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DRAFT REPORT

on the European Water Resilience Strategy
(2024/2104(INI))

Committee on the Environment, Climate and Food Safety

Rapporteur: Thomas Bajada

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MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION

on the European Water Resilience Strategy (2024/2104(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Treaty of the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), in particular Article 191 thereof,
- having regard to the Agreement adopted at the 21st Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC (COP21) in Paris on 12 December 2015 (the Paris Agreement),
- having regard to the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs),
- having regard to Regulation (EU) 2021/1119 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 June 2021 establishing the framework for achieving climate neutrality and amending Regulations (EC) No 401/2009 and (EU) 2018/1999 (European Climate Law)¹,
- having regard to Directive 2000/60/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2000 establishing a framework for Community action in the field of water policy²,
- having regard to Directive 2006/118/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 12 December 2006 on the protection of groundwater against pollution and deterioration³,
- having regard to Directive 2008/105/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 December 2008 on environmental quality standards in the field of water⁴,
- having regard to Directive 2007/60/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2007 on the assessment and management of flood risks⁵,
- having regard to Directive (EU) 2020/2184 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 December 2020 on the quality of water intended for human consumption⁶,
- having regard to Regulation (EU) 2020/741 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 May 2020 on minimum requirements for water reuse⁷,

¹ OJ L 243, 9.7.2021, p. 1, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2021/1119/oj>.

² OJ L 327, 22.12.2000, p. 1, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/2000/60/oj>.

³ OJ L 372, 27.12.2006, p. 19, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/2006/118/oj>.

⁴ OJ L 348, 24.12.2008, p. 84, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/2008/105/oj>.

⁵ OJ L 288, 6.11.2007, p. 27, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/2007/60/oj>.

⁶ OJ L 435, 23.12.2020, p. 1, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/2020/2184/oj>.

⁷ OJ L 177, 5.6.2020, p. 32, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2020/741/oj>.

- having regard to Directive 2008/56/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 June 2008 establishing a framework for community action in the field of marine environmental policy (Marine Strategy Framework Directive)⁸,
- having regard to the Directive (EU) 2024/3019 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 November 2024 concerning urban wastewater treatment⁹,
- having regard to Directive (EU) 2024/1785 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 April 2024 amending Directive 2010/75/EU on industrial emissions (integrated pollution prevention and control) and Council Directive 1999/31/EC on the landfill of waste¹⁰,
- having regard to Council Directive 91/676/EEC of 12 December 1991 concerning the protection of waters against pollution caused by nitrates from agricultural sources¹¹,
- having regard to Regulation (EU) 2024/1991 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2024 on nature restoration and amending Regulation (EU) 2022/869¹²,
- having regard to Regulation (EU) 2021/2115 of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing rules on support for strategic plans to be drawn up by Member States under the common agricultural policy (CAP Strategic Plans) and financed by the European Agricultural Guarantee Fund (EAGF) and by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and repealing Regulations (EU) No 1305/2013 and (EU) No 1307/2013¹³,
- having regard to Commission Regulation (EU) 2024/3190 of 19 December 2024 on the use of bisphenol A (BPA) and other bisphenols and bisphenol derivatives with harmonised classification for specific hazardous properties in certain materials and articles intended to come into contact with food, amending Regulation (EU) No 10/2011 and repealing Regulation (EU) 2018/213¹⁴,
- having regard to the Commission communication of 11 December 2019 on the European Green Deal ([COM\(2019\)0640](#)),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 12 May 2021 entitled ‘Pathway to a Healthy Planet for All – EU Action Plan: ‘Towards Zero Pollution for Air, Water and Soil’ (COM(2021)0400),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 24 February 2021 entitled ‘Forging a climate-resilient Europe – the new EU Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change’ ([COM\(2021\)0082](#)),

⁸ OJ L 164, 25.6.2008, p. 19, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/2008/56/oj>.

⁹ OJ L, 2024/3019, 12.12.2024, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/2024/3019/oj>.

¹⁰ OJ L, 2024/1785, 15.7.2024, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/2024/1785/oj>.

¹¹ OJ L 375, 31.12.1991, p. 1, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/1991/676/oj>.

¹² OJ L, 2024/1991, 29.7.2024, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/1991/oj>.

¹³ OJ L 435, 6.12.2021, p. 1, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2021/2115/oj>.

¹⁴ OJ L, 2024/3190, 31.12.2024, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/3190/oj>.

- having regard to the Commission communication of 18 July 2007 on addressing the challenge of water scarcity and droughts in the European Union ([COM\(2007\)0414](#)),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 11 March 2020 entitled ‘A new Circular Economy Action Plan: For a cleaner and more competitive Europe’ ([COM\(2020\)0098](#)),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 14 November 2012 entitled ‘A Blueprint to Safeguard Europe’s Water Resources’ ([COM\(2012\)0673](#)),
- having regard to the EU biodiversity strategy for 2030,
- having regard to the European Oceans Pact announced by Commission President von der Leyen in her political guidelines for the next European Commission (2024-2029) on 18 July 2024,
- having regard to the European climate adaptation plan and the European water resilience strategy announced by Commission President von der Leyen in her political guidelines for the next European Commission (2024-2029) on 18 July 2024,
- having regard to the EU’s 8th environment action programme,
- having regard to its resolution of 28 November 2019 on the climate and environment emergency¹⁵,
- having regard to its resolution of 14 November 2024 on the UN climate change conference in Baku, Azerbaijan (COP29)¹⁶,
- having regard to its resolution of 17 December 2020 on the implementation of the EU water legislation¹⁷,
- having regard to its resolution of 8 September 2015 on the follow-up to the European Citizens’ Initiative Right2Water¹⁸,
- having regard to UN General Assembly Resolution 64/292 of 28 July 2010, which recognises the human right to water and sanitation,
- having regard to European Environment Agency report 07/2024 of 15 October 2024 entitled ‘Europe’s state of water 2024: the need for improved water resilience’,
- having regard to the Environment Council conclusions of 17 June 2024 on the 8th environment action programme,
- having regard to European Court of Auditors special report 20/2021 of 28 September 2021 entitled ‘Sustainable water use in agriculture: CAP funds more likely to promote greater rather than more efficient water use’,

¹⁵ OJ C 232, 16.6.2021, p. 28.

¹⁶ Texts adopted, P10_TA(2024)0035.

¹⁷ OJ C 445, 29.10.2021, p. 126.

¹⁸ OJ C 316, 22.9.2017, p. 99.

- having regard to the European Economic and Social Committee declaration of 26 October 2023 for an EU Blue Deal,
 - having regard to its position adopted at first reading on 24 April 2024 with a view to the adoption of Directive (EU) 2024/... of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Directive 2000/60/EC establishing a framework for Community action in the field of water policy, Directive 2006/118/EC on the protection of groundwater against pollution and deterioration and Directive 2008/105/EC on environmental quality standards in the field of water policy¹⁹,
 - having regard to Rule 55 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the opinion of the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on the Environment, Climate and Food Safety (A10-0000/2025),
- A. whereas water is essential for life and humanity; whereas the EU has to manage existing water resources efficiently and respond effectively to the current water challenges, as they directly affect human health, the environment and its ecosystems, energy production, agriculture and food security;
- B. whereas water stress is already occurring in Europe, affecting 20 % of Europe’s territory and 30 % of the population on average every year, figures that are likely to increase in the future on account of climate change²⁰;
- C. whereas the deadline set by the Water Framework Directive (WFD) for European rivers, lakes, transitional, coastal and groundwaters to achieve ‘good’ status was 2015; whereas in 2021, only 37 % of Europe’s surface water bodies achieved ‘good’ or ‘high’ ecological status, while 29 % achieved ‘good’ chemical status²¹;
- D. whereas industry accounts for approximately 40 % of total water abstraction in Europe; whereas data on water abstraction and use in the EU is historical and poor²²;
- E. whereas agriculture is the most significant source of pressure on both surface and groundwater, as a result of water use and pollution from the intensive use of nutrients and pesticides; whereas agriculture is the largest net consumer of water in the EU²³;
- F. whereas the quality of surface waters across the continent reflects continuing and combined pressures, in particular diffuse pollution and the degradation of their natural flow and physical features; whereas pollution by nutrients and persistent priority substances, as well as by substances newly emerging as pollutants, continues; whereas

¹⁹ Texts adopted, P9_TA(2024)0358.

²⁰ European Environment Agency, report 07/2024, *Europe’s state of water 2024. The need for improved water resilience*, 2024.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Eurostat, Statistics Explained, ‘Archive: Water use in industry’, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Archive:Water_use_in_industry&oldid=196132#Further_Eurostat_information.

²³ European Environment Agency, report 07/2024, *Europe’s state of water 2024. The need for improved water resilience*, 2024.

groundwaters are affected by diffuse pollution, especially from agriculture, and also suffer from intensive abstraction²⁴;

- G. whereas the objective of achieving good chemical status for all EU water bodies by 2027 remains far from being achieved²⁵;
- H. whereas groundwater supplies 65 % of water for drinking and 25 % of water for agricultural irrigation in the EU; whereas it is a finite resource that needs to be protected from pollution and over-exploitation²⁶;
- I. whereas the lack of EU-wide quality standards for per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) in groundwater and insufficient monitoring of less-studied PFAS compounds exacerbate the challenge of achieving good chemical status for EU waters in line with the WFD;
- J. whereas occurrences of prolonged drought, extreme heat and large-scale flooding events will increase throughout the continent, damaging ecosystems and human health, and leading to major disruption to economic activities; whereas preserving water resources and the natural flow of rivers while supplying sufficient water of good quality is becoming a major challenge;
- K. whereas nature-based solutions are critical interventions to increase resilience in the water cycle and contribute to broader environmental objectives, including biodiversity protection, carbon sequestration and flood risk mitigation;
- L. whereas the current multiannual financial framework (MFF) includes an ambitious but non-binding target of dedicating at least 7.5 % of annual EU spending to biodiversity objectives in 2024 and 10 % in both 2026 and 2027;
- M. whereas pricing policy can improve the efficiency of water use; whereas pricing policies should consider affordability for households and small businesses;
- N. whereas digitalisation and innovation can effectively assist Member States, regional bodies and the Commission in collecting data on and monitoring water management;
- O. whereas 60 % of European river basin districts are transnational, which makes effective transboundary cooperation crucial;

General remarks

1. Welcomes and strongly supports President von der Leyen's announcement in the *Political Guidelines for the Next Commission 2024-2029* on putting forward a European Water Resilience Strategy (EWRS);
2. Calls for a full implementation of EU Green Deal legislation in order to build a resilient Europe, mitigate climate change, halt biodiversity loss and limit resource use, including water;

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

3. Reiterates the EU 2030 target to restore freshwater ecosystems, including the restoration and re-establishment of areas, the restoration of habitats of species and the non-deterioration of the areas after restoration, as well as the EU's objective to restore at least 25 000 km of free-flowing rivers by 2030;
4. Emphasises that the right to clean and safe water and sanitation must be unequivocally ensured, with every EU citizen having access to affordable and good quality water services;
5. Urges the Commission to integrate the water dimension into all EU policies in order to ensure that water sustainability is woven into the fabric of European policies; emphasises that assessing how each EU policy can impact water resources in terms of quantity, quality and accessibility would ensure that water resilience is a cornerstone of policy formulation and implementation, thus shifting the paradigm from treating water as an infinite resource to recognising its intrinsic value for humanity and the EU's ecological and socio-economic landscape;

Water efficiency

6. Calls for a transformative reduction in water demand, as well as an increase in water availability in water-stressed areas for all sectors at the local and regional level;
7. Calls for a legislative framework setting binding sectoral water efficiency and water abstraction targets at basin level, based on up-to-date assessments of climate risks and covering all water uses, including industry, agriculture and households; stresses the importance of efficient data collection practices across Member States and all sectors, including through the use of innovative technologies;
8. Calls for the transition to a sustainable farming model, assisted by the implementation of innovative technological solutions that can help ensure continued productivity while enabling agriculture to reduce pollution and adapt to lower water use;
9. Calls on the Commission and Member States to adopt supportive policies, at both the EU and the local level, that incentivise water reuse practices through economic regulation, environmental protection requirements or a combination of both;

Water pollution

10. Underlines the fact that the existing EU water policy framework is well designed to address the effective management of water resources and the protection and restoration of freshwater and marine ecosystems, but is poorly implemented, underfunded and barely enforced;
11. Calls on the Commission and Member States to accelerate the implementation and enforcement of the current legislation, in particular the WFD and its 'daughter' directives (the Groundwater Directive and the Environmental Quality Standards Directive), the Marine Strategy Framework Directive and the EU Nature Restoration Law;

12. Calls on the Commission to establish comprehensive EU-wide quality standards for PFAS totals in groundwater and surface water;
13. Emphasises the urgency of addressing pollution from pharmaceuticals, bisphenols and other emerging pollutants to align with the EU's zero pollution ambition and the goal of achieving good chemical status for all water bodies;
14. Calls for increased monitoring of pesticide residues in water bodies and stricter enforcement of pesticide application regulations to mitigate their impact on water quality;
15. Calls on the Commission to include an overview of measures in an annex to the EWRS, with a clear timeline for achieving the objectives in question;

Climate adaptation

16. Calls for climate adaptation proofing of all new EU legislative and non-legislative acts in order to ensure the integration of climate adaptation into sectoral plans and policy measures affecting water and land use; calls on the Commission to fully take into account the specific situation of islands and peripheral regions when adopting new legislative and non-legislative proposals;
17. Reiterates that climate adaptation solutions should not come at the cost of ecosystem degradation and should avoid increasing the demand for water- and energy-intensive activities, whether by expanding existing operations or introducing new ones, while ensuring equitable access to water for all;
18. Insists that, with climate change impacts becoming more persistent, flood and drought management must fully integrate arising risks; is convinced that a combination of preparedness, emergency and recovery responses on the one hand, and adapting societal and economic activities on the other, is essential to reduce vulnerability and increase resilience;
19. Calls on Member States to create natural water reserves based on up-to-date assessments of climate risks to protect critical water supplies and their catchments, and taking into consideration the environmental impact of developing such reserves;
20. Affirms the crucial cross-cutting role of nature-based solutions in addressing the challenges of the triple planetary crisis; calls on the Commission and Member States to prioritise the deployment of nature-based solutions for water resilience in their policy actions and recommendations;

Funding and pricing

21. Emphasises that the EWRS should ensure adequate funding from public and private sources in order to support resilient water infrastructure, sustainable water management, data collection, research, nature-based solutions and the uptake of water-efficient technologies, as well as to uphold nature restoration and biodiversity;

22. Calls on the Commission to create a separate and dedicated fund as a single EU access point for water resilience within the upcoming MFF;
23. Recalls that the lack of a dedicated water funding line or binding funding targets within the current MFF limits the EU's capacity to direct targeted investments towards essential water resilience measures;
24. Regrets that the application of the cost recovery principle remains low to non-existent in several Member States; calls on Member States and their regional authorities to implement adequate water pricing policies and fully apply the cost recovery principle for both environmental and resource costs;

Digitalisation and innovation

25. Stresses the potential of digitalisation and artificial intelligence in improving the management and monitoring of bodies of water;
26. Calls on the Commission, Member States and water providers to mainstream digitalisation and enhance the use of management and metering data for evidence-based decision-making at both the regulatory and consumption level; calls for digitally enabled water technologies to enable distance monitoring and reporting on water quality, leakages, use and resources;
27. Notes that better data and data analysis are key to evidence-based decision-making and the swift identification of small changes in water quality that could present a threat to bodies of water, together with the evaluation of best practices and identification of the most cost-effective measures;

Cross-border cooperation

28. Stresses the need for a comprehensive EWRS that fosters cross-border cooperation, ensuring sustainable water management and equitable resource distribution among Member States;
29. Calls for enhanced international cooperation, including at the level of river basins, to address the growing water crisis, ensure clean and high-quality water, promote sustainable water management and implement nature-based solutions;
30. Urges the EU to lead international efforts to protect and restore water ecosystems, in line with the WFD, the EU Biodiversity Strategy and the European Green Deal;

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31. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and the Commission.

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

This report presents an outline for the upcoming European Water Resilience Strategy that represents a significant advancement in the EU's commitment to enhancing water resilience, ensuring sustainable water management, and safeguarding water as an indispensable resource for future generations. The rapporteur aims to deliver a basis for a comprehensive and binding legislative framework that addresses water resilience through six key pillars: water efficiency, pollution mitigation, climate adaptation, funding, digitalisation and innovation, and cross-border cooperation.

With the strong belief that water sustainability must be a cornerstone of all EU policies, the rapporteur argues that every policy should be assessed for its impact on water resources, including quality, quantity, and accessibility. Embedding water sustainability into decision-making processes ensures that water resilience becomes integral to EU governance. This requires moving away from the outdated perception of water as an infinite resource, to recognising its intrinsic value as being essential to addressing environmental, social, and economic challenges Europe faces today, and in the near future.

The rapporteur emphasises the importance of binding sectoral water efficiency and abstraction targets for agriculture, industry, and domestic use, tailored to basin-level assessments. An evidence-based approach, supported by enhanced data collection and digital tools, is vital to effectively monitor and enforce these targets. Innovative water management practices must be prioritised to address water scarcity. Agriculture and industry, as two of the most significant water users, but also contributors to our food and economic security, must adopt efficient practices to balance their economic and environmental contributions. Encouraging innovation, fostering knowledge exchange, and implementing sustainable practices are crucial steps to ensure responsible water use across sectors.

Addressing pollution is equally essential to achieving water resilience. The rapporteur stresses the urgent need for stricter enforcement of the Water Framework Directive (WFD) and related legislation to combat chemical pollution in water. Emerging pollutants, such as per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) and bisphenols, present long-term ecological and health risks that require immediate action. Establishing EU-wide quality standards for PFAS in groundwater and surface water is crucial. Additionally, enhanced monitoring under the WFD, coupled with comprehensive measures to regulate industrial discharges, urban wastewater, and agricultural inputs, is necessary to combat contamination by PFAS and other hazardous substances. Relating to agriculture, the common agricultural policy funding should support the transition to low-input and organic farming practices to reduce reliance on chemical pesticides and fertilizers. By addressing pollution at its source and integrating circular economy principles, the EU can protect water from source to sea.

Climate adaptation is fundamental to making the European Water Resilience Strategy a future-proof tool. Water resilience is inextricably linked to the impacts of climate change, including floods and droughts. The rapporteur underscores the importance of nature-based solutions, such as restoring wetlands, rewetting peatlands, and creating natural water reserves, to enhance resilience against extreme weather events. These measures not only mitigate climate impacts but also restore ecological balance. The rapporteur believes that Member States must develop comprehensive drought and flood management plans that incorporate digital monitoring and early warning systems to ensure effective responses. Adaptation

measures must avoid exacerbating water- and energy-intensive activities while ensuring equitable access to water for all sectors.

Adequate funding is a cornerstone of this strategy. The rapporteur calls on the Commission to establish a dedicated funding line for water resilience within the upcoming multiannual financial framework (MFF). This funding should support the goals of the strategy, including infrastructure modernisation, innovative technologies, data collection, nature-based solutions, and compliance with legislative obligations, with a particular focus on addressing regional disparities and supporting economically disadvantaged areas. Public-private partnerships will also be pivotal in strengthening investment in water resilience. Governance frameworks should clearly define the roles of stakeholders in planning, financing, and implementing nature-based solutions, while integrating diverse funding sources, including philanthropic contributions and private-sector partnerships.

Digitalisation and innovation are transformative forces in advancing water resilience. Digital tools, artificial intelligence, and smart water technologies can revolutionise water management and monitoring by providing real-time data on water quality, usage, and leakages. Such technologies enable evidence-based policymaking and timely responses to emerging challenges. Real-time data collection is particularly critical for detecting small but significant changes in water systems, allowing policymakers to prioritise resources effectively. The rapporteur stresses the importance of data collection in ensuring monitoring and analysis of water efficiency and water pollution targets. To that end, the rapporteur highlights the role of digitalisation in robust data collection and calls on the Commission and Member States to prioritise knowledge sharing, and capacity building to ensure coordinated and equitable advancements in data collection through adoption of innovative digital technologies.

Water resilience is a transboundary challenge requiring strong international and regional collaboration. Climate change exacerbates shared water challenges, such as floods and water scarcity, which threaten social cohesion and stability. The report calls for enhanced international and regional cooperation to promote sustainable water management and equitable resource distribution. The rapporteur advocates the establishment of natural water reserves and greater collaboration at river basin level. Strengthened partnerships with neighbouring countries and international organisations will ensure that water resilience becomes a cornerstone of global and regional environmental strategies.

Water is essential to ensure the resilience of Europe. It is a resource needed for our food security, for our industry's competitiveness, including for emerging technological advancements, and, above all, it is essential for our own livelihood. The rapporteur believes that this report provides a bold, comprehensive framework for a stronger, more competitive and more resilient Europe, ready to tackle both current and future water challenges. By prioritising sustainability, inclusivity, and innovation, the report outlined envisions a people-centred water resilience framework that secures the long-term health of Europe's water resources, ecosystems, and communities today, and for generations to come.

ANNEX: ENTITIES OR PERSONS FROM WHOM THE RAPPORTEUR HAS RECEIVED INPUT

Pursuant to Article 8 of Annex I to the Rules of Procedure, the rapporteur declares that he received input from the following entities or persons in the preparation of the draft report:

Entity and/or person
Aqua Publica Europea
Bentley Systems International Limited
Danfoss
ECOLAB
EEA - European Environmental Agency
EEB - European Environmental Bureau
ERN - European Rivers Networks
EurEau
European Anglers Alliance
European Association for the Consumption-Based Billing of Energy Costs - AISBL
Grundfos
Malta Business Bureau
Permanent Representation of Spain to the EU
Suez
The Energy and Water Agency, Malta
The Nature Conservancy
Veolia
Water Europe
Wetlands International
WWF
Xylem

The list above is drawn up under the exclusive responsibility of the rapporteur.

Where natural persons are identified in the list by their name, by their function or by both, the rapporteur declares that he has submitted to the natural persons concerned the European Parliament's Data Protection Notice No 484 (<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/data-protect/index.do>), which sets out the conditions applicable to the processing of their personal data and the rights linked to that processing.