

Youth Position Paper

On the European Water Resilience Strategy

As the next generation of water professionals and advocates for water, working on both the European and World scale within the European Youth Parliament for Water (EYPW) and World Youth Parliament for Water (WYPW), we endorse the efforts placed towards shaping a water resilience strategy.

Taking into account previous agreements and directives as well as the current Draft Report, we see many propositions that give us hope towards a water-resilient and sustainable Europe. However, in order to fully develop the European Water Resilience Strategy, we believe that there are key points that need to be further developed.

The EYPW and WYPW present key recommendations to strengthen the EWRS and ensure a sustainable and water-secure Europe in the continuation of this text.

Within these recommendations, we would urge you to especially take into consideration our proposals regarding the youth, as we strongly believe that the European Water Resilience Strategy must also account for current youth needs and visions of the future.

We hope to see the conclusion of our recommendations in the final document of the European Water Resilience Strategy.

The recommendations are the following:

A Dedicated Water Accelerator Fund for Youth

Establish a European Youth Water Innovation & Acceleration Fund under the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) to provide financial and technical support for youth-led water initiatives.

The transition to a water-smart economy must include young people as key drivers of innovation and impact. A dedicated fund will create opportunities for youth-led initiatives, start-ups, and community-driven water projects, making their solutions more investable and scalable. Young people have the capabilities and the potential to drive economic growth and advance sustainable water management. To harness this potential, it is essential to integrate youth-led innovation into Europe's long term strategies, along with mentorship and capacity-building programs to accelerate the development and scaling of innovative water technologies, nature-based solutions, and governance models that address pressing water challenges.

Creating a Youth Advisory Body for Water Governance

Establish a permanent Youth Advisory Board within the EWRS governance framework to ensure continuous youth involvement in water governance decision-making.

As passionate water professionals and advocates, we believe it is crucial to create formal mechanisms for youth participation and host regular youth consultations from the local to the highest level to ensure proper implementation of the EWRS. As the present and the future, we believe the youth must be at the decision-making tables and contribute to the shaping of our collective future. We believe creating an advisory body to the EWRS implementation bodies, consisting of young water professionals and advocates would be the best way of achieving this important point.

Example of good practice: EU Youth Test, which ensures that policies consider youth impact before adoption.

Strengthen Cooperation with Non-Member States on Water Resilience

It is a fact that water in all its forms transcends political and national borders.

We believe, in order to ensure a water-resilient EU and water-resilient European continent, it is crucial to cooperate with non-member states whom EU member states share water sources. The only way to ensure a water-resilient EU is to strengthen and develop new and existing cooperation strategies with non-members states to ensure all sources of water are managed in a sustainable and resilient way.

Good example: EU Macro Regional Strategies (for example: EUSDR)

Addressing Urban Water Stress and Contamination Risks

The EWRS prioritizes water stress at an ecosystemic level but neglects urban water stress that leads to intermittent supply due to population growth. It also overlooks increased sewer system flow rates caused by expanding cities, reduced infiltration, and more frequent extreme rainfall in Europe. Additionally, the EWRS fails to address emerging contaminants in urban networks, such as Legionella, linked to aging infrastructure, climate change, and urbanization. Clear policies are needed to improve operational frameworks and mitigate health risks.

Strengthening Policies for Leakage Control and Pipe Rehabilitation

Unlike sectors like oil and gas, the water sector lacks stringent pipeline inspection and leakage control policies, leading to significant water losses. With climate change exacerbating the issue, mandatory leak reduction programs using smart networks, AI, and in-line inspections are essential. Additionally, aging pipes contribute to financial losses, contamination, and intermittent supply, making policy-driven pipe replacement programs critical for resilient urban water infrastructure.

Advancing Capacity-Building and Education

With the increasing severity of climate change and water-related issues, the demand for skilled professionals has never been greater. Europe is facing a shortage of skilled water professionals. As emerging professionals, we believe that the EWRS should separately focus on developing contemporary educational programs to guarantee a steady supply of qualified water experts to tackle future challenges.

Water Resilience Through a Security Lens

We believe it is crucial to emphasise the importance of cross border cooperation towards water resilience. We are aware that, for some member countries, it is challenging to position water resilience as the main goal in their agendas, but we believe that by viewing poor water management as a security threat, water resilience will become one of the main EU goals and at the base of future security strategies, leading to a sustainable, water-resilient and secure Europe. Poor water management can exacerbate conflict, economic instability, and displacement. A water-secure Europe is a more resilient and peaceful Europe.

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Addressing Water Scarcity as a Central Pillar

Elevate water scarcity management and prevention as a key pillar within the EWRS and ensure that it is treated with the same urgency as water quality. We believe the Strategy addresses water quality in detail, but does not equally address water scarcity, which can, for many people, become an equal, or bigger threat than water quality.

Prioritizing Glacier Protection

The rapid loss of Europe's glaciers threatens water availability, increases flood risks, and disrupts entire ecosystems. Taking into account 2025 being the UN year of Glaciers, we believe it is crucial that the EWRS contains a separate pillar focusing on the challenges and possible solutions to Glacier loss in Europe.

Digitalisation and Innovation

While the draft version highlights the potential of digitalisation and artificial intelligence, we advise that regulations should be established to make these technological advancements more sustainable. A recent study calculated the water footprint of AI technologies.



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