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P9\_TA(2020)0377

## Implementation of the EU water legislation

### European Parliament resolution of 17 December 2020 on the implementation of the EU water legislation (2020/2613(RSP))

(2021/C 445/16)

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, and in particular Article 191 thereof,
- having regard to Directive 2000/60/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a framework for Community action in the field of water policy <sup>(1)</sup> ('Water Framework Directive' — WFD),
- having regard to Council Directive 91/271/EEC of 21 May 1991 concerning urban waste-water treatment <sup>(2)</sup> ('Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive' — UWWTD),
- having regard to Directive 2006/118/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 12 December 2006 on the protection of groundwater against pollution and deterioration <sup>(3)</sup> ('Groundwater Directive'),
- having regard to Directive 2007/60/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2007 on the assessment and management of flood risks <sup>(4)</sup> ('Floods Directive'),
- having regard to Council Directive 91/676/EEC of 12 December 1991 concerning the protection of waters against pollution caused by nitrates from agricultural sources <sup>(5)</sup> ('Nitrates Directive'),
- having regard to Directive 2008/105/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 December 2008 on environmental quality standards in the field of water policy, amending and subsequently repealing Council Directives 82/176/EEC, 83/513/EEC, 84/156/EEC, 84/491/EEC, 86/280/EEC and amending Directive 2000/60/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council <sup>(6)</sup> ('Environmental Quality Standards Directive'),
- having regard to Regulation (EU) 2020/741 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 May 2020 on minimum requirements for water reuse <sup>(7)</sup>,
- having regard to Directive 2008/56/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 June 2008 establishing a framework for community action in the field of marine environmental policy (Marine Strategy Framework Directive) <sup>(8)</sup>,
- having regard to Regulation (EC) No 1907/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 concerning the Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals (REACH), establishing a European Chemicals Agency, amending Directive 1999/45/EC and repealing Council Regulation (EEC) No 793/93 and Commission Regulation (EC) No 1488/94 as well as Council Directive 76/769/EEC and Commission Directives 91/155/EEC, 93/67/EEC, 93/105/EC and 2000/21/EC <sup>(9)</sup> (the REACH Regulation),
- having regard to Directive 2010/75/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 November 2010 on industrial emissions (integrated pollution prevention and control) <sup>(10)</sup>,

<sup>(1)</sup> OJ L 327, 22.12.2000, p. 1.

<sup>(2)</sup> OJ L 135, 30.5.1991, p. 40.

<sup>(3)</sup> OJ L 372, 27.12.2006, p. 19.

<sup>(4)</sup> OJ L 288, 6.11.2007, p. 27.

<sup>(5)</sup> OJ L 375, 31.12.1991, p. 1.

<sup>(6)</sup> OJ L 348, 24.12.2008, p. 84.

<sup>(7)</sup> OJ L 177, 5.6.2020, p. 32.

<sup>(8)</sup> OJ L 164, 25.6.2008, p. 19.

<sup>(9)</sup> OJ L 396, 30.12.2006, p. 1.

<sup>(10)</sup> OJ L 334, 17.12.2010, p. 17.

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- having regard to the Commission report of 10 December 2019 on the Fitness Check of the Water Framework Directive and the Floods Directive and its executive summary of the same date thereon,
- having regard to the Commission evaluation of 13 December 2019 of the Council Directive 91/271/EEC of 21 May 1991, concerning urban waste-water treatment and the executive summary of the same date thereon,
- having regard to the Commission proposal of 1 February 2018 for a directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on the quality of water intended for human consumption (recast) (COM(2017)0753),
- having regard to the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the establishment of a Programme for the Union's action in the field of health — for the period 2021-2027 and repealing Regulation (EU) No 282/2014 ('EU4Health Programme') (COM(2020)0405),
- having regard to its resolution of 28 November 2019 on the climate and environment emergency <sup>(11)</sup>,
- having regard to the European Environment Agency (EEA) report of 4 December 2019 entitled 'The European environment — state and outlook 2020: Knowledge for transition to a sustainable Europe,
- having regard to the Commission communication of 11 December 2019 on the European Green Deal (COM(2019)0640),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 10 March 2020 entitled "A New Industrial Strategy for Europe", and in particular section 2.2 thereof entitled "An industry that paves the way to climate-neutrality" (COM(2020)0102),
- having regard to the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 <sup>(12)</sup>,
- having regard to the Farm to Fork Strategy <sup>(13)</sup>,
- having regard to the 7<sup>th</sup> Environment Action Programme <sup>(14)</sup>,
- having regard to the Commission communication of 14 January 2020 on the Sustainable Europe Investment Plan and the European Green Deal Investment Plan (COM(2020)0021),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 11 March 2020 entitled "A new Circular Economy Action Plan for a cleaner and more competitive Europe" (COM(2020)0098),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 27 May 2020 entitled "Europe's moment: Repair and Prepare for the Next Generation" (COM(2020)0456),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 11 March 2019 entitled "European Union Strategic Approach to Pharmaceuticals in the Environment" (COM(2019)0128),
- having regard to the Paris Agreement,
- having regard to the study by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) of May 2020 entitled "Financing Water Supply, Sanitation and Flood Protection — Challenges in EU Member States and Policy Options",

<sup>(11)</sup> Texts adopted, P9\_TA(2019)0078.

<sup>(12)</sup> Commission communication of 20 May 2020 entitled "EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030: Bringing nature back into our lives" (COM(2020)0380).

<sup>(13)</sup> Commission communication of 20 May 2020 entitled "A Farm to Fork Strategy for a fair, healthy and environmentally-friendly food system" (COM(2020)0381).

<sup>(14)</sup> Decision No 1386/2013/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 November 2013 on a General Union Environment Action Programme to 2020 "Living well, within the limits of our planet" (OJ L 354, 28.12.2013, p. 171).

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- having regard to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 6 on clean water and sanitation <sup>(15)</sup> and SDG 14 on the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans, seas and marine resources,
  - having regard to the global assessment report of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) of May 2019 on biodiversity and ecosystem services,
  - having regard to Commission report of November 2019 entitled “Evaluation of the Impact of the CAP on Water”,
  - having regard to the UN Resolution 64/292 of 28 July 2010, which recognises the human right to water and sanitation,
  - having regard to the Court of Justice judgment of 28 May 2020 in Case C-535/18, IL and others v Land Nordrhein-Westfalen,
  - having regard to the Court of Justice judgment of 1 July 2015 in Case C-461/13, Bund für Umwelt und Naturschutz Deutschland e.V. v Bundesrepublik Deutschland (the Weser Case),
  - having regard to the European Citizens’ Initiative “Right2Water” and the Parliament report on the follow-up to the European Citizens’ Initiative Right2Water,
  - having regard to the opinion of the Committee of the Regions of 2 July 2020 on the Fitness Check of the Water Framework Directive, Groundwater Directive, Environmental Quality Standards Directive and Floods Directive <sup>(16)</sup>,
  - having regard to opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee of 12 December 2018 on “Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on minimum requirements for water reuse (rolling programme)” <sup>(17)</sup>,
  - having regard to the questions to the Council and to the Commission on implementation of the EU water legislation (O-000077/2020 — B9-0077/2020 and O-000078/2020 — B9-0078/2020),
  - having regard to Rules 136(5) and 132(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
  - having regard to the motion for a resolution of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety,
- A. whereas water is essential for life and water management plays a vital role in the preservation of the EU’s ecosystem services, as well as in resource use and economic production; whereas the EU has to produce effective responses to the current water challenges and manage existing water resources efficiently, as they directly affect human health, the environment, its quality and ecosystems, energy production, agriculture and food security;
- B. whereas water is an essential element in the food cycle; whereas it is necessary that ground and surface water is of good quality and available in sufficient quantities in order to achieve a fair, healthy, environmentally friendly and sustainable food system as described in the Farm to Fork Strategy; whereas clean and sufficient water is an essential element in implementing and achieving a real circular economy in the EU;
- C. whereas water represents great value for the EU economy and whereas the EU’s water-dependent sectors generate 26 % of the EU’s annual gross added value, making it crucial to ensure continued availability of good-quality water, in sufficient quantities to serve all uses;
- D. whereas the WFD established a framework to protect 110 000 bodies of surface water in the EU, aiming to achieve “good ecological and chemical status” by 2015, to protect 13 400 bodies of groundwater in the EU, aiming to achieve “good quantitative and chemical status” by the same deadline, and to protect drinking water resources pursuant to Article 7(2); whereas the Fitness Check found significant shortcomings in the implementation of EU water legislation, the objectives of which are unlikely to be achieved by the final 2027 deadline unless all required implementation

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<sup>(15)</sup> Contained in Resolution 70/1 adopted by the UN General Assembly on 25 September 2015 entitled “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”.

<sup>(16)</sup> OJ C 324, 1.10.2020, p. 28.

<sup>(17)</sup> OJ C 110, 22.3.2019, p. 94.

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efforts are immediately initiated in the Member States and unless water-related sectoral policies are aligned with WFD requirements; whereas water management planning and programmes of measures (PoMs) should continue beyond the 2027 deadline, leading to further improvement of water quality and quantity;

- E. whereas 74 % of the area of bodies of groundwater is in good chemical status and whereas 89 % is in good quantitative status; whereas the gross nitrogen balance in the EU was reduced by 10 % between 2004 and 2015 <sup>(18)</sup>;
- F. whereas good chemical status has been achieved for only 38 % of surface water and just 40 % is in good ecological status or potential, and whereas the status of 16 % of surface water is still unknown because of a lack of data; whereas 81 % of surface water would achieve good chemical status if it were not polluted by ubiquitous, persistent bioaccumulative and toxic substances (uPBTs), such as mercury; whereas only one of the four WFD freshwater indicators analysed by the EEA has shown progress in the last 10-15 years <sup>(19)</sup>;
- G. whereas according to the “one out, all out” principle, water status is considered good only if all elements of the assessment are considered good, which does not reflect improvements in individual parameters of water quality; whereas good status depends not only on mitigation measures to address current pressures, but also on restoration measures to address pressures from the past and on timely preventive measures against emerging threats <sup>(20)</sup>;
- H. whereas the effectiveness of the WFD and the achievement of its objectives depends upon its implementation and enforcement by the competent authorities in the Member States, on ensuring adequate funding, including through EU financial instruments, on the implementation of other pieces of EU legislation, and on better integration of water objectives in other policies; whereas stakeholder involvement is key to effective implementation;
- I. whereas Article 7(3) of the WFD stipulates that the Member States must ensure that the bodies of water used for producing drinking water are protected with the aim of avoiding deterioration in their quality; whereas the Fitness Check clearly states that little progress has been made on protected areas for drinking water;
- J. whereas it is of crucial importance to tackle chemical and other causes of pollution in surface water and groundwater at source as a priority as it is the most sustainable, effective and cost-effective measure, alongside implementing the polluter-pays principle;
- K. whereas the WFD spells out the need to protect waters used for the abstraction of drinking water; whereas drinking water operators should be able to rely on high-quality water resources so that citizens do not have to pay for expensive treatments; whereas it is therefore necessary to reduce pollution at the source;
- L. whereas the 2019 IPBES global assessment report on biodiversity and ecosystem services names water pollution as an important threat to global biodiversity; whereas freshwater biodiversity is among the most threatened in Europe and whereas water pollution has a negative impact on flora and fauna; whereas European wetlands, which serve as natural carbon sinks, have decreased by 50 % since 1970 and whereas freshwater species have declined by 83 % since then;
- M. whereas climate change is a major threat for water resources around the world, both in terms of high and low quantities of water; whereas healthy and resilient freshwater ecosystems are better able to mitigate the effects of and adapt to climate change;

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<sup>(18)</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Agri-environmental\\_indicator\\_-\\_gross\\_nitrogen\\_balance](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Agri-environmental_indicator_-_gross_nitrogen_balance)

<sup>(19)</sup> European Environment Agency report of 4 December 2019 entitled “The European environment — state and outlook 2020: Knowledge for transition to a sustainable Europe”.

<sup>(20)</sup> Commission executive summary of 10 December 2019 of the Fitness Check of the Water Framework Directive and the Floods Directive.

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- N. whereas the WFD does not include specific provisions to address climate change impacts; whereas in its communication on the European Green Deal, the Commission nevertheless acknowledges that natural functions of ground and surface water must be restored; whereas the Fitness Check found that the WFD “is sufficiently prescriptive with regard to the pressures to be addressed, and yet flexible enough to reinforce its implementation as necessary with regard to emerging challenges not mentioned in the Directive such as climate change, water scarcity and pollutants of emerging concern”;
- O. whereas urban areas are constantly growing and increasing pressure on waste water treatment plants; whereas the main and partly unregulated point source of water pollution in the EU is the discharge of untreated or inadequately treated urban and/or industrial waste water; whereas the UWWTD was not initially designed to treat the release of chemical substances, pharmaceutical residue or microplastics into bodies of water; whereas the UWWTD was effective in reducing targeted pollutants to bodies of water by reducing the loads of biochemical oxygen demand, nitrogen and phosphorus in treated waste water across the EU; whereas nevertheless, more attention should be paid to both existing and emerging sources of pollution; whereas another main diffuse source of water pollution is agriculture, due to releases of nutrients, pesticides, antibiotics and other pollutants into drainage basins and rivers; whereas water-related provisions of the current CAP have been insufficient to help achieve the objectives of the WFD; whereas diffuse pollution is an obstacle to the implementation of the polluter pays principle;
- P. whereas one third of European countries suffer from water scarcity i.e. they have less than 5 000 m<sup>3</sup> of water per head annually <sup>(21)</sup>; whereas, in the event of conflicts over the allocation of water resources, the safeguarding of the human right to water must take priority; whereas 13 Member States declared that they are at risk of desertification at the UN Convention to Combat Desertification <sup>(22)</sup>;
- Q. whereas water abstraction puts significant pressure on EU water sources; whereas about a quarter of water diverted from the natural environment in the EU is used for agriculture; whereas an agreement on the new regulation on minimum requirements for water reuse was reached, which will facilitate the use of treated urban waste water for agricultural irrigation;
- R. whereas there are situations in which entities managing bodies of water are financed from activities that deteriorate the chemical and ecological status of bodies of water, impeding the achievement of the objectives of the WFD; whereas in such situations, conflicts of interest are hard to avoid and they keep the entities managing bodies of water going in vicious circles, making them dependant on activities that deteriorate bodies of water;
- S. whereas 60 % of river basins are in transnational regions, which makes effective transboundary cooperation crucial; whereas 20 European countries depend on other countries for more than 10 % of their water resources, with five countries relying on over 75 % of their resources coming from abroad via rivers; whereas non-compliance with the UWWTD in border regions causes deterioration of cross-border WFD bodies of water, which makes it impossible to reach WFD goals in the receiving Member State;
- T. whereas river connectivity, from small streams through to estuaries and deltas, is crucial for migratory species of fish, the life stages of which are a cornerstone of the respective ecosystems and the food chain, and which are gaining increasing socio-cultural value in fishing communities;
- U. whereas the overall energy consumption of the water sector in the EU is significant and needs to be more efficient in order to contribute to the goals of the Paris Agreement, the EU’s 2030 climate goals and its goal to achieve carbon neutrality in 2050;

<sup>(21)</sup> <https://www.eea.europa.eu/publications/92-9167-025-1/page003.html>

<sup>(22)</sup> European Court of Auditors background paper of June 2018 entitled “Desertification in the EU”.

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- V. whereas hydropower has the potential to decarbonise electricity generation to a certain extent and can therefore contribute to reaching the EU's climate and energy targets under the Paris Agreement; whereas hydropower needs to be seen in a holistic manner, including its effects on hydromorphological conditions and habitats; whereas, compared to wind power and solar-generated electricity, hydropower is less volatile and therefore helps to keep the power supply constant and the grid stable; whereas pumped hydro storage accounts for more than 90 %<sup>(23)</sup> of the EU's energy storage capacity; whereas the European Union should support Member States engaging in environmentally friendly hydropower projects, that at the same time do not pose threats to the health of local communities;
- W. whereas structural changes to bodies of water are the main pressures on their status<sup>(24)</sup>; whereas hydromorphology affects 40 % of bodies of surface water consisting of physical alterations (26 %), dams, barriers and locks (24 %), hydrological alterations (7 %) or other hydromorphological alterations (7 %); whereas there are currently over 21 000 hydropower plants in Europe; whereas no comprehensive EU action has been taken to remove obsolete dams and weirs, despite evidence that EU coordination in this matter would provide added value;
- X. whereas the human right to water and sanitation was recognised as a human right by the UN General Assembly on 28 July 2010;
- Y. whereas the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, among other international conventions and agreements, explicitly recognise the right to water and sanitation and oblige state parties to take appropriate measures in this regard;
- Z. whereas one million people in Europe have no access to water and eight million have no sanitation<sup>(25)</sup>, whereas globally 844 million people do not have safe access to safe drinking water<sup>(26)</sup>, and whereas a third of the world's population lacks basic sanitation; whereas the European Citizen's Initiative (ECI) Right2Water collected over 1,8 million signatures in March 2014; whereas Right2Water asked for guaranteeing water and sanitation for all in the EU and globally, better access to drinking water for the public and more transparency on the quality of water, as well as enshrining the right to water in EU legislation; whereas the Commission has adopted its communication in response to the "Right2Water initiative"<sup>(27)</sup>; whereas in its resolution of 8 September 2015 on the follow-up to the European Citizens' Initiative Right2Water, Parliament criticised the Commission for failing to meet the initiative's demands and called on the Commission to recognise universal access and human right to water<sup>(28)</sup>;
- AA. whereas studies show that the testing of waste water can act as an early warning system to predict or locate outbreaks of COVID-19, thus playing an important role in the fight against the pandemic;
1. Welcomes the success of the WFD in setting up an adequate governance framework for integrated water management, as well as its success in improving water quality, or in some cases at least in slowing down the deterioration of water quality;
  2. Rejects any attempt to treat water as a commodity (as with the trading of water futures on the New York Stock Exchange); deplores the implications of the commodification of nature, with essential public goods opened up for speculation, denying the universal right to their use;

<sup>(23)</sup> Commission study of March 2020 on energy storage — Contribution to the security of the electricity supply in Europe, p. 20.

<sup>(24)</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/info/news/implementation-report-water-framework-directive-and-floods-directive-questions-and-answers-2019-feb-26\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/news/implementation-report-water-framework-directive-and-floods-directive-questions-and-answers-2019-feb-26_en)

<sup>(25)</sup> <https://www.right2water.eu/documents>

<sup>(26)</sup> World Health Organization and the United Nations Children's Fund, *Progress on Drinking Water, Sanitation and Hygiene: 2017 Update and SDG Baselines*, World Health Organization and the United Nations Children's Fund, Geneva, 2017, p. 3.

<sup>(27)</sup> Commission communication of 19 March 2014 entitled "European Citizens' Initiative "Water and sanitation are a human right! Water is a public good, not a commodity!" (COM(2014)0177).

<sup>(28)</sup> OJ C 316, 22.9.2017, p. 99.

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3. Welcomes the assessment of the Commission that the WFD is fit for purpose, but notes that its implementation needs to be improved and speeded up by involving relevant competent authorities from the Member States and by further integrating WFD objectives in sectoral policies, particularly in agriculture, transport and energy, to ensure that all bodies of surface and ground water are in good status by 2027 at the latest;
4. Stresses that no revision of the WFD is necessary; calls on the Commission to declare that the WFD will not be revised, in order to end legal uncertainty; calls on the Commission to continue to propose updates to the annexes as necessary;
5. Strongly regrets that half of the bodies of water in the EU have still not attained good status and that the objectives of the WFD have not yet been reached, mainly due to inadequate funding, particularly slow implementation, insufficient enforcement, lack of implementation of the precautionary and polluter-pays principles, and broad use of the exemptions of the directive in many Member States, and also regrets that integration of environmental objectives in sectoral policies has been insufficient;
6. Stresses the need to restore and improve water quality; notes that, to improve the status of bodies of water, it is vital that all levels of government and authorities in the Member States be involved and cooperate in mainstreaming the WFD goals in policy, legislation and WFD measures; recalls the non-deterioration principle, whereby Member States are required to implement the measures necessary to prevent deterioration of the status of water bodies; calls on the Member States to urgently take the necessary measures to ensure implementation, enforcement and compliance with the WFD, through, inter alia, the third River Basin Management Plans (RBMPs), which are to be adopted by the Member States in 2021; urges the EU, its Member States and regional authorities to ensure that the next RBMPs are adopted on time, respecting the requirements concerning public consultation; calls on the Commission to increase the availability of funding and provide the necessary support to the Member States in the implementation of the WFD;
7. Draws attention to the OECD study that estimates that an additional EUR 253 billion needs to be spent in the EU water sector before 2030 to maintain or achieve full compliance with relevant water legislation<sup>(29)</sup>; calls on the Commission, the Council, the Member States and, where applicable, regional authorities to identify and secure the necessary funds and financial instruments for infrastructure that does not harm the environment or negatively affect public health, but also to identify infrastructures that perform poorly and are not up to standard and to tackle the issue of contaminants of emerging concern and other societal challenges; stresses the need to provide financial support for sustainable innovative methods and particularly nature-based solutions, such as carbon-neutral or lagoon-based treatment infrastructure, restoration of wetlands and flood-plains, rewetting drained peat-lands, while having due regard to public-private partnerships; highlights the importance of adjusting existing funding and financing streams related to water management and other related land uses such as agriculture, including subsidies, shifting from traditional engineering measures to nature-based solutions;
8. Calls on the Member States to take all necessary action, including the securing of the necessary funds and human resources and of the necessary expertise, to achieve full compliance with the WFD as soon as possible, and in any case no later than 2027; calls on the Commission to issue recommendations to the Member States to ensure the 2027 deadline is met; calls on the Commission to support the Member States in the implementation of the water directives with technical assistance and appropriate training, by sharing good practices and expertise to ensure the WFD goals are reached, and by promoting professional exchange programmes between Member States; calls on the Commission to provide guidance on the consequences of Court of Justice judgment in case C-461/13 for the implementation of the WFD; calls on the Commission to offer clear guidance on the application of exemptions pursuant to Article 4(4)(c) after 2027;
9. Calls on the Member States to identify the implementation measures that are needed to ensure bodies of water are in good status and design the PoMs on the basis of the best available evidence; calls on the Member States and the Commission to make publicly available the PoMs of Member States and the respective evaluations to improve the share of good practices and strategies and to improve public access to information;

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<sup>(29)</sup> <http://www.oecd.org/environment/financing-water-supply-sanitation-and-flood-protection-6893cdac-en.htm>

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10. Considers that the 'one-out, all-out' principle should remain intact; calls on the Commission to elaborate complementary reporting methodologies (such as distance to target, implemented measures and progress made on individual quality parameters) that provide an opportunity to better assess progress towards good water status; highlights the importance of transparency and provision of comprehensive information to the public on the quality and quantity of water in the EU;

11. Deplores the use of exemptions for over half of the EU's bodies of water, with limited justification; calls on the Commission and the Member States to update the guidance documents for the use of exemptions in order to limit this practice to only fully justified cases, so that it no longer hinders the achievement of the WFD's environmental objectives; calls on the Commission to swiftly and systematically pursue infringement proceedings when exemptions are not justified;

12. Regrets that the application of the cost recovery principle, which provides that all water users effectively and proportionately participate financially in the recovery of the costs of water services, remains low to non-existent in several Member States, especially with regard to households, industry and agriculture; stresses that water use in some parts of the EU threatens the quantitative status of bodies of water beyond the level of maintained ecological flow; calls on Member States and their regional authorities to implement adequate water pricing policies and fully apply the cost recovery principle for both environmental and resource costs, in line with the WFD, and also apply the polluter pays principle; recalls that the cost-recovery principle may be applied with regard to its social, environmental and economic effects, as well as the geographic and climatic conditions of the regions affected; calls on the Commission to enforce this principle; emphasises, however, that the right to water and sanitation must be ensured, with everyone having access to affordable and good-quality water services;

13. Calls on the Commission to take strict and swift action against infringements by Member States to ensure that all Member States fully comply with water legislation, and in particular with the WFD, as soon as possible and no later than 2027; urges the Commission to also take strict and swift actions on open infringement cases related to systemic violations of EU water legislation; calls on the Commission to strengthen its resources in relation to infringement procedures in general, and EU environmental legislation in particular;

14. Notes that climate change has and will continue to have a significant negative impact on freshwater sources with droughts leading to depleted river flows and higher concentrations of pollutants, notably in 'closed' water zones, and intense rainfall leading to increased urban and agricultural run-off; recalls that the more frequent incidence of extreme climatic phenomena, such as cyclones and storms, leads to an increase in the salinity of freshwater and coastal waters; emphasises that rising temperatures lead to increased water stress, impacting the environment, several economic sectors that depend on high water abstraction and use, as well as quality of life; underlines that the resilience of water ecosystems, flooding and water scarcity and their impact on food production should be duly taken into account in the upcoming EU climate adaptation strategy according to Article 2(1) (b) of the Paris Agreement, and also in the WFD implementation process (RBMPs);

15. Suggests that the Commission support the Member States in sharing and facilitating knowledge and best practices of the different climate adaptation efforts at regional and local level in the EU;

16. Underlines that rivers and wetlands are most at risk even though they are considered to be the largest providers of ecosystem services; recalls that wetlands, like marine and coastal ecosystems, play a fundamental role in regulating water and the climate, and provide services through their natural ecosystems and resources, and the development of economic or cultural activities, which all depend on water resources being in good ecological shape; stresses that wetlands are carbon sinks and climate stabilisers at a global level, play an important role in mitigating floods and droughts, provide clean water, protect coastlines, recharge groundwater aquifers, maintain great geodiversity, play an essential role in the countryside and provide recreational and cultural services for society; urges, therefore, the Commission and the Member States to adopt measures to reduce the use of aquifers, plan urban development away from floodplains and respect biodiversity linked to rivers and wetlands;

17. Stresses that the efficient use of water is an important contribution to the EU's climate goals as it can save energy used for the pumping of water, reduce the amount of chemicals used to treat water and reduce water stress; notes that there are high leakage rates from pipes in some Member States which is not acceptable in terms of climate change goals and resource efficiency efforts; welcomes that under the new Drinking Water Directive, the Commission will evaluate leakage

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rates and set threshold values that will trigger action in the respective Member States; also welcomes the new obligation for large water suppliers to make leakage rates transparent;

18. Notes that all over the EU, bodies of water used for the production of drinking water face new and old pressures which cause an increased need for purification treatment efforts by water suppliers; calls on the Member States to fully implement Article 7(3) of the WFD and to take all necessary measures to halt the deterioration of bodies of water for the abstraction of water intended for human consumption;

19. Welcomes the evidence that the directives have led to reduced chemical pollution in EU waters; considers nevertheless that there is an urgent need for improvement in the area of chemicals; notes that the Commission has identified unexpected differences between Member States, mainly in how the list of priority substances is updated and how the combined effects of mixtures are taken into account; notes further that the Priority Substances Directive so far barely includes substances relevant to drinking water provision; points out that considerable differences in approaches to classification, assessment and reporting methods make EU-wide comparisons and analysis challenging;

20. Calls on the Commission to take all necessary measures in order to achieve good chemical status and to take decisive EU-wide action when Member States fail to meet the environmental quality standards for priority substances that fall within the scope of EU legislation; stresses that substances relevant to production of drinking water, such as Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) and relevant pharmaceuticals, should be added to the list of priority substances; considers that pollutants of emerging concern and mixed toxicity can and should be addressed within the framework of the WFD and its specific 'daughter' directives; calls on the Commission to update and add relevant substances in the annexes of the Priority Substances Directive and the Groundwater Directive, in order to make it possible to reach the goals of the WFD and to better protect drinking water resources; calls on the Commission to align the implementation of water legislation with the Chemical Strategy for Sustainability and with the Biodiversity Strategy so that freshwater bodies and their ecosystems are adequately protected, to set a timeline for phasing out all non-essential uses of PFAS and to stimulate the development of safe and non-persistent alternatives for all uses of PFAS; urges the Commission to finance research on and the development of strategies to tackle uPBTs, with the aim of improving the quality of bodies of water and reducing the risks for animal and human health and the environment; recommends the development of new guidelines on improved monitoring methods and reporting for chemical mixtures as well as cocktail effects; calls for a more extensive use of the watch list to monitor potential water pollutants and determine the risk they pose to the aquatic environment; calls on the Commission to speed up its work on the development of methods for assessing and managing chemical mixtures and to complement its work by introducing a mixture assessment factor;

21. Notes that microplastics are estimated to have been persistent in freshwater for centuries and that current water treatment plants do not filter these particles completely; welcomes, therefore, the decision to develop a methodology for the monitoring of microplastics and the establishment of a watch-list in the revised Drinking Water Directive; urges the Commission and the Member States to increase source-control measures to achieve a non-toxic environment and circular economy; stresses that reducing emissions at source would alleviate the pressure on ecosystems and reduce the cost of water treatment; calls for decisive action at EU, Member State and regional level to tackle pollutants of emerging concern, such as PFAS, microplastics, endocrine-disrupting chemicals and pharmaceuticals through a holistic approach, starting with control at source measures and, as a last resort, complementary end-of-pipe solutions; calls on the Commission and the Member States to fully apply a life cycle approach to pollutants, while implementing the polluter pays principle, also through innovative instruments such as Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) schemes, in order to finance treatment solutions;

22. Highlights the importance of stepping up actions to address eutrophication of both fresh and salt waters caused by nitrogen and phosphorus from all sources, including from agriculture and untreated or inappropriately treated waste water; recalls that eutrophication weakens the environmental status of water bodies and makes them more vulnerable to invasive alien species; urges all farmers to use the Farm Sustainability Tool for Nutrients, which facilitates better management and reduces nutrient leakage in ground and surface water; calls on the Member States to properly identify areas vulnerable to nitrate pollution and to fully implement and enforce the measures adopted under the Nitrates Directive;

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23. Highlights that the current biodiversity crisis should be fully addressed by Member States when it comes to the implementation of water policies, with stressors on water ecosystems minimised and degraded ecosystems restored; underlines the importance of the new 2030 Biodiversity Strategy; recalls that in the implementation of the WFD, full consistency should be ensured with the new Biodiversity Strategy, the Nature Directives and other environmental legislation;

24. Welcomes the Commission's commitment in the context of its Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 to restore 25 000 km of free-flowing rivers in the EU through the removal of barriers and the restoration of flood-plains, and to establish an EU-wide methodology and provisions to map and assess the condition of ecosystems and ensure they are in a good condition; notes that there are currently 21 000 hydropower plants in the EU and that hydropower and small hydro stations provide the largest share of renewable energy in the EU; takes note of the developments in low-impact hydropower; points out, however, that the construction of dams can negatively affect habitats and create major pressure on surface water; recalls that the WFD imposes strict criteria for the protection of hydromorphological conditions; calls on the Commission and the Member States to ensure that strict assessments of the impacts of resulting alterations on water quality and quantity and ecosystems are carried out and that the objectives of the WFD are respected in all existing and potential new hydropower projects; therefore urgently calls on the Commission to consult all relevant directorate-generals, including the Directorate-General for Energy, when assessing the environmental impact of hydropower plants and to take their recommendations into account;

25. Calls on the Member States and the Commission to take all necessary action to minimise pressures on bodies of surface water in order to restore natural functions of rivers and protect ecosystems; calls on the Member States to refrain from building hydropower stations and avoid other building projects which would lead to significant hydromorphological pressures on water in protected areas; considers that EU subsidies and public finance in areas other than protected ones should only be granted to new hydropower plants for which the overall benefits clearly outweigh the overall negative impacts;

26. Commends the fact that, according to the 10<sup>th</sup> biennial report on the Member States' implementation of the UWWTD<sup>(30)</sup>, collection and treatment of urban waste water has improved over the last decade in the EU, and the fact that the UWWTD has delivered on the reduction of pollution loads, thereby contributing to the improvement of water quality; regrets nevertheless the fact that full compliance with the UWWTD has still not been achieved, as some Member States are still very far from their targets; supports the view of the Commission that more needs to be done to address remaining pollution, contaminants of emerging concern, energy use and sludge management as well as governance issues; regrets furthermore that the evaluation of the UWWTD does not analyse effectiveness regarding discharges of industrial waste water into collecting systems and urban waste water treatment plants (UWWTP);

27. Calls on the Commission to take the above into account when revising the UWWTD; urges the Commission to support the Member States with the implementation of the directive by enabling sustainable water financing and incentivising the development and deployment of innovative waste water technologies; calls on the Commission to carefully examine how the UWWTD requirements on the design, construction and expansion of UWWTP at all stages of technical development interact with the WFD obligation of non-deterioration, in order to ensure coherence between the two pieces of legislation and the treatment of urban waste water, while preserving all incentives to take proper technical treatment measures; encourages the Commission to take legislative action, if necessary; stresses that measures aiming above all at rectifying the problem at source are vital to tackling pollutants of emerging concern; emphasises that a future revision of the UWWTD should also take the new challenges that such pollutants pose into account;

28. Points out that the UWWTD and the WFD do not adequately address the problems stemming from climate change, such as storm water overflows, urban run-off and flooding in agglomerations, nor do they address the impacts of insufficiently treated waste water on the recipient body of water; believes that monitoring and controlling the effect of increasing storm water overflows and urban run-off should be better addressed by the EU, its Member States and regional

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<sup>(30)</sup> Tenth Commission report of 10 September 2020 on the implementation status and programmes for implementation (COM(2020)0492).

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authorities, since this significantly pollutes receiving bodies of surface and ground water;

29. Insists that, when assessing the environmental impact of hydropower installations, a holistic approach is needed, including the societal benefits of providing emission-free electricity and the contribution of hydropower and pumped hydro storage to securing the energy supply, and adverse effects on surface waters and habitats; underlines in this respect the contribution that electricity generated by hydropower plants can make to reaching the EU's climate and energy targets and the EU's commitments under the Paris Agreement, but considers that this should not be achieved to the detriment of surface waters and the protection of habitats; acknowledges that there are ways and technologies to lower the impact on the environment and aquatic wildlife; points out that there is great potential to increase the efficiency of existing river power plants;

30. Notes that the shift from road freight to inland waterways should be fully consistent with the non-deterioration principle of the WFD, as well as with other environmental legislation, including the Birds and Habitats Directives, and should go hand-in-hand with support for sustainable, alternative fuels and technology and inland navigation such as shore-to-ship power supply, in order to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and other pollutants and avoid a deterioration in the ecological and chemical status of bodies of water and a degradation of air quality, as well as to avoid stress on water ecosystems, protect biodiversity and strive for a zero-pollution environment;

31. Notes the high energy consumption in the water sector; calls on the Commission to consider energy-efficient measures and the possibility to use treated waste water as an 'onsite' source of renewable energy; calls on the Commission to push for energy-efficient improvements in waste water treatment plants, so as to recognise and harness the energy-saving potential of the sector; points out that according to the Commission's evaluation of the UWWTD, the potential energy savings amount to between 5 500 GWh and 13 000 GWh annually;

32. Recognises that total water abstraction in Europe has decreased by more than 20 % over the last 15 years; notes nevertheless that eight countries can be considered water-stressed<sup>(31)</sup>, representing 46 % of Europe's population, that the number of water-stressed countries is constantly increasing, and that about a quarter of the water diverted from the natural environment in the EU is used for agricultural purposes<sup>(32)</sup>; notes the potential of water reuse to create a circular economy for water resources and reduce direct extraction from bodies of water and groundwater; welcomes the agreement on the new Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on minimum requirements for water reuse, which will facilitate the use of treated urban waste water for agricultural irrigation; supports the continued modernisation of irrigation infrastructure through innovation and new technologies;

33. Underlines the importance of finding synergies between flood risk assessments and disaster prevention and preparedness planning under the Union Civil Protection Mechanism; calls on the Commission, the Member States and, where applicable, regional authorities to develop drought management strategies, particularly with a view to ensuring the provision of drinking water and ensuring food production, as part of the RBMPs and Flood Risk Management Plans, and integrating digitalised monitoring, control and early warning systems for the state of vegetation and its response to drought in order to support effective and data-based decisions on protection, response and communication measures; calls on the Commission and the Member States to put floodplain and wetland restoration, as well as protection of bodies of groundwater, at the heart of the aforementioned plans as bodies of water and ecosystems in good condition are essential to reducing the negative impact of both droughts and floods;

34. Notes that one area in which the WFD was viewed by stakeholders as ineffective is managing the effects of droughts<sup>(33)</sup>; calls on the Member States to devote more efforts to addressing climate change and the new (over-) abstraction problems that might arise in river basins, including those not historically facing abstraction challenges<sup>(34)</sup>; notes that a holistic approach to water management and climate adaptation could make responses more efficient and reduce the impact of extreme events; calls for the full integration of climate change considerations into the implementation of the

<sup>(31)</sup> <https://www.eea.europa.eu/archived/archived-content-water-topic/water-resources/water-abstraction>

<sup>(32)</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Archive:Agri-environmental\\_indicator\\_-\\_water\\_abstraction](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Archive:Agri-environmental_indicator_-_water_abstraction)

<sup>(33)</sup> Fitness Check of the Water Framework Directive and the Floods Directive, p. 66.

<sup>(34)</sup> Fitness Check of the Water Framework Directive and the Floods Directive, p. 199.

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directive and also highlights the potential of nature-based solutions in this regard; reiterates that sufficient public spending should be ensured for the objectives of the WFD and the required adaptations;

35. Suggests that droughts and water scarcity be addressed by prioritising the abstraction of water for the production of drinking water over other uses, in order to ensure the fulfilment of the human right to water, and by implementing solutions to collect rainwater and flood waves for later use, including inter alia rainwater collection projects in the design of buildings and infrastructure, underground storage basins, dual water distribution systems in homes and projects for the reuse of disused quarries, where deemed suitable; encourages research on and investment in measures that help to combat droughts and water scarcity;

36. Stresses the need for alignment of the common agricultural policy (CAP), the Drinking Water Directive<sup>(35)</sup>, the Nitrates Directive, the Plant Protection Products Regulation<sup>(36)</sup> and REACH with the WFD regarding the need for increased water protection measures and the efficient use of water in agriculture; underlines the necessity for a considerable increase in funding for environmental and climate change measures in both pillars of the CAP, as well as for additional financing of targeted ecological measures in the framework of the CAP revision, in order to ensure sustainable water management and to improve soil quality; urges the Member States to integrate and implement in their CAP strategic plans a reduction in fertiliser use and the use and risks of pesticides, and to implement water-related elements in their systems of conditionality; calls on the Commission to make freshwater pollution and over-abstraction priority topics in CAP-related recommendations to Member States; finally, calls on the Commission to ensure the WFD is also implemented via the cohesion policy (the Common Provisions Regulation<sup>(37)</sup>, the European Regional Development Fund/the Cohesion Fund<sup>(38)</sup>) and in line with policy objective 2 of the CPR;

37. Welcomes the targets for reducing the use and risks of pesticides by 50 % by 2030 and for reducing the loss of nutrients from fertilisers, as established in the Farm to Fork and Biodiversity Strategies, the decision to revise the Directive on the sustainable use of pesticides and the inclusion of improved nutrient management in the objectives of the new CAP strategic plans and of the two strategies; calls for the translation into legislation of the above-mentioned targets and objectives, as well as the upcoming zero-pollution action plan; highlights the urgent need to reduce the impact of pesticides on drinking water resources by fully addressing their protection in the (re-) approval of active substances and the (re-) authorisation of pesticides;

38. Calls on the Commission to improve the homogenisation of standards and reduce the wide range of thresholds within Member States in the Groundwater Directive;

39. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to enhance the synergies between water and biodiversity policies by introducing appropriate measures to better protect small water bodies and groundwater ecosystems in the context of river basin management, including reporting requirements, guidance and projects;

40. Encourages the Commission and the Member States to better integrate the Flood Risk Management Directive in policies on prioritising nature-based solutions and adjust funding streams accordingly; highlights the importance of managing catchment areas in an integrated and holistic manner;

41. Asks the Commission and the Member States to put in place an integrated approach based on the WFD and the Marine Strategy Framework Directive, given that 97,3 % of water resources on earth come from the oceans, and that groundwater, continental, transitional, coastal and marine waters are linked by the water cycle and the link between land and sea;

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<sup>(35)</sup> Council Directive 98/83/EC of 3 November 1998 on the quality of water intended for human consumption (OJ L 330, 5.12.1998, p. 32).

<sup>(36)</sup> Regulation (EC) No 1107/2009 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 21 October 2009 concerning the placing of plant protection products on the market and repealing Council Directives 79/117/EEC and 91/414/EEC (OJ L 309, 24.11.2009, p. 1).

<sup>(37)</sup> Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 laying down common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and laying down general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006 (OJ L 347, 20.12.2013, p. 320).

<sup>(38)</sup> Commission proposal of 29 May 2018 for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the European Regional Development Fund and on the Cohesion Fund (COM(2018)0372).

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42. Calls for increased action with sufficient funding to improve fish migration throughout the EU; calls, where applicable, for river connectivity to be included within the technical screening criteria developed in the context of the EU green taxonomy for sustainable activities and to consider energy and transport-related projects sustainable only when comprising nature-like fish-ways;

43. Notes that 'sustainable use and protection of water and marine resources' belongs to one of the six environmental goals of the EU taxonomy for sustainable finance; therefore encourages its use in navigating public and private investments to ensure the protection of water bodies;

44. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to take all necessary measures in the next water planning cycle to facilitate the conservation and restoration of aquatic ecosystems, promote nature-based solutions, involve the financial sector through the promotion of sustainable investments and promote capacity building and education on green growth;

45. Calls on the Commission to assist and support the Member States in the cross-border coordination of WFD bodies of water; calls on the Member States to prioritise WFD measures and UWWTD implementation in cross-border regions and improve cooperation in international water basins;

46. Urges the Commission to streamline and improve monitoring systems for water quality and environmental pollutants, collecting, inter alia, data on the main sources of emission of dangerous substances, including radioactive and pesticide residues and metabolites, biocides, pharmaceutical residues, chemicals of concern — such as PFAS — and microplastics, as well as other pollutants of emerging concern in EU bodies of water, and to apply the use of the latest, most effective available techniques; urges the Commission to adopt guidelines for harmonised standards for monitoring networks and data reporting; calls on the Commission to facilitate in its Zero Pollution Action Plan the use of non-invasive monitoring methods and bioindicators in order to minimise the exposure of humans and wildlife to contaminants in the air, soil and water; urges the Member States to make use of their complete monitoring networks when reporting data to the Commission;

47. Calls on the Commission, the Member States and water providers to mainstream digitalisation and enhance the use of management and metering data for evidence-based decision-making both at regulatory and consumption level; calls for digitally enabled water technologies to allow for distance monitoring and reporting on water quality, leakages, use and resources;

48. Notes the potential of digitalisation and artificial intelligence in improving the management and monitoring of bodies of water, creating better data and analysing evidence to support decision-makers, given that they could greatly contribute to the quick identification of small changes in water quality that could represent a threat to bodies of water, evaluation of best practices and identification of the most cost-effective measures;

49. Calls on the Member States to create legal frameworks that avoid situations in which the entities managing bodies of water are financed from activities that deteriorate their chemical and ecological status; calls on the Member States to clearly separate the entities in charge of management and those in charge of assessing the status of bodies of water;

50. Stresses the need to homogenise water data and create mandatory reporting standards for Member States to boost data transparency; calls on the Commission to continue improving WISE (the Water Information System for Europe) to make it a user-friendly information tool for everyone in the EU, providing information on the quantity, quality and availability of water resources, in addition to benchmarking the management of bodies of water;

51. Notes that, according to the fitness report, there is room for improvement in both the accessibility of information on water policies and quality, and in its level of detail; calls on the Member States and the Commission to remedy this and provide EU residents with clear, comprehensive and easily available information; calls furthermore for greater transparency and therefore for a significant improvement in public consultation, public awareness and education on water and on the links between water, ecosystems, sanitation, health, food safety, food security and disaster prevention, for inter-sectoral dialogue between economic operators, water providers, the general public, authorities and civil society organisations to be fostered, and for access to justice under both the Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) Directive and the WFD to be ensured in line with the case law of the Court of Justice;

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52. Welcomes the fact that the EU responded partially to Right2Water in the recast of the Drinking Water Directive by inserting a new article on access to water and more transparency on its quality to improve health and the environment; calls on the Member States to fully implement and enforce the WFD in order to ensure access to water for all and fully respond to Right2Water;
  53. Calls on the Member States and water providers to systematically use testing for COVID-19 in waste water as an early warning system to support the fight against the pandemic;
  54. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and the Commission.
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