

Water for a sustainable Europe – our vision for 2030

We have achieved sustainable water resource management and universal access to modern and safe water supply and sanitation because we value water in all its dimensions – in its economic, social, environmental and cultural importance.



Launching version

30th June 2008

The European Water Vision wants to be a vision for all people in Europe and all stakeholders. Formulated from the viewpoint of the people and stakeholders in a very positive spirit it seeks to stimulate ownership by everyone. The vision puts the people and values into the centre. Only if we mobilise many people and stakeholders around common values we will be able to achieve sustainability with regard to water in Europe. The vision wants to unite and to stimulate people and stakeholders for joint action in partnership to solve the water problems in Europe and for a significant contribution to overcome the global water crisis.

The present text was developed in an inclusive process by European stakeholders initiated by the European Water Partnership (EWP) and will be the starting point for a wide consultation process in the different European Regions. Via regional workshops and modern consultation technologies we will try to reach as many people and stakeholders as possible. The strength of Europe is its diversity and the objective of the consultation process is to reflect this diversity in the final version which should be presented to a global audience at the World Water Forum in March 2009 in Istanbul.

The current political crisis of Europe is in the first place a crisis of a clear common vision that people can understand and feel part of it. The water vision and its inclusive process want to contribute to overcome this crucial problem for Europe.

1. We treat water as our common heritage with an economic, social environmental and cultural value for our societies. Water is not a commodity like any other one – it's a fragile resource which can not be replaced and we protect and preserve it for future generations to sustain our societies, our economies and the environment. Water sustainability is crucial for us.
2. Water is an essential human need and we recognize the access to basic water supply and sanitation as a human right. The people in Europe have universal access to safe, modern and affordable water and sanitation services. At the same time we are able to satisfy the other human water needs – for businesses, industry, agriculture and recreation and have achieved a balance with needs of the environment also with regard to sustain biodiversity. We can rely on essential ecosystem services from our healthy rivers, lakes, coastal waters and wetlands and our people can also enjoy high quality rivers, lakes and coastal waters for ecologic and recreational purposes.
3. We manage our water resources sustainable within river basins across political boundaries including transboundary waters and we apply an integrated adaptive water management approach. All the stakeholders including all inhabitants in the basin participate actively in the management decision process. We apply a preventive approach which integrates quality and quantity as well as surface water, groundwater and coastal waters. We have adopted and implemented ambitious legislation such as the Water Framework Directive and other related legislation and made other policy areas such as agriculture, regional, industrial, trade, transport and energy policy 'water sensitive'.
4. We have achieved a true 'water democracy' where we apply the principles of transparency, integrity, solidarity and equity and where all people and stakeholders are aware of their rights and responsibilities. Our well informed people use their freedom of choice wisely - what they drink and how they use water - and use their opportunity to participate actively in the governance of water management and services. The people have a say in the quality and organization of their services and our services are efficient and sensitive to environmental and social needs.
5. We have jointly achieved a culture where water resources are not wasted, spoiled or overused. We have actively pushed a paradigm shift from supply driven water management to an integrated supply and demand driven approach as well as from an end of pipe to a preventive approach. We are able to satisfy most of our needs with water resources within the same river basin.

6. We have achieved a change of mindset, attitude and practices through raising water awareness and the application of appropriate instruments and incentives. Proven sustainable water practices, pricing and charging policies, transparency about water footprints of individual, industrial agricultural and local authorities' practices and of products have been useful instruments in achieving a modern water efficient society.
7. Water services have a price. We pay for services and for the uses and our pricing policies are guided by transparency, sustainability, efficiency as well as a social and environmental approach. We use water pricing and other economic instruments to achieve sustainable water use.
8. We are coping with the challenges of climate change as well as with the natural phenomena such as floods and droughts as we are continuously improving our adaptive, integrated management approach and we adapted our infrastructure and practices. Our infrastructure is planned, constructed, operated and maintained in an efficient and environmental and social acceptable manner based on a long term perspective.
9. We apply appropriate technologies and have thereby continuously improved our water efficiency and minimized pollution to a level which is negligible with regard to human and environmental health. Communities, agriculture and industry enjoy the economic and social benefits of a high level of water productivity by applying recycling technologies, closed production cycles and efficient irrigation techniques and other technologies. We promote and conduct research and development to continuously improve our know how on adaptive integrated management and innovative technological solutions and have achieved a fast track to bring those technologies to the markets.
10. Europe is a responsible partner in the world that actively promotes and supports the achievement of sustainable water management and universal access to water supply and sanitation in all countries. We have understood that sustainable water management is key to peace and security and to eradicate poverty and have made water a priority of our foreign and development policy. Our trade and economic policies have integrated water issues and we have significantly reduced our global water footprint to a level that is sustainable.

Organisations & Institutions contributing to the

Europe's Water Vision

Aquafed
Austrian Chamber of Commerce
Austrian Ministry of Environment
Breivoll
CEJA
Coca Cola Europe
Coca Cola HBC
CSR Europe
DHI
DOW
European Commission – DG Environment
European Landowners Organization (ELO)
European Parliament
EUREAU
EWA
French Water Partnership
German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety
GIG
Global Nature Fund
IBM
ICLEI
Institute of Advanced Studies on Sustainability
IWA
Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning, Republic of Slovenia
Netherlands Water Partnership
P&G
Quest Ltd.
Valenciana Region
Solidarity Water Europe
TNO Science and Industry
Tuscany Region
WBCSD/Alcan
Weber Shandwick
WECF
Women for Water
WWF EPO

Initiated by EWP