL COMMUNITIES

Engaging the local population by **raising awareness about WASH practices** is necessary to limit the spread of the virus.



Clear **information** should be **accessible for all** across multiple supports. Many online platforms and social media groups have reinforced communication within neighbourhoods.

A SUSTAINABLE RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19

Solidarity became a key factor since the beginning of the pandemic and especially during the lockdown. **Sustainability** has also been highlighted by local and international actors. A sustainable response to the COVID-19 crisis must emphasise on water and sanitation, and be **focused on the Green Economy**.

The **water-energy-food nexus** is an integral part of this model. Integrating these three components will ensure an efficient use of natural resources and limit environmental degradation. With the technologies available today, this approach seem achievable. **Cooperation** between public and private sector is required, along with contingency funding plans and long-term investments.

A change in consumers' behaviour is also expected. The aftermath of this global crisis is already observed in our economies and the outcome of the recovery phase will depend on our ability to rebuild a **sustainable and equitable society**.

