

Ursula von der Leyen
President of the European Commission

Teresa Ribera
Executive Vice-President for a Clean, Just and Competitive Transition

Stéphane Séjourné
Executive Vice-President for Prosperity and Industrial Strategy

Jessika Roswall
Commissioner for Environment, Water Resilience and a Competitive Circular Economy

Valdis Dombrovskis
Commissioner for Economy and Productivity; Implementation and Simplification

6 May 2026

Dear President, dear Executive Vice-Presidents, dear Commissioners,

We, the undersigned Members of the European Parliament across political spectrum, write to express our serious concern regarding the Commission's intention to reopen and review the Water Framework Directive (Directive 2000/60/EC) in Q2 2026, as announced in the RESourceEU Action Plan of 3 December 2025.

At a time when Europe is facing growing water stress, declining water quality, and increasing climate-related risks, reopening the cornerstone of the Union's water legislation risks sending the wrong signal to citizens, to investors, and to all those working to implement EU law on the ground. Such a revision would create uncertainty and risks weakening EU water protection rules precisely when their effective enforcement is most urgently needed to make Europe, including its industrial ecosystems, water-resilient.

The evidence is clear. Around 60% of surface waters still fail to meet the Directive's objectives, while water stress already affects over 20% of European territory, with projections indicating a potential gap of up to 40% between water supply and demand by 2030. These figures do not point to excessive ambition, but to a persistent implementation gap.

Moreover, the recently adopted European Water Resilience Strategy underscores the critical nexus between water resilience and economic competitiveness, explicitly recognizing that achieving water resilience hinges on the effective implementation of the EU's comprehensive water acquis. Therefore, regulatory stability is a prerequisite for enabling long-term investment and attracting capital and any modifications to the non-deterioration principle would carry systemic consequences for the broader economy, particularly for sectors dependent on raw water in the delivery of products and services.

In this context, the Union's priority must be to strengthen implementation, enforcement, and to step up public and private investments and not to reopen and weaken the legal framework that protects Europe's water resources. This position is consistent with the European Parliament's Resolution of 7 May 2025 and the Commission's own European Water Resilience Strategy, both of which emphasize full implementation and enforcement of the WFD¹. Reopening the Directive so shortly after these commitments would contradict the Union's stated priorities and undermine the credibility of its regulatory framework.

Additionally, the Commission's recent call for evidence on the Water Framework Directive received significant engagement from citizens, stakeholders and civil society organisations across Europe. A consistent message emerging from these contributions is the call to prioritise full implementation and enforcement of the Directive, rather than reopening it. This constitutes a clear democratic signal: Europeans expect their water resources to be better protected as they rely on them, e.g. by bank filtration for drinking water. Existing rules need to be delivered in practice, not weakened through premature revision. Ignoring this message would risk further undermining trust in the Union's environmental governance at a critical moment.

We recognize Europe's strategic interest in accelerating projects linked to critical raw materials and the green transition. However, there is no evidence that the Water Framework Directive is a structural barrier, with delays mainly stemming from limited administrative capacity, insufficient financial resources, and fragmented implementation across Member States as noted by the

¹ European Parliament resolution of 7 May 2025 on the European Water Resilience Strategy, paragraph 42, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-10-2025-0091_EN.html

European Court of Auditors.² Lowering environmental standards would not speed up projects but increase risks. Competitiveness also depends on regulatory stability, and water is a systemic risk, with the European Central Bank estimating that over 40% of bank lending is exposed to water-dependent sectors.³ Weakening protection would hence deter investment, increase risk of stranded investments, penalise efficient companies, and shift costs onto citizens.

It is also important to recall that the current framework already provides flexibility. The 2019 Fitness Check confirmed that the Directive is fit for purpose, including through exemptions under Article 4 that allow for balancing environmental and economic considerations. Furthermore, co-legislators have only recently updated key elements of the Directive. These changes have not yet been implemented in practice and should be given time to take effect before any further legislative revision is considered.

Reopening the Water Framework Directive at this stage would therefore:

- create legal uncertainty for public authorities, investors, and stakeholders;
- risk undermining core principles such as non-deterioration and the long-term objectives of EU water policy;
- weaken public trust in the Union's commitment to environmental protection and public health.

Instead, we urge the Commission to focus on delivery. In particular, we call on the Commission to:

- refrain from reopening or revising the core provisions of the Water Framework Directive at this stage;
- prioritise the publication of guidance to support more harmonised and effective implementation across Member States;
- strengthen monitoring, enforcement, and administrative capacity;
- accelerate the development of best available technique reference documents (BREFs), including for the mining sector, and support innovation through instruments such as INCITE;
- mobilise investment, including through the European Investment Bank, to support water efficiency, pollution reduction, infrastructure modernisation, and resilience.

² European Court of Auditors special report 04/2026 Critical raw materials for the energy transition – Not a rock-solid policy <https://www.eca.europa.eu/en/publications?ref=SR-2026-04>

³ Ceglar, A., Marques, A., Boldrini, S. *et al.* European banks face significant vulnerability to ecosystem degradation and climate change. *Commun Earth Environ* 6, 750 (2025), <https://www.nature.com/articles/s43247-025-02543-3#citeas>

Water is not just another resource. It is a fundamental public good essential for health, ecosystems, food production, and economic stability.

Europe cannot afford to weaken the very framework that safeguards it. The path forward is not deregulation, it is implementation.

We remain at your disposal to engage constructively on how to strengthen EU water policy and ensure that Europe's green transition is both competitive and sustainable.

Yours sincerely,

Thomas BAJADA

Jutta PAULUS

Michal WIEZIK

Sakis ARNAOUTOGLOU

Grégory ALLIONE

Stine BOSSE

Mohammed CHAHIM

Christophe CLERGEAU

Bas EICKHOUT

André FRANQUEIRA RODRIGUES

Sigrid FRIIS

Martin HOJSÍK

Pär HOLMGREN

Javi LÓPEZ

César LUENA

Sara MATTHIEU

Alessandra MORETTI

Maria NOICHL

Rasmus NORDQVIST

Maria OHISALO

Thomas PELLERIN-CARLIN

Majdouline SBAI

Lena SCHILLING

Kai TEGETHOFF

Bruno TOBBACK

Marie TOUSSAINT

Tiemo WÖLKEN