

Towards a water resilient Europe

This paper brings together the views of major Swedish water stakeholders, such as companies from a range of industries and businesses, energy, water service providers and agriculture. Given that multiple actors share the same water resources, collaboration is essential.

Water is vital to our ecosystems, our economy and our society as well as for human life. There needs to be a strategy for developing a water-resilient Europe, one that will prepare for a stable water supply in times of climate adaptation. It will strengthen sustainable development and deliver a strategic advantage to the Union. Scandinavia is rich in freshwater and seawater, providing an important resource for our societies and for our competitiveness. It is essential to recognise that this water abundance differentiates us from other European countries, which needs to be considered in policy making and in legislation. However, we are experiencing more-frequent droughts and floods, and we face a more rapid temperature increase than in other parts of Europe. This underscores the need to boost resilience and preparedness at both national and local levels throughout the Union, taking into consideration regional differences.

We stress the importance of a European water strategy built upon these five principles:

- **Ensuring National, Regional and Local Concerns**
- **Assessing Policy Gaps and Opportunities for Improvement**
- **Common Water Management Principles**
- **Enhanced Understanding and Management of Water Risks**
- **Investing in Education and Capacity Building for Enhanced Resilience**

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- **Ensuring National, Regional and Local Concerns**

National, regional and local conditions need to be considered as part of any plan, strategy or roadmap for water resilience, given the large discrepancies seen throughout European waters. Certain issues – such as water pricing – require national-level attention, and it is vital to reinforce subsidiarity and adopt a societal approach to water. Such an approach should allow stakeholders to be properly involved at a local level. This ensures that any decisions are taken in the best interest of the environment and that they consider local conditions and cross-media effects.

- **Assessing Policy Gaps and Opportunities for Improvement**

Before developing any new policies, it is important to evaluate the existing frameworks governing water management. This will help identify policy gaps, redundancies and areas for improvement. Such approach ensures that any future policies are fit for purpose and based on past experiences and successes, thus leading to more effective and cohesive water governance and management.

- **Common Water Management Principles**

As well as agreeing on definitions for concepts such as water abstraction, transfer, use, consumption and leakage, it is also essential to establish shared principles that underpin effective water management. Such principles should include sustainability, efficiency, competitiveness, measures at source, risk of depletion of resource and equity. By fostering a common understanding of these concepts, stakeholders can collaborate more effectively in addressing water challenges and achieving sustainable water management practices.

- **Enhanced Understanding and Management of Water Risks**

It is essential to identify, analyse and assess water-related risks to mitigate their impact effectively. Supporting the development of cost-effective technologies is crucial for promoting water efficiency and reuse as well as reducing pollution. In addition, there should be initiatives to encourage water circularity and to extract critical resources from wastewater to ensure sustainable water management practices.

- **Investing in Education and Capacity Building for Enhanced Resilience**

Building in resilience to water management will demand a close focus on education and capacity building. Establishing a European platform to gather and share knowledge and experiences will be essential for fostering the required collaboration and innovation. In addition, providing support to regions vulnerable to water scarcity or floods will be critical for ensuring their resilience and preparedness.