



Outcome of the Committee of the Regions' opinion on the European Water Resilience Strategy, *Turning the tide – A local and regional roadmap for water resilience*

Brussels, 17 April 2026

On the 5th of March 2026, the European Committee of the Regions (CoR) – a consultative EU institution representing Local and Regional Authorities (LRAs) – adopted its opinion on the Water Resilience Strategy. This document aims to analyse the outcome of the report, following actions led by Aqua Publica Europea, which were undertaken to influence the CoR's opinion by amplifying the voice of its members, European public water operators.

Following the publication of the European Water Resilience Strategy by the European Commission in June 2025, the European Committee of the Regions (CoR) had been working since September on the institution's opinion, aimed at sharing the position of LRAs on the Strategy. As a consultative body, the CoR does not have the power to directly modify legislation, but its influence relies on the strong impact it has on the EU legislative "train," as it represents the voice of European LRAs.

On this occasion, in order to make the voice of European public water utilities heard, Aqua Publica Europea shared a list of amendments with the CoR's advisors working on the file to ensure that the opinion took their perspective into account, while many private stakeholders were very active on this dossier. APE's activity was highlighted by a high-level meeting with the President of the CoR, Ms Kata Tüttö, who was Deputy Mayor of Budapest (Hungary) in charge of climate adaptation, waste and water management, public transport, and utility services until 2024, and currently also serves as chair of the supervisory board of our member Budapest Waterworks Company.

In hindsight, the CoR's opinion on the Water Resilience Strategy is very positive for Aqua Publica Europea, as most of our suggested amendments were successfully included in the text. Particular highlights include:

- The strong need to finance and empower LRAs and water utilities in the implementation of the Water Resilience Strategy. Thanks to APE, the CoR's report now emphasises that financing water resilience cannot be done at the expense of the public, local authorities, or water utilities.



- The inclusion of a call from the CoR urging the European Commission to preserve and uphold the EPR scheme in the recast Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive, as well as to refrain from revising key water legislation including the Water Framework Directive, the Drinking Water Directive, the Floods Directive, and the Industrial Emissions Directive.
- The need to limit the streamlining of environmental procedures to ensure that environmental integrity, public health, and participation are respected.
- A call to prioritise the implementation of nature-based solutions (where applicable) and to uphold the efficiency-first principle across all sectors – including the agricultural sector, where adaptation efforts are needed.
- A call to establish a beneficiary pays principle, alongside the polluter pays principle, to ensure that all water beneficiaries contribute their fair share. This principle was first mentioned in APE’s paper *Financing Water Resilience* (2025), based on the OECD’s proposed “land-value capture” or economic compensation schemes.
- The need for financial solidarity mechanisms for regions facing structural shortages of water resources.

Please find in the Annex the list of APE’s amendments that were included in the CoR opinion *Turning the tide – A local and regional roadmap for water resilience*.

Annex

List of Aqua Publica Europea's amendments included in the Committee of the Regions' opinion *Turning the tide – A local and regional roadmap for water resilience*

Article 6: *“The CoR underlines that this requires commitment by all parts of society, strong political ownership and key decisions in which local and regional authorities play an essential role;”*

Article 14: *“The CoR insists that it is essential to uphold the polluter pays principle and the extended producer responsibility scheme introduced by the Water Framework Directive and the Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive, and calls for proportionate and territorially sensitive simplification measures, which are particularly important for small and resource-constrained municipalities”*

Article 15: *“believes that the Water Framework Directive, the Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive, the Drinking Water Directive, the Flood Directive and the Industrial Emissions Directive should not be re-opened and revised at this moment, as regulatory stability is crucial for ensuring the long-term sustainable management of water resources, safeguarding public health, protecting the environment and building a water-smart economy”*

Article 18: Regarding this article on the streamlining of environmental procedures, APE ensured that the CoR would call for it to be implemented *“in a way that respects environmental integrity, people’s health, and public participation, taking into account the requirements for resilient water usage and the different pillars of the Water Resilience Strategy”*, adding that *“the CoR notes the need to support local and regional authorities in building their capacity to implement faster procedures effectively.”*

Article 20: *“The CoR notes that implementing digitalisation can be costly and that some solutions may not be applicable in all contexts, requiring financial and operational support for local and regional authorities.”*

Article 27: *“support adaptation measures through nature-based solutions;”*

Article 32: *“calls for stronger efforts on nature conservation, ecosystem restoration and sustainable land management in rural and urban areas to enhance natural water*

retention and restore the broken water cycle; for instance, sustainable agricultural practices will reduce the demand and contamination of water, and the deployment of nature-based solutions will increase land humidity and restore the natural water cycle.”

Article 33: *“The CoR stresses that construction activities and urban planning should take into account their potential to increase the risk of water stress (flooding, stormwater overflows and scarcity)”*

Article 35: *“highlights that in cases of water contamination, local and regional authorities are often responsible not only for deploying emergency water treatment measures but also for securing alternative sources to guarantee citizens’ access to clean and safe water. In such situations, calls for enhanced and targeted support from national governments and the EU, particularly for smaller and less developed regions that may lack the capacity to respond swiftly and effectively;”*

Article 41: *“The CoR warns against regulatory approaches that dilute essential environmental standards and/or unfairly shift the financial burden of pollution onto the public; underlines, however, that the value of water as a resource must also be felt by individual water users and the polluter pays principle should also be applied to water charging for citizens, with appropriate safeguards for vulnerable consumers.”*

Article 43: *“incentives to switch to less-water-intensive crops, buffer zones, and awareness campaigns, with particular attention to small farms”*

Article 44: *“It asks the European Commission to complement the polluter pays principle with a beneficiary pays principle to support good practices in these sectors. This can include financial incentives for large users of groundwater or drinking water, so that pricing mechanisms encourage more sustainable and circular water management practices in these sectors;”*

Article 45: *“The CoR stresses that the water efficiency first principle should be upheld across all sectors”*

Article 50: *“calls for EU funding programmes to prioritise regions with a structural shortage of water resources, where long-term deficits are exacerbated by climate change. Investment support should also cover a broad spectrum of resilience measures, including both innovative and nature-based solutions, as well as the modernisation, optimisation and climate adaptation of existing strategic water infrastructure;”*

Article 55: *“reaffirms the key role played by the European Investment Bank and other public banks in providing the patient and concessional finance that is fundamental to respond*



to the long-term investment needs of the water sector. The CoR therefore welcomes the European Investment Bank's Water Resilience Programme and the creation of the Sustainable Water Advisory Facility which will "strengthen the ability of local and regional authorities and water operators to design effective long-term investment plans"