



WWF

ACTION PLAN

EU

2014



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*Healthy freshwater ecosystems - a vital resource for Europeans, our environment and our economy - are under significant pressure.*

*Like WWF, I invite all EU institutions, Member States and stakeholders to join efforts by properly implementing the Water Framework Directive and safeguarding the highest environmental standards so that species can thrive and healthy freshwater ecosystems can continue providing the vital services we depend on.*

**Asa Westlund** –  
Former S&D MEP and Member of  
the ENVI Committee

**90%**

**of Europeans are concerned that pesticides and fertilizers in agriculture have an impact on water quality<sup>2</sup>**

## SECURE CLEAN AND HEALTHY WATERS

Freshwater is recognised as essential for human life, providing a resource base for nature and our economy. By 2015, only 53% of European waters are expected to reach good status, far from the EU target set by the EU Water Framework Directive (WFD) adopted in 2000<sup>1</sup>.

Pollution, habitat destruction and excessive use of water, mostly driven by unsustainable practices of agriculture, energy production, transport and industry, are still not adequately tackled. A widespread use of exemptions, by which Member States are postponing much needed management measures and are setting less stringent objectives, undermines the WFD implementation.

The European Commission and Member States need to increase their ambition in water management and ensure that water management measures put in place by the end of 2015 radically improve the status of our rivers, lakes and wetlands by 2021.

### HOW CAN MEPs IMPROVE THIS POLICY?

- Call for improved implementation and enforcement of the WFD, including through promotion of nature-based solutions and better use of economic instruments for water management.
- Advocate for increased ambition of 2nd cycle River Basin Management Plans (2015-2021) and associated Programmes of Measures.
- Call for farm subsidies under the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) to be conditional upon the respect of basic WFD measures.
- Ensure that the remaining free-flowing and unaltered stretches of rivers are protected for their biodiversity and not impacted by hydropower and inland navigation development.
- Promote ecosystem-based measures to tackle impacts of floods and droughts events.
- Ensure that existing and future EU climate and energy policies are compatible with EU water objectives.

## YOUR ACTION PLAN

- 1 Ensure improved and more ambitious implementation of water legislation by:
  - Urging the European Commission to prevent the overuse and misuse of WFD exemptions by Member States.
  - Advocating with the Commission and Member States via parliamentary questions, events or reports for:
    1. adequate contribution from users and polluters to full cost recovery for water services;
    2. measures that support nature conservation, in particular when designing flood and drought management measures (e.g. substituting traditional 'grey' with 'green' infrastructure);
    3. allocating sufficient water for ecosystem needs;
    4. ensuring stakeholder participation;
    5. improved planning for WFD compliant infrastructures (dams, dykes, etc.); and
    6. integration of climate change in water management.
  - Calling upon the Commission and Member States to increase ambition in tackling pollution (with nitrates and chemicals) and to improve monitoring and water status assessment.
  - Urging the Commission to present a proposal to include WFD measures in the CAP cross-compliance system.
- 2 Work across Parliamentary Committees to ensure future climate and energy policies lead to synergies and co-benefits between protection of water ecosystems and climate change adaptation and mitigation measures (e.g. ENVI and ITRE Committees).
- 3 Ensure that, the scheduled WFD review to be completed by 2019, leads to increased ambition in European water protection.
- 4 Make use of the mid-term review of the current EU Budget in 2017 to create additional funding opportunities for water protection.

## WE MUST ACT NOW!

- If all European water bodies would have reached good ecological status by 2015, they could have generated yearly benefits of up to €37.3 billion<sup>3</sup>.
- Diffuse pollution from agriculture significantly affects more than 40 % of Europe's rivers and coastal waters and one-third of lakes and transitional waters<sup>4</sup>.
- Pressures from hydropower, navigation, agriculture, flood protection and urban development causing physical alterations of ecosystems affect around 40% of rivers and transitional waters and 30% of lakes<sup>5</sup>.
- Up to 50% of water resources in the EU are being lost through leakage in water infrastructures<sup>6</sup>.
- 37% of European freshwater fish species are threatened and over two-thirds of freshwater habitats are in unfavourable conservation status<sup>7</sup>.

## TIMELINE

**2014-2015:**  
public consultations on the 2nd cycle RBMPs

**By end of 2015:**  
2nd cycle RBMPs, as well as flood risk management plans, established by Member States

**By 2019:**  
Commission to review WFD, and if needed propose changes

**By 2021:**  
majority of water bodies expected to be brought to good status



**€37.3 bn**

yearly benefits if all European water bodies would reach good ecological status by 2015

## FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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