

Addressing the challenge of water scarcity and droughts in the European Union

2008/2074(INI) - 19/12/2008 - Follow-up document

The Commission presented a follow-up Report to the [Communication](#) on water scarcity and droughts in the European Union. In October 2007, the Council supported the options identified at European and national levels in the Communication and invited the Commission to review and further develop the evolving strategy for water scarcity and droughts by 2012.

This report is the first follow-up report based on the progress made in putting into effect the options of the Communication. It specifies the progress needed in relation to the different strategic options and presents a work programme for the medium and long term. It identifies some encouraging policy initiatives at both EU and national levels that have contributed to these results, although there is a great deal still to be done.

The document specifies the progress needed on the **seven key challenges** which must be tackled if Europe is to move towards a water efficient and water saving economy. These challenges are as follows:

1. the need to fully implement the **Water Framework Directive**: in this context, setting water pricing policies in a manner consistent with water availability remains a challenge at all levels of governance;
2. moving towards **sustainable land use planning** and the need to improve the financing of water efficiency within the framework of existing sectoral policies;
3. the need to develop operational **drought** management plans in order to efficiently prevent and mitigate drought impacts on environment, society and economy;
4. assessment of **water supply infrastructures**: additional water supply infrastructures (such as storage of water, water transfers or use of alternative sources) should be considered as an option when other options, including effective water pricing policy and cost-effective alternatives, have been exhausted;
5. the promotion of water efficient **technologies** and practices (specific standards for water-using devices; sustainable consumption and production; implementing the current Ecodesign Directive; steps to reduce leakages in water networks, etc.);
6. the development of a **water-saving culture** in Europe, including by developing actions for communication and education in order to increase public awareness on water quantity issues;
7. the improvement of knowledge and **data collection**.

Adaptation to **climate change** has likewise become a top priority for the EU agenda, and the challenge of water scarcity should be considered in this broader context.

In conclusion, the follow-up report shows that, while progress has been made, a great deal still needs to be done in order to improve water demand management more widely across Europe and to avoid mismanagement of water resources, especially in water-scarce areas. The priorities set by the Commission remain valid and continued attention needs to be paid to implementation in all priority areas.

As announced in the 2007 Communication, the Commission will provide from 2009 onwards an annual European assessment on water scarcity and droughts that will make it possible to monitor the evolution of the issue across Europe on a regular basis.

The implementation of the work programme will be monitored and will be part of the review of the strategy for water scarcity and droughts mentioned in the Council Conclusions of 30 October 2007 and planned for 2012.