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NOTE

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Permanent Representatives Committee/Council
Subject:	Water Resilience Strategy - One year after: state of play and the way forward - Exchange of views

In view of the Council (Environment) on 25 June 2026, a background paper from the Presidency with questions to Ministers on the topic is contained in the Annex.

The Committee of Permanent Representatives is invited to take note of the background note and questions and to forward them to the Council.

ANNEX

Water Resilience Strategy - One year after: state of play and the way forward

– Exchange of views –

On 4 June 2025, the Commission presented the European Water Resilience Strategy. The Strategy was welcomed by Council in its conclusions of 21 October 2025. The strategy follows increasing concerns regarding water scarcity, droughts, floods and the overall impacts of climate change on water resources, ecosystems and economic sectors. It builds on the existing EU water acquis, including notably the Water Framework Directive, the Floods Directive and the Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive, as well as the EU Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change. It also aligns with the European Green Deal objectives and the 2040 climate target pathway and responds to growing evidence that water-related risks are intensifying across the Union. Many regions are experiencing more frequent and severe droughts, declining groundwater levels and rising water demand from agriculture, industry and urban areas. At the same time, extreme precipitation events and floods are placing growing pressure on infrastructure and ecosystems.

The aim of the strategy is to strengthen water resilience by restoring and protecting the entire water cycle, from source to sea, to better withstand floods, droughts, and water scarcity through effective implementation of existing EU water legislation. It promotes water-smart practices, green infrastructure, and measures to reduce pollution, including harmful substances such as PFAS in drinking water. The strategy also seeks to foster a water-smart economy by improving water efficiency, targeting a 10% reduction in water consumption across the EU by 2030, while modernizing infrastructure, reducing leaks, and encouraging digital solutions through public and private investment. In addition, it aims to ensure access to clean and affordable water by raising public awareness, supporting responsible water pricing, and promoting education and best-practice sharing, while strengthening the EU’s global leadership on water resilience through international cooperation and partnerships.

One year after the adoption of the strategy, the Presidency proposes taking stock of the progress achieved and discussing future actions, with a particular focus on the following three issues to be addressed by Ministers:

1. Stocktaking of the Water Resilience Strategy and national implementation:

The European Water Resilience Strategy includes at its core a new impetus for EU's efforts towards promoting **water efficiency**. It introduces an aspirational target of improving water efficiency by 10% by 2030 and introduces "the Water Efficiency First Principle". The Principle is further explained in the Commission Recommendation of 4 June 2025 on guiding principles of water efficiency first.[1]

According to a 2025 EEA/ETC Report on Water Savings for a water-resilient Europe, **saving potentials vary greatly** across EU regions and across sectors, but significant reductions in water abstraction are feasible. These reductions could be achieved through technical and operational measures to reduce losses and leakages as well as improving water efficiency in electricity production, agriculture, the public water supply, and manufacturing. Estimated water saving potentials per sector in the EU 27 range between 45-95% in energy (cooling powerplants), 5%-20% in agriculture, 20%-50% in public water supply and 30%-50% in industry (see table below).

[1] https://environment.ec.europa.eu/publications/commission-recommendation-water-efficiency-first-guiding-principles_en

Table 1. Estimated water-saving potential per sector in the EU-27

	Electricity — power plant cooling	Agriculture	Public water supply, including tourism and services	Industry	Others (e.g. mining, quarrying and construction)
Annual average of water abstraction (2000-2022) (million m^3)	72,300	59,300	38,700	28,200	3,000
Annual water abstraction as percentage of total for economic sectors	36%	29%	19%	14%	2%
Theoretical water-saving potential within the sector (% of the sector's annual water abstraction)	45-95%	5-20%	20-50% (10-30% in tourism)	30-50%	Not assessed in this briefing

Source: (Wolters et al., 2025) based on data from EEA 2024.

To support the implementation of the Recommendation and contribute to the ambition to increase water efficiency by 10% by 2030, the Commission in close cooperation with Member States and stakeholders, particularly in the context of the CIS Working Group on Water Scarcity & Droughts is working on the development of a **joint methodology for water efficiency targets**, taking into account territorial and other differences between countries, regions and sectors. The timeline of this workstream ends in **Q4 2026**. With the support of a consultant, the Group has mapped around 40 methodologies across public and private initiatives to set water related targets and is now distilling from these methodologies certain elements which together can form the basis for a European methodology or methodologies to set efficiency targets at the level of water storage, water conveyance and water use.

2. Digitalisation and smarter water management

The Water Resilience Strategy announced the development of an **EU-wide Action Plan on the digitalisation of the water sector**. To support this initiative, the Commission recently launched a call for evidence which closes on 24 June 2026[2]. Member States and other stakeholders were encouraged to provide their views and suggestions.

The Digital Action Plan for the Water Sector aims to overcome fragmentation in Europe's water management systems by promoting greater digital integration and coordination across the water cycle and between governance levels. By enabling better data sharing and digital solutions, it seeks to improve efficiency, reduce administrative burdens, strengthen resilience to water-related risks, and support the effective implementation of the Water Efficiency First Principle.

The upcoming Action Plan will target specific challenges of the water sector and will include **two main pillars**: i) deployment of digital solutions through funding and knowledge-sharing to build up digital skills and encourage technology transfer in the water sector; and ii) support to water data sharing by fostering the development of national data portals to overcome fragmentation and make data easily findable, accessible free of charge, interoperable, and reusable, in line with the requirements of the Open Data Directive. The Plan is part of the Commission's Work Programme for 2026. It operates at the intersection of the green and digital transitions, directly supporting the objectives of the Competitiveness Compass by helping secure resource availability across multiple sectors.

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2 Commission seeks input on digital action plan for water sector - Environment

The plan **will build on**: (i) the Apply AI strategy and the AI continent plan, which aim to facilitate the deployment of artificial intelligence for predictive maintenance and real-time monitoring; and (ii) the Data Union strategy, which supports water data sharing by fostering the development of national data portals to overcome fragmentation and make data easy to find, freely accessible, interoperable and reusable, in line with the requirements of the Open Data Directive.

3. Mobilizing Financing for the Water Resilience Strategy:

The EU Cohesion Policy mid-term review introduced greater flexibilities allowing Member States to redirect 2021–2027 funds toward strategic priorities with water resilience being highlighted as one of the key priorities and benefiting from an unprecedented package of incentives. As a result, **€3.1 billion were reallocated in 16 Member States**, with the majority of support dedicated to build or upgrade **wastewater and drinking water** infrastructure, and to **enhance water resilience and sustainable resources management**. Planned investments also include the development of **new storage** systems and **interconnections** between water systems, protection of aquatic ecosystems and **restoration** of areas of high environmental value. They also comprise **early warning systems for flood** prevention as well as enhanced water provision **efficiency through digitalization**, automation, and optimization.

The **EIB 15bn Water Programme** is also on track and the announced **Sustainable Water Management Advisory Facility** as a one-stop-shop for EIB's advisory on water is fully in place and can support capacity building and the delivery of pipeline of projects.

Recognising the important contribution of private financing to the Water Resilience Agenda, the Commission is working on the launch of a **Water Resilience Investment Accelerator** to implement 20 pilot innovative cases for natural water retention and water efficiency, bringing together local water investors, solution providers and problem holders to inspire similar actions across the EU.

Questions to Ministers

The Presidency invites Ministers to reflect on the following questions:

1. One year after the adoption of the European Water Resilience Strategy, what progress has been achieved and what are the challenges at national level as regards promoting water efficiency? What lessons can be drawn to support more effective implementation of the strategy in the coming years?

2. What good practices and experiences could Member States share, and what EU-level support do you expect from the upcoming Digitalisation Action Plan for the water sector to accelerate the deployment of solutions such smart water metering, remote sensing, or digital twins to support the implementation of the Water Resilience Strategy?

3. How can we unlock greater private investment and make better use of innovative financing instruments to accelerate the implementation of the Water Resilience Strategy, while ensuring that Member States have the necessary conditions and incentives to develop ambitious water resilience projects?