European Commission addresses barriers to innovation: the first Innovation Deal focuses on water reuse

Brussels, 07 April 2017

Today, the European Commission, together with 14 partners from national and regional authorities, universities, knowledge centres, innovators and end-users, takes concrete steps to address regulatory barriers to innovation by signing the first Innovation Deal on “Sustainable Waste Water Treatment Combining Anaerobic Membrane Technology (AnMbR) and Water Reuse”.

The European Commission delivers on its recent commitment to help innovators overcome perceived regulatory barriers and work towards better regulation through the Innovation Deals instrument.

Carlos Moedas, Commissioner for Research, Science and Innovation, said: "The Innovation Deals is an instrument towards a more modern and responsive administration that helps innovators facing regulatory obstacles to innovation in the existing EU legislative framework. Implementing Innovation Deals shows that we are changing as an institution, from only setting rules to being pragmatic and pro-active in helping achieve policy objectives through innovation”.

Karmenu Vella, Commissioner for Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries said: "This first 'Innovation Deal' on water helps in our push for a circular economy. It comes as we are about to check how European water policy is working. We want our policy to be simpler to put in place and easier to use. The Innovation Deal helps us do this”.

This first Innovation Deal focuses on an existing regulatory framework affecting water reuse for agricultural purposes. It will clarify how EU legislation can allow better recovery of resources from waste water through innovation.

The Innovation Deal can have a significant impact on water scarce regions in Europe by opening up innovative solutions as a new source of agricultural irrigation.

The aim is to provide more clarity on the regulatory situation towards the end of the year. This will serve as a basis for investment decisions in the technology. The Innovation Deal will explore solutions to overcome the perceived barriers, what the impacts and consequences of the solutions may be and which stakeholders should be involved. The Commission may decide to start follow-up actions.

Background

The Innovation Deal is a voluntary agreement aiming to bring together relevant national, local and EU regulatory bodies to help innovators overcome perceived regulatory barriers to innovation. The concept of Innovation Deals has been launched in the scope of the Commission’s Circular Economy package.

Different applications and/or manners of transposition of national, local and EU legislation and the fast pace of innovation have led to a policy and legislative framework that may not always adequately support innovation and its market uptake.

The Innovation Deal on “Sustainable Waste Water Treatment Combining Anaerobic Membrane Technology (AnMbR) and Water Reuse” will focus on perceived regulatory barriers in relation to the
recovery of costs for water services, discharge requirements for urban wastewater treatment, and responsibilities of end-users for water reuse.

The Competitiveness Council Conclusions of 27 May 2016 call on the Commission to develop and implement a pilot for the envisaged tool of 'Innovation Deals'. Before mid-2018, the results of the pilot will have to be assessed and evaluated.

For further information:

About Innovation Deals

How the Innovation Deals work

About the content of this Innovation Deal and on the partners

Press contacts:

- EC Spokesperson for Research, Science and Innovation