

Shared Water, Shared Future**Building Water Resilience Through Territorial Cooperation and Exchange of Good Practices****Mikulov Declaration of the EPP-CoR Group**

We, EPP Local and Regional Leaders, Representatives of EU Regions and Cities:

1. reiterate that active **subsidiarity, partnership** and **multi-level governance** should guide the EU's water policy, its objectives and priorities;
2. underline that **local and regional authorities are strategic partners, innovators and investors** in water resilience and sustainable water management, and not only passive policy implementers. We therefore urge for tailor-made and place-based solutions reflecting the diverse geographical, climatic, and economic realities of Europe's regions, cities and rural areas;
3. recognise water as a strategic resource for regional and local **development, competitiveness and cohesion**. We call on all relevant actors to accelerate investment in sustainable and innovative water solutions, including water-efficient and circular industry, sustainable agriculture, digital technologies, water reuse, renewable energy production, modern infrastructure and nature-based solutions;
4. believe that a long-term water resilience strategy is essential to address water pollution, water scarcity, floods and biodiversity loss, while considering local and regional characteristics of each Member State. We call for greater **policy coherence** across sectors and a reduction in unnecessary administrative and operational burdens to help restore natural water cycles and mitigate the risk of water-related disasters;
5. call for water resilience to be recognised as a strategic priority in the **Multiannual Financial Programme 2028-2034**. Financing water resilience will require strategic, predictable and long-term budgetary commitments in the next MFF. In this regard, we call for dedicated funding at EU, national, regional and local levels to build a water-smart economy and society. We stress, in this context, the need to adapt, modernise and simplify **cohesion policy**, and safeguard the role of local and regional authorities in shared management, the partnership principle and multi-level governance;

6. emphasise that **agriculture** is both a consumer of water and an indispensable sector for food production, food security and rural prosperity. We call for targeted financial support for farmers to reduce water demand, improve soil health and modernise production through smart irrigation solutions, precision farming, water reuse, better nutrient management and awareness campaigns, with particular attention to small and family farms;
7. underline the essential role of **forests** in regulating the water cycle, protecting soils, enhancing biodiversity and strengthening territorial resilience. We also recognise the environmental, social and economic value of **lakes, ponds, reservoirs and other inland water bodies**, which contribute to local development, tourism, recreation and quality of life. Their preservation and sustainable management should therefore be considered an integral component of Europe's water resilience efforts, in line with local and regional realities, while ensuring the availability of strategic water reserves for effective wildfire prevention and firefighting. We underline that regions facing increased risks of wildfires, extensive forest areas or strong seasonal tourism pressures should retain the flexibility to develop water storage and water security infrastructures suited to their specific needs;
8. stress the important role of the **European Investment Bank** in water financing, including through the Water Resilience Programme and the Sustainable Water Advisory Facility. We call on the European financial institutions to improve access to finance, especially to prioritise low-interest loans and credits for regional and local authorities undertaking large-scale restoration projects; and request technical assistance to help local and regional authorities develop bankable projects, strengthen administrative capacity and facilitate access to the funding programmes;
9. highlight the importance of **public-private partnerships**, private investment and innovation-friendly regulation in closing the water investment gap, while fully respecting Member States' and local and regional authorities' competence to organise water services and preserving public ownership and control where these services are publicly provided. We call on the European Commission and the Member States to create a supportive regulatory framework that attracts private capital for investment in infrastructure, technologies and innovation, without creating incentives for the privatisation of water services, and improves synergies between EU funding instruments, national, regional and local programmes and private investment;
10. stress that building a water-resilient Europe requires not only investment in infrastructure but also investment in people. We call for stronger support for **water education, public awareness and local initiatives** that encourage responsible water use, helping citizens, businesses and communities to contribute actively to safeguarding this essential resource for future generations;
11. call for stronger **cross-border cooperation** and enhanced **exchange of best practices** between local, regional and national actors. We call for more cross-border projects under Interreg and other EU funds to improve regional cooperation in the management of water resources. We also advocate using the European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation to design and implement

Interreg chapters and other projects concerning shared river basins, drought prevention, flood protection, water reuse and ecosystem restoration;

12. welcome the **European Water Resilience Strategy** and are committed to contributing actively to its implementation including through the **European Water Resilience Stakeholder Platform**, with a source-to-sea approach that secures clean and affordable water for people, economy and ecosystems, in the face of climate change, increasing water scarcity and droughts, floods, rising sea levels, pollution and biodiversity loss.
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