

# EUASE Response to the European Water Resilience Strategy Public Consultation



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EUROPEAN ALLIANCE TO  
SAVE ENERGY

Creating an Energy-Efficient Europe

## **Response to the European Water Resilience Strategy Public Consultation**

The European Alliance to Save Energy supports the European Commission's efforts to develop a European Water Resilience Strategy. Europe faces both a competitiveness crisis and increasing water scarcity. To address these challenges, the Water Efficiency First (WE1st) principle must be embedded in the strategy. Drawing from the Energy Efficiency First (EE1st) principle, we emphasize that prioritizing efficiency in water use across all sectors enhances economic resilience, and industrial competitiveness while supporting climate goals.

The EE1 principle, embedded in EU energy policy, requires prioritization of efficiency measures in planning, policy, and investment decisions. Similarly, the WE1st principle should be formally integrated into EU legislation for a systemic application. Water demand reduction across industries should be a priority, ensuring efficiency without placing burden on consumers. Member States must integrate water efficiency into decision-making, aligning it with climate, industrial, and digital policies, while ensuring due consideration in the built environment. A water-energy nexus approach is crucial, leveraging synergies between water conservation and energy savings, particularly in semiconductors, and data centers.

Water's local nature requires collaboration between the EU, Member States, and local authorities. EU-level guidance should allow Member States to tailor measures to regional water realities while mandating the development of National Water Plans with water withdrawal reduction targets. An EU-wide water balance system must be established to monitor supply, demand, and scarcity gaps, ensuring transparency and accountability. Cross-border cooperation in transboundary water management is essential, particularly in high-risk areas.

Industry consumes over 50% of Europe's freshwater, making sustainable water management essential for economic growth. The WRS must establish industrial water efficiency targets aligned with EU climate and energy goals while promoting innovations that reduce water use, energy consumption, and CO2 emissions. Water considerations should be integrated into key EU policies, such as the Circular Economy Act. Risk preparedness plans similar to the energy sector must be introduced to ensure resilience against water scarcity disruptions.

Europe reuses just 2.5% of its water. Policy barriers restricting recycled water use must be addressed. The WRS should work towards harmonizing regulations to incentivize safe and widespread water reuse and accelerate investments in innovative water conservation and reclamation technologies.

Strengthening links between the WRS, Circular Economy Act, and industrial policies will drive a more water-efficient economy. Moreover, responsible water management should also be taken into consideration as the New European Bauhaus evolves, as an enabler of the transition, notably focusing on innovation, the



integration of nature-based solutions, circularity, housing and the built environment. Desalination and alternative water sourcing methods should be part of a comprehensive water resilience strategy.

Effective water resilience requires precise local water assessments. An EU-wide water accounting system must be established to standardize data collection and ensure interoperability. Water footprint assessments should be integrated into industrial reporting and sustainability disclosures. Encouraging data-sharing mechanisms and promoting digital tools and smart metering will enhance water management accuracy.

Achieving water resilience requires long-term financial commitments from both public and private sources. The WRS should establish dedicated Water-Transition Funds under the next MFF and leverage EU funding instruments to incentivize industrial water efficiency investments. Public-private partnerships must be facilitated to accelerate water-smart infrastructure deployment. A funding mechanism similar to RePowerEU should be advocated to support large scale water efficiency initiatives.

The European Water Resilience Strategy presents a critical opportunity to embed the Water Efficiency First principle into EU policy. By aligning it with the successful EE1st model, the EU can ensure that water is managed as a strategic resource, supporting both sustainability and competitiveness. EU-ASE is committed to supporting this transition and looks forward to further engagement with policymakers and stakeholders to drive this agenda forward.

## About us

The European Alliance to Save Energy (EU-ASE) is a cross-sectoral, business led organisation which aims to ensure that the voice of energy efficiency is heard across Europe. EU-ASE members have operations across all the 27 Member States of the European Union, employ over 340.000 people in the EU and have an aggregated annual turnover of €115 billion.

