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EDITO

As the European deadlines approach and decision-makers consider the future of the European Green Deal, the question of the resource's role in our ecological transition is becoming ever more urgent.

At the beginning of March 2024, for example, the European Commission issued a communication highlighting the major risk posed by the growing scarcity of water resources to all human activities and the various aspects of our lives, while current projections predict a 35% increase in water stress over the next fifty years. In so doing, it highlighted the impossibility of purely national or regional water management, which does not take into account the challenges of water use in a holistic manner.

Faced with these challenges, last October, the European Economic and Social Committee launched its Call for an EU Blue Deal, supported by a number of MEPs and civil society players, in favor of greater inclusion of water resources in the discussions surrounding the future of the European Green Deal.

The aim of this initiative, which has been hailed by a number of players in the field, is to assess the impact of water scarcity on all economic activities, and to enable the emergence of a new form of water governance in Europe.

In parallel with these initiatives, many sectors are already facing up to the reality of climate change and its consequences for our water supplies.

First and foremost, European agriculture, which accounts for almost 40% of our annual water consumption, is already facing numerous conflicts of use, in France and more recently in Catalonia and Aragon. Ambitious national measures, such as France's Water Plan or Flanders' Blue Deal, have been put in place, but are struggling to find an equivalent echo in all Member States, and particularly among those most affected by drought in the south of the continent.

The hydroelectric power generation sector is also gearing up to face greater pressure on its production capacity, due to more regular periods of drought. Worldwide, nearly 61% of all hydroelectric dams are expected to be located in basins subject to severe water stress.

In Europe, this prospect is also very alarming, given that electricity production accounts for 28% of water use. Here too, with many of Europe's main water basins covering cross-border regions, European coordination and management will be the key to sustainable water management in the energy sector.

Furthermore, the question of investment in the transition to a more sustainable management of water resources arises immediately, and will need to be adequately financed through the creation of a Blue Transition Fund. At the same time, we need to invest in the training and preparation of workers, who will be responsible for implementing the transformations required under a future Blue Deal for Europe.

In the light of these factors, the need for a European governance framework is all the more obvious to ensure the resilience of our societies and implement a new water management paradigm. The stakes of such a transformation are high, but they should also open up new opportunities in terms of employment, research and the modernization of our current infrastructures. ■