

CALL FOR EVIDENCE FOR AN INITIATIVE (without an impact assessment)

This document aims to inform the public and stakeholders about the Commission's work, so they can provide feedback and participate effectively in consultation activities.

We ask these groups to provide views on the Commission's understanding of the problem and possible solutions, and to give us any relevant information they may have.

TITLE OF THE INITIATIVE	European water resilience strategy
LEAD DG – RESPONSIBLE UNIT	DG ENV – C1 (Sustainable Freshwater Management)
LIKELY TYPE OF INITIATIVE	Commission Communication
INDICATIVE TIMING	Q2-2025
ADDITIONAL INFORMATION	Policy area: Water Water - European Commission (europa.eu)

This document is for information purposes only. It does not prejudice the final decision of the Commission on whether this initiative will be pursued or on its final content. All elements of the initiative described by this document, including its timing, are subject to change.

A. Political context, problem definition and subsidiarity check

Political context

This initiative responds to a clear demand for enhanced action to address water challenges in the EU from Member States, EU institutions and stakeholders, including local authorities, the private sector, NGOs and members of the public. At global level, the 2023 UN Water Conference – where the EU presented its vision and commitments for a water-resilient world by 2050 – provided strong momentum.

As announced in the [Political Guidelines for the next European Commission 2024-2029](#), the European water resilience strategy will focus on ensuring that sources are properly managed, scarcity is addressed, and that we enhance the competitive innovative edge of our water industry and take a circular economy approach. The strategy aims to contribute to mitigating and preventing acute water stress across the world.

Problem the initiative aims to tackle

Despite the EU's comprehensive legal framework to protect and sustainably manage water resources, structural mismanagement of water has resulted in the continued degradation and pollution of this resource and water-related ecosystems, including coastal and marine ones. Over the last 5 years, floods, prolonged droughts and water scarcity have affected more and more areas of the EU and are being exacerbated by climate change, pollution and biodiversity loss. These events are harming people, the environment and the economy, and are increasing tensions between a growing number of water users. Increasingly, water is becoming a constraining factor in different economic sectors. Water-related weather events and poor water management have already caused damage in the EU costing several hundred billion euros ([JRC, 2021](#) and [EEA, 2024](#)).

Basis for EU action (legal basis and subsidiarity check)

Legal basis

<p>Due to its broad scope, the initiative will cover areas falling under the EU’s exclusive competence and others falling under the shared competence of the EU and its Member States. The principle of subsidiarity will be respected.</p>
<p>Practical need for EU action</p>
<p>The transboundary nature of water challenges, their cross-cutting nature and their relevance to delivering EU policies and legislation in various domains provide a clear basis for a European strategy on water resilience.</p> <p>Given the central role of Member States and local authorities in water management, any action identified in the initiative will take due account of the principle of subsidiarity and the differences in water availability and needs between EU regions and Member States.</p>
<p>B. What does the initiative aim to achieve and how?</p>
<p>The overall goal of the European water resilience strategy is to set a clear path towards water security and resilience, while better integrating water considerations across different policies and sources of funding. It also aims to scale up investments, leverage research and innovation and close the skills gap, taking account of social impacts and territorial differences to ensure a just transition.</p> <p>The initiative will focus on three specific objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restore and protect the broken water cycle; • Ensure clean and affordable water and sanitation for all; and • Promote a competitive EU water industry and a clean, water-wise and circular economy. <p>It will address five action areas: (i) governance and implementation; (ii) infrastructure; (iii) finance and investments; (iv) security; and (v) industry, innovation and education. It will include a strong international dimension, contributing to global sustainable development, and fostering transboundary cooperation for peace, stability and security.</p> <p>The 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 operationalise it, including to overcome investment barriers and foster innovation.</p> <p>The initiative 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 announced 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 the preparedness Union 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.</p>
<p>Likely impacts</p>
<p>The likely impacts of the initiative will be to secure the availability of clean water, better protect the EU against water-related risks by increasing the coherence and complementarity of all EU water-related policies and actions, and to strengthen commitment, cooperation and trust-building between the sectors using water and other stakeholders.</p>
<p>Future monitoring</p>
<p>Monitoring of implementation will be ensured primarily through existing mechanisms, with no additional reporting burden on Member States or businesses. It will include regular exchanges in the Council Working Party on Environment, the Water and Marine Directors meetings and in the context of the</p>

Common Implementation Strategy for the Water Framework Directive and for the Marine Strategy Framework Directive.

C. Better regulation

Impact assessment

The initiative will take the form of a Commission Communication that will not be accompanied by an impact assessment as it will not create a new policy at this stage. Impact assessments will be carried out for any related subsequent legislative proposals, as needed.

Consultation strategy

The public is invited to respond to this Call for Evidence. In addition, a stakeholder consultation event will be held in March 2025.

As the issue has been high on the political agenda in recent years, the initiative will benefit from extensive inputs already available, including the:

- outcomes of debates and hearings held by the Council, European Parliament (EP), European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) and European Committee of the Regions (CoR),
- consultation of expert groups supporting the implementation of EU rules on water and other relevant legislation,
- results of the European Environment Agency's Europe's State of Water 2024 report, the EU Environmental Foresight System foresight report and the Joint Research Centre Policy Lab exercise on water resilience,
- outcomes of the 2024 Green Week, focused on water resilience,
- stakeholders' contributions submitted after the previous announcement of a water resilience initiative in 2023,
- EP's upcoming own-initiative report on water resilience,
- European Citizens' Initiative for a Water-Smart and Resilient Europe, registered in 2024.

Stakeholders likely to be interested in this initiative include:

- Member States, including relevant Commission expert groups
- Relevant EU agencies
- EP, EESC and CoR
- River basin district authorities, coastal communities and port authorities
- Water regulators and utilities
- Members of the public
- Young people and youth organisations
- Industry and businesses related to water management
- Social partners
- Experts, think tanks and NGOs
- Academia, researchers and innovation policy stakeholders
- Regional and transboundary water conventions and commissions
- International stakeholders and partners outside the EU.