



WATER RESILIENCE STRATEGY

POSITION PAPER

Romania is committed through the Accession Treaty to ensure **compliance with the EU Directives** in the field of water and wastewater, and in 2015 adopted the UN 2030 Agenda, under which Objective 6 Clean Water and Sanitation aims to ensure the availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for everybody.

In the last 15 years, important **investments** have been made in the water/wastewater sector, of about 7 billion euros, but the needs for full compliance are still very high, being valued at a minimum of 24.5 billion euros.

Moreover, **digitalization** became a pre-requisite for a viable water utility. Many water utilities globally have been targeted by cyberattacks, increasing concerns about sector's vulnerability.

Lack of specialized **human resources** and people migration to other more attractive sectors, led to an increased need to develop specific programs for better employment opportunities to individuals, higher incomes, and can open possibilities for acquiring and improving skills and knowledge.

In this complex framework, the Romanian Water Association welcomes this initiative and presents its **contribution towards an EU Water Resilience Strategy** which can address both climate change, and national specific challenges.

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PRESIDENT

Key directions

Water efficiency

- priority should be given to ensure connection to water infrastructure for all, incentivizing population to connect to water infrastructure.
- water efficiency first principle (WEFP) should become a mandatory requirement for both industrial and residential sectors.
- development of wastewater reuse projects should be encouraged in industry, energy, services, agriculture sectors, etc.

Water pollution

- updated data bases should be supported in order to have accurate information on both compliance and water body status. This will ensure a sound development and monitoring of River Basin Management Plans.
- financing renewal and upgrade of drinking water supply and sanitation plants, as well as their networks, to ensure that water for human consumption meets physicochemical and microbiological standards.

Climate change adaptation

- flood and drought management measures must fully integrate the risks by supporting emergency response & recovery mechanism to reduce vulnerability and increase resilience.
- flood and droughts strategies and investments should become mandatory and incentives should be ensured in this direction.
- financing digital solutions, interoperability, and information sharing between relevant stakeholders (water management administration, regulatory body, water utilities).

Digitalization

- supporting digitalization of water resources management, smart metering, technologies & innovative equipment to reduce water losses. Digital technologies have proven effective in increasing both the resilience and efficiency of water utility core operations.
- support digital technologies that assess vulnerabilities and implement solutions to reduce risk and increase resilience.

Financing

- continue support under Cohesion Fund for investments in water / wastewater infrastructure, to **ensure compliance** with EU Aquis, especially in the context of revised UWWTD and anticipated modifications for WFD.
- a dedicated Water Fund should be established under MFF to support access to quality water, to invest in **water reuse**, to increase the level of **digitalization** of water utilities, to ensure an immediate **emergency response & recovery actions** in case of droughts and floods, to encourage **innovation** through flexible procurement procedures.
- finance strategy/reform preparation and institutional strengthening of water companies, to become financially and operational viable.

Skills and people

- support creation of skills in water industry, people formation and continuous learning. Apprenticeship programs and vocational training can also play a pivotal role in bridging the skills gap.
- finance programs to develop relevant digital skills. Foster digital innovation in the water sector by building IT skill sets to water professionals.