



European Committee
of the Regions

ENVE

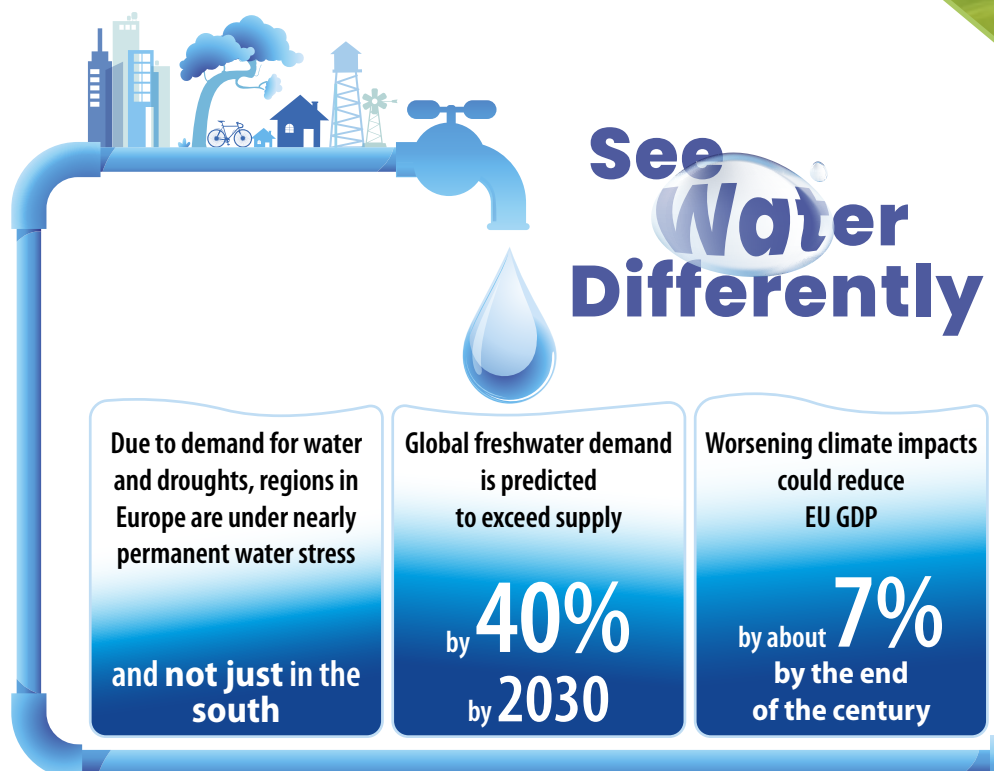
EU Blue Deal local approaches to water resilience

An inclusive EU water governance with regions and cities at its core

Unsustainable water management and climate change contribute to water scarcity, flooding, pollution, the spread of diseases, rising sea levels and damage to infrastructure and ecosystems.

This impacts water availability for drinking and sanitation, and threatens our food security, energy production and manufacturing, increasing the risk of conflict among local communities.

#WaterWiseEU



Too little, too much, too dirty

The EU must make water management a long-term strategy, transitioning from a silo-based, crisis-management approach to an integrated one that restores the water cycle and protects our health, well-being, environment, and economy.

20% of the European territory and 30% of Europeans face water stress each year, with costs soaring to an estimated €9 billion annually

60% of EU surface waters are not in good ecological status

Around 53 million people (12% of Europe's population) live in areas potentially prone to river flooding

Since 1970 in the EU, a third of our freshwater ecosystems has been lost

23% of treated water is lost during distribution in the EU

7% of the European population faces moderate-to-severe food insecurity

Usable cooling water capacity at power plants could be reduced by over 15% by 2050

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The current status quo presents alarming challenges for drinking water supply, agriculture, biodiversity, and energy infrastructure across various cities and regions in the EU. With no relief in sight, urgent and holistic measures are imperative to reconcile the needs of users, including local and regional authorities. Action must be taken now. ”

André Viola (FR/PES)
Opinion rapporteur

What is at stake?

Climate change and water mismanagement threaten the EU's social and territorial cohesion, decarbonisation, economic growth and strategic autonomy.

The European Committee of the Regions calls on

the European Commission to

- ▶ Make water an EU top priority in its new term 2024-2029 and appoint a Commissioner for water;
- ▶ Adopt a comprehensive European Water Strategy that restores the water cycle and mainstreams water into all EU policies;
- ▶ Increase funding for subnational authorities and water-related actors and better connect and enhance existing financing instruments;
- ▶ Introduce a water efficiency principle in the EU and establish a plan to improve water efficiency of major water consumers while strengthening their competitiveness;
- ▶ Reinforce water-sustainable practices in the Common Agriculture Policy and support investment in innovative farming to protect biodiversity, enhance competitiveness, and revitalise rural communities;
- ▶ Build green and water-smart economic sectors in the fields of energy, agri-food, tourism, aquaculture, and construction;
- ▶ Incentivise digitalisation in the water sector to facilitate data sharing at all governance levels and ensure interoperability at the basin level;
- ▶ Strengthen transboundary basin cooperation and water-related aspects in the EU's neighbourhood policy and regional/international initiatives to achieve the UN SDG 6.

Encourages the Member States and local and regional authorities to

- ▶ Collaborate in drawing up water resource plans that examine the needs for drinking water, nature, industry and agriculture;
- ▶ Ensure that water pricing is designed fairly, and guarantee sufficient water access for the population in the event of temporary water supply suspensions or pressure reductions;
- ▶ Implement the 'polluter pays' principle to address pollution at its source;
- ▶ Integrate a water- and soil-driven approach, allowing water and soil to guide spatial planning;
- ▶ Prevent water leakages, increase investment in maintenance and renewal of water infrastructure, and incentive the transition to a circular water economy;
- ▶ Adopt a 'One Water' approach, fostering collaboration among all water users, and raise awareness of the urgency of water challenges.



European Committee
of the Regions

Opinion rapporteur

André Viola (FR/PES),
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Online version



Created in 1994, the European Committee of the Regions is the EU's political assembly of 329 regional and local representatives such as regional presidents or city-mayors from all 27 Member States, representing over 446 million Europeans.

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