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**COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN
PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL
COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS**

European Water Resilience Strategy

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European Water Resilience Strategy

1. INTRODUCTION – SETTING THE SCENE

Water is life. Human beings, most species and the nature we live in, cannot survive without water. Our economy, our food and energy security and our quality of life rely on a stable supply of enough water of the right quality.

However, today we can no longer take water for granted, and this affects citizens, businesses and industry. Europe is the Earth’s fastest warming continent due to climate change. Floods, droughts and forest fires become more frequent, although the impacts vary significantly among Member States. Such extreme weather events are causing increasing casualties, ecosystem degradation and extraordinary economic losses¹. These phenomena caused health impact and premature deaths, loss of business and livelihoods: farmers suffer from crop losses that increase food prices and the impact of droughts on energy production and navigation disruptions undermines security of supply for civil and industrial uses.

Water resilience is also a matter of security and crisis preparedness for the EU. Water is a basic need and a critical resource, so all means need to be put in place to prevent supply disruption, as outlined in the Preparedness Union Strategy and the Niinistö report. Security of clean and affordable freshwater supply must be “a guiding priority” for the Union.²

Worldwide competition for dwindling freshwater is a source of conflict and displacement. At the current pace, global water demand will surpass what is available by 40% in 2030³. Worldwide, water-related disasters displaced 40 million people and inflicted more than EUR 480 billion in damages in 2024⁴.

For all these reasons, it is high time to put water resilience on the top of the agenda. This is conveyed by the European Council⁵, European Parliament⁶ and European Economic and Social Committee⁷. This is why, in her 2024-2029 Political Guidelines, President von der Leyen announced a new European Water Resilience Strategy to help the whole EU in improving the management of its waterbodies, tackling scarcity, enhancing the competitive innovative edge of its water industry⁸ whilst decisively embracing a clean and circular economy approach.

¹ Droughts have caused extraordinary losses of around EUR 40 billion in 2022 alone. Floods caused, between 1980 and 2023, losses of EUR 325 billion. Adding to these challenges, water pollution generate costs ranging from EUR 55 billion to EUR 73 billion. See Commission study on cost of inaction, in the context of upcoming Environmental Implementation Review.

² Safer Together – Strengthening Europe’s Civilian and Military Preparedness and Readiness.

³ Report of the Global Commission on the Economics of Water, 2024.

⁴ Global water monitor: 2024 summary report | PreventionWeb.

⁵ European Council Conclusions of 23 March 2023 - EUCO 4/23.

⁶ [placeholder for an updated reference to upcoming EP INI Report on Water Resilience].

⁷ The EESC Umbrella Opinion “A call for an EU Blue Deal” CCMI/209 of 25 October 2023.

⁸ In this Communication, water industry covers undertakings - whether public or private - involved in the supplying of (drinking) water and the treatment of wastewaters including urban and industrial wastewaters. It includes amongst others water engineering, water infrastructure building, developing and supplying water related equipment and technologies.

Investing in water will strengthen Europe's businesses and boost competitiveness. Five of the top ten global risks for businesses identified by the World Economic Forum⁹ are water-related. Unsustainable water management undermines our overall security of supply and the EU's competitiveness, as recognised in the Competitiveness Compass¹⁰ and the Clean Industrial Deal¹¹. This calls for a better integration of water resilience into our business decisions and an integrated vision of sustainable water management, which takes long-term climate scenarios duly into account.

Water resilience is also a business opportunity for the EU's industry. Europe is a global leader in water technology, holding 40% of all patents globally. Its water industry, essential for the well-being of EU citizens and the economy, generates EUR 107 billion in value added and supports 1.7 million jobs across 80,000 enterprises, mostly SMEs. We must leverage this position and strengthen its competitive advantage, scaling up activities so that our innovative businesses can address water challenges at home and in international partner countries. For example, a more sustainable water management would benefit all sectors: for instance, for sectors such as semi-conductors, data centres, hydrogen and batteries for electric vehicles could save up to EUR 2.8 billion per year, develop a worldwide needed expertise and create an additional 9 000 jobs per annum.¹²

Access to clean and affordable water is a human right and a public good for our people. Clean water also has a direct impact on human health. Member States have chosen to organise their water management in different ways, involving various forms of public or private ownership and nothing in this Strategy impacts these choices. But it underlines the need for simpler and faster implementation of the EU water acquis.

A strong European global leadership on water resilience is also an opportunity to build strategic alliances with international partners. Building on the global consensus achieved at the 2023 UN Water Conference that our current model of managing water is not sustainable, the EU is determined to make of the upcoming 2026 UN Water Conference a milestone to drive progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals. The EU will also foster Clean Trade and Investment Partnerships across all countries determined to embrace the green and digital transition.

This Strategy is consistent with, and complementary to, the European Ocean Pact, also adopted [today].

⁹ "Global Risks Report 2024" These five top global, also water-related risks are: 1) Extreme Weather events, 2) Critical Change to Earth Systems, 3) Biodiversity loss and ecosystem collapse, 4) Natural resources shortages and 5) Pollution <https://www.weforum.org/publications/global-risks-report-2024/>

¹⁰ A Competitiveness Compass for the EU

¹¹ COM(2025)85 The Clean Industrial Deal: A joint roadmap for competitiveness and decarbonisation-
¹² Water Europe (2024) Socio-economic study on the value of the EU investing in water.

2. THE KEY OBJECTIVES

This Strategy sets out a pathway to make Europe water resilient, firmly rooted in the 2050 vision put forward by the EU at the 2023 UN Water Conference¹³. A water resilient Europe means a Europe with as little water-stress as possible and a Europe that act as inspiration to the rest of the globe.

To put Europe on a pathway of water resilience, we must work on three objectives:

1. Restoring and protecting the water cycle as the basis for water supply.
2. Building a water-smart economy together with citizens and economic actors in a way that supports EU competitiveness, is attractive to investors and promotes the EU water industry.
3. Securing clean and affordable water and sanitation for all and empowering consumers for water resilience.

EU legislation and policies provide a strong basis to achieve these objectives (see key targets for the period 2027-2033 set out in Annex II).

Member States – and their local or regional authorities – are often best placed – to deal with water management challenges, since they know their own circumstances, challenges and possible solutions best. At the same time, EU action and best practices can help and support national, regional and local initiatives.

This Strategy identifies five enabling areas with key EU actions that will support Member States in building water resilient societies at different administrative levels: i) governance and implementation, ii) finance, investments and infrastructure, iii) digitalisation, iv) innovation, industry and skills, v) security and preparedness. Main flagships are presented under each section, while a full list of action is presented in Annex I.

This Strategy fully respects and recognises that Member States are free to organise their water supply systems as they see fit, within the boundaries of EU acquis.

2.1 Restoring and protecting the water cycle as our basis for water supply

A well-functioning water cycle is essential for water resilience. Water moves in a cycle which naturally stores, purifies and releases water. However, overexploitation and mismanagement of water resources, pollution as well as climate change and environmental degradation have deeply affected the water cycle and severely reduced both the quantity and the quality of water. To guarantee our water supply, we need to restore this natural cycle.

¹³ The EU will be water-resilient, providing water security for all. This entails the protection and restoration of aquatic ecosystems, and a fair balance between water supply and water demand responding to current needs, including the realization of the human right to safe drinking water and sanitation, without compromising the rights of future generations.

This requires concerted action of all stakeholders at the local, national and EU level, engaging with all business and civil society actors.

Action on water management must prioritise using the full potential of our ecosystems, relying on integrated management of freshwater and marine water. In addition will also need to use man-made structures, and must take into account common climate reference scenarios under the upcoming European Climate Adaptation Plan. Implementation of the existing EU legislative framework will support these actions, putting emphasis both on water quantity and quality and continue to reduce pollution.

We need to use the full potential of our ecosystems to store, purify and release, and restore nature at land and at sea, based on a Source to Sea approach. On its way back to the sea, freshwater is naturally stored in soils, forests, wetlands, floodplains and other ecosystems. We need to redress the natural sponge function of our landscapes as set out in the Vision for Agriculture and Food¹⁴, to replenish our groundwater reserves, protect biodiversity, and better adapt to and mitigate climate change. Rural areas play a key role by fostering agroecology and organic farming practices that retain more water. In urban areas, we must promote “sponge cities”, carved with nature-based solutions to absorb and release water in a controlled way. Integrated management of fresh and marine waters is essential. Nature-based solutions will make our coasts, ocean and seas healthier and, as such, restore ecosystems and enable sustainable blue economy activities such as tourism, fisheries, aquaculture, thus contributing to the objectives of the European Ocean Pact. To better coordinate and scale up existing initiatives¹⁵ aimed at increasing water retention on land, the Commission will establish a “Sponge Facility”, providing a coherent framework to future and ongoing initiatives to increase water retention in land.¹⁶

Storing water in reservoirs and other man-made structures requires a broad debate since many economic sectors need a stable supply of water and often have different needs over the year. Action on water management must prioritise nature-based solution, but will also need to rely on man-made structures. When planning new dams and reservoirs, relevant actors should carefully assess their environmental impacts and ensure that such actions are part of an integrated and sustainable water management strategy, which takes long-term climate scenarios duly into account to avoid stranded investments.

The existing EU framework for freshwater, including the Water Framework Directive, the Flood Management Directive, and the Nature Restoration Regulation provides a comprehensive regulatory framework for Europe’s water cycle. The complete implementation of all legislation is instrumental to restore the water cycle in quantity and

¹⁴ COM(2025) 75 Final Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on a Vision For Agriculture And Food. Shaping together an attractive farming and agri-food sector for Future Generations.

¹⁵ Adaptation and Soil Missions, EU Thematic Partnership on 'Water resilient City', the project «SpongeCity», etc.

¹⁶ For example the Sponge Landscape initiative of the Climate Adaptation Mission, the Sponge Cities initiative and the Water Sensitive Cities initiatives under Regional Development Policy.

quality. The Water Framework Directive's objective to achieve good status of all water bodies by 2027 and the objectives of the Flood Management Directive remain the compass for action. Tackling the main barriers to implementation will be at the heart of the enforcement priorities based on the EU and country-specific recommendations issued by the Commission in its latest assessment of national River Basin Management Plans and Flood Risk Management Plans.¹⁷ This analysis will underpin the Commission's implementation priorities to overcome the considerable implementation gap, focusing on failures to ensure the proper surveillance of the resource and the effectiveness of the measures adopted. To further support the work of Member States in addressing water scarcity and droughts, the Commission will further develop indicators for water scarcity and publish a Technical Guidance on Drought Management Plans. The Nature Restoration Law provides an opportunity to support water quantity management and enhance resilience against both droughts and floods with nature-based solutions. Water and climate resilience must be fully integrated in the national Restoration Plans to be developed by 2026. Recently agreed legislation to enhance the knowledge and resilience of soil will be an important tool for implementation, and so will the Forest Monitoring Law once agreed.

The European Ocean Pact calls for a streamlined legal framework to ensure clean, healthy, and productive seas, which are vital given the limited 2.5% of freshwater on Earth. The 2008 Marine Strategy Framework Directive's goal of achieving good environmental status for marine waters by 2020 was not met. Marine biodiversity is declining, and pollution from rivers continues to harm marine life. Strengthening source-to-sea links is crucial to address these challenges. Following a recent evaluation¹⁸, the Commission will revise the Marine Strategy Framework Directive to improve coherence and synergies with the EU freshwater acquis, focusing on delivering results and making it easier to measure progress, enhancing data management, reducing reporting requirements, and improving governance across the EU's Regional Seas Conventions. Additionally, ratifying and implementing international legal frameworks for marine protected areas in international waters is key.

Coastal areas play a critical role in the water cycle and are crucial in preventing land-based pollution from entering the sea. Coastal cities face significant climate change impacts like sea-level rise, salt intrusion, and coastal floods. Effective spatial planning can reduce seaports' vulnerability to these issues. In turn, ports also need to minimise pollution from ships by adhering to relevant laws and policies. This is a key reason why the Commission will adopt an EU Port Strategy.

Water quality and quantity are two sides of the same coin; we must continue working on preventing pollution at source and addressing other key pressures on our water bodies. In 2021, only 39.5% of EU's surface waters were in good ecological status, and only 26.8% in good chemical status. To redress this situation and achieve the goals of the Water Framework

¹⁷ The Commission issued country-specific recommendations around 7 clusters: a) accelerated action to reduce the compliance gap; b) scaling up investments; c) tackling key pressures; d) enhancing resilience against water related extremes (including specific recommendation on effective implementation of the Floods Directive); e) transboundary cooperation; f) exemptions and g) monitoring, assessment and reporting. For more information see https://environment.ec.europa.eu/topics/water/water-framework-directive/implementation-reports_en

¹⁸ [Evaluation of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive \(SWD\(2025\)50\)](#) and its [annex](#).

Directive, actions must focus on preventing unsustainable land use and hydro-morphological changes, structural mismanagement of water due to both legal and illegal over-abstraction, inefficiencies in water use across sectors, and water pollution linked to activities such as agriculture, industrial production, waste management, and mining.

A particular focus of restoring water quality must be on limiting nutrients pollution of aquatic ecosystems. This remains a big challenge and causes socio-economic losses estimated to be between EUR 75 and 485 billion a year for nitrogen alone¹⁹. Such costs call for accelerated action from source to sea, including by implementing the Nitrates Directive. The Commission will support Member States, including through enhanced modelling, interactive maps and exchanges of best practices. It will also support funding for the construction of manure storage tanks to stock nutrients, in line with its upcoming Bioeconomy Strategy. It will be assisted by an Integrated Nutrients Management expert group which will encourage, *inter alia*, the farming extensification in regions with high livestock concentrations, as advocated for in the Vision for Agriculture and Food.

Urgent action is needed to tackle pollutants of emerging concern which pose a risk to our vital sources of drinking water. Highly persistent pollutants, such as PFAS, keep accumulating also across EU waters and cause health impacts estimated to range between EUR 52 and 84 billion each year²⁰. In line with the Zero Pollution Action Plan, water and marine pollution must be tackled at source or across pathways through an integrated monitoring and outlook framework.²¹ To reduce the risks, the EU must embark on decisive efforts to clean up these and other ubiquitous, persistent, bio-accumulative and toxic substances, particularly in cases where polluting substances are still indispensable for society and industrial applications. Clean-up should be based on the polluter pays principle, with public money allocated to clean up orphan sites, where no liable entity could be found. While remediation efforts are very costly,²² research and innovation can significantly reduce these costs through novel, including bio-based, technologies. The Commission will set up a support mechanism for the remediation of PFAS and other persistent chemicals and establish a Public-Private Partnership for their detection and remediation. It will also foster biobased remediation solutions in the context of the upcoming Bioeconomy Strategy.

Flagship actions - Restoring and protecting the water cycle	Timeline
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¹⁹ Van Grinsven et al, Costs and Benefits of Nitrogen for Europe and Implications for Mitigation, 2013. The N emissions and damage costs include emissions from all sectors to surface, ground- and marine waters and to air.

²⁰ [Nordic Council of Ministers](#), 2019 data.

²¹ The actions on PFAS remediation set out in this Strategy complement the Commission's efforts to provide clarity as soon as possible on forever chemicals or PFAS, in the context of REACH, as set out in the 2024-2029 Political Guidelines. In this context it should be noted, that by the end of 2025, the Commission expects to adopt a restriction on all PFAS in firefighting foams, one of the main emission sources.

²² The economic cost of cleaning PFAS contamination in Europe has been estimated to range from EUR 5 to 100 billion a year, with the water sector alone facing an increase of up to EUR 18 billion per year for drinking water treatment, while cost for wastewater treatment and sewage sludge management is estimated to be even higher.

Establish, on the basis of different mechanisms, including Structured Dialogues with Member States, implementation priorities of the Water Framework Directive, focussing on water quality and quantity	2025
Enhance cooperation with Member States on addressing water scarcity particularly through the development of indicators and a Technical Guidance on Drought Management Plans and step up resilience against both droughts and floods through national Nature Restoration Plans.	2026-2027
Launch a public private partnership to support PFAS clean up	2026
Launch an Assistance Toolbox for Member States to support actions to reduce nutrients pollution.	2026-2027
Revise the Marine Strategy Framework Directive	2027

2.2 Building a water-smart economy that leaves no one behind and supports EU competitiveness and attracts investors

Water is a finite resource. It is a public good that needs to be used efficiently, while protecting ecosystems and future generations. This requires urgent action on better balancing supply and demand and promoting water savings, efficiency, and re-use to reduce demand across all sectors of the economy. Faced with increased water scarcity, competent authorities often struggle to continue securing water supply, meet the competing demands from different users and distribute water equitably. This is particularly important in regions with acute hotspots of overexploitation, where water scarcity is becoming systemic and a significant constraint to economic development. Water efficiency must focus in particular on the most intensive, current and future, water users. Indeed, those sectors also have the biggest interest in avoiding excessive abstraction leading to possible disruption of supply.

Water efficiency is key and must come first. The Commission is issuing with this strategy a Recommendation on the application of the water efficiency first principle, inspired by experience with the energy efficiency first principle²³. It sets out guiding principles for decision making and investments based on a clear and predictable, yet flexible, prioritisation in the way water demand and supply are managed. Across the EU, the priority should be to curb demand and over-abstractions. This should be followed by efficiency by design and re-use, while increased supply should be the last resort option.

²³ https://energy.ec.europa.eu/topics/energy-efficiency/energy-efficiency-targets-directive-and-rules/energy-efficiency-first-principle_en



To guide action on water efficiency across the EU, [this Strategy sets an aspirational target to reduce water abstraction by x% by 2030]. To contribute to this target and to guide their efforts, the Commission recommends that Member States set water saving targets at the appropriate levels, in particular of river basins affected by water stress. Operational guidelines and exchange of best practices among Member States and stakeholders will support the implementation of the Water Efficiency First Recommendation.

A water-smart economy requires a better control of the resource. Based on 2010-2021 data, 81% of the total water consumption goes to users that abstract water directly at source from private systems. This means that many Member States do not have accurate knowledge of freshwater availability. In line with the Water Framework Directive, authorities must conduct up-to-date assessments of water availability and abstractions by water users and increase their efforts to register and control all abstractions, losses and returns. Deploying smart water metering across all economic sectors will help to achieve a rigorous monitoring of water flows and will also help citizens and businesses to manage their water use more efficiently. The Commission will promote the exchange of best practices on water balances and smart water metering across all economic sectors. It will also work towards the launching of an EU Water Infrastructure & Smart Metering for All initiative (see section 3.2). Furthermore, it will assess by the end of 2026 the quality of the data available on water and, where appropriate, revise the relevant legislation to introduce new environmental economic account modules for water accounts²⁴.

A particular focus must be placed on assessing and wherever possible limiting the water needs that come with the industrial and digital transformation. Key sectors for the EU's strategic autonomy such as battery production, semiconductors, hydrogen, microchips and datacentres consume large volumes of (often ultra-pure) water. Hence there is a need to estimate the water consumption for current and future scenarios, and to anticipate possible negative impacts²⁵. In this context, savings in energy and water, which usually go hand in hand, must be maximised. In particular, to promote water savings across data centres, the

²⁴ REGULATION (EU) 2024/3024 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 27 November 2024 amending Regulation (EU) No 691/2011 as regards introducing new environmental economic account modules.

²⁵ Water Europe (2024) Socio-economic study on the value of the EU investing in water.

Commission will rate their overall sustainability and propose minimum performance standards, including water consumption²⁶.

Reuse must be at the heart of integrated water management. Enhancing the reuse of wastewater in a safe way, by giving it a second life in agriculture, energy production, industrial processes and the built environment, would be a major leap forward. Currently, only 2.4% of wastewater is reused in the EU, with major differences between Member States, ranging from zero to 80%. The Commission will support Member States to reuse water through guidance and capacity building in the context of implementing existing legislation²⁷. By June 2028, it will evaluate the Water Reuse Regulation, and will consider extending its scope.

For public water supply, consuming 13% of the water in the EU, a focus must be on fighting leakages and unwanted losses, supported by digital tools. The Drinking Water Directive requires Member States to reduce leakages in water supply networks. Member States with water supply leakage levels exceeding the EU-wide threshold – to be set by 2028 – will have to present, by 2030, national action plans to reduce leakages across their supply networks. As current national leakage levels vary from 8% to 57%, the potential for improvement is significant, especially through smart water metering and remote sensing.

Sustainable food systems are a major ally for water resilience and the Common Agricultural Policy has a crucial role to play. The production, processing, retailing, packaging and transportation of food has a profound impact on water quality and quantity. Agriculture accounts for no less than 59% of total water consumption in the EU, going up to 70% in some Member States. In some areas, the water efficiency gains are almost neutralised by an increase in irrigated areas. The Vision for Agriculture and Food underlined the importance of water quality and availability for food security. The CAP and the national Strategic Plans provide support for agricultural practices, such as precision farming and drip irrigation, that enhance water efficiency, circularity, improve water retention, whilst curbing nutrient and pesticides pollution. It is crucial to ensure that Member States make maximum use of these possibilities and better integrate water resilience in the CAP Strategic Plans, promoting innovation, knowledge exchange and strengthening their Farm Advisory Services' capabilities. To continue assisting, the Commission will include, under the future CAP, Transition Packages aiming to support and reward farmers engaging in transformational and structural changes to improve the environmental and climate performance of their holdings, including towards a better water management. In addition, the EIT Food contributes as the world's largest and most dynamic food innovation community of collaborative working that spans the whole food value chain. Moreover, future calls of the EIT Culture and Creativity may include water related aspects.

Water efficient energy production can make a big contribution to water resilience. 17% of the EU's total water consumption is used as a feedstock or cooling agent. Hydropower production is particularly relevant, and there is considerable potential to continue providing renewable energy while reducing significantly its negative environmental impacts. To reduce the consumption of water in the energy sector, deploying dry cooling will be a major step

²⁶ Commission report to the Council and the Parliament pursuant to Article 12 of Directive 2023/1791 on energy efficiency and amending Regulation (EU) 2023/955 (recast)

²⁷ Water Reuse Regulation, revised Industrial Emissions Directive and revised Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive.

forward. The Commission will team up with industry to make an innovation break through affordable and efficient dry cooling technologies.

Water resilience should also be integrated into all other industrial sectors. The revised Industrial Emissions Directive covers for the first time water use and will ensure that large industrial actors increasingly play their part by progressively applying best available techniques to reduce water demand, enhance water efficiency and improve water reuse across production processes, particularly across highly water intensive sectors. Going forward, the Commission will fully integrate water concerns, in particular water efficiency and reuse, across existing industrial ecosystems in particular through the Transition Pathways Stakeholder Support Platform. Furthermore, the Commission will launch a pilot project to promote water efficiency in selected industrial clusters.

Increasing supply by using seawater to replace freshwater can be part of the solution, if done sustainably. Provided that its use is properly framed in an integrated management approach, which prioritises curbing demand over increasing supply based on local conditions, sea-water desalination is a solution to potentially provide a steady supply beyond what is available from the hydrological cycle. Sustainable desalination can in particular play a role in regions more severely affected by water scarcity. It is experiencing an accelerated growth globally²⁸, represented in the EU by 2 178 desalination plants. For instance, in Malta and Cyprus, desalination has become a critical source for drinking water supply. Yet, this option remains costly and may entail significant environmental impacts. The Commission will thus support innovation in this area with a view to limit energy consumption and reduce greenhouse gas emissions, notably by promoting the use of renewable energies. Innovative solutions can also mitigate the environmental impacts of brine disposal and increase the recovery of energy and minerals.

Implementing the EU water acquis will enhance the EU water industry competitiveness by encouraging innovation and attracting investments. Implementing the recently revised legislation on e.g. industrial emissions, drinking and wastewater incentivises the development of new markets and innovation for the EU water industry. For instance, it is indispensable to develop innovation and digitalisation to remove emerging pollutants such as PFAS and other toxic micro-substances, move towards energy neutrality in the wastewater sector, and provide integrated management of water in cities.

Flagship actions - Building a water-smart economy and promoting a competitive EU water industry	Timeline
Support the uptake of the Recommendation on the Water Efficiency First principle through operational guidelines, exchanges of best practices and a EEA-EC report on the untapped water efficiency potential.	2025-2026
Support Member States in enhancing the uptake of water reuse practices also beyond agriculture and review the Water Reuse Regulation.	2026-2028
Public water supply: supporting leakage reduction and infrastructure modernisation and deep data assessment.	2025-2028

²⁸ UN-Water, 2020: UN-Water Analytical Brief on Unconventional Water Resources. Geneva, Switzerland.

<p>Agriculture:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include, in the next CAP, transition packages to support and reward farmers who engage in structural changes to improve also their water performance. • Maximise the use of CAP Strategic Plans for water resilience through the relevant networks and better equip farmers through improved Farm Advisory Services' capabilities. 	2025- 2026
<p>Industry and Energy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrate water efficiency into existing industrial ecosystems and launch a pilot project to promote water efficiency in selected industrial clusters. • Include water usage among the parameters of a common Union scheme to rate the sustainability of data centres and set water consumption minimum performance standards. 	2025-2026

2.2 Securing clean and affordable water for all, empowering consumers and other users

Access to safe and clean drinking water and sanitation is a human right. Three decades of development and implementation of EU water law, including the Drinking Water and Urban Wastewater Treatment Directives, have generally secured access to safe drinking water and sanitation across the EU in line with the European Pillar of Social Rights. 1,5 % of the EU population still lives without basic sanitary facilities, and around 4% lacks proper access to safe drinking water. Actions in this area must, target vulnerable groups and the least affluent EU regions, including the outermost regions.

Water pollution has a direct impact on health. It can result in water-borne and food-borne diseases. The experience from the COVID crisis showed the importance of tracking health parameters in wastewaters - now an obligation under the revised Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive - and to align water management with the One Health approach, as human, animal, plant and environmental health are tightly interlinked.²⁹ Equally, both droughts and floods can lead to higher concentration of pollutants and a suboptimal intake of water, thus impairing health.

At the same time, consumers play an essential role in water resilience. Next to the well-established EU Ecolabel, the Ecodesign for Sustainable Product Regulation (ESPR)³⁰ will help consumers reduce water consumption by choosing less polluting, more water-efficient products. This will shift demand towards water-smart products, boosting the EU's clean and circular competitiveness. New private initiatives, like the Unified Water Label, are emerging to rate the

²⁹ Council Recommendation 2023/C 220/01 on stepping up EU actions to combat antimicrobial resistance (AMR); pharmaceutical package; and, recast Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive ((EU) 2024/3019)

³⁰ The recently adopted Ecodesign for Sustainable Products and Energy Labelling Working Plan 2025-2030 includes textiles/apparel, Iron & Steel and Aluminium as products for which new requirements will be developed, as well as a number of water relevant energy-related products such as dishwashers and washing machines for which eco-design requirement and/or energy labels will be available.

efficiency of water-using products. The Commission will address the water footprint of products and services when setting requirements under the ESPR and the EU Ecolabel.

When it comes to water use in housing and city planning, saving energy and saving water should always go hand in hand. The new Energy Performance of Buildings Directive³¹, which includes hot water efficiency as one of its objectives, and the New European Bauhaus provide huge opportunities to boost efforts towards water resilience across the built environment while enhancing users and citizens’ involvement and the sharing of best practices on water resilient design planning and concepts.

At the level of water management policies, authorities must place a stronger emphasis on public awareness and involvement. As well depicted in the ‘Turning the tide’ report³², although water is a common good, it is clearly undervalued. Water management can be very complex and technical. Thus, the public often shies away from getting involved in water management, including participation in public consultations. While on a personal level citizens often have a close connection to water, they can feel unequipped to engage in water management discussions. In that sense, ensuring the full and user-friendly implementation of all relevant public information and transparency requirements will help increase citizens’ awareness and readiness to engage. Smart-metering may also support such increased awareness. The Commission will promote an exchange of best practices in different fora to continue raising awareness and equipping society to be more effectively involved in water management and in the development of the River Basin and Flood Risk Management Plans.

Water pricing policies based on actual use, environmental impact and capacity to pay are essential to ensure access to water while creating the right incentives for consumers and all other users. Although the Water Framework Directive incentivises an efficient water use through sound national water pricing policies based on a fairly shared cost recovery and the polluter pays principle, to date water tariffs vary widely across EU Member States, affecting the liquidity available in public budgets for the necessary water investment. An important first step are transparent and clear drinking water and wastewater bills. The revised Drinking Water and Urban Waste Water Directives, which require Member States to secure that operators provide regular and comprehensive information on the price of water, including information on individual water consumption, advice on how to reduce it next to key data on their own performance.

Flagship actions - Securing clean and affordable water for all, and empowering consumers	Timeline
Systematically address the water footprint of products when setting or updating requirements under the ESPR and the EU Ecolabel.	2025-2027
Launch pilot projects to test the impact of smart metering on water saving in regions with a high per capita water consumption.	2026

³¹ The Energy Efficiency Directive requires Member States to ensure that regional and local authorities prepare local heating and cooling plans at least in municipalities having more than 45 000 inhabitants.

³² Global Commission on Water Economics [Turning the Tide \(watercommission.org\)](https://www.watercommission.org)

3. FIVE ENABLING AREAS TO PAVE THE WAY FOR A WATER RESILIENT EUROPE

To reach these three objectives, we need a whole-of-society approach with enhanced cross-sectorial communication and cooperation between citizens, businesses, civil society and nature representative groups to identify common interests and achieve an efficient allocation of water resources. Integrated water management requires committed administrations working across policy silos and levels, involving all stakeholders.

This Strategy identifies 5 key enabling areas to support local, regional and national actors to act decisively.

3.1 Governance and implementation to boost change

Achieving water resilience will depend on enhanced implementation of the comprehensive EU water acquis, as well as stronger synergies with policies in sectors such as agriculture, industry, energy, transport and consumer protection. Regulators have for decades acted on protecting water in both EU environmental and health policies. Through the European Green Deal, several key pieces of legislation have been reviewed and modernised, driving much progress. Yet, as shown in a recent Commission report³³, gaps in implementation and funding have so far considerably hampered the achievement of water legislation objectives. For example, when preparing their third River Basin Management Plans and second Flood Risk Management Plans, several Member States have failed to duly follow up to the Commission recommendations issued in 2019 and have not yet put in place adequate registers, controls and, where appropriate, sanctions to avoid over-abstractions.

Building on the findings of its latest assessment of the national plans, the Commission will step up enforcement based on its EU-wide and country-specific recommendations³⁴, and further integrate water resilience related recommendations in the European Semester. It will also launch Structured Dialogues with Member States to work jointly towards a reinforced implementation of the broader EU water acquis. These dialogues will also cover implementation issues linked to the national permitting procedures linked to sound water management of existing and new economic activities. They will also allow the Commission to establish country specific enforcement priorities focusing on the surveillance of the ecological, chemical and quantitative state of the waterbodies and the effectiveness of the measures taken to reach environmental objectives.

Water-smart spatial planning becomes imperative to accompany a sustainable deployment of the green and digital transition. The Commission will enhance existing visualisation tools integrating environmental data with data related to the water and energy grids to assist Member States in their spatial planning efforts and help them identify the best areas for win-win localisation of water-intensive business operations whilst facilitating partnerships to accelerate the channelling of private funds into nature restoration and modernisation of water supply networks.

³⁴ The Commission recommendations were focused on seven clusters: a) accelerated action to reduce the compliance gap; b) scaling up investments; c) tackling key pressures; d) enhancing resilience against water related extremes; e) transboundary cooperation; f) exemptions and g) monitoring, assessment and reporting. For more information see https://environment.ec.europa.eu/topics/water/water-framework-directive/implementation-reports_en

Simplification of EU water rules can make an important contribution to their implementation. The Commission has regularly evaluated key pieces of legislation, and the Nitrates Directive is currently being evaluated. Moreover, the Commission aims to enhance the efficiency of electronic reporting under the Water Framework Directive to simplify and improve it, based on an ongoing study. The Commission will also propose simplification through the revision of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive.

Cross-border cooperation on managing water flows is a core element of the Water Framework Directive but must be further improved. Europe has no less than 75 transboundary river basins, thus being the continent with the highest number thereof. Although the Water Framework Directive explicitly requires Member States to ensure a coordinated implementation for international river basins, the effectiveness of cooperation achieved across the coordination mechanisms in place varies. There is clear room to ensure a more harmonised assessment of the water bodies' status, improved consistency between measures taken by upstream and downstream countries and increased focus on water quantity management.

To strengthen cooperation and tackle existing weaknesses, the Commission will organise regular exchanges with international river basin organizations to promote peer review practices. Moreover, the Commission will support peer-to-peer initiatives, to foster cooperation between River- and Sea-basin organizations, regions and cities, through EU programmes and initiatives such as Interreg, Horizon Europe, the Urban Agenda for the Thematic Partnership on 'Water Sensitive City'.

Flagship actions - Governance and implementation to boost change	Timeline
Step up enforcement and launch structured dialogues with all Member States to accelerate and scale up implementation of the EU water acquis, based on key enforcement priorities as stemming from the latest assessment of the River Basin and Flood Risk Management Plans.	2025-2026
Launch a public debate on key governance challenges, including the role of water pricing to promote water efficiency, the polluter pays principle, and related national water governance.	2026-2027
Set up regular exchanges with international river basin organizations and launch a call for INTERREG projects twinning River- and Sea-basin Organisations.	2025-2027
Launch a viewer integrating environmental data with data related to the water and energy grids to assist Member States in their spatial planning efforts and help them identify the best areas for win-win localisation of water-intensive business operations whilst accelerating the channelling of private funds for nature restoration and modernised water networks.	2026

3.2 Finance, investments and infrastructure to achieve a stable supply

Without significant additional public and private investments, progress towards water resilience will be too slow or lack meaningful impact. All Member States have identified the lack of funding as a key barrier to achieve the environmental objectives set in EU law. The current annual capital investment for water measures (by the EU, EIB and national budgets)

reaches around EUR 55 billion (in 2022 prices), suggesting an annual investment gap of around EUR 23 billion per year (0.1% of EU GDP) to implement the existing water legislation³⁵. EU funds, while playing a strong role, remain insufficient.

Investments must cover all the stages of water management and be planned in an integrated manner, factoring in future climate scenarios. This includes investment to turn rain into green water (stored in terrestrial ecosystems) - through nature-based solutions - and grey water (used in urban settlements or industrial processes) into blue water (rivers and seas) to make it fit for nature again. An integrated approach is important to ensure long-term financial planning and secure the funds to achieve full implementation of the relevant legislation.



The recent Mid-Term review of the Cohesion Policy will allow Member States to mobilise additional public funds for water, by making the most of the current budget. The Commission has proposed an exceptional package of measures to encourage Member States and regions to invest in water resilience. This package includes up to 100% of EU financing and 30% of prefinancing in water resilience projects, as well as various flexibilities. EU programmes provide significant funding opportunities for water technology. Funding through the “Strategic Technologies for Europe Platform” (STEP) could be mobilised to support the development and manufacturing of strategic water related technologies. The upcoming Industrial Decarbonisation Accelerator Act and the Industrial Decarbonisation Bank are further instruments to be used by Member States. Breakthrough innovations in new technologies could be further supported via the European Innovation Council, to strengthen European innovators and startups and could be supported by the updated Strategic Energy Technology (SET) plan.

Technical assistance can help to ensure that available EU money is used as effectively as possible. Despite the recognised challenges, some Member States have difficulties spending the EU funds available for water management. The recent evaluation of the 2014-2020 Cohesion Policy showed that some Member States redirected much-needed EU funding, planned for water investments, to other purposes. The level of investment in water needs to be maintained and reinforced in the 2021-2027 programming period, using the new incentives provided in the mid-term review.

The next Multi-annual Financial Framework (MFF)³⁶ could be an opportunity to further support water resilience by scaling up investments and topping up the funding allocated to

³⁵ DG Environment, Environmental investment needs, financing and gaps in the EU-27 – update 2024 (internal analysis). It should be noted that this amount is largely based on water supply and sanitation needs, while costs for other measures related to the implementation of the WFD and the FD may not be fully reflected.

³⁶ COM(2025)46 The road to the next multiannual financial framework

water. In particular, in the context of the national and regional partnership agreements, Member States should address key structural reforms in areas such as i) sound water pricing policies, ii) improved governance, iii) enhanced controls over abstractions, prioritised demand reduction, increased water efficiency and reuse. Furthermore, the Commission will encourage Member States to cooperate in a Green and Blue Corridors initiative to support the restoration of ecological settings and infrastructure including rivers, wetlands, and coasts and an EU Water Infrastructure & Smart Metering for All initiative to accelerate the modernisation of the public water supply and distribution network. Moreover, the planned Competitiveness Fund could offer simpler access and strong support for research, innovation, clean tech and digitalisation of the water industry. Lastly, factoring in water resilience considerations in the EU budget programmes from the start, may help reduce vulnerabilities and exposure to risks, reducing the cost of remedial action.

In addition, the Commission is enhancing its cooperation with the European Investment Bank. The Bank will adopt a new EU Water Programme, with an increased spending target [AMOUNT TO BE ADDED], designed to implement this Strategy and scale up investments in the water sector, including on nature-based solutions and ecosystem restoration. Furthermore, the Commission and the European Investment Bank will join forces to provide support to address capacity and governance gaps, next to administrative bottlenecks for deploying water investments. This will include new Sustainable Water Advisory Facility, to step up the assistance to potential loan-takers, increasing the pipeline of projects and EIB financing available for water and a dedicated EIB initiative [DETAILS TBD] including a joint study to better quantify funding needs and options to tackle existing barriers to water investments.

Available EU funds should be deployed quickly for investments aimed to reduce leakages by using digital tools, smart metering, and water efficiency enhancing technologies. These investments require less complex planning than large water projects. The Commission will develop guidance for Member States for “plug and play” (pilot) projects in these areas to simplify and streamline procedures.

Member States need to avoid subsidies that, as a side effect, may harm the environment or lead to an inefficient water use. Building on the findings of the upcoming evaluation of the Polluter Pays principle, the Commission will explore its use in a broader range of the EU acquis. This could provide an additional source of funding to cover investments, while incentivizing cleaner and more circular production models.

Private investment will need to be significantly stepped up. Cooperation with financial institutions, in particular the banking and insurance sectors as well as the EIB Group can leverage more private financing into water resilience. Such cooperation should build on standardization and aggregation of water projects, enabling frameworks via EU legislation and State aid, blended finance approaches, innovative models such as Water as a Service (for example, by mobilising capital for efficiency investments remunerated from the savings these generate) and structured ecosystems for Green and Blue Bonds. The simplified EU sustainable finance framework and the rolling out of the Savings and Investment Union should lead to the mobilisation of private savings for investments in clean and circular technologies, including in the water sector.

Climate induced disruptions are strengthening the business case for water investments, and innovative approaches can help unlock significant private investment. Water is

increasingly recognised as a financially material factor for businesses, investors, and governments. International organizations like the OECD and financial institutions highlight that underestimating water risks can lead to financial, operational, and reputational costs. Science-based targets for freshwater and water risk integration into insurance and investment strategies are becoming key tools to address these challenges. In order to cope with the growing challenge of insuring natural catastrophes including water related disasters in the EU, the Commission will explore possible solutions to reduce the insurance protection gap, if necessary, by following up on the proposals by the European Central Bank and European Insurance and Occupational Pensions Authority.

However, there are significant obstacles to trigger the needed private investments. It is important to raise awareness of the scale and impact of risks for individual businesses and citizens. To overcome the perception that the benefits of private investments in sustainable water management would be solely reaped by the general public, while the costs would be borne by individual investors, the Commission will establish a finance accelerator to bring together all relevant parties to promote investments in local water partnerships.

Incentives for improved information, pricing and control of water used will help to attract additional private funding for investments in water savings and efficiency. This should make the business case more appealing for investors, including in sectors that are highly dependent on water and increasingly vulnerable to its scarcity, such as agriculture and energy.

Payment for ecosystem services schemes will also support the creation of the necessary markets. To support these developments, the Commission will adopt a Roadmap for Nature Credits to tap the potential of these instruments and incentivise the scale-up of these markets.

Flagship actions - Finance, investments and infrastructure to achieve a stable supply	Timeline
Launch in cooperation with the EIB a new Water Programme and a new Sustainable Water Advisory Facility to step up the assistance to potential loan-takers, increasing the pipeline of projects. Increase EIB financing on water projects from X to Y in W years.	2025
Establish a Water Resilience Investment Accelerator to implement 20 pilot innovative cases for natural water retention and water efficiency, bringing together local water investors, solution providers and problem holders to inspire similar actions across the EU.	2026
Launch a Green and Blue Corridors initiative to support the restoration of ecological settings and infrastructure including rivers, wetlands, and coastal restoration to restore the water cycle with a source-to-sea approach.	2027
Launch an EU Water Infrastructure & Smart Metering for All initiative to accelerate the modernisation and targeted extension of the public water distribution and supply network including by digitalising data, including smart metering, and ensuring inter-operability.	2027

3.3 Digitalisation and Artificial Intelligence to accelerate and simplify sound water management

Digitalisation holds enormous potential for revolutionising water management and promoting sustainable water use. It will bring timely insights for better policy-making and improved design and operation of water infrastructure and services. Numerous digital solutions, including Artificial Intelligence, are available in the market, including smart metering providing real-time data on water use, predictive maintenance and leakage detection systems, digital twins, as well as products based on data generated by in-situ, drone, or satellite sensors. However, the uptake of these solutions remains too slow and uneven.

To unleash the large untapped potential, the Commission will develop an EU-wide Action Plan for Digitalisation in the Water Sector. It will include two main pillars: i) deployment of digital solutions through funding and knowledge-sharing to build up digital skills and encourage technology transfer in the water sector; ii) support to water data sharing by fostering the development of national data portals to overcome fragmentation and make data easily findable, accessible free of charge, interoperable, and reusable, in line with the requirements of the Open Data Directive³⁷. Such platforms should constitute the reference point for developing digital solutions. A data sharing framework for private data owners and public authorities will be developed in the framework of the Green Deal Data Space³⁸.

A “one stop shop” for Earth Observation products relevant to water management will make managing water from space available to everyone. While Earth Observation has been used for decades to forecast droughts and floods, its daily use for water management is much less widespread. The exploitation of Copernicus and its six specialized services³⁹ can make this overhaul a reality with an extensive portfolio of water-related products readily available on a full, free and open basis. Yet, for that to happen smoothly, two favourable conditions should be met: relevant satellite information on water must be easy to find for everyone, and water managers must be able to voice their needs in terms of products that would facilitate their work. Hence, the Commission will establish a “one-stop shop” for Earth Observation products relevant to water management – a Water Thematic Hub – in order to bring together Copernicus water-related data, products, and tools and facilitate access and use of these data. It will in addition set a robust governance process to secure collaboration between the Earth Observation and water management communities, in full partnership with the Joint Research Centre’s Knowledge Centre on Earth Observation, ensuring that Copernicus products align with precise policy needs and user requirements.

To assist water management authorities and policy makers in planning and permitting, as well as the private sector in assessing risks due to climate change, high-resolution interactive digital models with cutting-edge features are being developed through Commission initiatives on the Digital Twin of the Ocean and the Destination Earth. They will be able to predict floods, droughts, and long-term water conditions and availability under various climate change or human activities scenarios. Such capabilities might be available to national and local administrations before 2030.

Flagship actions - Digitalisation and Artificial Intelligence to accelerate and simplify sustainable water management	Timeline
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³⁷ Directive (EU) 2019/1024 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 June 2019 on open data and the re-use of public sector information

³⁸ <https://green-deal-dataspace.eu/about-us/>

³⁹ land, atmosphere, marine, climate change, emergency, and security.

Develop and implement Destination Earth pilot services for water resilience, and by 2030, make the modelling capabilities Digital Twin of the Ocean and the Destination Earth available to national and local administrations.	2025-2030
Develop an EU-wide Action Plan on digitalisation in the water sector.	2026
Launch a Copernicus Water Thematic Hub to serve as “one stop shop” for all water relevant Earth Observation data, products and tools - under the Copernicus Programme to facilitate access and the use of remote sensing in daily water management decisions.	2026

3.4 Innovation, water industry and skills to strengthen competitiveness

As noted in the Letta report⁴⁰, the EU water sector, largely consisting of SMEs and very local public or private utilities, needs to reduce its current fragmentation and build strategic alliances. The Commission will launch a Water Smart Industrial Alliance to support its consolidation by stimulating innovation, competitiveness and securing the necessary water skills. This will also be achieved through a specific focus on water resilience in the EU Start-up and Scale-up Strategy announced by the Competitiveness Compass. Furthermore, in line with the Clean Industrial Deal and the upcoming review of the Public Procurement Directives, the Commission will explore the incorporation on non-price criteria for water management public tenders for public authorities to promote clean and circular water techs and a simplified market access to water SMEs to better untap their innovation potential. Finally the Commission will launch in 2026 a Knowledge and Innovation Community (KIC) in Water, Marine and Maritime Sectors and Ecosystems under the European Institute of Technology (EIT) and contribute helping startups with innovative water solutions.

People of all ages and across different disciplines to develop new skills. Employment in the water sector has grown in the last years and will continue to do so⁴¹. However, both public authorities and the private sector are facing an aging workforce and a skills gap, particularly in technical areas such as water treatment and management, as well as in relation to digital skills. The EU's skills policy framework and the European Social Fund Plus can boost training for authorities, water management professionals, and communities. For freshwater and the ocean, skills in science, technology, engineering, and maths (STEM) must be promoted: here the Union of Skills is particularly important. To equip the EU water workforce with the right skills, the Commission, the EU water industry and stakeholders will work together towards a Water Skills Initiative. This may include the launch of a Large-Scale Skills partnership and provide targeted support through Erasmus+ for a Blueprint Alliance in the Water sector. In addition, the Commission will enhance vocational training by increasing its support to the Platform of Vocational Excellence Water. It will also use the existing Network of European Blue Schools to raise literacy and awareness to address freshwater and ocean protection in a source to sea approach.

⁴⁰ Enrico Letta (2024), Much more than a market.

⁴¹ Cedefop (2023). Skills in transition: the way to 2035. Luxembourg: Publications Office. <http://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2801/438491>

The EU must address knowledge gaps in water management. Despite a strong knowledge base, gaps remain in understanding European fresh and marine waters, water resource availability, climate changes, and the Water Energy Food Ecosystem nexus. Effective use of EU research funds can help bring innovative technologies to market and support SMEs. The EU Missions Restore our Oceans and Waters and on Adaptation to Climate Change leverage cutting-edge research and deliver tangible results, including pilot, demonstration and cooperation activities at local level. In addition, the Commission will adopt, by the end of 2026, a Water Resilience R&I Strategy addressing the fragmentation of EU R&I initiatives, to support the implementation of this Strategy. By leveraging cutting-edge research and mobilising stakeholders, successful solutions and patents must be scaled-up and rolled-out, in line with the upcoming EU ‘Start-up and scale-up strategy’.

Flagship actions - Innovation, industry and skills to strengthen competitiveness	Timeline
Develop a Water Resilience R&I strategy and a science/policy interface platform, with a dedicated funding mechanism (in coordination with the EIB) to disseminate the results of EU-funded R&I projects.	2026
Secure that the announced revision of public procurement rules helps to foster the uptake of clean and circular water techs across all sectors.	2026
Create a Water Smart Industrial Alliance to stimulate competitiveness.	2026
Establish the European Water Academy to address urgent capacity needs in Europe's water sector, support sharing of best-practice and work towards the launch of a wider Water skills initiative to develop a sectoral skills strategy for the sector.	2026-2027

3.5 Security and preparedness to boost collective resilience

Water disasters are a top concern of the Union’s Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM) countries. Climate driven threats, malicious attacks linked to the disruption of critical water infrastructure and supply, alongside accidental pollution of inland and marine waters have been identified as key water risks by Member States. Over the last years, these disasters are triggering an increasing number of requests for UCPM assistance, both in Europe and other parts of the world. Application of the climate and water resilience by design principle across relevant EU sector policies and investments as well as carrying out climate risk assessments are essential develop climate-resilience infrastructure and to reduce the needs for disaster relief.

Citizens are at the frontline of the impact of water challenges. They need local solutions that protect them and allow them to be prepared for what cannot be prevented, in line with the European Preparedness Union Strategy⁴². Such actions must integrate urban planning considerations to tackle pollution, whilst mitigating and adapting to climate change, improving drought and flood risk management and optimising the use of digital tools and rapid alert systems. Citizens must be empowered to act towards climate adaptation and protection from

⁴² JOIN(2025) 130 final. Joint Communication to the European Parliament, the European Council, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on the European Preparedness Union Strategy.

risks of floods and droughts. Making available information about the specific risks of floods and droughts for buildings and land is a first step towards increasing societal resilience.

Many tools exist in the EU to protect the population from water disasters, or mitigate the impact, yet they are not always sufficiently known or used. It is important to empower citizens to learn about and manage the growing risks of climate-driven water disasters, as called for in Union Disaster Resilience Goals developed under the UCPM⁴³. Existing tools⁴⁴, the surveillance and early warning systems for cross-border health threats⁴⁵, and the Technical Assistance Financing Facility for Disaster Prevention and Preparedness must be showcased and complemented with national capabilities and cooperation across different administrations. Boosting our predictive capacity and ability to rapidly respond is indispensable.

Knowing our weaknesses will make us more resilient. Appropriate security planning and well-identified vulnerabilities will help the Union to counter hostile actions against the physical and cyber integrity, including of water-supply systems and deliberate waterborne contamination. This planning will greatly benefit from the full implementation of the Critical Entities Resilience (CER) Directive⁴⁶ and the Cybersecurity Directive⁴⁷ also building on the close cooperation with other international institutions, such as NATO⁴⁸. The Commission will include water infrastructures in the upcoming Communication setting guidelines to support Member States in identifying their critical entities and reporting on the outcome of their risk assessments. In 2026, the Commission will present a European Climate Adaptation Plan to support people, business and policymakers in preparing for climate risks and strengthening the EU resilience, including through the use of common climate reference scenarios.

Flagship actions - Security and preparedness to boost collective resilience	Timeline
Enhance protection of on- and offshore water infrastructures through the implementation of the Critical Entities Resilience Directive, also in cooperation with the NATO	2025
Strengthen the EU's solidarity toolbox (e.g. RescEU/ Union Civil Protection Mechanism, the Solidarity Fund) to help Member States anticipate, prepare for and respond to disasters and <i>cas de force majeure</i> .	As from 2025
Enhance EU real time and early warning systems for floods and droughts by supporting Member States actions, by strengthening the European Drought Observatory and the European Flood Awareness System.	As from 2025
Adopt a European Climate Adaptation Plan to support people and business in preparing for climate risks and strengthening the EU resilience.	2026

⁴³ The first Union Disaster Resilience Goals were established under Article 6(5) of the UCPM Decision, and were published in February 2023. Recommendation establishing Union Disaster Resilience Goals, OJ C 56, 15.2.2023, p.1. Communication on Union Disaster Resilience Goals: Acting together to deal with future emergencies, COM(2023) 61.

⁴⁴ Copernicus Emergency Management Service with its early warning systems for forest fires (European Forest Fire Information System - EFFIS), floods (European and Global Flood Awareness Systems - EFAS & GloFAS), and droughts (European and Global Drought Observatory - EDO & GDO), the awareness-raising Flood Risk Areas viewer

⁴⁵ Regulation 2022/2371 on serious cross-border threats to health

⁴⁶ By 2026, Member States will adopt a strategy for enhancing the resilience of critical entities covering the drinking and wastewater sectors.

⁴⁷ Directive on measures for a high common level of cybersecurity across the Union

⁴⁸ [NATO - News: NATO and the EU set up taskforce on resilience and critical infrastructure, 11-Jan.-2023](#)

Enhance cooperation on preventing water-borne infectious diseases under the 2022 Regulation on Serious Cross-border Threats to Health.	2027
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4. ACTING GLOBALLY - LEADING BY EXAMPLE, COMMITMENT AND INITIATIVES

Water resilience is crucial for global sustainable development, for the realisation of human rights and for peace and security. Just five years remain until the end of the 2030 Agenda and progress towards Sustainable Development Goal 6⁴⁹ is well below the pace needed. Worldwide, 2.2 billion people still lack access to safe drinking water, and more than half of mankind lacks access to safe sanitation. Wetlands are nature's most effective water managers, yet they are disappearing, across the globe, three times faster than forests. Destruction of wetlands in urban areas has increased the severity of floods, while degradation of inland wetlands has led to worsening desertification. Almost half of the world's population is estimated to suffer acute water stress by 2030.

Swift and transformative action is needed globally to avoid an accelerated water crisis. In line with the EU objectives of this strategy and the Pact for the Future⁵⁰, the EU will focus its global action on restoring the global water cycle, including through the source to sea approach, building a water-smart economy and ensuring sustainable water and sanitation for all, by expanding its strategic partnerships and water diplomacy, strengthening the water, peace and security nexus, fostering innovation-driven policy reforms and infrastructure investments.

Stronger global water governance is essential for steady progress as the current system is fragmented. The UN 2023 Water Conference put water firmly on the global political agenda, including 840 voluntary commitments under the Water Action Agenda⁵¹. The global momentum for water resilience was further strengthened by the adoption of the UNEA-6 resolution on water⁵², the System-wide Strategy for Water and Sanitation⁵³ and the appointment of the UN Special Envoy on Water. The EU will work towards an ambitious and action-oriented outcome of the 2026 and 2028 UN Water Conferences, including strengthened multilateral governance with a regular inter-governmental process on water and further means for accelerating global water action, mainstreaming of water in key international processes⁵⁴ and engagement in key coalitions⁵⁵.

The EU will support the broadening of the UN Water Convention on transboundary water cooperation. Through Global Gateway⁵⁶, Team Europe (EC, EIB and Member States) is making over EUR 1.1 billion available for supporting governance, knowledge, and investments in 18

⁴⁹ SDG6 Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all

⁵⁰ [UNGA resolution 79/1](#)

⁵¹ <https://sdgs.un.org/conferences/water2023/action-agenda>, with 33 EU commitments

<https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-7443-2023-INIT/en/pdf>

⁵² <https://docs.un.org/en/UNEP/EA.6/RES.13>

⁵³ [UN System-wide Strategy for Water and Sanitation July2024_vs23July2024.pdf](#)

⁵⁴ including the three Rio Conventions, the Ramsar Convention and the upcoming Plastics treaty

⁵⁵ Such as the Freshwater Challenge, the Transboundary Water Cooperation Coalition, the G7 Water Coalition, the G20 Water Dialogue and the Baku Dialogue on Water for Climate Action.

⁵⁶ European strategy to tackle the most pressing global challenges and to mobilise up to €300 billion of investments for sustainable and high-quality projects https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/stronger-europe-world/global-gateway_en

major transboundary water basins across 47 countries in Africa and Central Asia. This includes initiatives like the International Fund for the Aral Sea and the Blue Africa program.

The EU will strengthen bilateral and regional Partnerships on water. Further work is needed to align with EU legislation in accession countries and to detail the necessary water investments. The EU will support the enlargement countries, including through the Western Balkans investment instruments and the Ukraine Facility. The EU will propose to introduce the relevant water legislation in the acquis covered by the Energy Community Treaty⁵⁷. The EU and Central Asia will enhance their cooperation through the recently agreed strategic partnership, with a EUR 12 billion Global Gateway investment package to focus on 4 key priorities, including climate, water and energy.

A reinforced Mediterranean partnership remains a strategic imperative for the European Union. This includes the Union for the Mediterranean Water Agenda 2030 to address increasing water scarcity and climate impacts in the region. Innovative financial mechanisms will be crucial to drive sustainable progress, including through the Partnership on Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area (PRIMA), which has the potential to contribute to strengthen start-ups and entrepreneurial growth through a closer collaboration with industries and investors. The upcoming Pact for the Mediterranean will be an opportunity to identify thematic areas where the EU and partner countries can work jointly, including on the interlinkages between freshwater and marine issues and climate action.

The EU cutting-edge water industry is key to support partner countries, develop water-efficient technologies, finance sustainable infrastructure and drive innovation. Policy incentives, financing mechanisms and seizing relevant market opportunities facilitate mutually beneficial investment relationships. Sharing best practices through capacity building, research and innovation cooperation, notably the Water Operators and Basin Organisations Partnerships, and the Water4All European Partnership, is also important. In addition, the EU will support water SMEs to access the international market through advisory and capacity-building services such as the Enterprise Europe Network, Cluster collaboration projects and the Intellectual Property SME helpdesks.

Trade policies, reflecting the true value of water, could be a powerful tool for promoting more efficient use of water resources and water resilience worldwide⁵⁸. The EU will cooperate with the World Trade Organization and the OECD⁵⁹ in addressing these issues. Clean Trade and Investment Partnerships offer an opportunity for the EU to engage with key trade partners to promote green sustainable competitiveness.

The EU remains committed to help closing the considerable gap in international water financing. Through Global Gateway, the EU remains the biggest contributor to Official Development Aid including in water infrastructure and Nature-based Solutions and stimulates private sector engagement through the European Fund for Sustainable Development (EFSD+) and EIB global investments. The EIB and the EBRD, together with other Multilateral Development Banks, have committed to greater levels of financing for water security⁶⁰. The new EIB water program will detail this commitment. The EU will continue supporting

⁵⁷[Treaty establishing Energy Community - Energy Community Homepage](#)

⁵⁸ Global Commission on the Economics of Water

⁵⁹ [Implementing Water Economics in the EU Water Framework Directive | OECD](#)

⁶⁰ <https://www.eib.org/files/press/CommitmenttoWaterSecuritywithlogos.pdf>

investments through blending mechanisms and guarantees and improving the investment climate by facilitating legal reforms and promoting high social and environmental standards. This includes initiatives like Climate Investor 2, mobilising up to EUR 2.2 billion, and the Urban Water Catalyst Initiative, as well as strategic procurement and Environmental, Social and Governance frameworks.

Flagship actions - Acting globally	Timeline
Strengthen global water governance by engaging in discussions on a future global water governance framework, fostering transboundary water cooperation through supporting accession to the UN Water Convention, and by mainstreaming water in international processes.	As from 2025
Reinforce bilateral and regional engagement by leveraging Global Gateway assistance to close the investment gap, supporting enlargement and neighbourhood countries in boosting water resilience, building comprehensive Water Partnerships with key strategic partners, and strengthen water diplomacy.	As from 2025
Support access for at least 70 million people to clean drinking water and/or sanitation and mobilise private sector innovative financing under the European Fund for Sustainable Development (EFSD+), to unlock larger investments and boost competitiveness of the EU water industry.	As from 2025

5. CONCLUSIONS

The Commission calls on Member States, institutional partners, businesses and all parts of society to take action along the lines indicated in this Strategy.

As from [December 2025] the Commission will convene, every two years, a Water Resilience Forum, bringing together in an inclusive dialogue stakeholders and interested parties to take stock of progress made in enhancing water resilience across all levels of government, business and civil society, and monitoring implementation of this Strategy.

In 2027, the Commission will carry out a mid-term review of the progress made in implementing the actions included in this Strategy. It will also make a first evaluation of the uptake of the Recommendation on Water Efficiency First. In this context, some of the actions may be updated or revised.

In 2029, the Commission will evaluate the progress made, including a full evaluation of national actions taken in line with the Recommendation on Water Efficiency First. The Commission will also identify which further action is needed to address emerging concerns and accordingly review, as appropriate, the identified targets and actions, with a view to achieve water resilience across all sectors of society.

ANNEX I – FULL LIST OF ACTIONS

	ACTIONS	Timetable
RESTORING AND PROTECTING THE WATER CYCLE		
	Revise the Marine Strategy Framework Directive to simplify and clarify provisions, reduce administrative burden, improve policy coherence, strengthen protection of the marine environment. [ENV]	2027
	Emphasize water quantity aspects in the implementation of the Water Framework Directive, enhancing cooperation with Member States on addressing water scarcity and droughts, particularly through the development of indicators for water scarcity and of a Technical Guidance on Drought Management Plans. [ENV]	2026-2027
	Launch an Integrated Nutrient Management programme to support ambitious actions to reducing nutrients pollution, particularly through a Helpdesk providing modelling, interactive maps and exchanges of best practices, and supporting the construction of manure storage tanks. [ENV]	2026
BUILDING A WATER-SMART ECONOMY AND PROMOTING A COMPETITIVE EU WATER INDUSTRY		
	Support the implementation of the Recommendation on Water Efficiency First through operational guidelines and exchanges of best practices, including a EEA-EC report on water efficiency potential across sectors. [ENV]	2025/2026
	Support Member States in enhancing the uptake of water reuse practices including beyond agriculture and review the Water Reuse Regulation [ENV]	2026 - 2028
	Public water supply: supporting leakage reduction and infrastructure modernisation through investment and digital tools [ENV]	2025-2030
	Agriculture: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include, in the next CAP, transition packages to support and reward farmers who engage in structural changes to improve also their water performance. [AGRI] • Identifying priority intervention areas under greater climate change pressures and water abstraction/pollution; foster collective/landscape level approaches for relevant farmers to adopt the same measures and have an impact at landscape level through cooperation interventions. [AGRI] • Establish a dedicated workstream in the CAP network, including a possible dedicated Thematic Group, to better integrate water resilience in the 	2025- 2026

	<p>design and implementation of CAP strategic plans. [AGRI]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promoting innovation, knowledge exchange and strengthening their Farm Advisory Services' capabilities through Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation System (AKIS) interventions. [AGRI] 	
	<p>Industry and Energy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integrate water efficiency into existing industrial ecosystems and [explore the] launch of a pilot project to promote water efficiency in selected industrial clusters, implementing also the revised Industrial Emissions Directive [GROW, ENV] Include water usage among the parameters of a common Union scheme to rate the sustainability of data centres and set water consumption minimum performance standards [ENER] 	2025-2026
	Promote best practices on for instance freshwater balances, accounting of water flows, water efficiency, and smart water metering across all economic sectors. [ENV]	As from 2025
	Assess the quality of the data available on water and, where appropriate, submit a legislative proposal for the introduction of new environmental economic account modules for water accounts. [ESTAT]	By the end of 2026
SECURING CLEAN AND AFFORDABLE WATER FOR ALL, AND EMPOWERING CONSUMERS		
	Exchange best practices as regards the information provided by utilities to consumers pursuant to the Drinking Water Directive. [ENV]	2027
	Public private partnership and support for research for PFAS clean up. [ENV, RTD]	2026
	Systematically address the water footprint of products when setting requirements for new products or updating existing requirements under the ESPR and the EU Ecolabel. [ENV]	2025-2027
	Promote an exchange of best practices on water pricing, on public awareness and involvement in water management. [ENV]	2025-2027
BOOSTING AWARENESS, GOVERNANCE AND IMPLEMENTATION		
	Stepped up enforcement and structured dialogues with Member States to accelerate and scale up implementation of the EU water acquis, based in particular on enforcement priorities for Water Framework Directive. [ENV]	As from 20205
	Convene every two years a Water Resilience Forum bringing together stakeholders and all interested parties to take stock on progress made. [ENV]	As from 2026

	Launch a public debate involving a broad stakeholder consultation on key governance challenges, such as on the role of water pricing to promote water efficiency and the polluter pays principle, and on the appropriateness of setting up national water regulators. [ENV]	As from 2026
	Take stock of existing cooperation mechanisms and organize a regular exchange with international river basin organizations to promote peer review practices and launch a call for INTERREG projects twining River Basin and Sea basin Organisations to perform a Peer-to-Peer enhanced water and ocean's management. [ENV, REGIO]	[tbc]
	Publish a manual for setting up citizen science mechanisms for water protection [RTD?]	2027
SECURING THE RIGHT INVESTMENTS IN THE RIGHT PLACES FOR THE RIGHT INFRASTRUCTURES		
	Support Member States and regions in using the package of incentives and flexibilities to invest cohesion policy funds in water resilience adopted on 1 April 2025 within the Mid Term Review of the Cohesion policy funds: up to 100% EU financing for investments in water resilience and 30% pre-financing. Promote water governance reforms, capacity building and investments in modernising water infrastructure. [REGIO, ENV]	As from 2025
	Launch in cooperation with the EIB a new Water Program and a new "Sustainable Water Advisory Facility" to step up the assistance to potential loan-takers, increasing the pipeline of projects and EIB financing available for water. This will be coupled with a joint study to better quantify funding needs for water resilience and options to tackle existing barriers to investments. Increase EIB financing on water projects from X to Y in W years [EIB, ENV]	2025
	Establish a Water Resilience Investment Accelerator to implement 20 pilot innovative cases for natural water retention and water efficiency, bringing together local water investors, solution providers and problem holders to inspire similar actions across the EU. This accelerator would also take stock of the preliminary results of the ongoing biodiversity credits projects in wetlands. to further inform policy in this field. [ENV]	2026
	Launch a dedicated Water Resilience Flagship under the Technical Support Instrument to support Member States in policy reforms in water governance, management and monitoring and improve digitalisation of their	2026/2027

	administrations relevant for water management - including capacities and skills. [SG REFORM]	
	Launch of a “Green and Blue Corridors initiative” to support the restoration of ecological settings and infrastructure including rivers, wetlands, and coastal restoration to restore the water cycle with a source-to-sea approach. [ENV, BUDG]	2027
	Launch of an EU Water Infrastructure & Smart Metering for All initiative to accelerate the modernisation and targeted extension of the public water distribution and supply network including by digitalising data, including smart metering, and ensuring inter-operability. [ENV, BUDG, CONNECT]	2027
FOSTERING THE DIGITALISATION IN WATER		
	Develop an EU-wide Action Plan on digitalisation in the water sector. [ENV, CONNECT]	2026
	Launch a Copernicus Water Thematic Hub to serve as “one stop shop” for all water relevant Earth Observation data, products and tools - under the Copernicus Programme to facilitate access and the use of remote sensing in daily water management decisions. [DEFIS, ENV]	2026
	Develop and implement Destination Earth pilot services for water resilience, and by 2030, make the modelling capabilities Digital Twin of the Ocean and the Destination Earth available to national and local administrations. [ENV, CONNECT, RTD, MARE]	2030
RESEARCH, INNOVATION AND INDUSTRY		
	Develop a dedicated R&I strategy on water resilience and a science/policy interface platform for water resilience, including a dedicated funding mechanism (in coordination with the EIB) to disseminate the results of EU-funded R&I projects. [RTD]	2025
	Establish a Joint Undertaking on Dry Cooling. [RTD]	2026
	Promote further research and innovation to promote sustainable desalination and explore the potential to use sea water as feedstock in the context of the Joint Undertaking on Clean Hydrogen [RTD].	2026
	Better integrate water concerns, and in particular water efficiency and reuse, across existing industrial ecosystem transition pathways and assess the added value of setting a	2026

	bespoke Industrial Ecosystem for the Water sector. [GROW, ENER, CONNECT]	
	Explore the options to use public procurement to foster clean water technologies and water efficiency across different sectors, including in context of the implementation of the Net-Zero Industry Act, the upcoming Industrial Decarbonisation Accelerator Act, and the announced revision of the Public Procurement Directives. [GROW]	As from 2025
	Launch a Knowledge and Innovation Community (KIC) in Water, Marine and Maritime Sectors and Ecosystems under the European Institute of Technology (EIT). [EAC]	2026
	Create a Water Smart Industrial Alliance to stimulate innovation, competitiveness and securing the necessary water skills [ENV, GROW, RTD, EAC]	2026
	Establish the European Water Academy to address urgent capacity needs in Europe's water sector and work towards the launch of a wider Water skills initiative to develop a sectoral skills strategy for the sector. [ENV, JRC and EMPL]	2026
	Adopt an Innovation Atlas visualisation tool: a viewer bringing together in one tool all water related projects of the European Innovation Partnership for Agriculture, the Living Labs of the Soil Mission, the Living Labs of the Oceans Mission] [JRC, AGRI, RTD, MARE]	[tbc]
	As part of its strategy for 2021-2027, the EIT will create a new Knowledge and Innovation Community (KIC) in the field of water, marine and maritime sectors and ecosystems.	2026
	Water Tech challenge, in cooperation with the EIC [RTD]	tbd
BOOSTING EU SECURITY AND PREPAREDNESS		
	Enhance EU real time and early warning systems for floods and droughts by supporting Member States actions, by strengthening the European Drought Observatory and the European Flood Awareness System under the Copernicus Emergency Management Service using in particular AI, and by increasing capacity building and training to foster user uptake and linking with other Commission alert systems. [JRC, DEFIS]	As from 2025
	Enhance disaster risk reduction and recovery by strengthening the EU's solidarity toolbox (e.g. RescEU/ Union Civil Protection Mechanism and the Solidarity Fund) to help Member States anticipate, prepare for and respond to a	As from 2025

	wide range of disasters and <i>cas de force majeure</i> . [ECHO, REGIO, BUDG, CLIMA]	
	Enhance preparedness to protect onshore and offshore water infrastructures notably through the upcoming guidelines in the context of Critical Entities Resilience Directive. [HOME]	2025
	Ensure that the needs of drinking water and waste water treatment are covered in the forthcoming EU Stockpiling Strategy in 2025 [SG/ECHO]	2025
	Enhance cooperation on water-borne health threats under the 2022 Regulation on Serious Cross-border Threats to Health to prevent the spread of infectious diseases. [SANTE]	2030
	Establish an INTERREG network focusing on preparedness and protection on the populations in low lying coastal areas particularly vulnerable to sea level rise and coastal floods. [REGIO, ENV, CLIMA]	[tbc]
	Develop new and reinforce existing research & innovation related actions to create the water infrastructure of the future focusing on digitalisation, climate change resilience and (cyber) security against malicious risks.	2026-2027
BOOSTING GLOBAL ACTION		
	Strengthen global water governance by engaging in discussions on a future global water governance framework, fostering transboundary water cooperation through supporting accession to the UN Water Convention, and by mainstreaming water in international processes. [ENV, INTPA, ENEST, MENA, EEAS]	As from 2025
	Reinforce bilateral and regional engagement by leveraging Global Gateway assistance to close the investment gap, supporting enlargement and neighbourhood countries to boost water resilience, building comprehensive Water Partnerships with key strategic partners, and strengthen water diplomacy as a tool for peace, security, and stability. [ENV, INTPA, ENEST, MENA, EEAS]	As from 2025
	Support access for at least 70 million people to clean drinking water and/or sanitation and mobilise private sector innovative financing under the European Fund for Sustainable Development (EFSD+), leveraging the EU's sizeable financial contribution to unlock significantly larger investments and to boost competitiveness of the EU cutting-edge water industry. [INTPA, ENEST, MENA]	As from 2025
	Mobilise private sector support and work closely with the European Investment Bank and other financing mechanisms to leverage sizeable investments in water infrastructure. [INTPA, ENEST, MENA]	As from 2026
	Promote water as a strategic priority in Global Gateway to enhance global water resilience. [INTPA]	As from 2025
	Significantly scale up investment in Nature-based Solutions, as part of the EU's Global Gateway, promoting resilience, sustainability and leveraging best practices from Team Europe Development Finance Institutions and the European private sector. [INTPA]	As from 2026

Promote the accelerated implementation of the integrated response options identified in the IPBES Nexus Assessment ⁸⁴ addressing water, food, health, biodiversity and climate change. [ENV, CLIMA, AGRI]	As from 2025
As Party to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the EU will implement the water-related goals and targets of the Kunming Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. [ENV]	ongoing
Enhance the EU engagement in the Ramsar Convention, to support protection and restoration of wetlands, thus ensuring cleaner water, fewer floods and droughts, a stronger foundation for resilience and reduced future costs. [ENV]	As from 2025
Foster transboundary water cooperation through stepping up advocacy and financial input to support accession to the UN Water Convention, and strengthen water diplomacy as a tool for peace, security, and stability. [ENV, INTPA, ENEST, MENA, EEAS]	As from 2025
Mainstream water in key international processes through G7/G20, the Transboundary Water Cooperation Coalition, the Freshwater Challenge and the Baku Water Dialogue. [ENV, INTPA]	As from 2025
Prepare an initial assessment of the investment needs for each candidate country to comply with the water acquis. This will support the preparation of a project pipeline to facilitate and speed up necessary investments from EU funds, development banks and leveraging private sector engagement. [ENEST, ENV]	tbc
Propose to introduce the relevant water legislation in the acquis covered by the Energy Community Treaty. [ENV, ENER]	2025
Step up engagement in the Union for Mediterranean and the Blue Mediterranean Partnership to support transition to a sustainable blue economy in the region and to secure funding for project preparation and blended finance. [ENV, MENA]	As from 2025
Encourage Member States which have not yet done so to promptly ratify the international Agreement on the Conservation and Sustainable use of Marine Biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ) to allow for the rapid entry into force of the Treaty	As from 2025
Work with the EP and the Council towards a timely adoption of the Commission's proposal for a Directive on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biodiversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction aimed at implementing the BBNJ Agreement	As from 2025

Annex II - The key 2027-2033 intermediate targets

Restoring and protecting the broken water cycle

By 2030, restoration measures will be put in place on at least 30% of the EU's coastal and freshwater habitats that are not in good condition and the status of at least 30% of the marine and aquatic species in unfavourable conditions will have improved (*Nature Restoration Regulation and Nature Directives*).

By 2030, at least 25 000 km of rivers in the EU will be restored into free-flowing rivers (*Nature Restoration Regulation*).

By 2027 Member States are to take measures to achieve water quality of at least Good Status in rivers, lakes, groundwater, estuaries and coastal waters (*Water Framework Directive*).

Building a water-smart economy

By 2030, the most water-intensive sectors will have adopted and enhanced water-efficient practices, including the following sectors, based on existing EU legislation:

- Agriculture: water-saving measures will cover around 40% of the EU's agricultural area, and practices for a sustainable use of pesticides and improved nutrient management will respectively cover at least 30% and 20% of the EU's agricultural area (*CAP support and CAP Strategic Plans*).
- Energy: national building renovation plans, due by 2026, will start being deployed in each Member State to achieve the progressive renovation of existing buildings into highly energy-efficient and decarbonised buildings by 2050, including through approaches and programmes addressing water treatment (*Energy Performance of Buildings Directive*).
- Industry: water use will start being tangibly reduced across the EU's largest industrial and livestock farming production processes (*Industrial Emissions Directive*).

By 2030, Member States with water supply leakage levels exceeding the EU-wide threshold – to be set by 2028 – will present an action plan with measures to reduce leakages across their supply networks (*Drinking Water Directive*).

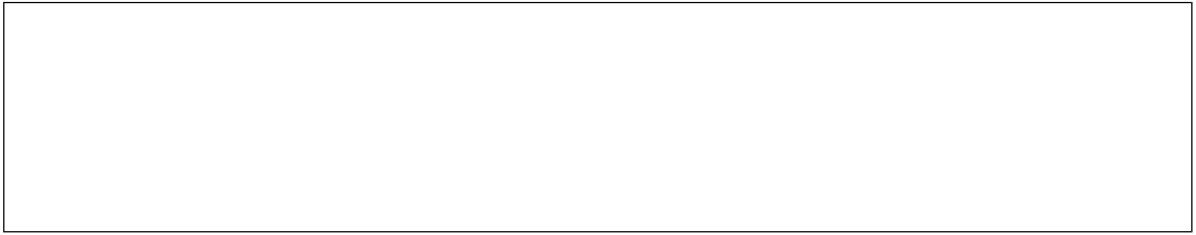
By 2030, the Commission and the Member States will promote the reuse of treated urban wastewater for all appropriate purposes beyond agriculture and assess the feasibility and appropriateness of setting an EU target for water reuse across economic sectors (*Water Reuse Regulation*).

Securing Ensuring clean and affordable water and sanitation for all

By 2027⁶¹, Member States will set up transparent drinking water and wastewater bills, to increase consumers' awareness of their consumption and the real price of water, as well as surveillance systems for monitoring public health parameters in urban wastewater in case of emergencies (*Drinking Water Directive, Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive*).

By 2029, Member States will inform the Commission about measures taken to improve access to drinking water and sanitation for all, including vulnerable and marginalised groups, and will start updating the Commission every six years on the matter (*Drinking Water Directive and Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive*).

By 2033, all EU cities above 100 000 inhabitants will set up integrated urban wastewater management plans prioritising nature-based solutions and green/blue infrastructures (*Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive*).



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