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A Water Resilience Strategy for Europe

Our vision for our water's future

Our Vision

Our society, economy, environment and health depend on each of us having access to reliable, clean and affordable water every day. Your European water services strive every day to do this.

Much EU legislation to better protect people and the planet has been passed or is being processed since the last European Parliament elections – the Drinking Water Directive, the Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive, and legislation covering agriculture, chemicals and pharmaceuticals. One other cornerstone of water legislation – the Water Framework Directive – will need to define its post 2027 ambitions, and policy makers must decide whether to extend its reach to protect water resources. We support such a move.

Europe needs a robust 360° strategy to ensure that water services are protected across all areas.

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People. Environment. Water.

A Water Resilience Strategy for Europe

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1. Give water its right place
2. Protect the quality of our water resources
3. Address climate change
4. Enhance the Circular Economy
5. Finance change while keeping water services affordable
6. Improve security and resilience and guarantee the protection of sensitive information

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Give water its rightful place

Water resources are under stress like never before as competition for these increases from industry, agriculture, tourism and public water supply.

We want the EU to recognise water's place at the centre of European policy. It is essential that there is a long-term European water resilience strategy and a cross-cutting EU policy framework in place that will ensure that each and every single person, business and industry has access to reliable, safe drinking water and wastewater services, today and in the future.

We are calling for:

- The adoption of an **EU Water Resilience Strategy** as to how our water resources can be protected and sustainably managed in the long term.
- The appointment of a Commission **Vice President for Water** to oversee the development of a European legislative framework that ensures the availability of sufficient water resources.

Protect the quality of our water resources

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Preventing our water resources from being polluted is fundamental to keeping a zero pollution future. Avoiding pollution at the source must be the guiding principle applied in all EU legislation to achieve this.

- **Control at source** to be implemented into chemical, pesticide and pharmaceutical legislation (REACH, Pharmaceuticals Legislation and the Sustainable Use of Plant Protection Products (SUR)) to reduce the amount of pollutants in the environment.

- The Water Framework Directive and its 'daughter directives' (Groundwater Directive and the Environmental Quality Standards Directive; GWD, EQSD) must include the tools to ensure that the **quality standards** for surface and groundwater bodies will be met, predominantly through control-at-source measures.

Address climate change

Climate change affects water service providers' ability to supply these services in a safe and reliable way.

We are calling for:

- Climate adaption plans to be **integrated** into all EU legislation and that the water sector's efforts are coordinated with other sectors' mitigation and adaptation measures.

- A strong 2040 **intermediate climate goal** ensuring that our societies, including all industry sectors and citizens, take measures in time to reach the EU's 2050 climate neutrality target.

Enhance the Circular Economy

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The water sector can make a significant contribution to the circular economy and the generation of renewable energy.

Water reuse, energy generation and nutrient recovery make significant contributions to the circular economy. Preventing the release of hazardous substances at the source is paramount if we want to maximise the potential of this. Furthermore, an enabling regulatory framework needs to be developed to ensure market uptake.

We are calling for:

- The implementation of an ambitious **Integrated Nutrient Management Action Plan** that includes targets for recovered material reuse (the Waste Framework Directive, the Sewage Sludge Directive and the Fertiliser Regulation) to ensure the closing of nutrient cycles.
- Effective **control-at-source measures** to protect drinking water resources, wastewater and its by-products from hazardous substances.
- The wider use of **ecodesign** to reduce water consumption in home appliances should be encouraged and financed at EU level while the use of ecolabels can be expanded to cover more products that meet the criteria.

Finance change while keeping water services affordable

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Systematic investing is a condition for maintaining infrastructure that is future proof. Providing safe and reliable water services is an investment in our future.

Financing our water services comes from taxes, tariffs and transfers (the 3T's)*. Member States should also ensure cost recovery for the rectification of environmental damage in accordance with the Polluter Pays Principle.

We are calling for:

- **Fair appropriation of EU funds** so that we can provide the requisite distribution networks, collection systems and treatment plants needed to deliver our services affordably.
- The Environmental Liability Directive to ensure that **polluters take preventive measures** and effectively pay for the damage they cause. The Polluter Pays Principle needs to be applied to cover costs of additional treatment efforts.
- Investment also means **financing effective research and development** as well as keeping services fit for purpose.

* In 2020, the OECD estimated that the EU needed to invest €289billion in water infrastructure over the next 10 years in order to comply with the 'old' Drinking Water and Urban Waste Water Treatment Directives and to enhance the efficiency of water supply systems.

Improve security and resilience

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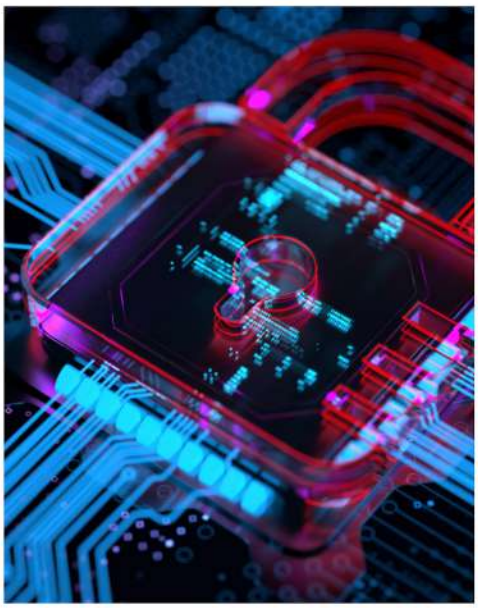
Drinking water and waste water services are critical entities and are covered by legislation on cyber security and physical resilience.

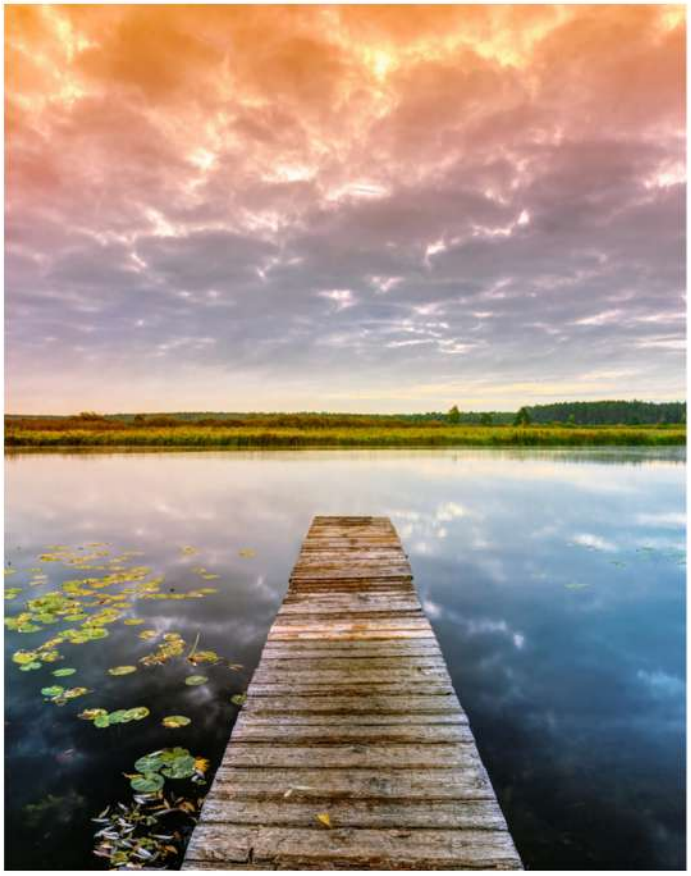
Protecting sensitive information and reinforcing network resilience to hostile attacks is more pertinent than ever. EU legislation must ensure the protection of sensitive data to prevent malicious acts. Restrictions must be maintained regarding public access to information on water utility networks and treatment facilities



We are calling for:

- **Sensitive geographical infrastructure information**, including the locations of key water treatment points such as abstraction points and drinking water mains to be kept off of the public record in the revision of the INSPIRE Directive.
- Keeping people and society functioning correctly by **ensuring physical and cyber-security** as well as guaranteeing the supply of energy and raw materials. Relevant EU policies should be adapted to ensure the water sector's continued access to energy and raw materials.

Conclusion



The water sector is working towards delivering a resilient and more sustainable future. Every other industrial and social sector depends on an affordable and robust water service, and we have to work like clockwork with other sectors, despite a very difficult economic and political environment. We are part of the solution in terms of the resilience of our society, closed resource cycles, energy production and climate neutrality. However, the burden of protecting public health and the environment must be shared with the full value chain.

The next few years will be decisive for a bluer, more sustainable future.

What will your role in this future be?

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EurEau represents drinking water and waste water operators from 32 countries in Europe, from both the private and the public sectors.

Our members are 37 national associations of water services. At EurEau, we bring national water professionals together to agree European water sector positions regarding the management of water quality, resource efficiency and access to water for Europe's citizens and businesses.

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