

UNTAPPED

Promoting tap water in Europe



EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION
OF PUBLIC WATER OPERATORS
10 YEARS OF COLLABORATION
FOR THE GENERAL INTEREST



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Promoting tap water as drinking water in Europe

Aqua Publica Europea

The European Association of Public Water Operators

Boulevard de l'impératrice 17/19

1000 Brussels, Belgium

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Promoting tap water as drinking water in Europe

With about 60% of the human body composed of water, staying hydrated throughout the day is crucial to our health and well-being. It is usually recommended to drink at least 1.5 litres of water every day, and always when thirsty. Water provides us with essential nutrients such as calcium, magnesium, sodium, potassium, and no calories.

Drinking water is necessary to stay healthy.

Yet, consumption of water is not always sufficient amongst European populations. This can be due to a lack of awareness regarding sufficient intake, or the choice of non-water beverages, such as sugary drinks.

Even when it comes to water, there is a choice to be made between tap and bottled. Tap water is the only alternative that is available 24 hours a day, delivered directly to its users and providing a cheap, zero-waste option. Nevertheless, Europeans continue to drink high volumes of bottled water (an average of 117 litres per person per year in the EU).

Amongst the reasons for high consumption of bottled water is the fact tap water is regularly dismissed for drinking purposes, often due to misconceptions on its quality and despite the fact that **stringent EU legislation imposes strong quality and control requirements.**

Because drinking more water is a question of public interest, and society as a whole benefits from more people choosing tap water, **public water operators actively undertake the responsibility of promoting the consumption of tap water as drinking water.**

“Drinking tap water is an act of citizenship. It is the choice of a water of perfect quality, more economical and more ecological”



Célia Blauel

President of Aqua Publica Europea,
President of Eau de Paris and Deputy-Mayor of Paris

AQUA PUBLICA EUROPEA

Aqua Publica Europea is the European Association of Public Water Operators

For the past ten years, it has united publicly owned water and sanitation services and other stakeholders working to promote public water management at European and international levels. Aqua Publica gathers over 60 members serving more than 70 million people, in an operator-led association that looks for efficient solutions that serve the public rather than corporate interests. In 2019, Aqua Publica Europea celebrates its tenth anniversary.

European public water operators have consistently **committed efforts and dedicated resources to raising awareness on the benefits of drinking tap water** and to increasing its consumption within communities. This is driven by their **unique mission, as public services, to meet the general interest beyond just economic interests.**

Acque Veronesi (Verona, Italy), in collaboration with the University of Verona conducted a survey with local families and found that 70% of children are consuming low amounts of water during the day.

Whilst today, Europeans consume high volumes of bottled water, tap water may also be an additional, credible, alternative for citizens in their choice of beverage.

Bottled water consumption in the EU & Switzerland (litres per person per year)



Sources : European Federation of Bottled Waters, www.efbw.org; Association suisse des sources d'eaux minérales et des producteurs de soft drinks, eau-minerale.swiss

Public water operators undertake the essential task to **foster trust in tap water, provide accurate information and raise awareness on the implications of daily consumption alternatives** so that populations can **truly have a choice between different options.**

Through the years, they have carried out, at their local levels, a diversity of communication and outreach campaigns that are innovative, playful and informative. Often, it is the opportunity for the operator to meet the population and introduce itself directly to the citizens served.

OUR MEMBERS



Aquawal (Belgium) partnered with a famous Belgian comedian in a series of videos highlighting the role of tap water in daily life.



Watch : youtu.be/NsoWzi-S8y4



**WHY CHOOSE
TAP WATER**



WHY CHOOSE TAP WATER

Tap water is our water

Water from the tap is supplied from local sources by local operators, it is transported through existing networks not in trucks or imported from abroad, it is naturally national or local.

The public water operator is an actor of its community and strives to have a strong connection with the citizens.

Several campaigns have therefore aimed to put the people who make the community, the actual consumers of tap water, on center stage. As they are the ones for whom the operators work daily and fulfil their public service mission, the objective is to create a **sense of pride in drinking tap water through ownership.**

SIG - Eau de Genève : this campaign featured different categories of citizens from Geneva, prominently throughout the city. Tap water is good for everyone.



For **Eau de Paris**, Parisians are the best ambassadors for the brand: 80% of them drink tap water! That is why the faces of the campaign l'Eau est Capitale were chosen after a casting in Paris.

To emphasise the historic and cultural value of water, **EMASESA** (Seville, Spain) organises the 'Water Roads' walking tours, with 12 different itineraries. The tours are also supported by a smartphone application with information and advice on water.



Tap water is good: regularly controlled high quality meets great taste

In the Europe Union, water quality is extremely high.

Stringent standards included in European legislation – stricter than recommendations by the World Health Organisation ensure that tap water is safe to drink throughout Europe.

With an average of over **99% of compliance** with legally set quality parameters (microbiological, chemical, indicator) in EU countries, water operators are successfully providing Europeans with excellent water to drink - according to the latest reporting exercise¹.

Public water operators **publish information of the quality of water**. In an internal survey, the members of Aqua Publica Europea reported that information on quality is available and to a very large extent directly on the operator's website, for citizens to consult.



In Belgium, water is one of the most controlled food products – more than **30.000 samples** are collected every year in Wallonia (Aquawal)

Test-Achats: "L'eau du robinet est bonne à boire et parfois même plus saine que l'eau en bouteille"

* **Test-Achats** : "tap water is good to drink and sometime ever safer than bottled water", Test-Achats is an independent organisation for the promotion and defense of consumer interests.



Tap water tastes just as good as other types of water.

Often, reluctance to drink tap water is based on the preconceived idea that the taste is inferior.

To prove this assumption wrong, public water operators have organised ‘taste tests’ in their streets. The result: *it is difficult to tell the difference between tap and bottled water based only on taste.*

Still, if you are looking for an enhanced taste, the Belgian association of public water operators Aquawal recommends to add flavour with a few mint leaves or a slice of citrus, and Eau de Paris notes that placing water in the refrigerator or leaving it outside for 15 to 30 minutes removes the taste of chlorine.

For a fancier version, the operator from Brussels (Belgium) proposes recipes, provided by local citizens for ‘**Water Cocktails**’: from iced teas to fruity lemonades, tap water as the ally for tasty, healthy beverages.



Public water operators also commit to continuously working on the taste of water, through innovative processes and by involving citizens.

SMAT (Turin, Italy) is studying the organoleptic quality of drinking water and trained **20 ‘water tasters’** who continuously assess the Global Edonistic Indicator (GEI) of tap water and monitor 13 parameters associated with three organoleptic sensations small, taste and aftertaste.



SDEA (Alsace-Moselle, France) seeks **water ‘tasters’** in its efforts to provide ever-improving services to the population. With this initiative, the operator wants to **make the user an active participant in the improvement of water services** by providing feedback on the taste of tap water, evaluated several times at different moments.



With Italy being Europe's largest consumer of bottled water, **Padania Acque** invented the water brand VAND ("water" in Danish), which was in reality tap water, and put it to the test in the streets of the Province of Cremona. The reactions: it's **fresh, delicate, light, tasty**

 Watch: youtu.be/cm5CFTXjoIM



In Budapest, 93.2% of the population is satisfied with the quality of water, yet 45.7% say the rarely or never drink it.

To convince its citizens, **Budapest Waterworks'** (Hungary) organised a blind test which confirmed that the taste of tap water is good too.



Aguas de Cádiz proposed to passersby a glass of city water from a public fountain and a glass of bottled water. Identifying which is which was more difficult than expected for the ones who tried.

 Watch: youtu.be/U_hFk1nMTaM

TASTE-TESTING CAMPAIGNS

Tap water is sustainable: everyone can be an actor of change

As we are growingly conscious of the effects of our actions on the environment, it is paramount to take a look at our consumption of both the limited resources of the planet and of disposable materials such as plastic.

For drinking, tap water is by far the most ecological solution available: it is a **zero-waste option** that not only does not come in a disposable plastic container, **but also does not need to be transported in trucks or airplanes, or across borders, does not require storage** and is **available directly from the tap**.

Public water operators have chosen to play their part in environmental protection by raising awareness amongst the populations and providing them with the necessary tools to become actors of change, and especially the younger generations.

With the distribution of reusable bottles and jugs that are both attractive and practical, operators facilitate the switch to tap water in an enticing manner.



SPAIN: THE PROGRIFO CAMPAIGN

Spanish public operators participate in the campaign to promote tap water **Pro Grifo** coordinated by the Spanish association of public water operators, AEOPAS.

The participating operators have subscribed to the campaign Manifesto and taken actions including awareness-raising at local level.

Different localities continue to distribute reusable water bottles or glass jugs, each designed specifically for each city through a contest.



Promedio



Aguas de Cádiz



Medina Sidonia

Working with local figures to spread the word



Aquaflanders (the association of Flemish operators), as part of its **KRAANWATER** campaign, has called upon famous figures to not only “give tap water a new, fresh image” but also increase the audience. The videos were seen over 150.000 times.



EMASESA (Seville, Spain) welcomed a group of **journalists and social media influencers** to visit its infrastructure and gain knowledge about tap water, its management and its quality.

Creating environmental consciousness amongst children

Public water operators realise that awareness on sustainability goes through outreach to the generations of the future. Therefore, they dedicate a part of their efforts to promoting tap water with children and in schools.



Padania Acque has created a mascot, Glu Glu, specifically to connect with children, and distributed reusable bottles in schools.

On the first day of the 2019 school year, **MM** will distribute 100.000 aluminum water bottles to children in primary and secondary schools in Milan, with two educational purposes: promote the consumption of tap water and reduce the use of plastic bottles in tune with the new environmental policy address ‘**Milan Plastic Free**’, strongly supported by the Municipality of Milan. The initiative is supported and promoted by a full awareness campaign.

Meno plastica con la tua borraccia



**il primo giorno di scuola
il Comune di Milano
distribuisce
una borraccia in alluminio
a tutti gli studenti
delle scuole primarie
e secondarie di primo grado
di Milano**

**personalizza la borraccia con il tuo nome
ricordati di lavarla spesso con acqua calda e una goccia di detersivo**

Tap water is affordable: the social impact

Data from the European Commission suggests that tap water costs, in average, about **€0.002** per litre in the European Union, which means that 1.000 litres, about a year's supply of tap water for drinking purposes, costs **€2**.

In comparison, conservative estimates highlight that the average price for bottled water is **€0.1 per litre²**, **fifty times more expensive than tap water**, although market data suggests that it may be well over one hundred times more expensive³.

“Lower consumption of bottled water can help households in Europe save more than €600 million per year.”⁴

Choosing cheaper water makes it easier to meet recommended amounts and to stay hydrated throughout the day, including in heatwaves or when exercising, when the needs are higher.

Encouraging people to drink tap water: a public mission

Through their communications campaigns towards citizens, public water operators aim to build the trust necessary to make tap water the **favourite choice**.

They inform on the benefits of drinking more water and the positive results for health, for the environment and for families' finances of choosing tap water.

Through their actions they aim to create an environment where drinking **tap water is not only enjoyable and attractive but also the reasonable choice for citizens**.

Unique, creative initiatives are the chosen instrument for public water operators who seek new ways to raise awareness and foster the positive image of tap water in their communities.

Uniacque, the operator from Bergamo (Italy) organises, for example, a yearly 'Musical Tour' in the summer to celebrate water, as an enchanting element whilst emphasising public commitment to culture.



Tour musicale UniAcque 2019

ONDA ENSEMBLE
Soprano e elettronica: Silvia Lorenzi
Pianoforte e cori: Stefano Gatti
Percussioni e cori: Stefano Bertoli

PROGRAMMA
F. Schubert: *Der Jüngling an der Quelle*
O. Respighi: *Pioggia*
A. Dvořák: *Canto alla luna, dall'Opera "Rusalka"*
F. Schubert: *Ave Maria*
Melodia Gregoriana: *Ave Maris Stella*
J.E. Spilman: *Flow gently sweet Afton*
G.L. dell'Arpa: *Villanella ch'all'acqua vai*
H. Mancini: *Moon River*
P. Frustaci e E. Macario: *Camminando sotto la pioggia*
Anonimo: *Sia maledetta l'acqua stammatina (Campania)*
Anonimo: *L'acqua de la fontana (Puglia)*
Anonimo: *La bella la va al fosso (Lombardia)*
Bertoli-Gatti-Lorenzi: *Acqua e basta*

DATE CONCERTI

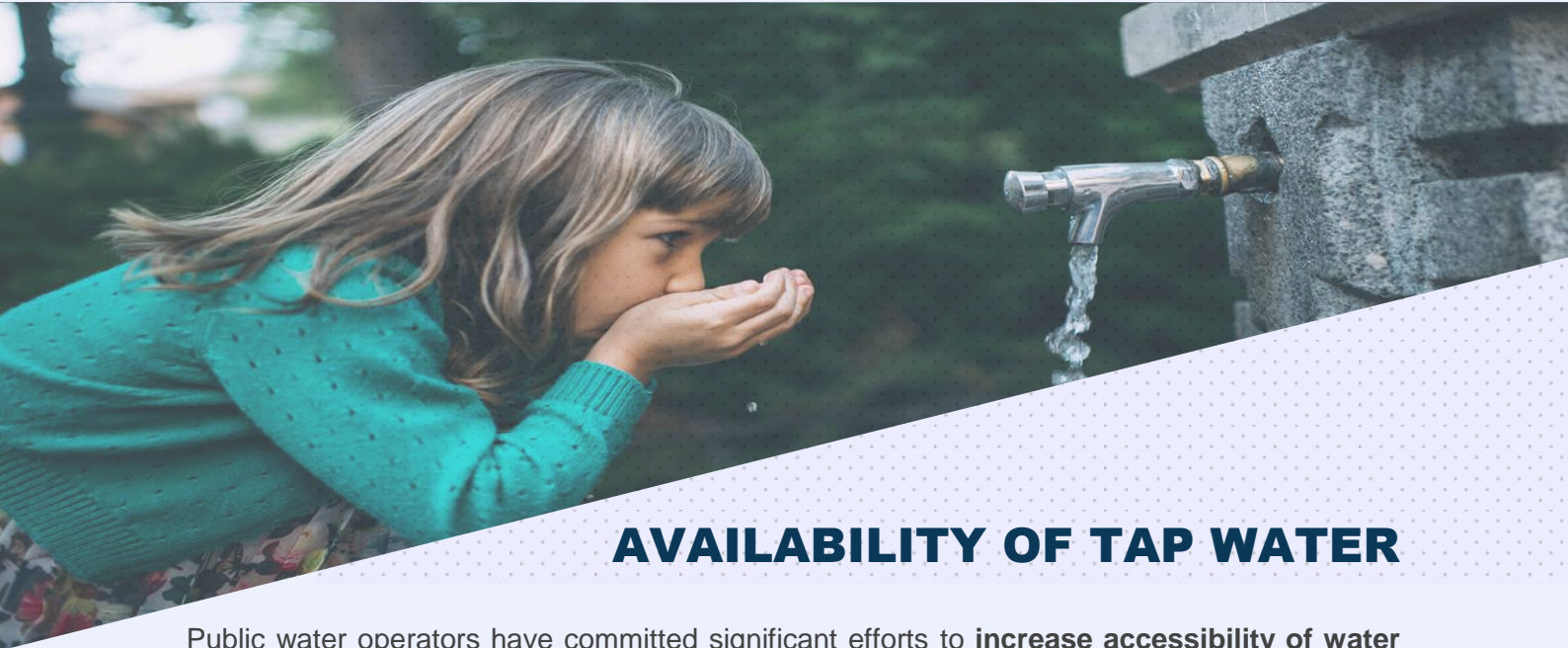
DOMENICA 30 GIUGNO Cologno al Serio Piazza Agliardi - ore 21.00	SABATO 24 AGOSTO Sant'Omobono Terme Chiesa Santa Maria Immacolata in Selino Basso - ore 21.00
SABATO 13 LUGLIO Monasterolo al Castello Parco Biali - ore 21.00	VENERDÌ 30 AGOSTO Villa D'Almè Arena Papa Giovanni - ore 21.00
DOMENICA 14 LUGLIO Sarnico Piazza Santissimo Redentore - ore 21.00	SABATO 31 AGOSTO Ponte San Pietro Passaggio Toscanini - ore 21.00
VENERDÌ 23 AGOSTO Clusone Piazza dell'Orologio - ore 21.00	

Uniacque
SERVIZIO IDRICO INTEGRATO

COMUNE COLOGNO AL SERIO
COMUNE MONASTEROLO AL CASTELLO
COMUNE SARNICO
COMUNE CLUSONE
COMUNE SANT'OMOBONO T.
COMUNE VILLA D'ALMÈ
COMUNE PONTE SAN PIETRO



**AVAILABILITY
OF TAP WATER**



AVAILABILITY OF TAP WATER

Public water operators have committed significant efforts to **increase accessibility of water** by deploying **access points** in localities and creating cooperation for the public places to offer tap water as well. But there is still more work to be done.

Increased access to water responds to an international priority, set by the UN's Sustainable Development Goal number 6, to a **citizens' priority**, with the first-ever successful European Citizens' Initiative Right2Water, and, as a consequence, to a **European priority** as part of the revision of the Drinking Water Directive.

Having water points in cities and towns aligns with the objective to **reduce consumption of plastics** but also supports access to water to all parts of the populations and plays an important role when water needs are higher - in periods of heatwaves for example.

Available water in public space : hydration on-the-go

To encourage consumption of tap water and increase access to water, many members of Aqua Publica Europea have **installed water fountains in their localities**, a way to make water available to all, 24 hours a day.

In Spain, **Aguas de Cádiz** and **EMASESA** (Seville) deployed innovative fountains, designed specifically for their cities by local actors, to be perfectly integrated into city life and landscape, but also to be fully accessible to citizens with disabilities, to children and even to pets.

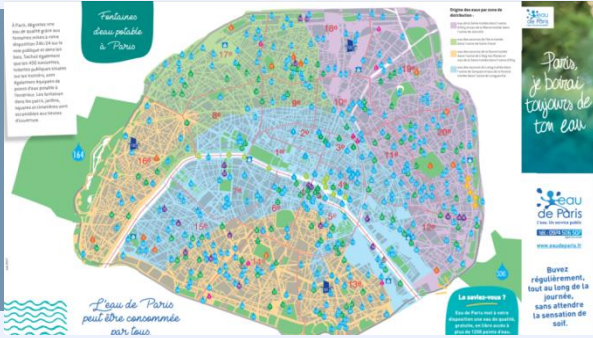


In July 2018, **EMASESA** (Seville, Spain) inaugurated the first fountain designed by students from the University of Seville's School of Architecture (ETSA).



Aguas de Cádiz started deploying 'Cádiz model' fountains in 2017, with the aim to reach a ratio of one per 1.000 inhabitants. The design including some of the city's emblematic architectural elements.

Eau de Paris has 1.200 fountains in streets and public parks throughout the city, including the iconic Wallace fountains a choice of sparkling water fountains.



Scottish Water's campaign Top Up from the Tap encourages to carry refillable water bottles, with the aim to reduce plastic consumption and raise awareness on the quality, safety and economic benefits of tap water.



EXCHANGES BETWEEN MEMBERS OF AQUA



PUBLICA EUROPEA
The Water Erasmus Initiative

Members of **Scottish Water's** personnel travelled to **Paris** in August 2018 to exchange on the supply of water in public spaces.

As Paris is deploying forty new water fountains in the city, Scotland is planning the **installation of drinking points** in ten cities. Objectives of these initiatives include increasing access to water and promoting sustainability through reduced use of plastic bottles.

The exchange allowed Scottish Water to draw from Paris' long experience on the matter and use concrete practices in its decision-making.



WATER ERASMUS
AQUA PUBLICA EUROPEA

Water Erasmus is Aqua Publica Europea's flagship initiative to promote and facilitate cooperation between European public water operators.

Water Erasmus offers the opportunity for technical staff from member operators to travel and meet their peers to discuss issues of common interest, exchange expertise, visit infrastructure and launch joint projects.

Focusing on the idea that knowledge circulates with the people, Water Erasmus contributes to building long-term skills, as well as a common understanding of the mission of European public services, a building block of our shared European future.

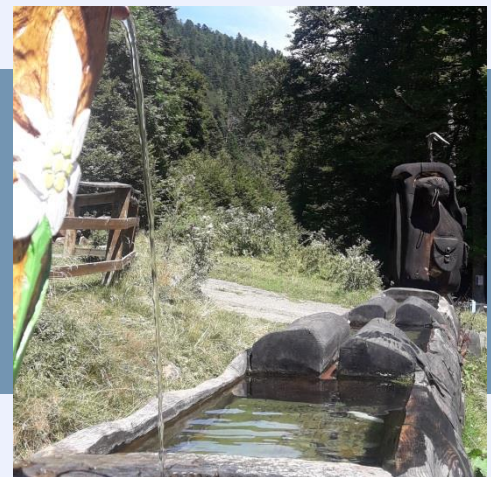


In order to make the value of tap water well recognised amongst citizens, **SMAT** installed 181 'Punti Acqua' (Water Points) which distribute, every year, nearly **50 million litres** of tap water – still or sparkling – to over 120.000 families of the Turin Metropolitan Area.

In addition to cities, the public water operator plays an important role in **remote areas** as well.

Facilitating access to water in **rural and mountain areas** with the availability of public fountains is a task deeply connected to the historic and patrimonial identity of localities as well as particularly essential for as well as health and environmental questions. Finally, the touristic value is noteworthy as such initiatives valorise village, natural landscape and hiking trails.

In Haute Garonne (France), the operator **RESEAU31** serves municipalities mainly located in **rural and mountain areas** and about **160 public fountains** are in service at catchments in the Pyrenees. Whilst these fountains supply 7.300 inhabitants in 48 municipalities, they represent the public investment in favour of rural territories.



It is further, particularly important to raise awareness on the quality of water towards **visitors**, especially in **touristic areas**, which contributes to increasing confidence, and therefore consumption by foreigners who may not be informed about the quality of tap water in the places they visit.



Águas de Gaia (Portugal) organised a **summer campaign** to inform tourists, including by placing **postcards in hotels and hostels**, as well as publishing a video in English.



eau
de Paris
L'eau. Un service public

Paris, je boirai
toujours de
ton eau



VILLE DE
PARIS

Available water at outdoors events : partner for all activities

Public water operators develop partnerships with local actors to supply water at public events with **water bars and water points** available at music festivals, sporting events and many other events.

These initiatives respond to a **health imperative**: free water helps stay hydrated, especially in summer – the typical high season for outdoors activity; it is also **accessible to everyone**, hence allowing the enjoyment of favourite activities whilst avoiding the obligation to purchase more expensive beverages. Often attended by large numbers of people, tap water availability further prevents the generation of **significant quantities of plastic waste**.



SPORTS

SDEA (France) partners with sporting events, and supplies water every year to the Marathon du Vignoble d'Alsace with 15 kiosks – the event is labelled as ecological.

De Watergroep, from the Belgian region of Flanders, has three water bars that can be made available at events welcoming 500 people or more, to promote tap water.



SIG - Eau de Genève has, since the creation of the brand in 2009, supplied water to over **420.000 runners** in Geneva - Marathon, Course de l'Escalade, Marche de l'Espoir.

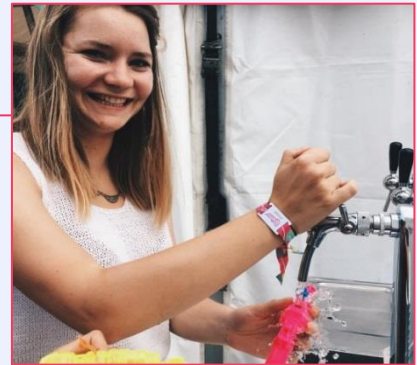
INTERNATIONAL EVENTS

For the universal exposition in Milan in 2015, local operator **Gruppo CAP** (Italy) and the metropolitan area MM deployed 32 'Water Kiosks', which served a total of 9 million liters of water in the six months of the expo. Since then, the kiosks have been relocated in municipalities.



MUSIC FESTIVALS

During festival season, **SWDE** (Belgium) places water taps at events so that music lovers can stay hydrated with the #Yoleau campaign.



Águas de Gaia provides taps of water on the beach during the summer festival and encourages festival goers to drink water.

AND ALL OTHER EVENTS

Since 2012, **Eau du Ponant** (France) makes available 'water bars' with everything necessary and connected to the network for outdoor and indoor events, hosting more than 5.000 visitors.

It represents around 50 events a year, including the French Premier League soccer matches. The requests are made through an online form.



On the occasion of the local Italian festival 2019, the city of Liège requested that local water operator **CILE** (Belgium) to supply free water to participants. Because of the heatwave the 'Water Truck' was rolled in a few days to keep the population hydrated.

BEBA ÁGUA DA TORNEIRA

GAIA
TODOLHMUNDO

ÁGUAS DE GAIA
Produção de Água

Faz bem à saúde



Ajuda a controlar o peso e a evitar derrames cerebrais ou ataques cardíacos



Está disponível 24/24H



É controlada e segura (analisada diariamente)



É 1000 vezes mais barata que a água engarrafada



É mais amiga do ambiente



Águas de Gaia congratula-se em informar os nossos Clientes que em 308 concelhos do país, 32 municípios foram referenciados pela ERSAR - Entidade Reguladora dos Serviços de Águas e Resíduos com o nível de excelência, pela qualidade da água disponibilizada na torneira, e o Município de Vila Nova de Gaia foi novamente distinguido como um dos melhores, atingindo no indicador de água segura o nível de Excelência em pleno: **100%**.

Nota: Águas de Gaia disponibiliza os resultados do controlo de qualidade da água trimestralmente, através de edital e no site da empresa, em www.aguasgaia.pt.

Para qualquer esclarecimento adicional relativo à qualidade da água, por favor contactar através do n.º **223770460** ou do e-mail info@aguasgaia.pt.

Available water in hospitality : some tap water, please?

The question of **tap water availability in restaurants and cafés** is subject to many divergences of views. Not only is there no uniform legal framework on the topic, but practices may vary greatly from one country to another. The reasons are multiple and may be cultural, legal or even economic.

Whilst in some countries, establishments have long been accustomed to serving tap water, even for free, several representatives of the hospitality sector have also highlighted the fact that tap water may prevent profits. The President of the Brussels Horeca Federation notes: “*The Horeca sector is more than ever looking for profitability*” and expresses that offering water implies costs, including for the service itself⁵.

In most countries, there is no regulatory framework and it is the decision of each establishment whether or not to provide tap water on the table.

Public water operators, for their part, **are arguing in favour of the provision of tap water in restaurants**. On the one hand, through advocacy at European level with Aqua Publica Europea, notably in the context of the revision of the Drinking Water Directive. On the other hand, on a local basis with initiatives to encourage and support restaurants in changing their practices.



FRANCE

By law, restaurants have to provide tap water for free with the food they serve to their customers (it is included in the prices) - *arrêté n°25-268 du 8 juin 1967*



In Budapest, the **ReFill initiative** encourages restaurants to provide drinking water and refill water bottles. Participating establishments are identified with a sticker and mapped online.

More information: <http://refill.hu>.

Free tap water in restaurants, in addition to being a move towards better access to water, also corresponds to **citizens' expectations**. Several grassroots campaigns have shown that **citizens want to have a choice** and not be imposed a mandatory bottled water in restaurants.

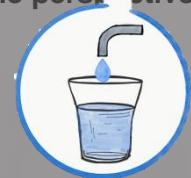
In Spain, the consumer association (OCU) launched the campaign #PideJarraDeAgua⁶ to call for a national law that would make it mandatory for restaurants and bars to offer free tap water to their customers. The organisation had conducted a survey that found that 14% of establishments refused to serve tap water when asked.

It was also the case in Belgium, where, notoriously, restaurants refused to serve tap water. Excuses included claiming that it is unsafe to drink – a false statement, considering stringent quality requirements, or that water cannot be free because the service of bringing the water or making it available is not free.

In 2019, one campaigner, **Sarah Ehrlich**, took it to social media and has gathered large support from citizens and achieved significant results: the list of restaurants changing their practices is constantly growing.

We met her to discuss her campaign, the motivations behind it and the perspectives.

INTERVIEW WITH SARAH EHRlich Campaigner



HOW DID THE CAMPAIGN START?

The campaign started with a simple question on Facebook: **who is else is annoyed with the lack of option for tap water in restaurants?** Not much reaction was expected but very soon twenty messages came, then a hundred and one thousand. A dedicated page was created, someone suggested to make a **google map** of the restaurants that do serve tap water, and that is how the campaign was launched.

There is **no money involved, no sponsorship**, and the majority of the campaign is organised through Facebook with the contribution of **volunteers**. It was only possible because of social media and the support gathered for the topic. Whilst it started with one person, **now it is the people who are doing the work**: they are joining the page, tagging their restaurants and contacting them directly to ask them to change their policies.

WHAT IS THE MESSAGE?

The key message is that **Belgian tap water is of excellent quality** and that **drinking tap water is the more sustainable option to reduce plastic pollution**, even before we think about recycling it.

Still, we are not proposing to make it obligatory for restaurants to serve tap water, we are calling for restaurants to **give their customers a choice**: tap water should be an option amongst others. We are looking for a change in mindsets that would make it more acceptable and possible to choose tap water. A poll that was conducted on the page actually showed that **55% of people have changed their water drinking habit in the past year**, so there is a change already happening.

“Belgian water is excellent”

CAN YOU TELL US MORE ABOUT THE TEAM ?

There are currently **eleven volunteers** working on the campaign, from different countries (France, Ireland, Croatia, Israel, Belgium, UK). They all **spontaneously reached out**, through Facebook, to offer their time and skills. Two volunteers from Belgium & Israel who are software developers and committed to reducing pollution have designed an app version of the Google Map. The **app is free to download and was launched in June with over 4000 downloads on Apple & Android**. It is encouraging people to frequent the restaurants & cafés listed and also to nominate new ones.



DID YOU RECEIVE SUPPORT?

In addition to the community support of **over 11.000 individuals on the Facebook page**, **Belgian water utilities have been supportive** of the campaign and others groups have liked the page, although that may not necessarily imply support, such as green party politicians, mayors, Zero Waste and Plastic-Free. The publicity around the campaign and the media uptake have also helped raise awareness. Negative reactions have been very limited, with only a few HORECA representatives opposing the campaign. The head of HORECA recently said that Belgian tap water was “*bad*” which we pointed out as incorrect.

WHAT HAS BEEN THE IMPACT SO FAR?

As a result of the campaign, about **640 restaurants & cafés in Belgium have changed their policies** and are beginning to serve tap water. One example, was the commitment of the founder of Exki, a Belgian health food chain restaurant, who implemented a free tap water policy the day after we talked to him. The café at the Science Museum in Brussels was also convinced, especially as the museum was showing an exhibit on plastic pollution.

“It creates a nice atmosphere”

Belgians want to have a choice between bottled and tap water, so eventually, the restaurants will have to adapt. But it is also positive for their business: you have to queue to get into restaurants that serve tap water and it is a factor that influences customers’ choices. We have also noticed that restaurants serving tap water may not results in lower profits, and a more in-depth analysis is being conducted on the topic to assess the impact.

WILL THE CAMPAIGN SPREAD TO OTHER COUNTRIES?

In many countries, tap water is, to some extent, available in restaurants, so the campaign would not be necessary. Still, in **Luxembourg**, where the situation is similar to Belgium, a person was inspired to set up the same campaign. Although they are doing it independently, the Belgian campaign provided some support by sharing existing material. Another lady was inspired to set up a sister campaign in **Germany** so both campaigns are using the same logo and name: **Free Tap Water in Luxembourg Restaurants & Free Tap Water in German Restaurants**.

WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS?

There are **new conversations launched with other restaurants**, and we are also looking to see **free tap water refill machines installed in Belgian rail stations & metro stations**. **Brussels Airport** has already agreed to install bottle refilling stations after security instead of the 1€ single-use plastic bottles. We have also conducted an initial series of questionnaires with 24 restaurants to find out how offering free tap water influences their business and we would like to extend that too. Beyond that, now that the instruments are available, **we leave it up to each and everyone to reach out to restaurants to ask them to change their policies, always on a voluntary basis**.

“It’s not my thing anymore, it’s all of us”

THE REACTIONS OF PUBLIC WATER OPERATORS

Belgian public water operators have overwhelmingly supported this initiative.



in BW

March 27 at 11:58 AM · 🌐

in BW soutient l'initiative de **Free Tap Water In Belgian Restaurants** : de l'eau du robinet gratuite dans les restaurants en Belgique.



AQUAWAL

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Aquawal encourage l'initiative de **Free Tap Water In Belgian Restaurants** qui milite pour obtenir de l'eau du robinet gratuitement dans les restaurants belges, ce qui est déjà le cas en France. Les avantages sont multiples.

“I call the hospitality sector to become an **ambassador for tap water in Brussels.**”



Bernard van Nuffel
President of Vivaqua in Le Vif, March 2019



VIVAQUA

March 27 at 11:54 AM · 🌐

Faites un geste pour la planète : buvez l'eau du robinet ! **Free Tap Water In Belgian Restaurants**

Doe iets voor de planeet: drink kraantjeswater! **Free Tap Water In Belgian Restaurants**

AQUA PUBLICA EUROPEA'S WORKING GROUP ON COMMUNICATION

As part of the platform for cooperation between European public water operators, communication experts from members of Aqua Publica Europe collaborate within a dedicated **Working Group on communication**.

Led by operators, the Working Group allows operators from around Europe to **exchange on the different campaigns that they organise at local level**, the **key priorities** and the **results** witnessed. It contributes to creating a **network of like-minded professionals** and supports the **sharing of experience** and **pooling for resources**.

Main topics of discussion include: **how to efficiently promote tap water as drinking water and build trust within the population**; how to be increasing **plastic-free and tackle plastic pollution** at different levels, as well as other important themes for the water sector such as the question of internal communication with employee as well as how to attract professionals to operators.

Working together supports **raising the profile of tap water** at European level to boost consumption.

In addition the Working Group is also a context in which members identify **common actions and projects**. In the past, it allowed to place a joint order of reusable water bottles, which had the benefit of ensuring a lower price for everyone. The bottles were then distributed to communities, by the local operator, thus supporting access to water and reduction of plastic waste.

The Working Group on Communication meets at least once a year. In 2019, it is led by the Italian operator from the Apulia region, **Acquedotto Pugliese**.



OUR MEMBERS



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September 2019

Aqua Publica Europea

Aqua Publica Europea



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**Aqua Publica Europea is the European Association of Public Water Operators**

In 2019, **Aqua Publica Europea, the European Association of Public Water Operators, celebrates its tenth anniversary** and with it ten years of working to establish strong collaboration both with the utilities who provide us with indispensable water services and with EU and international institutions to inform decision-making that meets the public interest.

Back in 2009, a handful of operators from Belgium, France, Italy and Switzerland, realised that public utilities had **many values in common**. They joined their efforts to formalise a **shared vision for water management** with the creation of Aqua Publica Europea and its founding charter based on the view that **water is a common good that needs to be managed for the general interest by efficient public services**. Since then, this vision gathered growing support and over 60 operators have endorsed it.

With members **providing water supply and sanitation services to over 70 million people in Europe**, Aqua Publica is **now looking at the future**. Many challenges and new opportunities will affect water operators in the years to come, from climate change and population growth to technological progress. At the same time, the **EU also focuses on strengthening the management of this precious resource** through an ongoing wide review of its water policy, including cornerstone pieces such as the Drinking Water Directive or the Water Framework Directive, and tabling new legislation.

In this unique context, **collaboration between all actors is crucial** to secure sustainable and responsible management of a finite yet essential resource for both ours and future generations. Aqua Publica Europea's role will continue to be **to support public water operators' efforts by representing their voice** on key issues and provide a **platform for peer-to-peer exchanges for continuous improvement**, notably with the landmark Water Erasmus initiative.

*Aqua Publica Europea (APE) is the European Association of Public Water Operators. It unites publicly owned water and sanitation services and other stakeholders working to promote public water management at both European and international level. APE is an operator-led association that looks for efficient solutions that serve the public rather than corporate interests.*

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