



# FOUNDING CHARTER

**Adopted March 18, 2008  
Pavillon de l'Eau, Paris**



The members of Aqua Publica Europea endorse the following Founding Charter.

#### **ARTICLE 1. Water: a common good**

a. Water is the source of all life. Access to water constitutes a fundamental, inalienable, and universal human right, and has a direct effect on the security of our collective existence. The availability of sustainable water supplies to serve domestic, industrial and agricultural needs, at the same time preserving the natural balance, must be guaranteed.

b. Water constitutes a common good and humanity's heritage. It needs to be managed in a socially responsible way to ensure everyone has a fair share, and to secure its conservation for the benefit of future generations.

c. Water is a public good of general interest. It cannot, therefore, be considered a mere commodity, liable to rivalry and private appropriation. The management of water as an essential resource, its production, distribution, sanitation and protection, belongs in the public domain. It must be organised and supervised by the public authority under the responsibility of elected representatives at all local levels, taking specific hydro-geographical factors into account.

#### **ARTICLE 2. For a public and efficient water service**

a. Local authorities must be able, without restriction or hindrance, to organise the provision of water services through the establishment of public companies operating under the authority of elected representatives. The elected representatives must be allowed to associate and integrate themselves with a view to constituting public companies supplying optimal territorial dimensions. Water services must be considered as services that are operated in the general interest.

b. The members of Aqua Publica Europea aim to work towards a constant improvement in performance. To this end, they promote co-operation, partnership, and an exchange of experience and skills among water services within the framework of an emerging European public water service.

c. The members of Aqua Publica Europea clearly reaffirm their commitment to work together in a totally transparent way within the framework of public procurement procedures.

#### **ARTICLE 3. Managing water for the general interest**

a. The liberalisation of water services in accordance with commercial imperatives dominated by short-term private financial, and indeed speculative, interests must be rejected.

Socially responsible, effective and sustainable management of water resources calls for a long-term vision, an asset-based approach, and co-operation with other societal domains such as agriculture and industry. It needs democratic supervision characterised by the active participation of all citizens, and a strong governance role for users.

b. The provision of free tap water in public spaces, such as administrative buildings, teaching establishments, parks, railway stations, and museums, must be enhanced.

c. Revenues deriving from water bills must be fully allocated to water-management operations to ensure the best services. In order to secure the right to water and a fair and sustainable use of water resources, financial recovery of water-provision costs may call for Solidarity Mechanisms and general or specific taxation redistributive functions.

#### **ARTICLE 4. A global approach**

We promote a global water policy based on our guiding principle: universal access to water and sanitation.

This objective can be achieved within a generation. The time has come to take effective responsibility for the management of water as a common and public good. European public water companies and public authorities are ready to take up the challenge.