

FROM THE EDITORS

# WATER, WATER EVERYWHERE?

Water covers 71% of the Earth's surface and makes up 60% of the adult human body by mass. Although it is the basis for our very existence, too much of it can pose a lethal danger. That is why we have a deep-set fear of inundation, flash flooding, torrential rains. On the other hand, a shortage of water – especially clean water – puts the very survival of whole societies in jeopardy. Here, we might aptly quote the English poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge's famous words: "Water, water, every where, nor any drop to drink." Indeed, alongside climate change and surging population numbers, ensuring access to clean water for every inhabitant of the globe is undoubtedly one of the most important challenges of the 21st century. It poses a problem practically everywhere in the world, though the severity varies by region. Europe, too, faces its own set of water-related threats.

Although water is virtually everywhere in the human experience, we still do not understand many processes related to it, and its extraordinary properties are the topic of much research. One thing is certain, however – without it, life on Earth would not be possible in the first place.

This water-themed issue of *Academia* magazine has been inspired by fact that an extraordinary event – the 6th Europe Congress under the auspices of the International Association for Hydro-Environment Engineering and Research (IAHR) – is being organized in Poland by the Polish Academy of Sciences, the PAS Institute of Geophysics, and the Warsaw University of Life Sciences (SGGW), slated to take place on 15-18 February 2021. This issue proudly features articles by all the invited speakers of the congress. Other articles are written by outstanding European and Polish scientists and scholars, across a broad range of disciplines. All of them have one fundamental thing in common: great passion for water.

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VICE PRESIDENT OF THE POLISH ACADEMY OF SCIENCES



PIOTR LIGIER/POLISH NATIONAL MUSEUM IN WARSAW

**Józef Chełmoński "Water Hen" 1894**

from the collection of the Polish National Museum in Warsaw



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