



Malta-EU Steering
& Action Committee

COM (2012) 673: Commission Communication

A Blueprint to Safeguard Europe's Water Resources

Water is essential for human life, nature and the economy. It is permanently renewed but it is also finite and cannot be made or replaced with other resources. Freshwater constitutes only about 2% of the water on the planet and competing demands may lead to an estimated 40% global water supply shortage by 2030.

EU water policy has successfully contributed to water protection over the past three decades. Europeans can safely drink tap water and swim in thousands of coastal areas, rivers and lakes across the EU. Pollution from urban, industrial and agricultural sources is regulated and this has brought about significant improvements in the quality of European waters, particularly by reducing an excess of nutrients. As a result, iconic fish species such as salmon and sturgeon have, in some places, returned to European rivers.

In 2000, the EU Water Framework Directive (WFD)¹ addressed for the first time in a comprehensive manner all the challenges faced by EU waters, making it clear that water management is much more than just water distribution and treatment. It involves land-use and management that affect both water quality and quantity; it requires coordination with spatial planning by the Member States and integration into funding priorities. The WFD established the objective to achieve good status by 2015. This deadline is approaching. The EEA State of Water report² and the Commission assessment of the Member States' River Basin Management Plans (RBMPs) developed under the WFD concur that this objective is likely to be achieved in slightly over half (53%) of EU waters. Major additional action is therefore needed to preserve and improve EU waters.

The Blueprint to Safeguard Europe's Water Resources is based on extensive public consultations both in the framework of its development and under the Fitness Check which has involved the general public, stakeholders, Member States as well as other EU institutions and bodies. The Blueprint recognises that the aquatic environments differ greatly across the EU and therefore does not propose any one-size-fits-all solution, in line with the principle of subsidiarity. It emphasises key themes which include: improving land use, addressing water pollution, increasing water efficiency and resilience, and improving governance by those involved in managing water resources.

Link to Dossier:

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2012:0673:FIN:EN:PDF>

¹ http://ec.europa.eu/environment/water/water-framework/info/intro_en.htm

² <http://www.eea.europa.eu/themes/water/publications-2012>