



15TH
EUROPEAN YOUTH
PARLIAMENT FOR WATER
NIZHNY NOVGOROD - RUSSIAN FEDERATION
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COLLECTIVE COMMITMENT

15th Session of the European Youth Parliament for Water

Introduction

We, the youth of Albania, Armenia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, France, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Malta, Moldova, Russia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Switzerland, Uzbekistan, as well as members of the Sava Youth Parliament and Scheldt Youth Parliament have gathered in Nizhny Novgorod, Russia, at the conclusion of the 15th Session of the European Youth Parliament for Water with the agenda “The River Basin: the Backbone of Regional Development”.

Expressing our gratitude to The Russian Socio-Ecological Union (Russian: Российский социально-экологический союз), Let's Help the River Movement (Russian: Движение в защиту Волги «Поможем Реке»), EcoCenter Dodo (Экоцентр Дронг), Erasmus+ Programme, Agence de l'Eau Artois Picardie, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, EU delegation in Russia, City of Nizhny Novgorod, Legislative assembly of Nizhny Novgorod, Lukoil (Russian: Лукойл), and Nizhniy Novgorod DWP (Russian: Нижегородский водоканал) for convening the youth representatives from 16 countries

Affirming our commitment to the principles of sustainability, identified in the UN General Assembly Declaration No. A/70/1 “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”,

Further recognising the importance of sharing experiences among the European and regional youth to harmonise views on water-related issues and provide collective solutions to global challenges,

Noting with concern the human nature of climate change, as well as growing anthropogenic pressure on all the components of ecosystems,

Desiring to serve as a nexus of change at the watershed, water basin, and interbasin levels,

Recognising the critical role of young leaders and influencers in the water-related sector, including river basin management and transboundary water cooperation,

Stressing the power of the collective Youth voice,

HEREBY DECLARE

1. Challenges

1. We note with concern the negative human-caused changes in the environment and the water cycle. This includes inter alia the increased frequency of droughts, the loss of biodiversity, ecosystem degradation, salinisation, and the worsening appearance of the water bodies.
2. We acknowledge, concerning the undeniable pollution of water, insufficient wastewater and agricultural run-off treatment as well as the lack of sewage infrastructure.
3. We recognise the existence of constraining gaps between regions, river stakeholders, and generations when it comes to river basin management.
4. We regret to note the limited access to relevant information. That results in the lack of public awareness regarding the river basin issues and their urgency.
5. We acknowledge the administrative and geographic fragmentation in water governance among policymakers while addressing the needs of local communities.
6. We recognize the existing conflicts, and emphasize the importance of the conscientious and cooperative attitude towards water resources used for household, agricultural, ecological, cultural, industrial, and recreational purposes.
7. We desire a shift in policy-making from a solely profit-based approach to a sustainable one, which could ensure gender and economic equity, as well as access to clean water and sanitation for all (SDG 5,10, and 6 respectively).
8. We realise how regional basin development is hampered by unilateral management and affirm both the productive power of long-lasting trust between stakeholders and their commitment to the principle of sustainability.

2. Solutions

In the 15th European Youth Parliament for Water, we strived to harness our youthful passions within a realistic context. We wanted to achieve this by forming a realistic template in order to recommend solutions with reference to some of the daily challenges we unfortunately face.

1. **Robust and Inclusive Policies.** During our week at the 15th European Youth Parliament for Water, we discussed possible solutions policymakers could implement. A start to this would be to spread and promote instruments from the European Union such as the Water Framework Directive and the Waste Water Treatment Directive. This may initiate interest in non-European member states to start implementing such practices. Another important thing is that the current laws keep pace with science about emerging pollutants. Policymakers should also encourage the implementation of water-wise agricultural practices and tackle the ones which have a negative impact on water quality and quantity such as a net loss of wetlands and river ecosystems. This process would need to be in combination with legitimising youth by involving them in the decision making process.
2. **Awareness that Climate is Water.** We believe that change can also be brought by increasing awareness campaigns to reduce behaviours which have a negative impact on water quality and quantity, such as having a bad water footprint. We also believe that the knowledge about the effects of climate change on the river basin should be communicated and citizens connection to nature reinforced. Lastly, we see the need

for citizen education in order to improve awareness about the climate emergency we are facing.

3. **Implementing Innovation.** The diffusion of experimental knowledge between the different levels of decision-makers is crucial to create solutions based on the latest findings from the field. In the same way, we need to reinforce the collaboration between experts, scientists, universities and decision makers. For example, the innovation partnership needs to be made through pilot projects proposed by Water Agencies, municipalities, companies, and research organizations.
4. **Development in tune with nature and society.** We are also proposing technical tools to help stakeholders tackle river basin's issues. We ask for more prevention using a precautionary principle, with preliminary impact studies and stakeholder consultation.

We ask, where possible, to implement state-of-the-art technologies for water management. Some simple measures could consider micro-hydroelectric systems, biomimetics, and more efficient water nozzles instead of taps. To avoid water losses, we suggest to replace old or damaged infrastructure with smart and resilient technologies and keep track of their efficiency across time. In these processes, support has to be provided to operators and municipalities, to estimate the needed investments for adapted water infrastructures. Rising block tariff mechanisms can be added, considering the differences between countries when defining the thresholds. In a circular economy vision, we ask to apply its principles to the water management and water use, to increase the volume of wastewater recycled and decrease the use of potable water for all the purposes but quenching the thirst. At last, we suggest evaluating the results of our activities with well-known indicators such as the Blue Peace Index.

3. Our mission

1. Recognising our individual responsibility in the development of our river basin, we commit ourselves to taking concrete and measurable actions to raise awareness. We engage ourselves in adapting our daily behaviour in a responsible way by decreasing our water footprint. We will support and actively participate in projects promoting sustainable use of natural resources.
2. Conscious of the capacities developed through the 15th Session of the European Youth Parliament for Water, we endeavour to implement the projects built up during the session and to continue sharing our experience with the multicultural participants we met. We commit to strengthening the links between the World Youth Parliament for Water, the European Parliament for Water, and the local youth of our basin or country by realising common projects.
3. For the voice of youth to be heard and trusted, we will participate in their ecological education. By gathering and aggregating youth views, needs, and challenges, we will provide support and facilitate synergy between generations of ecologically conscious actors.

4. We will apply the inspiring knowledge we acquired to make our propositions to make the change happen and heard. Using means of communication adapted to our audience, we will testify of successful benefit-sharing throughout our basin network. We will also share our constructive foresight on the failures in the enforcement of water-related laws by industry and governments.
5. Yet we ask to refrain from blaming individuals: there is only the empowerment and cooperation of each stakeholder and each generation to enable the necessary developments we aim for in our river basin.

Conclusions

For this 15th European Youth Parliament for Water, we are all fully convinced of the fact that the water basin is the most suitable frame for water management.

After this session, we will make people in our communities aware of the challenges to tackle. At the same time, we will continue to insist on the emergency nature of the situation and the need to act for water and the ecosystems it sustains. Moreover, we endeavour to realise the missions we committed to. We commit to communicating between the different youth groups and with the whole society within our river basin.

To conclude, we commit ourselves to evaluating the actions we will take during the following year and increasing our engagement over the years. Embodying the change is the main way to continue to encourage both youth and other generations around the world.



(Signature)
Ms Hasmik Barseghyan
President of the Parliament

The 15th Session of the European Youth Parliament for Water
Nizhny Novgorod, 22 November 2019



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Mr Stas Peters
Vice President of the Parliament



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