

A LOST OPPORTUNITY: NEW EU WATER RESILIENCE STRATEGY MISSES THE MARK ON CLEAN WATERS AND POLLUTION REDUCTION, SURFRIDER FOUNDATION EUROPE WARNS

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Surfrider Foundation Europe reacts to the European Water Resilience Strategy released today, expressing deep concern over the lack of concrete measures to tackle the ongoing water pollution and the root causes of the water crisis. Water resilience won't be achieved through simplification and resilience on technological fixes alone, warns the organisation which urges the EU to prioritise systemic environmental action in the flagship actions that will follow. There can be no water resilience while pollution persists and marine and coastal ecosystems remain under severe pressure from overexploitation.

Promises to fix the broken water cycle are not enough, the EU needs to deliver

Surfrider Foundation Europe praises the Commission for emphasizing the need to adopt a source-to-sea approach and ensure consistency between the EU frameworks for fresh and marine waters. Yet, today's announcements leave us wondering whether words will be matched by deeds. We support the face that the Water Resilient Strategy and the upcoming Ocean Pact¹ should be complementary and that water and marine policies should provide a coherent framework to manage the water cycle as a whole. However, in light of the existing political context, we warn against any call to overly simplify established provisions and open the door to deregulation. The data is clear: we are nowhere near reaching good environmental status for fresh- and marine water and the solution is not to backpedal on current legal instruments.

Tackling pollution at source: short-term fixes for a long-term crisis

The Commission rightly highlighted that water quantity and quality are two sides of the same coin and access to safe and clean water needs to be secured. However, despite repeated mentions of the need to prevent pollution at source, the strategy fails to establish clear measures to tackle the issue directly, relying instead on

¹ expected to be published tomorrow, June 5 – see Surfrider Europe's reaction following a recent leak [here](#)

technology boosts and short-term costly remediation efforts. Water resilience is vital for both aquatic ecosystems and human health. Time is of the essence. We must prioritise prevention at source and ensure a systematic and effective implementation of the polluter pays principle, from source to sea.

The flagship actions outlined to address main sources of pollution are especially underwhelming. While only 29% of EU surface waters are in good chemical state, focusing on clean-up efforts will only provide temporary solutions to the severe pollution crisis we are facing. Similarly, the measure proposed to tackle nutrient pollution will not be enough to accelerate and strengthen the implementation of the Nitrates Directive. Plastic pollution is barely mentioned, and no policy measures are proposed to address the escalating microplastics crisis, despite mounting evidence of its risks to human health and the latest Zero Pollution monitoring outlook reporting an estimated 9% increase in microplastic pollution across the EU in the last years.

Lucille Labayle, Water Quality and Health Policy Officer: *"We cannot claim to protect our water bodies if we don't turn off the tap on pollution. Europe is at a turning point as we are facing serious challenges to water resilience. Mopping up the mess will not suffice."*

Desalination is no silver bullet: address water crisis at its source, not its symptoms

Surfrider Europe welcomes the European Commission's recognition of the significant environmental impacts entailed by seawater desalination. However, we strongly urge the Commission to prioritise action on the root causes of growing water scarcity – namely, climate change, excessive water use and pollution. Rather than placing further strain on already vulnerable coastal ecosystems and waters – the EU must adopt concrete measures to curb overall water consumption and ensure clean waters for all Europeans. Support for innovation in desalination, as proposed by the Commission, must only follow the adoption and implementation of such measures. Only by respecting the ecological limits of our marine and coastal environments – limits that cannot sustain ever-increasing exploitation – can we ensure the long-term resilience of all our waters.

Background and resources:

- [EU Water Resilience Strategy, European Commission, 4 June 2025](#)
- [Surfrider Europe's public reaction to the leaked EU Water Resilience Strategy, 16 May 2025](#)
- [Surfrider Europe's public reaction to the adoption of the European Parliament resolution on Water Resilience, 7 May 2025](#)
- [Zero Pollution Monitoring and outlook 2025 report](#), European Environment Agency and Joint Research Center, 2025
- [Toxic tides, confronting the chemical crisis](#), Surfrider Foundation Europe, January 2024
- [The Senior representatives of 12 organisations call on Ursula von der Leyen to safeguard the EPR scheme in the recast Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive \(UWWTD\)](#)

About Surfrider Foundation Europe

Surfrider Foundation Europe, an NGO created in 1990, works to protect the ocean, the coastline, the waves and their users. For 35 years, with a team of experts and 50 volunteer branches in 12 European countries, the association has been working with stakeholders (citizens, private and public sectors) on several major issues: aquatic waste, coastal development, climate change, water quality and user health. Find out more about the association at <https://surfrider.eu/> or via [this video](#)

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