

Ladies and Gentlemen,
Dear distinguished guests,

It is my pleasure to welcome you all to the AQUAWARENESS POLICY FORUM
“Water 2030—who cares?” conference in our representation here in Brussels.

It's great that the European Water Partnership took the initiative to
organize this event with the support of regions like Valencia, to provide us with
this great opportunity to discuss and address questions concerning Sustainable
Water Resource Management.

I really appreciate that the European Water Partnership is emphasizing the regional
and local aspects of Europe's water resource management.

The aim of this event is to provide information, but more
importantly to enable an exchange of views so that we can learn from each other.

So please feel free to fully participate.

Ladies and Gentleman,

To start things off, I have been asked by Ms Biesiekierska to tell you something about
the region of Saxony-Anhalt.

Water management in Saxony-Anhalt could be summarised by two sentences:

First: We have everything that has to do with water; the only exception is there is
no coastal water, since the federal state Saxony-Anhalt is located in the heart
of Germany.

Second: Besides the usual water assets we have a very sophisticated, state-
owned water regulation system with a very long-distance water supply system.

Both of these points are closely connected and very important to understand the
water distribution in Saxony-Anhalt.

Saxony-Anhalt is home to the biggest major storage dam in Germany. It has several
tasks including raw water supply, flood protection, regulation of water levels, and
cultivation of landscape, hydropower, fisheries, environmental protection and tourism.

The raw water of the dam is prepared by large waterworks which are part of a huge
and unique long distance water supply system. Then the drinking water is delivered
through a pipe-work system that is more than 700 km in length touching three federal
states of Germany: Saxony-Anhalt, Saxony and partly Thüringia.

Generally speaking water management in Germany has a very regional and
localized history. This is now slowly changing because of the cross-border aspects of
pollution and the European legislation.

I consider the Water Framework Directive was one of the important drivers to federalize the German water legislation.

Pursuant to the new distribution of responsibilities between the Federation and the federal states as laid down in the Basic Law, the responsibility for setting up regulatory frameworks now lies with the Federal Government, while the federal states are in charge of implementing and supplementing the federal regulations and enforcing all statutory provisions in the field of water pollution control. Therefore the federal government has to cooperate very closely with the federal states.

Usually in Germany the local governments are in charge of the supply of drinking water and the sanitation of waste water. This has the advantage that the civil organization is involved and the “user pays” principle is enforced by communal fees.

The claim that water is not a commercial product like any other emphasizes the importance of the social and environmental aspects of water. However, high-quality water, which is delivered to users, is a product into which human labour, material resources, and energy have been invested, and must, therefore, have an economic price like any other product. The same economic logic should apply to systems used for protection against the adverse effects of water and also for the protection of water against pollution.

Saxony-Anhalt is a special case because of the natural resources and the transformation history. This story might be of particular interest for the (potential) New Member States, as there are still supra-regional or state owned companies.

Twenty years ago during the communist era all water management was state owned and managed. The water companies were formerly social properties: They performed several tasks in the interest of the state.

I could recommend to the New Members States that before commencing any process of selling or privatising the water assets, that there should be an extensive organisational and legal assessment in addition to the commercial assessment.

As with West-Germany, the communal assets of water management resources of the new federal states of Germany have (yet) to be assigned to the local governments, a process which is still not closed.

But because of the financial crisis, a lack of money and globalization, there is nowadays a big pressure to work together and create bigger entities again, because they might be more efficient.

Saxony-Anhalt could therefore be exemplified as a country in a transition period between modernisation, communalisation and tradition.

In addition to the dam and long distance water supply system, there is as mentioned before a very sophisticated flood protection system which is managed by a state owned company. The disastrous flood 2002 highlighted the organisational advantage for Saxony-Anhalt - the management of the flood company and the dam system was in one hand, the technical organisation was lead by one

executive director and the management of the shareholdings was lead by the general director of the ministry. It was this that prevented us from experiencing bigger damages.

Based on Saxony-Anhalt, my conclusion is that it is important to have an intelligent design of water management, taking into account the geographical conditions and the broad public participation. Water management should be localised as much as possible to achieve the goals of sustainability but it must also be organized by larger entities if necessary to tackle the new challenges, especially flood protection.

Now, for the remainder of this conference: It is crucial to have a platform for representatives from the Commission, the Council, the European Parliament and other institutions to highlight and discuss the special qualities and the very specific problems that water management faces in the regions.

The European Commissioner has recently promised to look into the challenges facing water management, especially climate change. Today there are a lot of stakeholders in the management of water. I hope that the European Commission will give these crucial stakeholders and regions the possibility to participate in the decision making process.

Ladies and gentlemen and distinguished guests,

I hope all of you will have an interesting and important discussion about water management on this World Water Day.

I wish this Aquawareness Policy Forum every success.

Thank you.