

EWA

Water Manifesto



Topics

- Water Quality
- Water Framework Directive - the Process must go on
- Water and Agriculture
- Water pricing and Price Transparency
- EWA and the Water Manifesto



Water quality

Securing safe water for a growing population is still a major issue globally, and because of this, a continuous focus on water pollution prevention and water quality is highly needed. The paradigm shift towards innovation as a key element of a European growth agenda in the wake of the financial crisis has been an important trend in water policies over the last decade. This is significantly expressed in the EU research programme Horizon 2020, which by its own words is an innovation program rather than a research programme with the primary aim to develop new technologies and solutions to societal challenges which can be brought to the market. For the water sector, this has led to a clear focus on water technologies at the expense of broader water resources management solutions.

The issue of water quality has gained renewed attention by the discussion on reuse and recycling as a means of introducing new secondary water sources for water supply such as reclaimed wastewater to counteract water scarcity, i.e. in the developing a CIS Guidance Document on Water reuse New tendencies in urban planning using multiple water sources for new open spaces as elements in the urban architecture has contributed to the necessity of future focus on water quality, as well.

EWA calls for a balanced approach between the water "Fit for Purpose" principle while considering hygienic aspects and the precautionary principle.

EWA calls for a research and innovation agenda, which emphasizes pollution prevention, emerging pollutants, and ensures water quality standards in innovative rethinking of using alternative water sources.

Water Framework Directive – the process must go on

The European Water Framework Directive (WFD) with its river basin approach to water development has proven to be a reliable tool and is the basis for a sustainable European water policy. The achievement of the ambitious objectives of the WFD will need more time than previously estimated. This is a task beyond one generation. With view to the forthcoming revision of the WFD in 2019, previous experience of practice must be integrated into the necessary development. Although it will take more time to achieve the target, the aim of good status should be retained. Temporal interim targets will be helpful to keep a positive perspective. The numerous successes in the water sector must be visible to the public.

EWA calls for an open and constructive discussion involving the stakeholders more actively in the revision of the WFD by 2019. Even though it is ambitious to reach „Good Status”, it is however of utmost importance to allow the timeframe it requires.

EWA calls for a better harmonisation among other regulations which are relevant to the water sector, such as the EU Floods Directive or the REACH Regulation.



Water and agriculture

Agriculture and water management are strongly interlinked. Agricultural activities affects the water quality heavily and in many regions inefficient or extensive use has a negative impact on the surface and groundwater reserves.

Climate change is predicted to increase variations in precipitation and surface water availability. Extreme weather conditions, like droughts and floods, are expected to be more frequent, as well. Linked with these changes, farmers in many regions will face increasing competition from non-agricultural users due to the rising urban population density and water demands from energy and industry sectors. This means that agricultural production will have to rely on much less freshwater resources than before.

The increased pressure on water resources does not only affect water quantity. Agriculture production is a major polluter, a leading cause of eutrophication, and an important source of groundwater contamination. Furthermore, much of its pollution is diffuse (non-point source), which thereby is difficult to control and eliminate. A societal challenge will be to prevent deterioration of water quality due to the growth of polluting activities or lack of improvements. These complex and locally diverse challenges do not only concern the water sector but are expected to impact the agricultural sector strongly – a highly water-dependent sector. Sustainable solutions will force the two sectors to cooperate more closely than before.

The most important “new source” will be the reuse of water in irrigation and groundwater recharge. This means that clear quality requirements for water reuse will have to be established.

EWA calls for a focus on policies at EU and national level that:

- increase the overall efficiency of water use by the agricultural sector by implementing a sustainable integrated water resource management in agriculture including the reuse of water
- reduce the sector’s impact on freshwater resources by developing and supporting new farming techniques

Water prices and transparency

Water pricing systems as well as the user’s financial burden related to water services varies greatly in the EU. The problem is not the difference itself, but the stakeholders’ highly varying understanding and perception of the costs of water services. In many cases, water tariffs do not reflect the overall real costs, and the users have limited access to the information and considerations verifying certain level of water prices. As a consequence, users are not aware of the real magnitude of the resources needed for the long term provision of water services, resulting in social tension and inefficient uses of water.

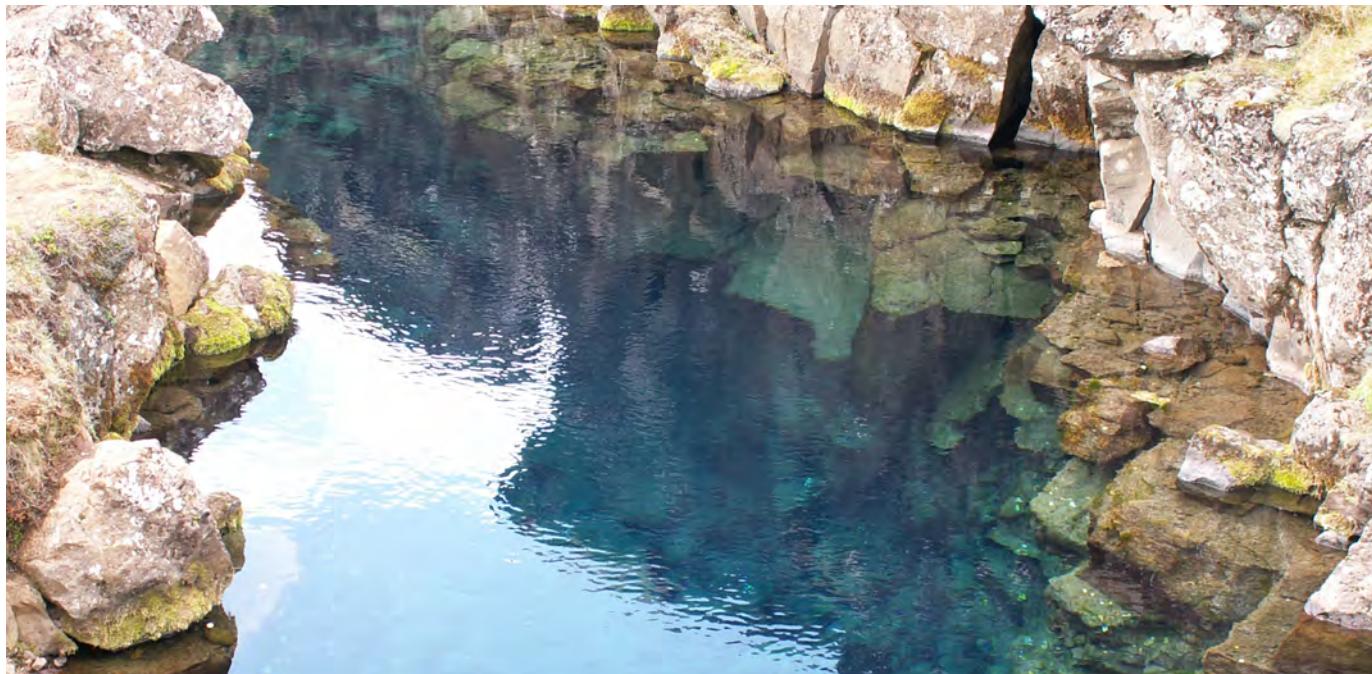
According to Article 9 of the Water Framework Directive, water-pricing policies should provide adequate incentives for users to use water resources efficiently in line with the polluter pays principle and also take account of the principle of the recovery of all costs. However, in most cost recovery calculations the real magnitude of the replacement costs of the ageing infrastructure remains hidden, providing misleading information on the real structure of financial costs and the overall financing situation of water services. The lack of a clear picture of the overall real costs disables the formulation of proper financing strategies and transparent pricing systems. Most water tariffs in the EU cover the costs of everyday operation but they barely provide coverage for the costs of reconstruction and replacement of existing facilities reaching the end of their useful lifetime.

When pricing of water should motivate efficient uses of water resources and ensure financial sustainability of water services, wise allocation of tariffs, taxes and transfers is needed. Besides the consideration of many other aspects, like affordability and solidarity, effective and responsible decision-making in this matter would require reliable, transparent information on the real costs that should be covered, in the first place.

EWA calls for improved transparency of tariff systems and financial cost structures of water services with an expressed focus on the real costs related to the reconstruction, replacement of the ageing water infrastructure.

EWA supports transparent and sustainable decision-making by development and deployment of life cycle cost based evaluation methodologies.





THIS WATER MANIFESTO

European Water Association (EWA) is the pan-European, non-governmental, non-profit-making, technical and scientific umbrella organization of and for national member associations bringing together all professionals involved in the water cycle. Simply, it is the voice of water in Europe. It is the platform and turntable for discussion, exchange and transfer of information and know how in the European Water landscape on technical and scientific level, not only between the national member associations and with the corporate members, but also for distribution of information from the EU to the members and from the members to EU. EWA's national members and all their working groups and specialized members will build a real task-force to analyse, discuss, translate and communicate the European Agenda to their national, regional and local authorities, the involved consultants, the industry, the contractors and even the general public.

By means of the Water Manifesto, the European Water Association draws attention to current important water issues in Europe and makes proposals for their resolution by the sustainable management and use of water resources. EWA calls upon the society in general and all relevant stakeholders to strive for the sustainable and responsible use of water. As one of the major professional associations in Europe that covers

the whole water cycle, EWA is ready and prepared to accept the public appeal by the MEP Water Group “to link the EU-level with the local level”. EWA is ready to answer the public appeal by the Water Group within the Members of the European Parliament (MEP) for more and better information to all participants in the European Water Cycle.

Through the 23 leading National professional member organizations, EWA will take action to promote the urban water related issues in the upcoming Horizon 2020 programme, in close coordination with the EU Water Alliance and the MEP Water Group.

EWA encourages the permanent dialogue between the decision makers and the national and regional authorities



Published by:

EWA · European Water Association · October 2016

Theodor-Heuss-Allee 17 · D-53773 Hennef · Germany

Tel.: +49 2242 872-189 · Fax: +49 2242 872-135

info@EWA-online.eu · www.ewa-online.eu

Secretary General: Dipl.-Ing. Johannes Lohaus (DE)

President: Mr. Károly Kovács (HU)

Chairwoman EWA European Policy Committee: Mrs. Wendy Francken (BE)

Picture source: iStock (Title), DWA