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The European Water Association - 20 years commitment for clean water for Europe

Hennef, 21 June 2001. In June 2001 the European Water Association (EWA) celebrates two decades of work to improve water management throughout Europe by means of technical and information exchange. The Association represents 55,000 professionals in the broad water sector and membership embraces the EU nations and most of the accession countries.

The European Water Association (EWA) was founded on 22 June 1981, at that time still named European Water Pollution Control Association (EWPCA), as an independent non-governmental and non-profit making organisation dealing with the management and improvement of the water environment. Delegates from eleven national professional associations came together on the International Trade Fair for Wastewater and Waste Disposal (IFAT) in Munich, representing associations dealing with water protection issues from Austria, Belgium, Denmark, West Germany, Finland, France, Great Britain, Italy, the Netherlands, Sweden, and Switzerland. They felt that in the light of a uniting Europe there was a need for the exchange of national associations working in this sector. What had been informal irregular meetings until then entailed subsequently a process that still goes on in terms of growing membership and the number of organised projects and events. The

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scope of the association was also enlarged in 1999 with the change of name from "European Water Pollution Control" to "European Water Association".

Given the origin of the founding organisations, the Association always transcended the borders of the European Union and its predecessors. The membership increased continuously in the years after the foundation. Contacts to associations from Central and Eastern European Countries existed from the very beginning of the Association's work; full membership was however much eased after the fall of the Iron Curtain. Firms were also included in the organisation as Corporate Members. Today the EWA consists of 29 European national associations representing professionals and technicians for wastewater and water utilities as well as consultants, and about 10 firms and enterprises as Corporate Members. The association thus represents about 55,000 professional individuals working in their national associations in a broad field of water management.

From the very beginning the Association considered the exchange of professional experts as its main targets. Through this exchange of knowledge, the Association intends to contribute to a sustainable water management: a safe water supply and the protection of water and soil. This resulted in the organisation of more than 50 conferences and workshops taking place all over Europe and covering a very broad range of water related topics such as European legislation (Water Framework Directive, Sewage Sludge Directive etc.), technical questions as for example the significance of small wastewater treatment plants in rural areas and also integrated approaches. Regular events are the International Trade Fair for Wastewater and Waste Disposal (IFAT) in Munich and Aquatech in Amsterdam, which

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are both accompanied by the European Water Association with conferences and symposia. With the growing number of members from Central and Eastern European countries, the interest for events dealing with water protection issues in the light of EU accession grew respectively.

However not only conferences and reports thereof were and are the output of the Association's work, but also publications such as the study "The Comparability of Quantitative Data on Waste Water Collection and Treatment" and the study "Urban Wastewater Projects - A Layperson's Guide" which was realised together with the European Environment Agency (EEA). It met very high interest and was translated into various European languages.

In 1991 an additional tool for the exchange of experts on a European scale was introduced: The journal "European Water Pollution Control" whose name was later changed to "European Water Management". This journal, issued six times a year, encompasses news from the European Union, information about the Association's work and several technical papers. Special topical issues are produced regularly, e.g. concerning drinking water.

All this work is achieved through the different Committees and Working Groups that were established from the very beginning. They are based on the voluntary work of experts coming from the different member associations and working together on various actual subjects from the water field.

Throughout the years, the EWA has established close contacts to the European Commission (DG Environment), the European Committee for Standardization (CEN), the European Environment Agency (EEA) and the European Parliament. Co-operation was also established with other

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European and international associations like IWA, EUREAU, EWRA and many others.

Today the European Water Association (EWA) is one of the major technical and scientific association in Europe that covers the whole water sector, wastewater as well as drinking water and water related waste. Since 1989 Dr.-Ing. Sigurd van Riesen is the Honorary Secretary General. With member associations from nearly all Central and Eastern European Countries, it not only includes the current European Union member states, Norway, and Switzerland, but also most of the acceding countries and Russia.

Further information about the Association's work can be obtained from its homepage at <http://www.EWAonline.de>

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