

Water Manifesto

The Strategic Value of Water

October 2023



The EWA Water Manifesto

With this Water Manifesto, the EWA draws attention to current and future challenges for water management in Europe and provides proposals for sustainable solutions to these. The EWA calls upon civil society and all relevant stakeholders to contribute to the implementation of such solutions. The EWA encourages permanent dialogue between the decision makers and the national and regional authorities.

European Water Association

The European Water Association (EWA) is the pan-European, nongovernmental, not-for-profit, technical, and scientific umbrella organization of 23 national member associations bringing together professionals involved in the water cycle. It is therefore the voice of water in Europe and a technical and scientific platform and turntable for discussion, exchange, and transfer of information. EWA's national members and all their working groups and specialized members are the perfect partners to analyze, discuss, translate, and communicate the European Agenda at national level.

Water is the basis of all life. Keeping it available, managing and protecting it must be our top priority. The European Water Association (EWA), as one of the major professional associations in Europe that covers the whole water sector is calling for a **better place for water and water challenges in mainstream European policies**. As well as for the development of a **European Blue Deal under the next European Commission mandate**.

The strategic value of water for Europe security.

The EWA insists that **water must be a top priority for the European Union**. Water plays a **critical role for human health, biodiversity, and for the EU strategic autonomy**. It is a major resource needed in all economic sectors. It will also play a crucial role in the development of key European strategic sectors such as microchips for semiconductors, batteries, data centers and hydrogen projects to name a few.

Investments and development of new economic activities in Europe will increase the competition between economic actors for **fair access to water**. In many European regions, local economic actors and populations are already facing water scarcity. This has a negative impact on their daily life. **Food and energy production** have also been affected by **lack of water** in some parts of the continent. There is a **need for a better and more integrated water management approach** to protect human health and the environment, meet the requirements of the public and ensure economic development and competitiveness in Europe.



The EWA calls for:

- **Recognition of the key role of water in Europe and having an integrated approach to water by mainstreaming it into all relevant EU policies,**
- **Strengthening Europe's strategic autonomy and competitiveness by preserving water, ensuring its availability and good quality water for all important purposes,**
- **Improving the availability of EU funds to help finance the upcoming water-related investments as a complement to the contribution from water tariffs.**

An EU Blue Deal

The EWA supports the establishment of **water as a central aspect of all relevant EU policies** in the future and welcomes the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) initiative to **establish a Blue Deal**[1]. The EWA is taking part in the EESC activities to promote a Blue Deal with focus on the following points:

- Access to water and geopolitics of water
- Sustainable water management
- Economics of a Blue Deal for the EU

The EWA is convinced that an EU Blue Deal is an important **step towards good quality water resources and their sustainable management** and would help to ensure equitable access for all stakeholders at all levels (countries, regions, people...). It will also guarantee the integrity of the ecosystems that deliver these resources.

[1] <https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/agenda/our-events/events/eu-blue-deal>

The EWA insists that a **long vision is needed for the water sector** as well as the entire society. This vision should focus on the provision of water services and be moving in the direction of good quality water resources, balancing water demand with availability and equitable sharing of the resources.

Water is already playing a key role in our life; it should receive the recognition it deserves. The EWA supports **greater recognition for water** and its vital aspect in our daily life either as an individual private user or as an economic actor. Climate change makes this more relevant than ever.

EWA calls for:

- **Implementation of the Blue Deal proposal**
- **Better balancing of water demand with availability and fair access to water.**

Secure financing to address future water challenges.

Water and wastewater infrastructures in Europe are aging and require substantial investments that can no longer be delayed, preventing even more expensive and potentially dangerous system failures. It causes loss of resources, water crises and floods. These hazardous events are a threat to the economy and strategic autonomy of the EU, and even more importantly, to the society in general. They result in lost lives and declining public health.



Adapting water infrastructure to the challenges of climate change is nowadays a continuous struggle. In addition to the classic tasks of water infrastructure dealing with drinking water production, distribution, wastewater collection and disposal, it will increasingly have to take into account of torrential rainfall or periods of dryness and drought. At the same time, **sustainable water management also mitigates climate change** itself by protecting ecosystems and reducing carbon emissions from water and sanitation transportation and treatment.

Water services are currently **affordable** for almost everyone in the EU. Investments and any tariffs changes need to ensure that it remains as such for all citizens. The EWA supports a **fair pricing of water shared by all stakeholders having an impact on water**. This would allow water services operators to finance the investments needed to cater for new environmental and technical requirements while maintaining affordability of water for all citizens as the water tariffs will not become the only or main source of income needed to cover new investment.

EWA calls for:

- **All stakeholders to pay their contribution to cover future costs,**
- **Securing future access to water with relevant investments,**
- **Significantly improving the maintenance and resilience of the existing infrastructure.**