

# PATRICK DECKER

PRESIDENT AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER OF XYLEM

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The global water technology company, Xylem, founded Xylem Watermark, its corporate social responsibility programme, over ten years ago. The programme empowers the U.S.-based giant to pursue its mission of solving the world’s most challenging water issues by working with nonprofit partners on sustainable development projects around the world.

 OLIVIA TEMPEST

Through Xylem’s Watermark programme, the company has recently joined forces with Pep Guardiola and the Manchester City Football Club manager’s philanthropic foundation – the Guardiola Sala Foundation – to further promote public engagement in the world’s water challenges. This partnership builds on Xylem’s existing alliance with Manchester City Football Club and City Football Group. In a joint interview, Pep Guardiola and Patrick Decker, President and Chief Executive Officer of Xylem, speak to us about this unique and distinctive collaboration, a critical step towards achieving Xylem’s vision of a world where water issues are no longer a barrier to human health, prosperity and sustainable development.

**Xylem joined forces in 2021 with Manchester City Football Club manager, Pep Guardiola, to promote public engagement in the world’s water challenges. What motivated this partnership and what do you hope to achieve?** In addition to being a world-renowned football manager, Pep is also a philanthropist, and Xylem’s partnership with him is an extension of our innovative work with Manchester City Football Club (MCFC) and other clubs within the City Football Group. We can only tackle global water challenges if we raise awareness of those challenges *and* the opportunities available to solve them. So, we are using creative partnerships on a global scale to do just that, and empower the next generation of water advocates. Some might consider our partnership with MCFC as an unconventional pairing, but it gives us a route to tap into



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a massive global fanbase and drive real change. We've already reached over a billion people and, by teaming up with Pep, we can take this even further. It's a unique partnership, and one that Xylem, and I personally, are incredibly proud of.

### In what other ways can the water industry propel public engagement around water issues?

The scale and urgency of global water challenges requires us to think differently. We need innovation – in the broadest sense – across mindset, products, processes and the way in which we collaborate with partners both within and beyond our industry. Technology is just one part of the solution; we need bold thinking and new ideas to really drive change, and our youth can fuel that pro-

gress. By leaning into their passion and creativity, we have an opportunity to make a real difference and create a more sustainable world.

### Last year, Xylem celebrated its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary tackling water issues around the world. What are some of the key lessons your company has learned along the way?

Over the last ten years we have really evolved as a company, particularly in the way we do business. Given that we are a water technology company, we've always had a clear purpose and a commitment to sustainability – it is essential to who we are and what we do. We doubled down on this commitment about five years ago by putting sustainability at the centre of all of our business operations and functions.

In 2019 we laid out a set of ambitious 2025 Sustainability Goals, which helped focus our efforts in a way we had never done before. We dramatically increased the emphasis on advancing sustainability in our products and solutions. We also advanced sustainability-driven financing, which has been a powerful catalyst for change.

The biggest lesson we have learned is that, in order to do good business, we

need to *be* a good business. It's about more than delivering on sustainability targets. It's about constantly reinventing our vision for sustainability, so that we can deliver positive outcomes for our people, our customers and our communities.

**During your time as CEO of Xylem, Xylem Watermark, the company's**



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**corporate citizenship initiative, has quickly expanded. What lies in the future for Xylem Watermark in the following years?**

Our Xylem Watermark programme has delivered some remarkable projects in recent years, and it all comes down to our employees, volunteers, customers, suppliers and NGO partners that com-

bine their efforts to bring it all together. Last year, Xylem employees alone clocked 113,000 volunteer hours, helping to solve local water challenges in 55 countries.

Our efforts through the Watermark programme all tie back to our 2025 Sustainability Goals. Under those goals, we aim to provide access to clean water and

sanitation for people living at the lowest levels or the base of the global economic pyramid, and to provide water and sanitation education to help improve their quality of life. The goal here is to provide them with an equitable chance for personal achievement.

So far, we've enabled clean water and sanitation access for 6.5 million people



living in some of the most economically challenged communities, and provided education for more than 5 million people – so we're on our way to achieving those goals. Our focus over the next couple of years will be on driving this effort forward so we can continue to create economic and social value through our humanitarian work.

**What trends would you highlight in the digital transformation of the water sector?**

Delivering safe, reliable and affordable water is challenging, and water utilities around the world are under tremendous pressure. But digitally enabled solutions can solve that by futureproofing water

networks in an affordable way. Around the world, utilities are already seeing major operational and environmental gains and the water sector's transformation is gaining pace.

And it isn't just large utilities at the forefront of innovation. More and more small to mid-sized utilities are migrating to digital, and this is largely down to the ability to combine foundational technologies with tools like sensing, monitoring and analysis to support better decision making and overcome resource constraints.

From smart and connected devices to advanced metering infrastructure and advanced analytics, these digital tools

can optimise existing solutions by linking together to drive outcomes with ease. This helps us and other solution providers meet customers wherever they are in their digital journey, and enables them to move faster with their transformation.

**What role does smart water play in the roadmap in utilities' 'race to zero'?**

The water sector, and utilities specifically, are in a unique position when it comes to cutting carbon emissions. Water operators have long been stewards of an essential resource, and water infrastructure is vital to every healthy community. At the same time, water systems are a major source of greenhouse gas emissions



(GHGs) and global water utilities emit the same volume of GHGs as the world's shipping industry.

Digital technologies and high-efficiency systems have the power to change that. By using readily available solutions, the water sector could become one of the fastest sectors to decarbonise and become a blueprint for others. Think “smart” pumps, leak detection sensors and other digitally-powered solutions that dramatically reduce the amount of energy used in the treatment and transport of water. These emission reduction opportunities are low hanging fruit and, more importantly, they don't require new infrastructure.



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### **Water reuse and pollution prevention are two of Xylem's sustainability goals. How is the company working towards these two objectives?**

In terms of pollution, our goal is to prevent over 7 billion cubic metres of polluted water from flooding communities or entering local waterways. Last year alone, through our portfolio of dewatering and digital technologies, we prevented 1.4 billion cubic metres of polluted water from doing so. That's an astounding volume of water – about 2.5 times the size of the Sydney Harbour.

We're also working with our customers to help address issues related to water scarcity. In 2021, our solutions helped our customers reuse more than 1 trillion gallons of water – which is huge in terms of combatting water shortages, and represents about 36% of our 2025 goal. Through continuous innovation and customer collaboration, we're constantly pushing the boundaries of what's possible in order to deliver ever more effective solutions.

**In mid-2020, Xylem launched 'Xylem Ignite'. How can the younger generations create a more water-secure future?**

Xylem Ignite is a really exciting initiative that was conceived by a team of young professionals in Xylem, and its purpose is to engage the passion and creativity of both high-school and college students around the world. Through the programme, we provide students with access to the resources and tools needed to develop their own ideas and innovations – empowering them to become water innovators from a young age.

We have a long history of engaging young people, particularly with programmes like Ignite and the Stockholm Junior Water Prize. It's incredibly rewarding work. Not only does it generate visibility for young talent within the sector, but it also drives progress towards addressing global water challenges. These young people really are some of the brightest and best, and their creativity has the potential to change the world.

**"So far, we've enabled clean water and sanitation access for 6.5 million people living in some of the most economically challenged communities"**







**Pep Guardiola**, Football coach of Manchester City

## “WHEN YOU SEE THE IMPACT THAT WATER ISSUES HAVE ON LOCAL COMMUNITIES, YOU SIMPLY CAN’T IGNORE IT”

**The Guardiola Sala Foundation was founded in 2021. A project led by four siblings, the Foundation is based on the values of sport, promoting the integration of the least advantaged in society.**

**ALEJANDRO MACEIRA**

Manchester City Football Club manager, Pep Guardiola, has partnered with Xylem to promote public engagement in the world’s water challenges. Through the Guardiola Sala Foundation, the alliance will support numerous community initiatives. Pep Guardiola spoke to Alejandro Maceira, Founder and Director of iAqua and Smart Water Magazine, about this innovative collaboration. Together, Xylem and the Guardiola Sala Foundation aim to reach hundreds of millions of people, and to motivate young people to address water challenges in their own communities.

### **Why did you choose water as a part of your philanthropic work with the Guardiola Sala Foundation?**

My family and I launched the Guardiola Sala Foundation in 2021 in memory of our late mother who passed away in 2020. She was an exceptional person who devoted much of her life to helping people, we wanted to honour her memory by working to improve the lives of underprivileged families and children.

Growing up in Catalonia, I was always aware of the risk of drought – it’s no secret that our country is experiencing difficulties with water scarcity. In fact, this past winter has been one of the driest on record. When you see the impact that water issues have on local communities, you simply can’t ignore it. This is why we wanted to include water and sanitation education programmes into our work, to help young people become more aware of the problem so they can take action.

### **How did the Guardiola Sala Foundation get involved with global water technology company Xylem?**

For us, the partnership with Xylem was a perfect match. We were aware of Xylem’s work through its wider partnership with Manchester City Football Club, and how this helped raise awareness of global water issues. Football can be a powerful force for change, particularly when it comes to engaging young people. Young fans are so invested in the game – they live and breathe it. Together, Xylem and Manchester City have reached a global audience with a powerful

message around water issues, so for us, forming a separate partnership through the Guardiola Sala Foundation seemed like a natural extension of this. By combining our efforts, together we can do more.

### **Which water issues will the Guardiola Sala Foundation focus on through its partnership with Xylem?**

We’re very aware that a critical way to make progress in tackling water issues is to raise awareness. By focusing on young people, we can motivate the next generation to help solve these problems before it’s too late. So, for us, it’s about raising awareness of *all* water issues, from accessibility to affordability and resiliency. They are all connected – you can’t address one without the other.

When we launched the Guardiola Foundation last year, we partnered with Xylem and EarthEcho International to launch Water Challenge Catalonia, a series of water education events for young school children in the area. The initiative established a sustainable youth engagement programme around protecting water resources in Catalonia, and we provided training materials for school teachers in the region. We also identified fifteen young leaders to serve as Water Challenge Catalonia Ambassadors to help educate others in the community on local water challenges, and we provided them with tools to test and detect water issues in Spain’s waterways.

### **What are the short term and long-term goals of the foundation?**

Our vision for the foundation is simple. We want to promote better integration of society to create more vibrant and sustainable communities, particularly through youth engagement programmes. The goal is to improve the lives of underprivileged people around the world.

Our partnerships with Xylem and EarthEcho International play a huge part in this, particularly when it comes to increasing access to water. Outside of this, we have worked with local schools in Barcelona to provide summer camp scholarships for disadvantaged children, and we’ve also partnered with the United Kingdom division of The Salvation Army to help address homelessness.

Our aim in the long term is to really continue to help improve the lives of people around the world, to contribute what we can and drive real and lasting change.

### **How does your experience working with youth and sports come into play here?**

As mentioned, football can be a powerful catalyst for change. The potential we have to tackle major societal issues and inequalities through sport, including those related to sustainability and health equity, is really what inspired my family to create the Guardiola Sala Foundation. As a sport, football is associated with passion, emotion, excitement and dedication, and our youth embody those qualities so well. By tapping into their energy, we can drive real change in the world. Youth hold the key to our future, and by inspiring them to take action now, the world will be one step closer to becoming a better place for everyone.