

## Water Resilience

### Background

The goal of the European water resilience strategy is to set a path towards water security and resilience, while better integrating water considerations across different policies and sources of funding. The strategy also aims to scale up investments, leverage research and innovation and close the skills gap. The strategy will focus on three specific objectives:

- Restore and protect the broken water cycle;
- Ensure clean and affordable water and sanitation for all;
- Promote a competitive EU water industry and a clean, water-wise and circular economy.

The strategy will address five action areas: (i) governance and implementation; (ii) infrastructure; (iii) finance and investments; (iv) security; and (v) industry, innovation and education. The European Commission will also put emphasis on the Water Efficiency First principle to better manage water demand and increase water reuse and circularity across economic sectors in the EU. The focus will be on defining the principle and providing objectives and orientations to operationalize it, including to overcome investment barriers and foster innovation. The strategy will build on and promote full implementation of the strengthened body of EU rules on water. It will also contribute to achieving several other Commission priorities, including the Vision for Agriculture and Food, the Clean Industrial Deal, the chemicals industry package, the Circular Economy Act and the European Oceans Pact. It will complement the European climate adaptation strategy and contribute to advancing the EU biodiversity strategy for 2030 and the water-energy-food-ecosystems nexus, while fostering implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights.

### CIFF views

The Chemical Industry Federation Finland supports the initiative to develop a Water Resilience Strategy at the EU level. Water is essential and vital for the chemical industry. At the same time, the EU target of good status for waters remains unachieved, and the negative effects of climate change exacerbate water-related risks.

CIFF member companies are constantly working to minimize environmentally harmful emissions to water and to ensure that emissions remain within the limits set by environmental permits and legislation. Best available techniques are used and impacts on water systems are monitored. The updated Industrial Emissions Directive (IED 2.0) also introduces new environmental policy targets for chemical industry plants, including the continuous improvement of environmental efficiency and safety. The Responsible Care sustainability program for the chemical industry has been monitoring various emission indicators, including those related to water emissions and energy efficiency, for over 30 years.

The Water Resilience Strategy should serve as a step towards a more coordinated and strategic approach to water, including stakeholder cooperation. There is no lack of EU legislation on water, and instead of new legislative proposals, priority should now be given to ensuring that the existing EU-wide regulatory framework on water is properly and consistently implemented, and to address potential contradictions and overlaps in existing legislation. Although a coherent and strategic approach at EU-level is needed, measures, including pricing mechanisms, should remain local, reflecting the nature of environmental conditions, water-related challenges as well as measures already undertaken, bearing in mind that water quality and availability is very much location dependent.

The Water Resilience Strategy as well as any Water Efficiency First-principle should emphasize a holistic approach: water-related actions need to be complementary and consider competitiveness, innovation and security aspects in addition to environmental ones. The Water Resilience Strategy and any Water Efficiency First-principle need to be aligned with requirements under existing legislation, such as the IED2.0, where efficiency (including on water) is already required and directly linked to permitting. Careful consideration is needed so as not to create concepts or strategies that contradict or overlap with existing policy and legislative obligations. The EU policy mix and strategies need to be attractive for investments, creating incentives and an enabling framework for innovation, development and deployment of water-efficient technologies and solutions. The Water Resilience Strategy could serve as a good opportunity for a coherence check of cross-sectoral, water-related policies, as well as outline support needs and options for cost-efficient implementation.

All water users should be encouraged and supported to adopt sustainable water use solutions and practices. Awareness raising, engagement and education are key factors in this sense. Possible actions stemming from the strategy should be focused where they are most effective and where they will bring the most benefits. Robust data and understanding are key factors of any successful strategy; therefore knowledge, understanding and sharing of best practices should be increased and promoted. Solid data, knowledge and understanding is especially important for any new concepts, such as the Water Efficiency First-principle.

In Finland, the use of cooling water is environmentally efficient, and it is hoped that this will continue to be possible. Industry uses cooling water because of its good availability and high heat transfer capacity. In Finland, the water used for cooling plants is subject to permits and is monitored. The cooling water is returned to the water body, so it is not normally consumed in the cooling process. Care should be taken to ensure that definitions and concepts related to water are clear and precise, for example in relation to water use and water consumption, but also efficiency.

### **Timeline**

The European Commission communication is expected during Q2/2025.

### **Additional information:**

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