

# **Water for a sustainable Europe – our vision for 2030**

**We have achieved sustainable water resource management and universal access to modern and safe water supply and sanitation because we value water in all its dimensions – in its economic, social, environmental and cultural importance.**



*The Water Vision for Europe aspires to be a Vision for all people in Europe and around the globe. The Vision is formulated from a people's perspective in a positive and proactive manner that seeks to encourage ownership by all. Putting people and values at its core, the Vision departs from the premise that only if we mobilise people and stakeholders around common values we will be able to achieve sustainability with regards to water in Europe. It desires to unite and stimulate people and stakeholders to act in partnership in order to solve Europe's water problems and to contribute to solutions that will address the global water crisis.*

*The Vision serves as guidance to reach joint actions in the different partnerships on advanced water management and to solve the water problems in Europe and globally. It is underpinning both programmes of Aquawareness - the European Water Awareness and the Water Stewardship Programme. The postulates of the Vision will serve as a basis for the concrete project settings of both programmes: as a source for awareness activities and as a basis to define principles of sustainable water management for best governance tools of the stewardship programme.*

*The Vision, which was initiated by the European Water Partnership (EWP) in 2008, was elaborated in an open multi-stakeholder process, including representatives from the EU Commission, the EU Presidency, the EU Parliament as well as leading multinationals and NGO's. It was handed over to the European Union Institutions on 30th June 2008 during the launch of Aquawareness.*

*After this expert view on the basic vision text, a broad discussion, dissemination and commitment of a maximum of stakeholder groups throughout Europe was crucial. Therefore, a regional consultation process across Europe was launched by the EWP providing the opportunity to add region-specific points. Four regional workshops took place in Castellon (Spain), Copenhagen, Vienna and Brussels. Within these workshops the following outcomes were pursued:*

- o to generate joint commitments towards sustainable water management, set up by the stakeholders of each region,*
- o to include region-specific points*
- o to set up a map of actual projects/ activities implementing the vision aims*
- o to identify the main obstacles to the implementation of the vision aims*

*The Water Vision for Europe, enriched by the region-specific points, was presented on a global level during the 5th World Water Forum in Istanbul. As a follow up after the Forum a status quo on where Europe stands on water and a gap analysis on obstacles hindering the realisation of the Vision-aims has been started within a Vision mapping process. On the basis of this Vision mapping a guidance document with recommendations for actions for the incoming European Commission and European Parliament will be prepared and handed over in autumn 2009.*

*The Vision serves as the valuebase for the European Water Partnership in all its projects and initiatives as well as in its relations with its partners.*

*The basic text of the Vision, as was presented on the 30<sup>th</sup> of June in Brussels, can be found below.*

1. We treat water as our common heritage with an economic, social, environmental and cultural value for our societies. Water is not a commodity like any other one – it's a fragile resource which can not be replaced and we protect and preserve it for future generations to sustain our societies, our economies and the environment. Water sustainability is crucial for us.
2. Water is an essential human need and we recognize the access to basic water supply and sanitation as a human right. The people in Europe have universal access to safe, modern and affordable water and sanitation services. At the same time we are able to satisfy the other human water needs – for businesses, industry, agriculture and recreation and have achieved a balance with needs of the environment also with regard to sustain biodiversity. We can rely on essential ecosystem services from our healthy rivers, lakes, coastal waters and wetlands and our people can also enjoy high quality rivers, lakes and coastal waters for ecologic and recreational purposes.
3. We manage our water resources sustainable within river basins across political boundaries including transboundary waters and we apply an integrated adaptive water management approach. All the stakeholders including all inhabitants in the basin participate actively in the management decision process. We apply a preventive approach which integrates quality and quantity as well as surface water, groundwater and coastal waters. We have adopted and implemented ambitious legislation such as the Water Framework Directive and other related legislation and made other policy areas such as agriculture, regional, industrial, trade, transport and energy policy 'water sensitive'.
4. We have achieved a true 'water democracy' where we apply the principles of transparency, integrity, solidarity and equity and where all people and stakeholders are aware of their rights and responsibilities. Our well informed people use their freedom of choice wisely - what they drink and how they use water - and use their opportunity to participate actively in the governance of water management and services. The people have a say in the quality and organization of their services and our services are efficient and sensitive to environmental and social needs.
5. We have jointly achieved a culture where water resources are not wasted, spoiled or overused. We have actively pushed a paradigm shift from supply driven water management to an integrated supply and demand driven approach

as well as from an end of pipe to a preventive approach. We are able to satisfy most of our needs with water resources within the same river basin.

6. We have achieved a change of mindset, attitude and practices through raising water awareness and the application of appropriate instruments and incentives. Proven sustainable water practices, pricing and charging policies, transparency about water footprints of individual, industrial, agricultural and local authorities' practices and of products have been useful instruments in achieving a modern water efficient society.
7. Water services have a price. We pay for services and for the uses and our pricing policies are guided by transparency, sustainability, efficiency as well as a social and environmental approach. We use water pricing and other economic instruments to achieve sustainable water use.
8. We are coping with the challenges of climate change as well as with the natural phenomena such as floods and droughts as we are continuously improving our adaptive, integrated management approach and we adapted our infrastructure and practices. Our infrastructure is planned, constructed, operated and maintained in an efficient and environmental and social acceptable manner based on a long term perspective.
9. We apply appropriate technologies and have thereby continuously improved our water efficiency and minimized pollution to a level which is negligible with regard to human and environmental health. Communities, agriculture and industry enjoy the economic and social benefits of a high level of water productivity by applying recycling technologies, closed production cycles and efficient irrigation techniques and other technologies. We promote and conduct research and development to continuously improve our know how on adaptive integrated management and innovative technological solutions and have achieved a fast track to bring those technologies to the markets.
10. Europe is a responsible partner in the world that actively promotes and supports the achievement of sustainable water management and universal access to water supply and sanitation in all countries. We have understood that sustainable water management is key to peace and security and to eradicate poverty and have made water a priority of our foreign and development policy. Our trade and economic policies have integrated water issues and we have significantly reduced our global water footprint to a level that is sustainable.