

MANIFESTO

The European Union needs an ambitious Water-Smart Strategy

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Water Europe

POLICY RELATED PAPER



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JOINT STATEMENT FOR A WATER-SMART STRATEGY

Water Europe (WE), the European Association of the innovative water sector, calls on European institutions and policymakers to adopt an ambitious and holistic European Water-Smart Strategy with a strategic political accountability within the Commission.

Brussels, 30 June 2023



Water scarcity affected 29% of the EU territory during at least one season on 2019, states the European Environment Agency (EEA)¹. When an area is under water stress, it compromises both individual domestic use and economic activities of all sectors.

EU policymakers must master the cross-sectoral water risks and challenges, including their full economic impacts. These risks could eliminate USD5.6 trillion from the GDP of our economies globally², with direct impacts for the insurance and banking sectors for instance. Europe is not safe.

Water must become a top priority for the European Union. It involves repairing the governance of water within the European Union, adopting an ambitious Water-Smart Strategy addressing all challenges for agriculture, industrial, energy, domestic uses, and allocating the necessary funds, knowledge, skills, and human resources to achieve this ambition.

The nomination of an EU Vice-President in charge of the whole water dimension is required to enable Europe to strategically tackle the challenges we face in Europe and beyond. Breaking the current silo will also unlock new opportunities for every sector, making water a vector to achieve their climate goals, secure business while leaving no one behind.

A Water-Smart Strategy is a competitive asset for our European autonomy alongside the energy and critical raw materials strategies. An ambitious EU Water-Smart Strategy putting water – a leading resource of our society, economy, and environment – at the heart of the EU agenda will respond to this increasing concern highlighted by the European Parliament’s resolution calling on the European Commission to present a water strategy³.

Water-related solutions do exist and are demonstrated by EU-funded projects⁴ and developed technologies by companies but ensuring water security, resilience and sustainability will require leveraging financial tools, beyond the innovation

policy. Investment in CAPEX and OPEX is needed to deploy innovative solutions and secure water for all. Key strategic sectors for the EU have already been granted dedicated funds, whereas one of the main resources of their value chains has remained unconsidered: water.

€43 billion is invested for the European Chips Act, while an integrated circuit on a **30cm wafer requires 8,300 liters of water⁵.**

€235 billion is dedicated to digital under the EU Budget 2021-2027⁶, while a **1 MW data center uses 25,5 million liters of water each year⁷.**

€130 billion of EU investments are directly associated with hydrogen projects⁸, while **for every kg of hydrogen produced, 9kg of demineralized water is consumed⁹.**

56 %

GAP BETWEEN WATER SUPPLY AND DEMAND BY 2030.

World Resource Institute¹⁰

Do you think that semiconductors, batteries, and hydrogen productions or other critical supply chains are secured? The World Resource Institute predicts a 56% gap between water supply and demand by 2030. European competitiveness is threatened by the lack of water-smart management of the resource while invest in promising sectors. Europe shall accelerate water efficiency, reuse and exploit the full value in water. Water matters.

We call on policymakers to adopt an ambitious and holistic European Water-Smart Strategy with a strategic political accountability within the Commission for its the next term 2024-2029.

¹ [Water scarcity conditions in Europe \(Water exploitation index plus\) \(8th EAP\)](#), EEA (2023).

² [Aquanomics: The economics of water risk and future resilience](#), GHD (2022).

³ European Parliament resolution of 15 September 2022 on the consequences of drought, fire, and other extreme weather phenomena: increasing the EU’s efforts to fight climate change (2022/2829(RSP)).

⁴ [Building a water-smart economy and society](#), CORDIS.

⁵ [Pure water, semiconductors and the recession](#), Global Water Intelligence.

⁶ [Funding for Digital in the 2021-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework](#), European Commission.

⁷ [Data centre water consumption](#), Mytton, D., npj Clean Water (2021).

⁸ [Hydrogen Insights, An updated perspective on hydrogen investment, market development and momentum in China](#), Hydrogen Council (2021).

⁹ [Does the Green Hydrogen Economy Have a Water Problem?](#), R. Beswick, A. Oliveira & Y. Yan, ACS Energy Letters (2021).

¹⁰ [Achieving abundance](#), World Resource Institute (2020).

