Efficient Buildings Europe

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Consultations – European Water Resilience Strategy

European Water Resilience Strategy

The European Water Resilience Strategy must recognise and address the interlinkages between water and energy efficiency. In buildings, reducing water use significantly impacts energy performance. **Addressing the water-energy nexus will improve efficiency in both water and energy consumption**.

- The Strategy's 2030 and 2040 milestones must be in line with the energy-efficiency targets already set in the EPBD, EED, and the EU climate law.
- The Commission must adopt a **holistic perspective of water resilience**. The Strategy should clearly define water resilience considering the efficiency, durability and safety of water supply, disposal and infrastructure. The Strategy must address **water consumption in buildings**, as they are at the centre of the water system (distribution, wastewater, treatment, use of heating and cooling, etc.).
  - To improve water management and resilience to extreme weather events, this chapter should present measures to incentivise rain- and greywater harvesting across buildings, **encourage the uptake of innovative digital solutions and equipment** for water management, and integrate **nature-based solutions** for stormwater management.
  - This part must mention **EPBD implementation** and encourage the **use of energy and water efficient products and technologies in buildings**. 15% of energy consumption in buildings in the EU is used to heat water[1]. Currently, national Energy Performance Certificates (EPC) may only consider domestic hot water generation, excluding potential energy gains from efficient taps and showers. The latter improves energy performance in buildings by 2% to 6%. Combined with decentralised water heaters, a reduction of up to 12% of primary energy demand is possible, without behavioural change from users[2].
  - The Strategy must encourage the consideration of hot water consumption in EPCs and of water efficiency measures in building codes and standards (including indoor and outdoor water use).
  - Unlock the **potential for water reuse through greywater recycling systems, and heat recovery technologies** in buildings and support innovation in this sector.

- **Support the digitalization of the water sector** to guarantee better management and governance. The Strategy should introduce a harmonised water consumption data system with better interoperability.
  - The Commission should **draw on existing tools** to support the European water digital industry. The EPBD provides sufficient instruments to ensure smart water management in buildings with **technical building systems** (TBS), **building automation and control systems** (BACS), and **SRI tool** (which encompasses domestic hot water as a criterion).
  - The Strategy should call for funding to support these objectives through **specific water-related funding streams in the MFF 2028-2034**. A revision of the **state aid rules** would also allow Member States to support the modernisation and extension of resilient water infrastructures.

- Guarantee the **competitiveness of EU water efficiency industry**

[1] File:Visual SE article Households 2021.png - Statistics Explained
[2] Energy savings potential of water-saving showers and faucets

- The Strategy must support innovations and advanced technologies that reduce consumption and boost efficiency. Water-efficiency technology and digital tools for buildings are innovations that create jobs, save costs and contribute to the EU's water resilience.
- The Strategy should include a **plan for training programmes and digital upskilling initiatives** targeting SMEs, local authorities, and educational institutions.
- The Strategy should call for sufficient funding to support these objectives through **specific water and energy efficiency-related streams in the MFF 2028-2034**. This should concern both **fundamental research and technology innovations** on water-efficiency. Mechanisms that incentivise investments in water efficiency in buildings, like the **EU Taxonomy**, must be maintained and applied to water reuse.

Water efficiency first – guiding principles

Following the Energy Efficiency First principle laid out in the Governance Regulation and the Energy Efficiency Directive, establishing **a cross-policy water efficiency first principle (WE1st) is crucial to ensure a water-resilient Europe**. Efficient Buildings Europe welcomes this initiative and wishes to underline overarching principles to guarantee a **realistic and well-functioning water efficiency first principle**:

- Establish **a clear definition of water efficiency** which encompasses all water usage and sectors, especially water in buildings. Clear water-efficiency first standards will **guarantee stable market conditions, strengthen the EU's industrial competitiveness, improve water management systems, and enable sustainable water use.**
  - The definition must **consider the co-benefits of water efficiency** and link the water efficiency first principle to the energy efficiency first principle.
  - The Commission must set clear **sector-specific water efficiency standards** in line with the current state of technology. This should be elaborated in collaboration with industry stakeholders through a **High-level Forum on Water Resilience**. This standard must make water efficiency a central element to be considered in planning, policy or investment decisions.

- The WE1st guidelines must allow the **uptake of innovative water-efficient solutions** by becoming a guiding principle for water-related decisions. The implementation of the WE1st principle must aim at **removing existing market and regulatory barriers to water efficiency**.
  - The Commission should **draw on existing tools** to support the European water digital industry. The EPBD provides sufficient instruments to ensure smart water management in buildings with **technical building systems** (TBS), **building automation and control systems** (BACS), and **SRI tool** (which encompasses domestic hot water as a criterion).
  - Unlock the **potential for water reuse and circularity in buildings** and support innovation in this sector. The WE1st guidelines must acknowledge the role of greywater recycling systems, heat recovery technologies, water capture, reclamation, recycling, rainwater recovery systems in increasing water efficiency.

- Explore the potential of **nature-based solutions**. Solutions such as green infrastructure[3] and **bioclimatic designs** will increase the resilience of urban environments through better stormwater management, and optimised water consumption.

- Following the energy-efficiency first principle, the Commission must adopt **clear implementation guidelines for water efficiency first**. These guidelines must set a common framework to **develop cost-benefit methodologies to quantify the multiple benefits of water efficiency**.
  - To guarantee good implementation of the water-efficiency first principle at national level, responsibility in Member States must be clear, and reporting and evaluation by the European Commission must be regular.
  - The European Commission must ensure the mainstreaming of the water-efficiency first principle in other **relevant EU legislation** – covering buildings, urban, public procurement, circular economy, biodiversity (especially related to urban areas) and the EU taxonomy.
  - The Strategy should introduce a **harmonized water consumption data system**, which will facilitate the reporting, monitoring and evaluation of good WE1st implementation.

[3] Green infrastructure encompasses a variety of water management practices, such as vegetated rooftops, roadside plantings, absorbent gardens, and other measures that capture, filter, and reduce stormwater. Green Infrastructure: How to Manage Water in a Sustainable Way

For further information

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About Efficient Buildings Europe

Efficient Buildings Europe represents Europe's leading companies involved with the manufacture, distribution and installation of energy efficient products, equipment, and services for buildings.
The members of Efficient Buildings Europe employ more than 280,000 people in these activities in Europe and have over 1,200 production facilities and office locations in the EU. The mission of Efficient Buildings Europe is to work together with the EU institutions to help the EU to move towards a more efficient use of energy in buildings, thereby creating an efficient, decarbonised, and flexible building stock that actively contributes to the achievement of Europe's commitments on climate change, energy security, and economic growth.

Efficient Buildings Europe Members (2025)