



EESC call for an EU Blue Deal: Mapping water stakeholders

STUDY



European Economic
and Social Committee



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Study

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Executive summary

The European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) has launched the EU Blue Deal¹ to elevate water as a strategic priority within EU policymaking, on par with climate and energy agendas. This report represents a critical step in that process, focusing on stakeholder mapping and governance analysis to support inclusive and resilient water management across the EU.

A cornerstone of this work is the development of country-specific factsheets for all 27 EU Member States. These factsheets serve as concise yet comprehensive profiles of national water governance systems. Each one outlines the institutional framework, key legislation, and policy strategies shaping water management at national and regional levels. They identify the main actors (ministries, river basin authorities, agencies, utilities, and civil society organisations) while highlighting their roles and interactions. Beyond governance structures, the factsheets summarise pressing challenges such as water quality issues, hydro-morphological pressures, climate-related risks, and infrastructure gaps. The factsheets also capture how each country aligns with EU directives and engages in international cooperation. In short, these factsheets are practical tools for understanding the diversity of water governance models across Europe and for pinpointing opportunities for stronger collaboration and policy coherence.

The analysis reveals that while robust legislative frameworks exist, anchored in directives such as the Water Framework Directive, Floods Directive, and Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive, implementation remains uneven. Governance can be fragmented, with coordination challenges between national, regional, and local levels. High-impact actors include national ministries and river basin authorities, supported by EU-level bodies such as DG Environment, the European Environment Agency, and financing institutions (e.g. the European Investment Bank). Medium-impact stakeholders encompass utilities, municipalities, research organisations, and NGOs. However, the private sector and local civil society actors remain underrepresented in governance dialogues, despite their potential influence on innovation and resource management.

The findings reveal three main gaps: not all relevant stakeholders are included in decision-making, investment in modern water infrastructure is lagging, and progress on climate adaptation and digitalisation is uneven. These problems are becoming more serious as climate change leads to more extreme weather and water shortages, ecosystems lose their ability to recover, and competition for water between agriculture, industry, and cities intensifies.

This mapping exercise and the accompanying factsheets provide a unique, structured view of EU's water governance landscape. By consolidating information on institutional frameworks, stakeholder roles, and key challenges, the report lays the groundwork for more informed dialogue and collaboration. The factsheets, in particular, offer a practical reference point for policymakers, practitioners, and civil society to understand where gaps exist and where opportunities for stronger integration can be found. In doing so, they help bridge the fragmentation that often characterises water governance in the EU and create a basis for coordinated action towards sustainable water management.

¹ [EESC Blue Deal initiative](#)

List of abbreviations and of tables and figures

List of abbreviations

Abbreviation	Full name
ACA	Agència Catalana de l'Aigua (Catalonia Water Agency)
ADB	Asian Development Bank
AdP	Águas de Portugal Group
AfDB	African Development Bank
AguaEspaña	Spanish Association of Water Sector Companies
ANAR	National Administration "Romanian Waters"
ANRSC	Romanian National Regulatory Authority for Public Services
AOPK	Nature Conservation Agency of the Czech Republic
APA	Portuguese Environment Agency
AquaBru	Brussels water sector federation
AquaFed	Federation of Private Water Operators
AquaFlanders	Federation of Flemish water companies
AQUAWAL	Fédération du secteur de l'eau en Wallonie
ARA	Asociația Română a Apei (Romanian Water Association)
ARERA	L'Autorità di Regolazione per Energia Reti e Ambiente/Italian Regulatory Authority for Energy, Networks and Environment
ARH	River Basin District Administrations (Portugal)
ARSO	Slovenian Environment Agency
Belgaqua	Belgian Federation for the Water Sector
BEUC	The European Consumer Organisation
CCIEP	Coordination Committee for International Environment Policy
CEMR	Council of European Municipalities and Regions
CENIA	Czech Environment Information Agency
CHMI	Czech Hydrometeorological Institute
CIZP	Czech Environmental Inspectorate
CWA	Czech Water Alliance
CzWA	Czech Water Management Association
DAQUAS	Spanish Association of Water Supply and Sanitation Management Entities
DEYA	Municipal Water Supply and Sewerage Company
DG AGRI	Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development
DG CLIMA	Directorate-General for Climate Action

Abbreviation	Full name
DG ENV	Directorate-General for Environment
DG REGIO	Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy
DG SANTE	Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety
DHLGH	Irish Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage
DLGO	District Local Government Organisation
DREAL	Directions Régionales, de l'Environnement, de l'Aménagement et du Logement (Regional Directorate for Environment, Planning and Housing)
EBRD	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
EBRD	European Bank for Regional Development
ECAT	Environmental Centre for Administration and Technology
ECHA	The European Chemicals Agency
EEA	European Environmental Agency
EESC	European Economic and Social Committee
EEWRC	Energy, Environment and Water Research Centre (Cyprus Institute)
EIB	European Investment Bank
EIB	European Investment Bank
ELY centres	Finnish Regional Centres for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment
EPA	Environment and Planning Act of the Netherlands
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
ERA	Environment & Resources Authority
ERSAR	Water and Waste Services Regulation Authority
EWA	Energy & Water Agency
EWRC	Bulgarian Energy and Water Regulatory Commission
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FEEM	Fondazione Eni Enrico Mattei
FRMP	Flood Risk Management Plan
FRMP	Flood Risk Management Plan
GEUS	Geological Survey of Denmark and Greenland
GWP	Global Water Partnership
HELCOM	Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission / Helsinki Commission
IBGE/BIM	Brussels Environment (Institut Bruxellois pour la Gestion de l'Environnement / Brussels Instituut voor Milieubeheer)
ICPDR	International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River

Abbreviation	Full name
ICPR	International Commission for the Protection of the Rhine
ICRA	Catalan Institute for Water Research
IDA	Romanian Intercommunal Development Association
IHP	International Hydrological Programme (UNESCO)
IIAMA	Instituto de Ingeniería del Agua y Medio Ambiente (Institute of Water and Environmental Engineering)
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INHGA	National Institute of Hydrology and Water Management
ISRBC	International Sava River Basin Commission
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
IWA	International Water Association
IWMI	International Water Management Institute
JRC	Joint Research Centre
LAWPRO	Irish Local Authority Waters Programme
LEMA	La loi sur l'eau et les milieux aquatiques (The Water and Aquatic Environments Act)
LPN	Liga para a Protecção da Natureza / League for the Protection of Nature
LVGMC	Latvian Environment, Geology, and Meteorology Centre
MAF	Finnish Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry
MAFA	Malta Ministry for Agriculture, Fisheries and Animal Rights
MAPA	Spanish Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food
MARDE	Cyprus Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Development and Environment
MEER	Ministry for the Environment, Energy and Regeneration
MEPRD	Latvian Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development
MITE/MASE	Ministry of Ecological Transition (now Ministry of Environment and Energy Security)
MITECO	Spanish Ministry for the Ecological Transition and the Demographic Challenge
MMAP	Romanian Ministry of Environment, Waters and Forests
MoE	Finnish Ministry of Environment
MoESD	Croatian Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development
MoEW	Bulgarian Ministry of Environment and Water
MRDPW	Bulgarian Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works
NEK	National Electric Company (Bulgaria)
NERC	National Energy Regulatory Council

Abbreviation	Full name
NIJZ	Slovenian National Institute of Public Health
NWP	National Water Programme of the Netherlands
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OPW	Irish Office of Public Works
PA	Planning Authority
PUC	Public Utilities Commission
RAAEY	Regulatory Authority for Energy, Waste and Water
RBD	River Basin Districts
RBMP	River Basin Management Plan
REWS	Regulator for Energy & Water Services
RIEWs	Bulgarian Regional Inspectorates of Environment and Water
ROC	Romanian Regional Water Operating Company
SES	State Environmental Services
SIWI	Stockholm International Water Institute
SMAT	Società Metropolitana Acque Torino S.p.A.
SOVAK	Water Supply and Sewerage Association of the Czech Republic
SPGE	Société Publique de Gestion de l'Eau (Public Water Management Company)
SPH	Superintendent of Public Health
SPW ARNE	Wallonia Public Service on Agriculture, Natural Resources and the Environment
SWDE	Société Wallonne des Eaux (Walloon Water Company)
SYKE	Finnish Environment Institute
UBA	Austrian / German Environment Agency
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
URA	Agencia Vasca del Agua (Basque Water Agency)
UWWTD	Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive
VMM	Vlaamse Milieumaatschappij (Flemish Environment Agency)
WBCSD	World Business Council for Sustainable Development
WDD	Water Development Department

Abbreviation	Full name
WFD	Water Framework Directive
WHO	World Health Organization
WSC	Water Services Corporation
WSP	Water service providers
WSS	Water supply and sanitation
WWAP	World Water Assessment Programme (UNESCO)
WWC	World Water Council
WWF	World Wide Fund for Nature

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1. Introduction to the assignment, its context, objectives and scope

1.1 Context, objectives and scope of the study

Freshwater is a vital but finite resource, underpinning ecosystems, human health, agriculture, industry, and energy across the European Union. Despite its fundamental importance, freshwater management has often been fragmented within EU policymaking, with responsibilities and priorities divided across sectors and governance levels. Recognising the urgent need for a more integrated approach, the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) launched the **EU Blue Deal initiative** to elevate freshwater to a strategic, cross-cutting political priority, on par with climate and energy agendas.

The current assignment plays a critical role in supporting the scaling up of the Blue Deal. Water is inherently transboundary, with water bodies often crossing regional, national and even continental borders. In the EU, the international river basin districts cover more than 60% of the territory, making international coordination one of the most significant and important issues in achieving effective freshwater governance.²

Although water is managed at the local, regional and national levels and often seen as a 'community' issue due to the local circumstances which differ between countries and regions, ensuring alignment among Member States is vital for the sustainable management of shared water resources, the prevention of tensions, and the implementation of a truly integrated approach envisioned under an EU Blue Deal. To support this, a **comprehensive mapping of water stakeholders** is necessary. It provides the foundation for evidence-based policymaking, fosters inclusive and cross-sectoral engagement, and helps embed water resilience as a core pillar of EU governance. Therefore, this mapping will support not only the implementation of the EU Blue Deal, but also the broader goal of establishing a collaborative, transparent, multi-level governance structure. It seeks to identify influential actors across Member States, spanning organisations and individuals with expertise and influence in areas that impact or rely on water in the EU.

To that end, this assignment has general as well as specific **objectives**. Generally, it aims to advance the implementation of the EU Blue Deal Declaration³ and support the call for a Blue Deal by delivering a state-of-the-art mapping of relevant stakeholders who can shape a sustainable and resilient water policy across Europe. Specifically, the assignment seeks to:

- 1) Identify potential stakeholders relevant to the implementation of the Blue Deal;
- 2) Design a set of indicators to assess stakeholder relevance, impact and influence;
- 3) Produce country-level fact sheets with a qualitative overview of national water stakeholder ecosystems; and
- 4) Compile a confidential database containing key contact details and assessments of stakeholders' suitability for future engagement at both political and technical levels.

The study provides a comprehensive mapping of water-related stakeholders of **all 27 EU Member States, as well as an overview of key EU-level and international stakeholders.**

² Commission Staff Working Document – [Accompanying document to the Communication on 'Towards Sustainable Water Management in the European Union.](#)

³ [Renewed declaration for an EU Blue Deal](#)

1.2 Reading guide

The report provides a compilation of fact sheets, summarising each Member State's water governance, overview of key stakeholders, qualitative assessment of their relevance at national and EU-level and (where applicable) some observations regarding gaps and recommendations for further outreach.

The report includes one factsheet per Member State as well as one for broad EU-level stakeholders and one for international stakeholders. The annex (in a separate document) includes a simplified version of the Excel database of mapped stakeholders accompanying the report.

2. Member State (and other) fact sheets

2.1 Key EU-wide stakeholders

The governance of freshwater in the European Union is shaped by a set of powerful institutions, scientific bodies, financial actors and stakeholder networks that together drive legislation, implementation, and long-term water policy.

At the centre is the **European Commission**, particularly **DG Environment (DG ENV)**, which traditionally covered the environmental dimension of water by designing and enforcing the core freshwater directives, the Water Framework Directive, Floods Directive, Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive and the Drinking Water Directive. **DG CLIMA**, **DG AGRI**, **DG SANTE** and **DG REGIO** play complementary roles by integrating water concerns into climate adaptation, agriculture, public health, and regional investment. The **European Parliament** acts as a co-legislator, shaping the ambition and direction of all freshwater-related laws, particularly through the ENVI Committee. Additionally, the MEP Water Group is the central platform for water-related issues in the European Parliament, empowering the Parliament to lead by example in securing water for all users and uses, and to pioneer the tools necessary for a prosperous, competitive, and people-centred Europe. Advisory bodies such as the **European Economic and Social Committee (EESC)** contribute with economic, social and civil-society perspectives that inform early-stage policy development. Furthermore, as the first EU institution to elevate water on the EU agenda, the EESC called for a paradigm shift in the treatment of water within EU policies. Through its call for an EU Blue Deal, the EESC advocates for a standalone EU water policy that fully integrates water across all policy areas, equal in ambition to the EU Green Deal. The EU Blue Deal initiative has gained broad support from numerous Members of the European Parliament, the **European Committee of the Regions**, international organisations such as the United Nations, and a wide range of civil society stakeholders, all of whom share the EESC's conviction that a more strategic approach to water is needed at EU level.

Moreover, the **European Institute of Innovation and Technology's (EIT)**, launched in January 2025 the **EIT Water**, its newest Knowledge and Innovation Community (KIC), created to boost innovation and entrepreneurship in Europe's water, marine, and maritime sectors. It brings together research, industry, startups, and public actors to develop solutions for challenges like water scarcity, flooding, ecosystem degradation, and the sustainable blue economy. Additionally, the **European Environment Agency (EEA)** supports EU water policy by collecting, analysing, and reporting environmental data and indicators related to water resources across Europe. The **Joint Research Centre (JRC)** conducts original research and technological development to support EU policy, including in the field of water. The **European Chemicals Agency (ECHA)** shapes upstream water quality through chemical regulation and supports the protection of water resources in Europe by generating, assessing, and managing scientific data on chemical substances that may enter surface water, groundwater, and drinking water. The **European Research Executive Agency (REA)** helps advance water-related research and innovation by managing and implementing EU-funded R&D programmes, notably under *Horizon Europe* and *Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions*. REA also oversees a large portfolio of projects focused on water quality, treatment and reuse technologies, digital and smart water systems, climate resilience, flood and drought management, and the water-energy-food nexus. The **European Space Agency (ESA)** contributes to water research and management by developing and operating satellite missions, particularly through the Copernicus programme, that provide high-resolution data on surface water extent, floods, droughts, soil moisture, snow and ice dynamics, and hydrological extremes.

A second group of actors consists of **pan-European networks and associations** that represent sectoral interests and influence policy development. **EurEau**, representing national water and wastewater utilities, is one of the most influential stakeholders in shaping service-related legislation and operational standards, together with Aqua Publica Europea. **Aqua Publica Europea**, or the European Association of Public Water Operators, unites publicly owned water and sanitation services and other stakeholders working to promote public water management at both European and international level. Innovation and research communities are represented through **Water Europe**, which helps shape EU research agendas and technological priorities. **EurAqua**, a network of European freshwater research institutes, also provides valuable insights into decision-making on policies and management of Europe's freshwater resources. They cooperate with partners in developing and promoting uptake of European freshwater science and technology. Environmental NGOs such as the **European Environmental Bureau (EEB)**, **WWF EU**, and **ClientEarth** advocate for strong environmental protection, enforcement of the Water Framework Directive, and ambitious river restoration measures. Consumers and local authorities also have a voice through **BEUC**, the European Consumers Organisation, and **CEMR**, Council of European Municipalities and Regions, respectively.

Finally, freshwater policy at EU level is strongly shaped by **financial and economic institutions**. The **European Investment Bank (EIB)** is the largest financier of water and wastewater infrastructure in Europe, influencing national investment priorities and enabling compliance with EU directives. The **European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD)** plays a similar role in neighbouring regions and candidate countries. Transboundary river basin cooperation is supported by international commissions such as the **International Commission for the Protection of the Danube river (ICPDR)** and the **International Commission for the protection of Rhine (ICPR)**, which align closely with EU legislation and support coordination across Member States.

Together, these institutions, networks, and financial actors form a multi-layered governance system that drives the EU's approach to freshwater protection, sustainable use and climate resilience.

Despite its strong regulatory and scientific foundations, **EU freshwater governance has notable stakeholder gaps that weaken implementation and resilience**. Policy discussions are dominated by large utilities and national actors, while small and rural operators, often facing the greatest operational challenges, have limited representation. Social equity is weakly integrated, as vulnerable and low-income water users lack a structured voice, raising risks of water poverty and public resistance to reforms. Freshwater governance also remains fragmented from energy and climate policy, despite the growing importance of the water–energy nexus for efficiency and adaptation. Innovation actors such as SMEs and digital water providers are only partially involved, slowing uptake of available solutions. Agriculture, a major water user, remains politically under-represented in water-specific fora, contributing to persistent ecological pressures. River basin practitioners lack a strong EU-level platform, climate-risk and insurance actors are marginal, and neighbouring non-EU countries have limited influence despite shared river systems. Overall, the EU system is strong on rules and evidence, but weaker on local delivery, inclusion, and cross-sector integration.

2.2 Austria

2.2.1 Brief overview of Austria’s water governance

Austria’s water policies and strategies are embedded within its broader sustainability and climate frameworks, notably the commitments under the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**⁴ and sectoral strategies such as the Biodiversity Strategy Austria 2030+⁵ and the Mobility Master Plan 2030⁶. While there is no specific water framework, the abovementioned strategies integrate water protection goals into environmental and climate action planning. These strategies emphasize safeguarding water resources, improving ecological status of water bodies, and enhancing resilience to climate-related risks such as floods and droughts. The key legislative act governing water management in Austria is the **Water Rights Act 1959 (Wasserrechtsgesetz)**⁷, which remains the cornerstone of national water law. It regulates the use and protection of water resources, sets conditions for sustainable management, and addresses flood defence and maintenance of water bodies. The Act enshrines principles such as the prohibition of deterioration, integrated catchment planning, and state-of-the-art wastewater treatment to prevent pollution. It also provides for monitoring, enforcement, and the establishment of water cooperatives and associations to manage shared resources.

Austria’s institutional framework for water management operates at multiple levels. At the central level, the **Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Regions and Water Management** is the lead authority, supported by specialised agencies such as the **Federal Agency for Water Management**. These bodies oversee legislation, river basin planning, flood risk management, and international cooperation (e.g., through the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River). Regional authorities implement measures and prepare River Basin Management Plans (RBMPs) and Flood Risk Management Plans (FRMPs), while local municipalities manage water supply, sewerage, and emergency responses, often in collaboration with public utilities and private operators.

The main challenges Austria faces in water management include nutrient pollution from agriculture, which affects groundwater and surface water quality, and hydro-morphological alterations due to infrastructure and land use, hindering the achievement of good ecological status under the WFD. Additionally, climate change is increasing the frequency and severity of floods and droughts, putting pressure on water infrastructure and requiring enhanced adaptation strategies. There is a need to improve progress in reducing diffuse pollution, need for further investment in wastewater treatment and river restoration.⁸

2.2.2 Stakeholder landscape

Table 2-1 – A high-level overview of the main water stakeholders in the Austrian context

Stakeholder	Type	Scope	Relevance
Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Climate and Environmental Protection, Regions and Water Management (BML)	Public authority	National	Focus on water policy, river basin management plans, flood risk management, and EU Water Framework Directive compliance and its related research.

⁴ Republic of Austria (n.d.). Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

⁵ Federal Ministry for Climate Action, Environment, Energy, Mobility, Innovation and Technology (n.d.). Biodiversity Strategy Austria 2030+

⁶ Federal Ministry for Climate Action (n.d.). Mobility Master Plan 2030

⁷ Wasserrechtsgesetz 1959 (Water Rights Act)

⁸ European Commission (2025) [Environmental Implementation Review 2025 – Austria](#).

Stakeholder	Type	Scope	Relevance
Federal Agency for Water Management	Public authority	National	Operates under BML. Provides technical support for hydraulic engineering, hydrometry, aquatic ecology, and fisheries; conducts research and implementation projects.
Environmental agencies (e.g. UBA)	Public authority	National	Central to environmental monitoring, water quality assessment, and policy support; leads national reporting and provides scientific expertise for water management and implementation of environmental directives.
Provincial governments (Lower Austria, Upper Austria, Styria, Tyrol)	Public authority	Regional	Responsible for regional water management, implementation of national water laws, flood management and wastewater treatment standards in their respective regions.
Public Utility Providers (e.g. Vienna Water, Graz Water Utility, Salzburg Water)	Utility provider (public and private)	Regional	Management of water supply and wastewater treatment services.
Business associations (e.g. Austrian Water and Waste Management Association, Austrian Association for Gas and Water)	Industry	National	Representation of water (and other) utilities, setting technical standards, advocating for sectoral interest and provides policy and technical guidance.
Water-intensive Industries (e.g. VERBUND, EVN, Voestalpine)	Private company	National	Major industry stakeholders in water use as a resource (e.g. in steel or energy production industries).
Research organisations (e.g. University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Technical University of Vienna)	Academia and Research Institutes	National	Focuses on topics such as hydrology, extreme events, climate change, surface water modelling, groundwater protection, water status assessment, protection of biodiversity in the aquatic environment or wastewater and water treatment
NGOs and civil society organisations (e.g. WWF Austria, Global2000, Austrian Alpine Club)	NGO	National	Organisations dedicated to comprehensive monitoring of laws and policies, coordinate legislative campaigns and provide active support in advocacy activities aimed at maintaining high-quality environmental protection and a high level of civil rights in decision-making processes

2.2.3 Qualitative assessment of Austria's stakeholders

Austria's **national** water governance is supported by a well-structured and multi-level stakeholder landscape. Public authorities play a central role in policy development, environmental regulation, and implementation of EU directives, ensuring strong strategic leadership. Regional authorities are highly relevant for operational delivery and flood risk management, given Austria's federal governance model. Utility providers have significant influence in service provision and infrastructure management, with strong representation across municipalities. Sectoral organisations contribute to technical standards, coordination, and advocacy for water services. Research and academic institutions are deeply engaged in hydrology, water engineering, and climate adaptation, providing technical expertise and supporting innovation. NGOs are active in biodiversity protection, river restoration, and public awareness campaigns, with moderate influence on national policy. The private sector, including water-intensive industries and clean technology providers, participates in water efficiency and pollution control initiatives, though its strategic role remains limited. **Overall, Austria's national stakeholder**

landscape demonstrates strong institutional capacity and operational depth, with active contributions across public, academic, and civil society categories.

At the **EU-level**, Austria's stakeholder engagement is led by national public authorities and research institutions, which actively participate in EU water policy forums, technical committees, and cross-border cooperation platforms. Sectoral organisations are members of European networks and contribute to regulatory discussions and compliance efforts. Academic and research bodies are involved in EU-funded projects, particularly in water quality, hydrology, and climate resilience. NGOs engage in EU conservation networks and advocacy campaigns, while private sector actors participate in sustainability and clean technology programmes. Utility providers comply with EU directives and are represented through umbrella organisations, but their direct influence on EU policymaking is limited. **Overall, Austria maintains a strong and visible presence in EU water governance through its institutional expertise, research engagement, and sectoral representation.**

2.2.4 Observations and gaps

Austria's water governance system is supported by a wide range of stakeholder groups, including national ministries, regional authorities, research institutions, utilities, NGOs, and sectoral organisations. While public authorities and academia show strong engagement and relevance at both national and EU levels, several stakeholder groups remain underrepresented or have limited influence. Regional and local utility providers, despite their operational importance, often lack direct involvement in EU-level policy processes. NGOs and civil society actors contribute to advocacy and environmental protection but tend to have lower visibility and influence in strategic decision-making. The private sector, including water-intensive industries and clean water technology providers, is present but not consistently engaged in shaping water policy. Additionally, consumer organisations and trade unions play a moderate role, with limited integration into broader governance dialogues. These gaps highlight the need for more inclusive stakeholder coordination, particularly to strengthen the role of local actors, civil society, and private sector contributors in Austria's water governance landscape.

2.3 Belgium

2.3.1 Brief overview of Belgium's water governance

Belgium's water policy has evolved from early federal legislation to a decentralised, region-driven framework. **The Law of 11 March 1950** and the **Royal Decree of 29 December 1953** introduced the first comprehensive rules against surface-water pollution, followed by the Royal Decree of 27 April 1984 on protecting surface and groundwater, which strengthened controls and set water-quality standards. These measures, along with regulations on drinking water, sewerage, and industrial discharge, formed the foundation of pre-regionalisation governance. A major shift came with the **1980 State Reform**, which transferred most water-management responsibilities to Flanders, Wallonia, and Brussels.⁹ During the 1990s, the regions expanded their systems with rules on abstraction permits, watercourse management, and wastewater treatment, while aligning with EU directives such as the Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive and the Water Framework Directive (WFD). This culminated in the **2003 Flemish Decree on Integrated Water Policy**, Belgium's first WFD-aligned, river-basin-based law, later mirrored in Wallonia and Brussels. Today, water governance is shaped by this layered evolution, early federal acts, robust regional frameworks, and federal coordination ensuring national coherence.¹⁰

Belgium's water governance is shaped by its federal structure, with responsibilities divided among the three regions: Flanders, Wallonia, and Brussels-Capital. Each region has its own regulatory framework, authorities, and water utilities (some of which cover more than one region), reflecting the country's linguistic and administrative diversity. At the federal level, coordination is ensured through bodies such as the **Coordination Committee for International Environment Policy (CCIEP)**, which brings together regional and federal actors to represent Belgium's unified position in international and EU fora. The regions are responsible for the implementation of EU directives, river basin management, and the regulation of water services, while the federal government retains certain competencies, such as product standards and international treaties. At the same time, **transboundary water management** also plays a crucial role in Belgium through the International Scheldt Commission and the International Meuse Commission.

In **Flanders**, the Department of Environment and Spatial Development and the Vlaamse Milieumaatschappij (VMM) play central roles, supported by public utilities like De Watergroep, Farys, Water-link, PIDPA, and Aquaфин. **Wallonia's** water sector is coordinated by the SPW Agriculture, Natural Resources and Environment, with operational roles for the Department of Environment and Water, SPGE (Public Water Management Company), SWDE (Walloon Water Company), and inter-municipal utilities. **Brussels-Capital** relies on Brussels Environment (IBGE/BIM), public water utilities (e.g. Vivaqua, Hydria), and the regulator Brugel. National associations such as Belgaqua and the regional federations (AquaFlanders, AQUAWAL, AquaBru) promote sectoral interests and facilitate coordination. This multi-layered system is complemented by research institutes, NGOs, and industry, all contributing to a complex but robust water governance landscape.

In terms of **challenges**, Belgium faces severe pressures on its water resources, despite being a temperate country. This means that it uses most of its renewable water supply each year, thereby increasing the country's exposure to drought conditions. Belgium suffers from water stress which is exacerbated by urbanisation, including widespread paving and inefficient rainwater infiltration which leads to rapid

⁹ World Health Organisation, Regional office for Europe, Copenhagen, 1989. Water and sanitation services in Europe.

¹⁰ Integraal Waterbeleid, n.d. Integrated water policy in Flanders.

runoff. Another major concern is groundwater pollution through agricultural runoff and surface water pollution from industrial discharge. Moreover, flood management remains a concern, as a result there is growing political momentum to strengthen resilience. **Priorities** for the future include adopting more circular water use practices (e.g. wastewater reuse), improving institutional coordination across regions and closing the investment gap for water infrastructure, pollution control and maintenance.^{11 12}

2.3.2 Stakeholder landscape

Table 2-2 – A high-level overview of the main water stakeholders in the Belgian context

Stakeholder	Type	Scope	Relevance
Coordination Committee for International Environment Policy (CCIEP)	Public authority	National	Ensures coherence in international environmental policy, represents Belgium in EU/international fora.
Wallonia Public Service on Agriculture, Natural Resources and the Environment (SPW ARNE)	Public authority	Regional (Wallonia)	Implements environmental policies, including water management.
SPW Agriculture, Natural Resources and Environment	Public authority	Regional (Wallonia)	Oversees regional water policy, compliance with EU regulations.
Department of Environment and Water (Wallonia)	Public authority	Regional (Wallonia)	Focuses on water issues, transposes EU directives, manages groundwater and pollution.
Brussels Environment (IBGE/BIM)	Public authority	Regional (Brussels)	Implements environmental policies and oversees water management for Brussels-Capital Region.
Vlaamse Milieumaatschappij (VMM)	Public authority	Regional (Flanders)	Operational arm for monitoring, river basin plans, flood risk management, technical data for national/EU coordination.
Department of Environment and Spatial Development (Flanders)	Public authority	Regional (Flanders)	Sets regulatory frameworks, prepares regional inputs for EU reporting, interacts with other regions and federal government.
Water utility providers (e.g. De Watergroep, Farys, Water-link etc.)	Utility provider (public)	Regional	Major drinking water suppliers across the regions, key for water supply, wastewater treatment, water quality, and infrastructure related services.
Business organisation (umbrella) (e.g. Belgaqua, AquaFlanders, Aquabru etc.)	Industry	National	Industry associations representing the water sector
Water-intensive industries (e.g. BASF, AB InBev)	Private company	National	Major stakeholders in water use as a resource.
Academia and Research Institutes (including Think Tanks) (e.g. Walloon Institute for Evaluation, Forecasting, and Statistics (IWEPS))	Academia and Research Institutes	National	Conduct research on water related topics that may influence policymaking.
NGOs and civil society organisations (e.g. Belgian Committee of the International Water Association)	NGO	National	Connects stakeholders and promotes research and knowledge sharing, thereby potentially having an indirect impact at the federal level.
International bodies (e.g. International Scheldt River Commission).	River Basin organisation	Regional / International	Belgium relies on international river basin organisations which help to coordinate upstream-downstream cooperation on pollution control, water quality, and flood risk management across multiple countries.

¹¹ European Commission (2025). Environmental Implementation Review 2025 – Belgium.

¹² European Commission (2025). Recommendation for a Council Recommendation on the economic, social, employment, structural and budgetary policies of Belgium.

2.3.3 Qualitative assessment of Belgium's stakeholders

At the **national level**, Belgium's water governance is characterised by a high degree of regional autonomy, resulting in a decentralised but well-coordinated system. The regions Flanders, Wallonia, and Brussels-Capital each have their own legislative frameworks, authorities, and utilities, allowing for tailored approaches to local challenges. This structure enables effective implementation of EU directives and river basin management plans, with strong operational roles for public utilities such as De Watergroep, SWDE, Vivaqua, and Aquafin. Regional agencies like VMM and SPGE provide technical expertise, monitoring, and financing, while umbrella organisations (AquaFlanders, AQUAWAL, Belgaqua) facilitate sectoral coordination and advocacy. The Coordination Committee for International Environment Policy (CCIEP) ensures that Belgium speaks with one voice in international and EU negotiations, despite the complexity of its internal arrangements. The system's strengths lie in its robust institutional capacity, technical expertise, and the ability to adapt to regional needs, though coordination across regions and with the federal level remains an ongoing challenge.

At the **EU level**, Belgian stakeholders are highly engaged and influential, particularly through their participation in European networks. Regional authorities and utilities contribute technical data, policy feedback, and operational insights to EU reporting and policy development. Organisations such as Belgaqua, AquaFlanders, and AQUAWAL are active members of EurEau and other European associations, ensuring that Belgian perspectives are represented in Brussels. The CCIEP plays a pivotal role in aligning regional positions and representing Belgium in EU negotiations, while research institutes and NGOs contribute to EU-funded projects and policy consultations. International river basin organisations ensure Belgium's interests in transboundary water management. In addition, Belgian utilities and agencies are often seen as models for best practice in water management, innovation, and compliance, and their experiences inform EU-wide strategies on water quality, wastewater treatment, and climate adaptation. However, the diversity of regional approaches can sometimes complicate the articulation of a unified Belgian stance at the EU level, highlighting the importance of ongoing coordination and dialogue.

2.3.4 Observations and gaps

Belgium's water governance benefits from strong institutional capacity and technical expertise at the regional level, with tailored frameworks ensuring compliance with EU directives and active engagement in European networks. Coordination mechanisms like the CCIEP help maintain a unified stance internationally, while sectoral associations and public utilities play key operational roles. However, the system's complexity creates persistent coordination challenges across regions and with the federal level, sometimes complicating Belgium's representation at the EU level. Direct involvement of utilities in strategic EU policy processes remains limited. Similarly, NGOs and private sector stakeholders despite their relevance are sometimes underrepresented in governance dialogues. These gaps highlight the need for improved cross-regional coordination and more inclusive engagement of non-governmental and industry actors to strengthen coherence and resilience in Belgium's water governance framework.

2.4 Bulgaria

2.4.1 Brief overview of Bulgaria's water governance

Bulgaria's water governance framework is anchored in the **Water Act (2000)**¹³, which serves as the primary legislative instrument for water management. The Act establishes principles for protecting surface and groundwater, regulating water use, and mitigating harmful effects such as floods and droughts. It aligns national policy with EU directives, notably the **WFD**, the **Floods Directive**, and the **UWWTD**, ensuring integrated river basin management and compliance with European standards. The **National Strategy for Management and Development of the Water Sector (2023-2037)** sets long-term objectives for sustainable water use, infrastructure modernization, and climate resilience. It emphasises improving water quality, reducing losses in supply systems, and strengthening governance through better coordination among institutions. Recent reforms include a **draft Bill on Water Supply and Sewerage (2025)**¹⁴, designed to consolidate regulation, introduce new pricing structures, and enable private investment through concessions.

Institutionally, the **Ministry of Environment and Water (MoEW)** leads policy development and oversees **four River Basin Directorates** responsible for implementing River Basin Management Plans and Flood Risk Management Plans. The **Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works (MRDPW)** manages water supply and sanitation infrastructure, while the **Energy and Water Regulatory Commission (EWRC)** regulates tariffs and service quality. At the regional and local levels, **16 Regional Inspectorates of Environment and Water (RIEWs)** monitor compliance and enforce environmental regulations, while municipalities are responsible for local water infrastructure and service provision. The recently established **National Water Board (2025)** aims to improve cross-ministerial coordination and strategic oversight, reflecting Bulgaria's ongoing efforts to address water crises and modernize its governance framework.

In terms of current **challenges**, Bulgaria faces severe water governance and infrastructure issues. Aging pipelines cause leakage rates of 50-60%, with some regions reaching 80%, leading to frequent supply disruptions. Water shortages affect over 260,000 people, particularly in northern regions, while groundwater depletion and droughts exacerbate scarcity. Climate change impacts, such as reduced river runoff, floods and heatwaves, strain reservoirs and ecosystems. Wastewater treatment remains inadequate, with many agglomerations failing EU standards, prompting infringement procedures. Governance is fragmented across ministries and local authorities, slowing decision-making. Financial constraints and limited technical capacity hinder modernisation, especially for smaller utilities.

Bulgaria's water sector **priorities** centre on modernising its aging infrastructure to reduce leakage and improve storage, while ensuring compliance with EU directives through expanded wastewater treatment and sewerage systems. Climate resilience is a key focus, integrating flood and drought management into national strategies and river basin plans. Strengthening governance and coordination among institutions, improving transparency, and building technical capacity are essential. Securing sustainable financing through EU funds, partnerships, and balanced tariffs remains critical, alongside promoting public engagement and innovation through smart technologies and awareness initiatives.

¹³ Bulgarian MinFin (2000). Water Act. [Here](#).

¹⁴ CMS Law Now (2025). Bulgaria addresses water supply shortages with new draft law and private funding. [Here](#).

2.4.2 Stakeholder landscape

Table 2-3 - A high-level overview of the main water stakeholders in the Bulgarian context

Stakeholder	Type	Scope	Relevance
Ministry of Environment and Water (MoEW)	Public authority	National	Leads water policy, implements EU directives, oversees RBDs and RIEWs.
Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works (MRDPW)	Public authority	National	Oversees water supply, sanitation, infrastructure investment.
River Basin Directorates (e.g. Danube, Black Sea, East Aegean, West Aegean)	Public authority	Basin	Plan and implement RBMPs/FRMPs, issue permits, monitor water status.
Energy and Water Regulatory Commission (EWRC)	Public authority	National	Sets water tariffs, regulates service quality, approves business plans.
Regional Inspectorates of Environment and Water (RIEWs)	Public authority	Regional	Monitor, enforce, and report on environmental and water regulations.
Municipalities	Public authority	Local	Manage local water infrastructure, often own/operate utilities.
Bulgarian Water and Sewerage Holding EAD (ViK Holding)	Utility provider (public and private)	National	Public holding for national water supply and sewerage companies, investment and service quality.
WSS operators/ViK Utilities	Utility provider (public and private)	Regional / Local	Operate water supply, wastewater collection/treatment, face infrastructure challenges.
National Electric Company (NEK)	Utility provider (public and private)	National	Operates hydropower, manages dams and reservoirs.
Union of Water and Sewerage Operators	Industry	National	Non-profit association of 49 water and sewerage operator, which support and implement government policy regarding water supply and sewerage.
Water and Energy Savings (WESave)	Private company	National	Service provider that focuses on delivering energy services aimed at sustainable development of energy systems
Research Institutes (e.g. Sofia University, Technical University of Sofia)	Academia and Research Institutes	National	Research, technical expertise, support for policy and monitoring.
NGOs (e.g. WWF Bulgaria, Za Zemiata, Bulgarian Water Association)	NGO	National	Advocacy, project implementation, technical assistance, public engagement.

2.4.3 Qualitative assessment of Bulgaria's stakeholders

At the national level, **Bulgaria's water sector is dominated by a small group of high-impact public authorities.** The Ministry of Environment and Water (MoEW) and the four River Basin Directorates (RBDs) have the strongest influence, leading strategic planning, permitting, enforcement, and the implementation of EU directives, as well as preparing RBMPs and coordinating flood and drought management. The Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works (MRDPW) and the Energy and Water Regulatory Commission (EWRC) also play major roles, particularly in the governance, regulation, and financial oversight of the water supply and sanitation (WSS) sector. Medium-impact actors include regional WSS operators, whose performance directly affects service quality, and national hydrology and environmental agencies, which provide essential monitoring and technical expertise. Municipalities are important partners, though their capacity varies widely. Lower-impact stakeholders tend to have specialised roles: research institutions provide scientific input with limited policy influence,

NGOs engage mainly in advocacy, and private-sector and agricultural associations shape specific water-use issues but have little influence over broader governance processes.

At the EU level, Bulgaria's engagement is consistent but highly concentrated among a few key institutions. MoEW and the RBDs remain the primary interlocutors with the European Commission and participate actively in WFD Common Implementation Strategy groups and transboundary cooperation frameworks such as the ICPDR¹⁵ and the Black Sea Commission. National technical agencies and research bodies contribute to EU-funded projects and provide data for European monitoring platforms, while NGOs maintain links with EU-level environmental networks. However, municipalities, smaller utilities, and business associations have comparatively limited visibility or influence in EU-level processes. As a result, **Bulgaria's overall EU engagement reflects a centralised pattern, with strong participation from core public authorities but relatively weak representation from local structures, operators, and non-state actors.**

2.4.4 Observations and gaps

Bulgaria has a well-established legal and institutional framework for water management, supported by strong mandates for central ministries and the river basin directorates. However, the main governance challenges arise at the implementation level, particularly among municipalities and in some cases the water supply and sanitation (WSS) operators (ViK utilities). Limited capacity in these areas affects water quality, infrastructure performance, and service reliability. Stakeholder engagement also remains uneven: national authorities and basin bodies are highly active, while NGOs, research institutions, and private-sector actors participate less consistently in policy processes. At the EU level, Bulgaria's engagement is steady but concentrated among a small group of institutions, primarily the MoEW, RBDs, and environmental agencies, with limited involvement from municipalities and smaller utilities. Strengthening cross-sector coordination is increasingly important, especially with agriculture and energy stakeholders due to their significant influence on water abstraction, pollution pressures, and climate-related risks. Overall, while Bulgaria's governance system is structurally sound, it continues to face constraints related to institutional capacity, uneven stakeholder participation, and the need for faster progress on investment and compliance.

¹⁵ International Commission for the Protection of the Danube river (ICPDR)

2.5 Croatia

2.5.1 Brief overview of Croatia's water governance

Croatia's water governance framework is defined by a comprehensive set of national policies and strategies aligned closely with EU directives. The principal legislative document governing Croatian water management is the **Water Act**¹⁶, which regulates the protection and use of surface and groundwater, flood defence, wastewater services, water resource planning, and the roles of institutions at national and regional levels. This Strategy is complemented by the **National Climate Change Adaptation Strategy**¹⁷, the **Environmental Protection Act**¹⁸, the **Nature Protection Act**¹⁹, the **River Basin Management Plans (RBMPs)** and **Flood Risk Management Plans (FRMPs)** prepared in accordance with the EU Water Framework Directive (WFD) and Floods Directive.

The institutional structure of water management in Croatia is centred on national authorities and a specialised water agency. The **Ministry of Environmental Protection and Green Transition** is responsible for water policy, oversight of WFD implementation, water protection, permitting, and environmental monitoring. Operational responsibilities are delegated to **Hrvatske vode (Croatian Waters)**, the national water management agency, which plays a central role in planning, developing, and maintaining water infrastructure; implementing RBMPs and FRMPs; managing flood protection measures; and monitoring water quantity and quality. Local and regional government units cooperate with Hrvatske vode in managing water infrastructure, wastewater networks, and local land-use decisions, while **public water service providers (WSPs)** deliver drinking water and wastewater treatment services. Their performance varies widely, reflecting the country's diverse geographic, demographic, and financial landscape.

Croatia faces several persistent water management **challenges**. Although significant progress has been made in wastewater treatment due to EU cohesion funding, further investment is still required to expand treatment capacity, particularly in smaller and coastal settlements. Water losses in distribution networks remain high in many regions. Climate change has intensified hydrological extremes, with increasing droughts, floods, and saltwater intrusion in coastal areas. Agricultural water use remains uneven and underdeveloped, and certain water bodies continue to face pressures from pollution, hydromorphological alterations, and inadequate sanitation in rural areas. Key **priorities** for Croatia include increasing the resilience of water infrastructure, accelerating the modernisation of wastewater and drinking water systems, improving water retention and irrigation, and strengthening coordination between national, regional, and local institutions.

2.5.2 Stakeholder landscape

Table 2-4 – A high-level overview of the main water stakeholders in the Croatian context

Stakeholder	Type	Scope	Relevance
Ministry of Environmental Protection and Green Transition	Public authority	National	Central body responsible for water policy, environmental protection, conservation of natural resources, the protection of the environment and nature, the promotion

¹⁶ The Croatian Parliament (2009). Promulgating the Water Act. Available [here](#).

¹⁷ Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development (2020). Climate Change Adaptation Strategy. [Here](#).

¹⁸ The Croatian Parliament (2013). Decision Promulgating the Environmental Protection Act. [Here](#).

¹⁹ Ministry of European Integrations (n.d.). Nature Protection Act. [Here](#).

Stakeholder	Type	Scope	Relevance
			of climate change adaptation, and sustainable development.
Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development	Public authority	National	Sets policies related to water and utilities, regulation, permits, etc. Engaged in reforms like reducing water losses, setting regulatory frameworks.
Hrvatske vode (Croatian Waters)	Public authority	National / Regional	Main operational authority for water resource management, flood protection, water infrastructure, RBMPs/FRMPs, monitoring, and WFD implementation.
County/regional authorities	Public authority	Regional	Support spatial planning, land-use decisions, and coordination with national bodies on water-related measures.
Local governments (municipalities)	Public authority	Local	Manage local water networks, spatial planning, stormwater management; implementation capacity varies.
Environmental and hydrometeorological agencies (e.g. Croatian Meteorological and Hydrological Service)	Public authority	National	Provide monitoring, modelling, and forecasting, supporting environmental assessments, flood warnings, and policy implementation.
Water service providers (WSPs) (e.g. Zagreb Water Supply and Drainage)	Utility provider (public and private)	Regional / Local	Deliver drinking water and wastewater services; essential for UWWTD compliance, infrastructure operation, and service quality.
Business organisation (umbrella) (e.g. Croatian Water Supply and Sewerage Group)	Industry	National	Industry associations representing the water sector.
Research institutions and universities (e.g. University of Zagreb)	Academia and Research Institutes	National	Contribute hydrology, climate, and ecological research; support WFD assessments and innovation in water management.
NGOs and civil society organisations (e.g. WWF Adria, Green Action/ZA ZEMLUJ)	NGO	National	Advocate for environmental protection, sustainable water use, and public participation in decision-making.
International river basin organisations (e.g. ICPDR ²⁰ , Sava Commission, Drava Commission)	River Basin organisations	Regional / International	Coordinate transboundary water management, data sharing, pollution control, and flood risk planning under Danube and Sava Basin frameworks.

2.5.3 Qualitative assessment of Croatia's stakeholders

At the **national level**, Croatia's water governance is dominated by a few highly influential actors. **Hrvatske vode** stands out as the central operational authority, with substantial responsibility for water resource planning, flood protection, infrastructure development, and the implementation of WFD measures. It has a decisive impact on water policy outcomes and is indispensable for coordinating national and regional efforts. The **Ministry of Environmental Protection and Green Transition** also holds significant influence through its authority over legislation, environmental protection, permitting,

²⁰ International Commission for the Protection of the Danube river (ICPDR)

and strategic planning. Together, these bodies guide Croatia's alignment with EU requirements, manage investment priorities, and oversee long-term water sector development.

Medium-impact stakeholders, such as water service providers (WSP), municipalities, environmental agencies, and research institutions, play crucial but more targeted roles. WSPs are responsible for delivering drinking water and wastewater treatment and therefore strongly influence service quality, infrastructure performance, and compliance with the UWWTD. Municipalities contribute to local infrastructure planning and land use, though their influence can be limited by financial and administrative constraints. Technical agencies and research organisations supply essential monitoring data and scientific knowledge, contributing to policymaking but lacking direct regulatory authority. Lower-impact actors include NGOs, civil society groups, and business associations, which tend to influence specific issues, such as pollution control, nature conservation, or irrigation, rather than shaping overarching water policy. Their engagement can be sporadic and varies considerably across regions. Overall, **Croatia's national water governance is characterised by strong centralisation, with a clear leadership role for Hrvatske vode and the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Green Transition, supported by a range of operational and technical stakeholders that perform complementary functions within the system.**

At the **EU level**, Croatia's engagement is driven primarily by its central authorities. The Ministry of Environmental Protection and Green Transition is the principal actor in EU negotiations, reporting, and transposition of directives, while Hrvatske vode plays a leading role in providing technical input, implementing EU-funded projects, and participating in expert groups under the WFD and Floods Directive. These two institutions therefore hold the highest EU-level impact among Croatian stakeholders.

Research organisations and hydrological institutes also participate in EU projects, contributing with data and expertise to Horizon Europe and LIFE initiatives, while Croatian NGOs engage through European environmental networks, albeit to a more limited extent. Water service providers and local authorities generally have weaker EU-level engagement, participating primarily through compliance obligations and sector associations rather than direct policy influence. Croatia's active participation in international basin commissions, such as the Sava Commission and the ICPDR, strengthens its role in transboundary cooperation and supports the integration of EU water objectives across shared river basins.

2.5.4 Observations and gaps

Croatia's water governance system benefits from a strong central structure, with clear mandates for the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Green Transition and Hrvatske vode, and a generally well-aligned institutional setup for implementing EU directives. However, the system is constrained by **uneven local capacity, variable performance among water service providers, and limited engagement from smaller municipalities, NGOs, and private-sector actors.** Furthermore, EU-level participation remains concentrated among a few institutions, with limited involvement from regional or local stakeholders. Continued progress will require strengthening local administrative capacity, expanding stakeholder participation in planning processes, and accelerating investment to address infrastructure gaps, climate resilience, and remaining compliance challenges.

2.6 Cyprus

2.6.1 Brief overview of Cyprus's water governance

Cyprus's water governance is structured around a cohesive national policy framework that reflects EU directives and an increasingly integrated resource management approach. The cornerstone is the **Protection and Management of Water Law (Law 13(I)/2004)**, which implements the EU Water Framework Directive and mandates full-cost recovery schemes across household, agricultural, and industrial usage.²¹ This is further detailed and operationalised via the **2014 Pricing and Mechanisms Regulations for the Recovery of the Cost of Water Service (PI 28/2014)** and the **2017 Water Fees Regulations (PI 48/2017)**.²²

Cyprus's water governance is centrally coordinated by the **Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Development and Environment (MARDE)**, which leads on water policy, strategic planning, and budget allocation. The Water Development Department (WDD) is the core technical and operational agency, responsible for bulk water production (dams, reservoirs, desalination, wastewater treatment), infrastructure development, and data collection, as well as being the main interface for EU compliance and reporting. The Department of Environment and Department of Agriculture (both under MARDE) play supporting roles in water quality standards, environmental permitting, and irrigation policy. In July 2024, Cyprus enacted a major local government reform under **Law 37(I)/2022**,²³ establishing new elected District Local Government Organisations (DLGOs) in each district to centralise and manage functions such as development licensing, water supply, sewage, stormwater, and waste services, replacing previous boards and achieving economies of scale. Municipalities and communities remain responsible for local infrastructure and are represented in national policy discussions through their respective unions.

In terms of **challenges**, Cyprus faces acute water scarcity, exacerbated by climate change, frequent droughts, and high seasonal demand. Over-abstraction of groundwater, saline intrusion, and limited natural recharge are persistent issues. Water quality is threatened by agricultural runoff, urban pollution, and inadequate wastewater treatment in some areas. Infrastructure is under pressure from outdated assets and the need for modernisation. Key **priorities** include enhancing drought resilience and water security through desalination, reuse of treated wastewater, and improved water storage, reducing non-revenue water (leakage) and improving efficiency in distribution. Additionally, strengthening water pollution prevention, integrating water management into climate adaptation and spatial planning, and building capacity at the district and local levels are also important priorities.

2.6.2 Stakeholder landscape

Table 2-5 – A high-level overview of the main water stakeholders in the Cypriot context

Stakeholder	Type	Scope	Relevance
Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Development and Environment (MARDE)	Public authority	National	Central policy authority for water that leads strategy, budget, and EU compliance.
Water Development Department (WDD)	Public authority	National	Implements water policy, manages bulk supply, infrastructure, and EU reporting.

²¹ Water Development Department, Ministry of Cyprus (n.d.). [Water Development Department | Legislation](#)

²² Water Development Department, Ministry of Cyprus (n.d.). [Water Development Department | Water pricing](#)

²³ Republic of Cyprus. (2022). Local Government Reform Law (Law 37(I)/2022). Ministry of Interior.

Stakeholder	Type	Scope	Relevance
Department of Environment (MARDE)	Public authority	National	Oversees water quality standards, environmental permitting, climate adaptation strategies.
Department of Agriculture (MARDE)	Public authority	National	Influences irrigation demand, efficiency standards, and agricultural water practices.
Municipalities and Union of Cyprus Municipalities	Public authority	Local	Manage local water infrastructure, sewage and stormwater management. They represent local interests.
Water utility providers (e.g. District Local Government Organisations (DLGOs))	Utility providers (public)	District	Since 2024 they manage water supply, sewage, and waste at the district level. They include the previous water boards.
Business organisation (sectoral) (e.g. Cyprus Water Association)	Industry	National	Professional association of water experts from across the sector (utility service providers, research and innovation etc). They influence standards, best practices, and policies.
Academic and research institutes, think tanks (e.g. Cyprus Institute (EEWRC))	Academia and Research Institutes	National	Research and innovation on water-energy-food nexus and climate adaptation.
NGOs and civil society organisations (e.g. Terra Cypria)	NGO	National / International	Influences public campaigns and awareness, however minimal influence on water policy.

2.6.3 Qualitative assessment of Cyprus’s stakeholders

At the **national level**, MARDE and WDD are central to policy development, implementation, and compliance with EU directives. The 2024 reform has clarified roles: WDD focuses on bulk water production and infrastructure, while DLGOs manage distribution and local services. The Department of Environment and Department of Agriculture play supporting roles in quality standards and irrigation policy. The Health Monitoring Unit ensures public health standards for drinking water. The new DLGOs are expected to improve efficiency, coordination, and service quality, but their capacity and integration are still evolving. Municipalities and communities remain important for local implementation and public engagement. The Cyprus Water Association and research institutes provide technical expertise, while NGOs and environmental groups contribute to advocacy and awareness.

At the **EU level**, Cyprus’s central ministries and WDD are the main interlocutors with the European Commission, actively participating in WFD, UWWTD, and other directive implementation and reporting. The WDD provides compliance data and technical input for EU water policy. DLGOs and local authorities may participate in EU-funded projects, but their influence is primarily operational. Research institutes and the Cyprus Water Association contribute to EU research and technical networks. Agricultural and business associations have limited direct influence but participate in EU stakeholder platforms. Overall, Cyprus is committed in implementing EU water policy, with strong central coordination but limited direct policy-shaping influence at the EU level due to its small size. The country’s experience with drought management, desalination, and water reuse is increasingly relevant in EU discussions on climate adaptation and water resilience.

2.6.4 Observations and gaps

Cyprus has a robust centralised water governance framework, with strong technical capacity at the national level (notably in the Water Development Department and MARDE) and a clear legal basis for water management. The country has made significant progress in aligning with EU directives, investing in desalination, and developing drought management strategies. However, the 2024 reform shifted water distribution responsibilities to District Local Government Organisations (DLGOs) and introduced transitional challenges. There are concerns about the readiness and capacity of DLGOs to manage

complex water supply and wastewater services, especially in rural and peri-urban areas, where technical and financial resources may be limited.

Persistent gaps include underinvestment in the renewal of ageing infrastructure, high levels of non-revenue water (leakage), and insufficient monitoring of groundwater resources, particularly in rural areas that rely heavily on wells for drinking water. While urban areas benefit from advanced desalination and reuse schemes, smaller municipalities and communities may lack integrated stormwater management and face difficulties in maintaining service quality and resilience to drought. There are also disparities in access to EU and national funding, with larger urban centres better able to leverage investment than smaller localities. Finally, stakeholder engagement and public participation in water planning remain limited, and coordination between central, district, and local levels is still evolving, especially following the recent institutional changes.

2.7 Czechia

2.7.1 Brief overview of Czechia's water governance

Czechia's water policies and strategies are primarily defined by the **National Strategy for the Environment 2030**²⁴. The Strategy covers the issue of environmental protection in its entirety and sets strategic direction until 2030. The document also formulates visions of the ideal state by 2050. Concretely for water, the Strategy outlines water-related goals, such to improve surface and groundwater quality, to ensure access to safe drinking water, to enhance wastewater treatment and water recycling, to increase water retention in landscapes through ecosystem-based solutions or to strengthen resilience to climate-related water risks (e.g., droughts, floods).

The key legislative act is the **Water Act**²⁵, which is the basic legal standard for water management in Czechia. The purpose of the Act is to protect surface and groundwater, establish conditions for the economical use of water resources and for the preservation and improvement of the quality of surface and groundwater, create conditions for reducing the adverse effects of floods and droughts, and ensure the safety of waterworks.

The institutional framework for water management in Czechia is structured across **three levels of governance: central, regional, and local**. At the central level, the **Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry of Agriculture** are the primary authorities responsible for legislation, water protection, flood management, international cooperation, and oversight of water quality and infrastructure. Regional authorities (**river basin organisations**) implement selected measures, prepare River Basin Management Plans (RBMPs) and Flood Risk Management Plans (FRMPs), and coordinate actions on transboundary waters in consultation with the central ministries. At the local level, **municipal and district authorities** manage surface water regulations, water supply, sewerage, and wastewater treatment, often in collaboration with public and private water companies. Additionally, municipal authorities with extended competencies play a role in emergency water-related situations such as droughts or pollution incidents.²⁶

The **key issues** Czechia is currently facing in relation to water management is **insufficient progress in improving water quality**, particularly in agricultural regions where **nutrient pollution** from fertilizers and livestock remains a major concern. Czechia also struggles with hydro-morphological pressures (alterations to water bodies due to infrastructure and land use) which hinder the achievement of “good ecological status” under the EU Water Framework Directive (WFD). Additionally, **climate change impacts**, such as increasing droughts and floods, are putting pressure on outdated water infrastructure.²⁷

2.7.2 Stakeholder landscape

Table 2-6 – A high-level overview of the main water stakeholders in the Czech context

Stakeholder	Type	Scope	Relevance
Ministry of Environment and Agriculture	Public authority	National	The central bodies of state administration that focuses on the areas of agriculture, water management, food industry, forests, hunting and fishing (MoA) and nature and environmental protection (MoE).

²⁴ Czech Ministry of Environment (n.d.) [National Strategy for the Environment 2030](#)

²⁵ Act No. 254/2001 Coll. (Water Act)

²⁶ Committee of Regions (n.d.) [Czechia – Water management](#)

²⁷ European Commission (2025) [Environmental Implementation Review 2025 - Czechia](#)

Stakeholder	Type	Scope	Relevance
Environment-related agencies (e.g. CENIA, CIZP, AOPK, CHMI)	Public authority	National	Agencies supporting development and implementation of EU and national water policies, through (e.g.) data collection.
River basin management organisations (e.g. Vltava, Labe, Odra, Ohre, Morava)	Public authority	Regional	Management of significant watercourses and activities related to the detection and assessment of the state of surface and groundwater, operation and maintenance of waterworks, monitoring the state of watercourse beds and ensuring their adjustments. Under the umbrella of the Ministry of Agriculture.
Municipalities	Public authority	Local	Manage local water infrastructure and planning. A total of 6 258 municipalities.
Water utility providers (e.g. Veolia, Suez)	Utility provider (public and private)	National / international	Large companies active in production and distribution of drinking water and wastewater collection and treatment.
Business organisation (umbrella) (e.g. CzWA, SOVAK, CWA)	Industry	National	Bring together legal entities and individuals in water supply or the collection and treatment or disposal of wastewater. And other water management infrastructure.
Water-intensive industries (e.g. ČEZ)	Private company	National	Primary energy company and operator of power plants; uses large volumes of water for cooling in coal and nuclear power plants; also operates hydroelectric facilities.
Academic and research institutes (e.g. TGM Water Research Institute)	Academic and Research Institutes	National	Public research institution, under the Ministry of Environment. Focuses on topics such as hydrology, extreme events, climate change, surface water modelling, groundwater protection, water status assessment, protection of biodiversity in the aquatic environment or wastewater and water treatment.
NGOs, civil society organisations (e.g. Caritas, Green Circle, Arnika)	NGO	National	Organisations dedicated to comprehensive monitoring of laws and policies, coordinate legislative campaigns and provide active support in advocacy activities aimed at maintaining high-quality environmental protection and a high level of civil rights in decision-making processes.
International bodies (e.g. Elbe, Odra, Danube)	River basin organisation	Regional / International	Committees set up at international level to facilitate management of transboundary water bodies. They aim to improve water cooperation between stakeholders, promote economic development, environmental conservation, international trade, and regional integration.

2.7.3 Qualitative assessment of Czechia's stakeholders

Czechia's water sector is shaped by a diverse set of stakeholders, including national ministries (e.g. Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Agriculture), specialised agencies (e.g. Czech Hydrometeorological Institute, Czech Environmental Inspectorate), river basin organizations (e.g., Povodi Vltavy, Povodi Labe), research institutes (e.g., T. G. Masaryk Water Research Institute), and business associations (e.g., SOVAK, CzWA). The most relevant stakeholders are central to policy development, implementation, and enforcement, such as the ministries and river basin organizations, which lead on strategic planning, regulatory oversight, and coordination of water management and climate adaptation. These actors are responsible for developing and executing River Basin Management Plans, flood risk strategies, and compliance with national and EU legislation. Stakeholders with 'medium level' relevance include utility providers, NGOs, and research bodies. They play supporting roles in technical expertise, data provision, advocacy, and public engagement. These usually have broad mandates, and focus on integration of environmental, agricultural, and infrastructure concerns, and cross-sectoral collaboration. Overall, **Czechia's water governance is characterised by strong**

institutional capacity, scientific support, and multi-level coordination, with stakeholders actively shaping national policy and practice.

At the EU level, Czech stakeholders demonstrate engagement and influence, particularly through their roles in implementing and reporting on EU directives. High-impact actors such as ministries, river basin organisations, and research institutes contribute to EU policy formation via expert groups, consultations, and participation in EU-funded projects (e.g., LIFE, Horizon Europe). They provide technical input, data, and best practices that inform EU-wide strategies and facilitate harmonization of standards across Member States. Business associations and NGOs amplify Czech perspectives in European networks (e.g., EurEau, EEB), advocate for sustainable water management, and support cross-border cooperation. Czech stakeholders are recognized partners in international commissions (Elbe, Danube, Odra). While some actors have more localized or niche roles, the overall stakeholder landscape in **Czechia is well-aligned with EU objectives, actively contributing to the advancement of integrated water policy, climate resilience, and sustainable development at the European level.**

2.7.4 Observations and gaps

Czechia's water governance landscape is robust, with strong representation from national ministries (Environment, Agriculture), river basin organisations, research institutes, and utility associations. These central actors are highly engaged in policy development, implementation, and compliance with EU directives. However, while the core public authorities and technical agencies are well integrated, there are gaps in engagement from certain sectors and regions. For example, the private sector (especially smaller water technology providers and water-intensive industries), local NGOs, and some regional authorities are less visible, indicating limited influence or involvement. While national coordination is strong, local municipalities and smaller enterprises may lack resources or capacity for active participation, and citizen engagement is present but could be further strengthened.

2.8 Denmark

2.8.1 Brief overview of Denmark's water governance

Denmark's water governance framework is grounded in a long-standing tradition of sustainable water management, strict environmental protection, and strong compliance with EU legislation. Denmark has national strategies on climate adaptation, flood risk management, groundwater protection, and agri-environmental measures, all contributing to an integrated approach to water management. For example, the **Nature Conservation Act**²⁸ protects around 10% of Denmark's area and includes various water-related ecosystems. Denmark's **Environmental Protection Act**²⁹, **Water Supply Act**³⁰, **Wastewater Management Act**³¹, and the **Planning Act**³² form the core legal framework, governing water quality, water abstraction, wastewater treatment, and nature protection.

Institutionally, Danish water governance is highly decentralised but well-coordinated. The **Ministry of Environment and Gender Equality** is the central policy authority responsible for legislation, environmental monitoring, and the oversight of WFD and Floods Directive implementation. Under the ministry, the **Danish Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)** plays a key role in regulatory enforcement, permitting, water quality monitoring, and implementation of EU directives. Regional and local authorities have major responsibilities: **municipalities** manage wastewater services, local groundwater protection zones, stormwater management, and certain spatial planning measures related to climate adaptation. **Utilities**, primarily municipally owned non-profit companies, operate water supply and wastewater treatment systems, and their responsibilities are defined by the principle that water services must operate independently of municipal finances.

Denmark faces a number of ongoing **water-related challenges and priorities**. The most significant concern is **nutrient pollution from agriculture**, especially nitrogen and phosphorus runoff, which continues to impact coastal waters, lakes, and estuaries. The country has also experienced increasing **climate-induced pressures**, including more intense rainfall events, cloudbursts, and coastal flooding, requiring substantial investment in stormwater and flood defence infrastructure. Additional challenges include maintaining high-quality drinking water from groundwater sources amid rising contamination from pesticides and PFAS, meeting ambitious wastewater treatment and emissions-reduction targets, and adapting infrastructure to future hydrological extremes.

2.8.2 Stakeholder landscape

Table 2-7 – A high-level overview of the main water stakeholders in the Danish context

Stakeholder	Type	Scope	Relevance
Ministry of Environment and Gender Equality	Public authority	National	Leads national water policy, environmental legislation, and implementation of EU directives (WFD, UWWTD, Floods Directive).

²⁸ Danish Agricultural Agency (n.d.). National nature protection. <https://en.lbst.dk/nature-and-forestry/nature/national-nature-protection>

²⁹ Ministry of the Environment and Gender Equality. (2023). Environmental Protection Act. <https://www.retsinformation.dk/eli/ta/2023/5>

³⁰ Ministry of the Environment and Gender Equality (2017). Proclamation of the Water Supply Act. <https://www.retsinformation.dk/eli/ta/2017/125>

³¹ MST Denmark (n.d.). Environmental Factors and Health: Wastewater. https://www2.mst.dk/udgiv/publications/2001/87-7944-519-5/html/kap12_eng.htm

³² Ministry of the Urban, Rural and Church Affairs (2000). Promulgation of the Planning Act <https://www.retsinformation.dk/eli/ta/2000/518>

Stakeholder	Type	Scope	Relevance
Ministry of Climate, Energy, and Utilities	Public authority	National	Oversees climate adaptation, energy-water linkages, and water utility regulation.
Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Fisheries	Public authority	National	Oversees agricultural water use, irrigation policy, and nutrient runoff reduction.
Danish Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)	Public authority	National	Key regulatory body responsible for permitting, enforcement, water quality monitoring, and coordination of national environmental data.
Danish Nature Agency	Public authority	National	Manages state-owned forests, nature reserves, and coastal areas. It focuses on biodiversity protection, recreation, and land use planning. The agency also plays a role in implementing nature restoration and flood protection projects that intersect with water management.
Danish Coastal Agency	Public authority	National	Manages the governmental socio-economic interests within the field of coastal protection.
Regional authorities (e.g. Region Nordjylland, Central Denmark Region)	Public authority	Regional	Supports municipalities in regional water resource protection, mapping, and monitoring, as well as climate adaptation coordination. Act under the Danish Environment Protection Agency.
Municipalities	Public authority	Local	Manage wastewater services, stormwater systems, groundwater protection zones, local climate adaptation and spatial planning.
Water utility providers (e.g. HOFOR, Aarhus Vand)	Utility provider (public and private)	Regional / Local	Provide drinking water and wastewater treatment; central to meeting environmental and service quality standards and adapting infrastructure to climate change.
Business / Sectoral organisations (e.g. Landbrug & Fødevarer)	Industry	National	Major water-impacting stakeholder influencing nutrient runoff, land-use decisions, and water quality policy negotiations.
Industry and energy companies (e.g. Krüger)	Private company	National	Work on water abstraction and discharges; operate under environmental permits and contribute to water efficiency and emissions reductions.
Geological Survey of Denmark and Greenland (GEUS)	Academia and Research Institutes	National	Provides groundwater, geoscience, and hydrological research and data essential for policymaking and WFD implementation.
Universities and research organisations (e.g. Danish Technical University, Aarhus University)	Academia and Research Institutes	National	Supply technical expertise, modelling, and environmental research supporting evidence-based policy and innovation.
Environmental NGOs (e.g. Danish Society for Nature Conservation)	NGO	National	Advocate for marine and freshwater protection, nutrient reduction, PFAS regulation, and stronger enforcement of environmental standards.
Transboundary organisations (e.g. HELCOM)	International organisation	International	Coordinates transboundary marine protection, nutrient reduction efforts, and monitoring Danish coastal waters.

2.8.3 Qualitative assessment of Denmark's stakeholders

At the **national level**, Denmark's water governance is shaped by a small group of highly influential public authorities. The **Ministry of Environment and Gender Equality** and the **Danish EPA** exert the strongest influence, as they lead national water legislation, set regulatory standards, coordinate WFD and Floods Directive implementation, and oversee monitoring programmes. Their central role in developing River Basin Management Plans and environmental targets makes them the most impactful actors. Municipalities and public water utilities also play substantial roles: municipalities are responsible for spatial planning, stormwater management, and climate adaptation, while utilities deliver drinking water and wastewater services and invest in infrastructure that directly affects environmental outcomes. Research institutions such as GEUS and major universities are medium-impact stakeholders, providing scientific assessments that underpin policy decisions but lacking direct regulatory authority.

Environmental NGOs contribute to public debate, legal actions, and advocacy for stricter nutrient reductions and groundwater protection, while agricultural organisations exert strong influence on policy negotiations related to fertilizers, drainage, and land management. Their impact is issue-specific: agriculture is central for nutrient pollution management but less relevant for drinking water regulation or climate adaptation infrastructure. Private-sector actors in industry and energy have narrower water-related roles, mainly around industrial water use, emissions, and permitting. Overall, Denmark's national governance is characterised by strong coordination between national regulators, municipal authorities, and utilities, supported by robust scientific institutions but challenged by competing land-use interests, particularly with agriculture.

At the **EU level**, Denmark's influence is channelled primarily through its national ministries and technical agencies. The **Ministry of Environment and Gender Equality** leads Danish engagement with the European Commission, shaping the implementation of directives such as the WFD, UWWTD, Nitrates Directive, and Floods Directive. The **Danish EPA** contributes technical expertise to EU committees, working groups, and reporting processes and is recognised for high-quality environmental monitoring and data systems. Research institutions, including GEUS and leading universities, participate actively in EU research programmes (Horizon Europe, LIFE), providing scientific input to EU environmental assessments and international datasets.

Agricultural and industrial associations participate in EU-level networks and sector bodies, influencing debates on nutrient limits, emissions standards, and circular economy solutions. Danish NGOs engage through European environmental platforms, contributing to advocacy on marine protection and water quality. Denmark's participation in **HELCOM** and regional sea conventions further strengthens its role in shaping Baltic Sea environmental policy. While municipal utilities have limited direct EU engagement, they participate indirectly through European water associations and compliance obligations.

2.8.4 Observations and gaps

Denmark's water governance system is strong, data-rich, and institutionally mature, with clear mandates and effective coordination between ministries, municipalities, and utilities. High-impact stakeholders are well organised and technically capable, and scientific institutions provide strong analytical support. However, gaps remain in addressing nutrient pollution, where agricultural stakeholders maintain a high degree of influence and progress has been slower. The agricultural sector in Denmark exerts strong influence on policy through well-organised interest groups, consistently shaping decisions to prioritise economic competitiveness, farm viability, and flexible regulation. It mainly resists stringent

environmental and climate measures, such as strict nutrient limits or binding emissions taxes, that are perceived to threaten production, income stability, or the pace of structural transition. Municipal capacities vary, particularly regarding stormwater management and climate adaptation investments, and smaller actors such as NGOs and local community groups have limited formal influence despite active public debate. At the EU level, engagement is consistent but concentrated around central agencies, with less involvement from subnational entities or smaller utilities. **Strengthening cross-sector cooperation, especially between environmental authorities and agriculture, remains critical to achieving Denmark's long-term water policy objectives.**

2.9 Estonia

2.9.1 Stakeholder landscape

Table 2-8 – A high-level overview of the main water stakeholders in the Estonian context

Stakeholder	Type	Scope	Relevance
Ministry of Climate	Public authority	National	Coordinates climate policy and green transition, which includes water aspects as well as the marine and aquatic environment, water protection, and use policy.
Ministry of Regional Affairs and Agriculture	Public authority	National	Oversees agricultural water use, irrigation, and compliance with Nitrates Directive, water management plans and general EU directive implementation.
Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications	Public authority	National	Regulates industrial water use and supports clean technology development.
Ministry of Social Affairs	Public authority	National	Responsible for public health standards, including drinking water safety and sanitation.
Estonian Environmental Board	Public authority	National	Implements water protection measures, Natura 2000 sites, and wetland conservation.
Estonian Environment Agency	Public authority	National	Provides hydrological monitoring, water quality data, and supports river basin management.
Public Utility Providers (e.g. Emajõe Veevärk, Tallinn Water Utility)	Utility provider (public and private)	National	Water utility organisations that manage drinking water and wastewater treatment.
Estonian Associations of Cities and Municipalities	Public authority (uniting local governments)	Local	Represents local governments in water policy discussions and emergency planning.
Estonian Waterworks Association	Industry	National	Umbrella organisation for water utilities; advocates for sectoral interests and standards.
Private water companies (e.g. Järve Biopuhastus OÜ)	Private company	Local / National	Operates wastewater treatment facilities, contributing to water quality improvement.
Water-intensive industries (e.g. Lindström Estonia, Viru Keemia Grupp)	Private company	National	Examples of water-intensive companies, such as the mining and extractive industries or industrial water users and resource processing)
Research centres and academia (e.g. Environmental Research Centre, Taltech, University of Tartu)	Academia and Research Institutes	National	Research on hydrology, water ecosystems, climate adaptation, water engineering, wastewater treatment technologies and innovation.
NGOs and civil society organisations (e.g. ELF, Peipsi Centre)	NGO	Local	Activities related to river restoration and wetland conservation projects.

2.9.2 Qualitative assessment of Estonia's stakeholders

Estonia's national water governance is supported by a diverse set of stakeholders with varying degrees of relevance and influence. Central public authorities such as the Ministry of Climate, Ministry of Regional Affairs and Agriculture, and Estonian Environment Agency play leading roles in policy development, implementation of EU directives, and hydrological monitoring. These institutions are highly relevant due to their strategic and regulatory functions. Local municipalities are key actors in water service provision and emergency response, though their influence is primarily limited to the local level. Public utility providers, including regional and municipal water companies, are critical for operational delivery of water and wastewater services, with moderate relevance in national governance. Research institutions such as the University of Tartu contribute significantly to water-related innovation

and policy support. NGOs and civil society organisations, while active in conservation and cross-border cooperation, have a more limited strategic role. **Overall, Estonia's national water governance benefits from strong public sector leadership and scientific support, but engagement from civil society and the private sector remains moderate.**

At the EU level, Estonia's stakeholder engagement is led by national ministries and research institutions with established roles in European policy processes. The Ministry of Climate and Estonian Environment Agency are actively involved in EU water and climate policy forums, contributing to directive implementation and technical working groups. Research institutions such as the University of Tartu participate in EU-funded programmes, particularly in areas of water engineering and climate adaptation. Sectoral organisations like the Estonian Waterworks Association are members of European networks such as EurEau, enabling them to represent national utility interests in EU discussions. However, many regional and local actors, including utility providers and municipalities, have minimal direct engagement at the EU level, limiting their influence on policy shaping. NGOs contribute through project-based cooperation and advocacy within EU conservation networks, but their institutional influence remains modest. **While Estonia maintains a visible presence in EU water governance through its central institutions and academia, broader stakeholder inclusion at the EU level could enhance the country's overall impact and representation.**

2.9.3 Observations and gaps

Estonia's water governance system is anchored by strong national institutions and research bodies, with high relevance in policy implementation and technical expertise. However, several gaps are evident across stakeholder groups. Local utility providers and municipalities, while essential for service delivery and emergency response, have limited visibility and influence at the EU level. Civil society organisations, including environmental NGOs, contribute to conservation and advocacy but operate on a smaller scale, which restricts their strategic impact. Private sector actors, and water-intensive industries, are present but underrepresented in policy dialogues and decision-making processes. Consumer organisations and regulatory bodies play a role in ensuring service standards and fair pricing but lack broader engagement in governance structures. These gaps point to a need for enhanced coordination across governance levels, greater inclusion of local and non-governmental actors, and stronger mobilisation of private sector expertise to support a more balanced and participatory water governance framework in Estonia.

2.10 Finland

2.10.1 Brief overview of Finland's water governance

Finland's water governance framework is guided by a long-standing commitment to sustainable water management, integrated river basin planning, and strong alignment with EU directives. The strategic basis for Finnish water policy lies in the **Act on the Organisation of River Basin Management and the Marine Strategy of 2004** and **Government Decrees on Water Resources Management**, on the **Organisation of the Development and Implementation of the Marine Strategy**, and on **Water Resources Management Regions**³³. The national statutes implement the WFD and MSFD of the EU. These strategies place strong emphasis on safeguarding drinking water resources, protecting aquatic ecosystems, managing diffuse pollution from agriculture and forestry, and strengthening resilience to climate-related risks. Finland's legal foundation is established through the **Environmental Protection Act**, which regulates water use, permitting, groundwater protection, wastewater discharge, and environmental monitoring measures³⁴. Furthermore, the Finnish Water Envoy, or **International Water Strategy**³⁵, aims for responsible and equitable water security across borders via close cross-sectoral collaboration.

Institutionally, Finland's governance model is decentralised but highly coordinated. The **Ministry of the Environment (MoE)** is responsible for national water policy, WFD implementation, environmental protection legislation, and oversight of monitoring and permitting systems. The **Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF)** plays an equally important role by guiding water-resource use in agriculture and forestry, irrigation policy, flood risk management, and land-use planning. The **Ministry of Foreign Affairs** coordinates Finland's international water strategy, working closely with the Finnish Water Envoy to represent and advance Finland's water-related priorities globally. The **Ministry of Social Affairs and Health** leads the drafting of Finland's national Water Safety Plan, ensuring the protection of public health through safe and reliable water management. Operational tasks are largely delegated to the **Regional Centres for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment (ELY Centres)**, which manage water permitting, coordinate RBMPs, and implement environmental monitoring programmes at regional scale. Municipalities are responsible for local drinking water supply, wastewater treatment infrastructure, stormwater systems, and land-use decisions, often carried out in cooperation with public water utilities.

Finland's key water management **challenges** stem from climate change impacts, diffuse nutrient pollution, and hydromorphological pressures. More frequent heavy rainfall and flooding events are putting pressure on drainage and wastewater systems, while drought periods affect groundwater availability in certain regions. Nutrient loading from agriculture and forestry remains a persistent issue, especially in coastal and lake regions, affecting the ability to reach "good ecological status" under the WFD. Additional challenges include the need to modernise ageing water infrastructure, reduce greenhouse gas emissions from wastewater treatment, and address emerging pollutants such as PFAS and microplastics. Finland's policy **priorities** therefore focus on improving the ecological status of water bodies, strengthening climate resilience, reducing agricultural and forestry pressures on waterways, and enhancing data-driven water management. Securing water infrastructures against cyber-attacks and other types of threats is also an emerging issue, especially in the current geopolitical context,

³³ Ministry of Environment (n.d.). Legislation on water resources and marine protection. <https://ym.fi/en/legislation-on-the-protection-of-water-and-the-sea>

³⁴ Ministry of Environment (n.d.) Environmental protection legislation and guidelines <https://ym.fi/en/environmental-protection-legislation>

³⁵ Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2023). [Finnish Water Way – International Water Strategy](https://ym.fi/en/environmental-protection-legislation).

and coordination between authorities has been strengthened in this regard. For instance, recent break-ins at water supply plants in Finland have raised concerns, but authorities confirm they do not affect the security of water supply, and preparedness levels have not been elevated. While cooperation among authorities and critical infrastructure operators has been strengthened, water utilities remain well prepared for local disturbances and continue to monitor and update security measures in line with the evolving security situation.³⁶

2.10.2 Stakeholder landscape

Table 2-9 – A high-level overview of the main water stakeholders in the Finnish context

Stakeholder	Type	Scope	Relevance
Ministry of the Environment (MoE)	Public authority	National	Leads national water policy, WFD implementation, environmental legislation, and oversight of monitoring and permitting.
Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF)	Public authority	National	Responsible for agricultural and forestry impacts on water, flood risk management, land-use planning, and resource use policies.
Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Public authority	National	Coordinates Finland's international water strategy Finland's Special Envoy for Water. In his role, the Special Envoy advocates for Finnish water security, implements strategy, and strengthens international water diplomacy.
Ministry of Social Affairs and Health	Public authority	National	Leads in the drafting of the national Water Safety Plan
Regional Centres for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment (ELY Centres)	Public authority	Regional	Implement RBMPs, manage permitting, monitor environmental status, and support regional water management and enforcement.
Municipalities	Public authority	Local	Manage local water services, wastewater treatment, stormwater systems, and spatial planning.
Water utility providers	Utility provider (public and private)	Local / Regional	Provide drinking water and wastewater treatment; essential for meeting UWWTD standards and infrastructure modernisation.
Water business organisations (e.g. Water Cluster Finland, Pellervo, SVOSK, Finnish Waterworks Association, Finnish Water Forum)	Industry	National	Cooperation platforms/associations bringing together companies, research, education and ministries working with water issues.
Tech business organisations (e.g. Technology Industries of Finland)	Industry	National	Industrial federation for tech/engineering firms, operating in innovation, framing water as strategic risk or seizing opportunities for Finnish industry.

³⁶ National Emergency Supply Agency (2024). [Break-ins to water supply plants do not impact security of supply](#).

Stakeholder	Type	Scope	Relevance
Agricultural and forestry organisations (e.g. MTK, Forest Industries Federation)	Industry	National	Major water users. Influence nutrient management, land-use decisions, water abstraction, and regulatory debates affecting rural water pressures.
Finnish Environment Institute (SYKE)	Academia and Research Institutes	National	Provides scientific data, modelling, and monitoring that support environmental assessments and WFD evaluations.
Universities (e.g. Helsinki, Aalto, Oulu)	Academia and Research Institutes	National	Conduct research on hydrology, climate impacts, water treatment, and ecosystem health.
Environmental NGOs (e.g. WWF Finland, Finnish Association for Nature Conservation)	NGO	National	Advocate for water protection, biodiversity, reduced nutrient pollution, and stronger environmental standards.
International bodies (e.g. HELCOM, OSPAR)	International organisations	International	Support cooperation on Baltic Sea protection, nutrient reduction, and transboundary river basin management.

2.10.3 Qualitative assessment of Finland’s stakeholders

At the **national level**, Finland’s water governance is driven by a small number of high-impact public authorities. The Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry are the most influential stakeholders, setting national water policy, environmental regulation, WFD implementation, and land-use rules that directly affect water bodies. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health has led the establishment of the national Water Safety Plan, which aims to identify risks related to the entire water production operating environment and water production chain and to manage these risks in order to safeguard the quality of drinking water. The ELY Centres also play a major role by operationalising these policies, issuing permits, managing regional monitoring, and coordinating RBMPs. Public water utilities and municipalities have medium-to-high impact because they deliver drinking water, wastewater treatment, and local climate adaptation measures, with their performance shaping Finland’s compliance with EU and national targets.

Medium-impact actors include SYKE and leading universities, which provide crucial scientific data and modelling that inform policy, even though they lack regulatory authority. Environmental NGOs and civil society promote ecosystem protection and nutrient reductions but exert limited formal decision-making power. Agriculture and forestry organisations significantly shape debates on nutrient runoff and land management, though their influence is more sector-specific than system-wide. Private industries and hydropower operators have narrower roles focused mainly on permitting and environmental compliance.

At the **EU level**, Finland’s engagement is driven primarily by the Ministry of the Environment, which oversees compliance with EU directives, participates in negotiations, and represents Finnish priorities in WFD, UWWTD, and biodiversity policy discussions. The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry also plays a central role in EU-level dialogues on nutrient management, agricultural practices, and forestry policy, influencing discussions relevant to water quality. ELY Centres and SYKE contribute technical expertise to EU reporting processes, data platforms, and expert working groups, often being recognised for high-quality environmental monitoring.

Academic institutions participate in EU-funded research programmes and provide scientific input on hydrology, climate adaptation, and water treatment technologies. NGOs engage with European environmental networks and advocate for stricter nutrient reduction and marine protection policies, especially in the Baltic Sea region. Finland's involvement in HELCOM also amplifies its influence on EU marine and coastal water policy implementation. Local utilities and municipalities are less engaged directly at EU level, though they contribute through European water associations and compliance obligations.

At the **international level**, four Finnish ministries led by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs work together on the country's International Water Strategy. As a part of the implementation of the Strategy, a goal has been set for Finland and Finnish companies to become the most responsible water stewards in the world by 2030. At COP26, in Glasgow, in November 2021, Finland became a founding signatory of the Fair Water Footprints Declaration along with other global leaders. In 2022, Finnish ministries with the support of the Finnish Environment Institute Syke developed a first delivery plan for the Declaration for years 2023-2025. While the plan focuses on Finnish government action, it links closely to private sector, research and development, civil society and consumer roles, in Finland and internationally.

2.10.4 Observations and gaps

Finland's water governance landscape is robust, supported by strong national ministries, capable regional authorities, high-quality scientific institutions, and well-organised public utilities. However, challenges persist in **managing diffuse pollution from agriculture and forestry**, modernising wastewater and stormwater infrastructure, and ensuring consistent capacity across municipalities. EU-level engagement is strong but concentrated within a few national authorities and scientific bodies, with more limited participation from local-level stakeholders and smaller utilities. Strengthening cross-sector coordination, particularly with agricultural and forestry interests, and enhancing local capacity will be essential for Finland to meet long-term WFD objectives and climate resilience goals.

2.11 France

2.11.1 Brief overview of France's water governance

France's water policy is anchored in a legislative framework shaped by successive national laws and the transposition of EU water legislation. Early water laws were adopted in 1964 and 1992, both of which set out basic principles for the management and protection of water resources. Building on this foundation, the 2004 law (2004-338) was adopted to transpose the EU Water Framework Directive (WFD). The legislative framework was further developed and consolidated by the **Water and Aquatic Environments Act (LEMA 2006)**³⁷. The main objectives of LEMA are to achieve the objectives of the EU WFD, to improve access to water for all, bring greater transparency to the operation of the public water service and improve the institutional frameworks. Recent national strategies include a collective action plan, which was adopted in March 2023, **The Water Plan 2023–2030**.³⁸ This plan sets out priorities for resilient and coordinated management of water resources, focusing on conservation (i.e. reducing leakages), improving water quality, governance, and drought management. It includes 53 concrete measures that are focused on conserving water through better measurement, planning and savings; improving water availability by reducing losses, making use of unconventional water sources and enhancing storage; and protecting water quality by preventing diffuse pollution.

Water management in France is shared across several levels. The **Ministry for Ecological Transition, Biodiversity, Forests, Sea and Fisheries** lead national policy, supported by the **Ministry of Territorial Planning and Decentralisation**. There are six Water Agencies that implement plans at the river-basin level³⁹, while 13 Regional Directorates for Environment, Planning and Housing (DREAL) are responsible for implementation of national policies at the regional level, as well as regulation and oversight and crisis management. Municipalities are responsible for local drinking water supply, wastewater treatment, and stormwater management, either directly or via contracts with public or private utility companies. This multi-tiered system is complemented by national public agencies, research institutions, and a mix of public and private water utility providers. Furthermore, at the national and international level, **France's Special Envoy on Water** coordinates strategic engagement and high-level preparation around water policy issues. Additionally, the **Ministry of the Overseas (Ministère des Outre-mer)** is responsible for France's outer regions, including territories in the Caribbean, Indian Ocean, and Pacific, overseeing duties such as economic development, infrastructure, disaster resilience, and the coordination of social, health, and environmental policies.

In terms of **challenges**, France faces increasing water scarcity due to frequent droughts and declining rainfall, alongside rising water stress in summer months. Water leakages are also a major issue in France, with around 18.8% of water in distribution networks lost through leaks in 2023, highlighting the urgent need for infrastructure updates and more efficient water management.⁴⁰ Additionally, water quality is threatened by diffuse agricultural pollution, pesticides, micropollutants from industry and urban runoff. Competing demands for irrigation, drinking water, and industrial use are causing local conflicts. Key

³⁷ Loi sur l'eau et les milieux aquatiques (LEMA), 2018. [Loi sur l'eau et les milieux aquatiques \(LEMA\) | DRIEAT Île-de-France](#)

³⁸ Le Plan Eau: 53 mesures concrètes pour une gestion sobre, résiliente et concertée de la ressource en eau, 2024. [Le plan eau : 53 mesures concrètes - Environnement, risques naturels et technologiques - Actions de l'État - Les services de l'État dans la Manche](#)

³⁹ The six river basins and their agencies are Seine-Normandie (covers the Seine and Normandy coastal rivers), Rhin-Meuse (covers the Rhine, Meuse and their tributaries, Adour-Garonne (covers the rivers in southwest France, including Adour and Garonne), Loire-Bretagne (covers the Loire, Brittany rivers and surrounding catchments), Artois-Picardie (covers rivers in northern France, including the Somme and Scheldt basins), Rhône-Méditerranée-Corse (covers the Rhône, southern rivers, Mediterranean coastal rivers, and Corsica).

⁴⁰ Part du volume d'eau mis en distribution perdu par fuite dans les canalisations en 2023, Eau France. [Part du volume d'eau mis en distribution perdu par fuite dans les canalisations en 2023 | EauFrance](#)

priorities include reducing water withdrawals by 10% by 2030, promoting water savings, scaling up wastewater reuse, strengthening pollution controls, developing resilient infrastructure, and integrating water into climate adaptation planning. Governance reform, capacity building, and enhanced public participation are also emphasised.^{41 42 43}

2.11.2 Stakeholder landscape

Table 2-10 – A high-level overview of the main water stakeholders in the French context

Stakeholder	Type	Scope	Relevance
Ministry for Ecological Transition, Biodiversity, Forests, Sea and Fisheries	Public authority	National	Ministry is the central authority for water policy, implementation, and inspection.
Ministry of Territorial Planning and Decentralisation	Public authority	National	Ministry is a supporting authority for water policy, with a specific focus on territorial planning, decentralisation and inter-ministerial coordination.
National public agencies (e.g. Office Français de la Biodiversité)	Public authority	National	Produce reports and publications that inform policymaking.
French Water Envoy	Public authority	National / International	The envoy coordinates France’s strategic engagement and high-level preparation on water policy nationally, including events like the One Water Summit. Internationally, they represent France in EU and global water governance forums.
Agence de L’eau (Water Agencies) (e.g. Agence de l’Eau Rhône-Méditerranée-Corse)	Public authority	Regional	Water Agencies are responsible for implementing policies at the river-basin level.
Regional authorities (e.g. DREAL/Regional Directorate for Environment, Planning and Housing)	Public authority	Regional	Regional authorities responsible for implementation of national policies at the regional level (e.g. ensure compliance with laws and supervise water management), as well as regulation and oversight (e.g. issuing authorisations for water abstractions, monitoring hydraulic infrastructure etc.).
Municipalities	Public authority	Local	Municipalities handle local water policy implementation and planning.
Water utility providers (e.g. Veolia, Suez, Eau de Paris)	Utility provider (public and private)	Local, Regional, National, International	Water utility providers are responsible for sourcing, treating, and distributing safe drinking water to households and businesses. Several of them, especially the private sector utility providers are also responsible, under delegation contracts by municipalities, for other services such as waste water treatment, infrastructure maintenance, amongst other such services. The private sector water utility providers also play a major role in water innovation and technology development and are internationally prevalent.
Business organisation (umbrella) (e.g. Fédération Professionnelle des Entreprises de l’Eau (FP2E))	Industry	National	Industry associations representing the water sector

⁴¹ Eau sous tension : les Français face aux défis hydriques de leurs territoires, Institut Terram, March 2025. [Eau sous tension : les Français face aux défis hydriques de leurs territoires - Institut Terram](#)

⁴² L’eau sous tension, surtout l’été, Commissariat Général au Développement Durable, 2025. [L’eau sous tension, surtout l’été - notre-environnement](#)

⁴³ Plan d’action pour une gestion résiliente et concertée de l’eau, Ministère de la transition écologique de la biodiversité de la forêt de la mer et de la pêche, 2023. [Plan d’action pour une gestion résiliente et concertée de l’eau | Ministères Aménagement du territoire Transition écologique](#)

Stakeholder	Type	Scope	Relevance
Water-intensive industries (e.g. Danone, EDF, Tereos Group)	Private company	National / International	Businesses from sectors like energy, industry and agriculture are notable water users and influencers (lobbying).
Academic and research institutes, think tanks (e.g. CNRS, AFEID)	Academia and Research Institutes	National / International	Academic and research institutes and think tanks provide research and scientific guidance, supporting evidence-based policymaking.
NGOs and civil society organisations (e.g. French Water Partnership, ANEB)	NGO	National / International	Influences policy, public campaigns, and collaborates with companies.
International bodies (e.g. International Scheldt River Commission)	River Basin organisation	Regional / International	France relies on international river basin organisations which help to coordinate upstream-downstream cooperation on pollution control, water quality, and flood risk management across multiple countries.

2.11.3 Qualitative assessment of France's stakeholders

At the **national level**, the Ministry for Ecological Transition is central to policy development, enforcement, and implementation, supported by other ministries and the six Water Agencies. Regional DREALs enforce regulations and manage crises, while municipalities deliver water services and apply local water management plans. The water utility sector is predominantly managed by public operators, but private operators also play a significant role, depending on the type of service and local arrangements. Major private utility providers (i.e., Veolia, Suez) and public operators (i.e., Eau de Paris) are influential in-service delivery and policy consultation. Water-intensive industries, agriculture, and energy sectors shape policy through innovation and lobbying. Academic and research institutes, NGOs, and environmental organisations provide technical expertise, advocacy, and public engagement, collectively addressing drought, flood risk, water quality, and climate adaptation.

At the **EU level**, French stakeholders play a significant role in shaping and implementing EU water policy. The Ministry for Ecological Transition represents national priorities in EU negotiations and technical guideline development. Water Agencies and regional authorities contribute with data and expertise to EU policymaking and participate in EU-funded initiatives. Private utility companies (i.e., Veolia, Suez) are highly influential through lobbying and industry groups, and they are widely recognised for their technical expertise and large-scale service operations. Academic institutes (CNRS) contribute to EU research programmes on water management and sustainability, and their work often informs both national and transnational policy and innovation. NGOs and environmental organisations play a crucial role in raising awareness, campaigning for stronger water protection, and holding governments and companies accountable, but their influence at the EU level remains moderate due to limited formal decision-making power. Water-intensive industries impact EU policies via European associations, and international river basin organisations ensure France's interests in transboundary water management. At the EU and international level, the French Water Envoy represents France in major multilateral water governance forums, supports integration of water issues into EU and global agendas, and facilitates cooperation and knowledge exchange. Overall, France's governance is well-coordinated with EU goals, supporting integrated water policy, climate resilience, and sustainable development.

2.11.4 Observations and gaps

France's water governance is well-structured and multi-tiered, with strong coordination between national ministries, regional bodies such as DREALs, local authorities, water agencies, research

institutions, and civil society. While most key stakeholders are included in policy processes and there are ongoing efforts to improve integration and inclusiveness⁴⁴, some sectors and regions remain comparatively underrepresented. Large-scale agribusinesses tend to receive more financial support due to their size and pollution risks, whereas small-scale farmers, especially in less intensive or mountainous areas, often receive less targeted aid. Similarly, major cities benefit from greater investment in stormwater and wastewater infrastructure, while smaller towns and peri-urban areas may lack integrated management and face increased risks of local flooding and groundwater pollution. Rural groundwater, which supplies much of the drinking water, is often under-monitored.

Certain regions in the south, southeast, and the central and eastern Massifs are experiencing increasingly frequent droughts, with some areas reaching record-low river flows and groundwater levels. These trends are affecting both drinking water supply and agricultural output. In such cases, current policies may fall short in addressing structural imbalances in water use and access, highlighting the need for more preventive, equitable, and climate-resilient water governance.

⁴⁴ One such example includes the existence of platforms like the French Water Partnership, which serves as a multi-stakeholder advocacy network, which brings together public authorities, private sector, NGOs and research institutions to coordinate French expertise and represent diverse perspectives in international water discussions.

2.12 Germany

2.12.1 Brief overview of Germany's water governance

Germany's water management framework is primarily defined by the **Federal Water Act** (Wasserhaushaltsgesetz – WHG)⁴⁵, which sets the legal basis for sustainable water use, protection of water bodies, and compliance with EU directives. The Act regulates water abstraction, discharge, flood and drought risk management, and transposes the EU Water Framework Directive and Floods Directive into national law. It also provides for RBMPs and FRMPs. Complementing this, the **Drinking Water Ordinance** (Trinkwasserverordnung – TrinkwV)⁴⁶ ensures high-quality drinking water standards and incorporates risk-based protection. Strategic direction is provided by the **National Water Strategy**⁴⁷, which sets long-term goals for water resilience up to 2050, including preventing water scarcity, restoring semi-natural water regimes, improving infrastructure, and integrating water into climate adaptation policies. These instruments aim to maintain access to safe drinking water, achieve good ecological status for water bodies, and strengthen resilience to climate-related risks.

Water governance in Germany operates at three levels. At the central level, **the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection** (BMUV) sets national water policy and oversees compliance with EU directives, supported by the German Environment Agency (UBA) for monitoring and technical guidance. The **German Working Group on Water Issues of the Federal States and the Federal Government** (LAWA) coordinates implementation across Länder. At the regional level, the **16 Länder ministries** and environmental agencies prepare RBMPs and FRMPs, issue permits, and enforce water protection measures. At the local level, municipalities manage drinking water supply, sewerage, and wastewater treatment, typically through **municipal utilities**, and maintain smaller water bodies and sewer networks. Local authorities also handle emergency responses to floods and pollution incidents.⁴⁸

Germany faces several challenges in water management. **Diffuse nutrient pollution** from agriculture remains a major issue, particularly nitrates and phosphates affecting groundwater and surface waters. **Emerging contaminants**, such as microplastics and pharmaceuticals, pose growing risks to water quality. **Hydro-morphological pressures**, including river regulation and barriers, hinder ecological restoration and fish migration. Climate change exacerbates these problems by increasing the frequency of heatwaves and droughts, which strain water availability, and extreme rainfall events, which heighten **flood risks**. There is a need for improved agricultural practices, enhanced wastewater treatment, and greater use of nature-based solutions for water retention and flood protection.⁴⁹

⁴⁵ German [Law on the Order of the Water Balance](#)

⁴⁶ German [Ordinance on the Quality of Water Intended for Human Consumption](#)

⁴⁷ German [National Water Strategy 2023](#)

⁴⁸ European Committee of Regions (n.d.) [Water Management - Germany](#)

⁴⁹ European Commission (2025) [Environmental Implementation - Germany](#)

2.12.2 Stakeholder landscape

Table 2-11 – A high-level overview of the main water stakeholders in the German context

Stakeholder	Type	Scope	Relevance
Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection	Public authority	National	Central authority for national policy in its domain, with strong influence on water management and environmental standards. It leads to implementation of national laws and coordinates with regional authorities and stakeholders.
Working Group on Water Issues of the Federal States and the Federal Government	Public authority	National	Organisation where Germany's federal states and the federal government collaborate on water management and legislation. Its main goal is to discuss water-related questions, develop solutions, and make recommendations for implementation at both national and international levels. It also conducts and publishes water quality assessments to track changes and inform policy.
Regional Ministries	Public authority	Regional	Implementing water laws, flood management, and wastewater treatment standards in their respective regions (Laender).
Regional utility providers	Utility provider (public)	Regional	Providing water supply and wastewater services for the respective region.
Business organisations (umbrella) (e.g. German Association for Water, Wastewater and Waste)	Industry	National	Key technical and professional association setting standards and providing expertise for water and wastewater management in Germany.
Academic and research institutes (e.g. Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research, Research Institute for Water Management and Climate Future)	Academia and Research Institutes	National	Research institution providing scientific expertise and innovation in water management and climate adaptation.
NGOs and civil society organisations (e.g. WWF Germany, BUND, NABU)	NGO	National	Advocating for environmental protection and sustainable water management in Germany, engaging in national campaigns and policy consultations.

2.12.3 Qualitative assessment of Germany's stakeholders

Germany's **national** water governance is supported by a broad and highly structured set of stakeholder categories. Public authorities play a dominant role in policy development, environmental regulation, and implementation of EU directives, ensuring strong strategic leadership. Regional and local authorities are highly relevant for operational delivery and flood risk management, given Germany's federal governance model. Utility providers have significant influence in service provision and infrastructure management, with strong representation across municipalities. Sectoral organisations contribute to technical standards, coordination, and advocacy for water services. Research and academic institutions are deeply engaged in hydrology, water engineering, and climate adaptation, providing technical expertise and supporting innovation. NGOs are active in biodiversity protection, river restoration, and public awareness campaigns, with moderate influence on national policy. The private sector, including water-intensive industries and clean technology providers, participates in water efficiency and pollution control initiatives, though its strategic role remains limited. **Overall, Germany's national stakeholder landscape demonstrates strong institutional capacity and operational depth, with active contributions across public, academic, and civil society categories.**

At the **EU-level**, Germany's stakeholder engagement is led by national public authorities and research institutions, which actively participate in EU water policy forums, technical committees, and cross-border cooperation platforms. Sectoral organisations are members of European networks (e.g. EurEau, Water Europe or European Water Association) and contribute to regulatory discussions and compliance efforts. Academic and research bodies are involved in EU-funded projects, particularly in water quality, hydrology, and climate resilience. NGOs engage in EU conservation networks and advocacy campaigns, while private sector actors participate in sustainability and clean technology programmes. Utility providers comply with EU directives and are represented through umbrella organisations, but their direct influence on EU policymaking is limited. **Overall, Germany maintains a strong and visible presence in EU water governance through its institutional expertise, research engagement, and sectoral representation.**

2.12.4 Observations and gaps

Germany's water governance system is robust, with strong engagement from public authorities, research institutions, and sectoral organisations. However, several gaps remain across stakeholder categories. While national-level actors are highly integrated into both domestic and EU-level processes, regional and local utility providers have limited strategic influence and minimal direct involvement in EU policymaking. NGOs, although active in environmental advocacy and river restoration, often operate on a smaller scale and primarily contribute through project-based initiatives rather than formal policy development. The private sector, including water-intensive industries and clean technology providers, plays a role in compliance and innovation but remains underrepresented in strategic governance discussions. Consumer organisations and citizen engagement platforms show moderate relevance, with potential for stronger participation in shaping water policy and service delivery. These gaps highlight the need for improved multi-level coordination, greater inclusion of civil society and local actors, and more structured engagement of private and consumer sectors to ensure a more participatory and resilient water governance framework in Germany.

2.13 Greece

2.13.1 Brief overview of Greece's water governance

Greece's water policy has evolved from a fragmented, centrally managed system to an integrated, EU-aligned governance framework. The **1987 Water Law**⁵⁰ marked the first attempt at national coordination but was hampered by institutional fragmentation and weak enforcement. A major shift occurred with the adoption of the EU Water Framework Directive (WFD) in 2000, which was transposed into Greek law by **Law 3199/2003**,⁵¹ introducing river basin management, public participation, and ecological objectives as core principles. The **Presidential Decree 51/2007** further detailed WFD implementation by establishing monitoring and planning procedures.⁵²

Greece's water governance is structured around a centralised yet multi-level system, anchored by the **Ministry of Environment, Energy and Climate Change**, which leads on water policy, legislation, and the implementation of EU directives such as the Water Framework Directive (WFD). The **Special Secretariat for Water** within the ministry is responsible for national water strategy, river basin management plans (RBMPs), and compliance with EU requirements. Operational responsibilities are devolved to 14 **River Basin Authorities** (RBAs), which manage water resources, permitting, and planning at the basin level, and to **regional and local governments** that oversee infrastructure, service provision, and emergency response at the regional and local level. Other ministries involved include the Ministry of Rural Development and Food, who plays a key role in agricultural water use and irrigation policy, the Ministry of Health, who is responsible for drinking water quality and public health standards, the Ministry of Climate Crisis and Civil protection, who coordinates disaster risk management and emergencies, and the Ministry of Infrastructure and Transport who oversees water infrastructure related projects. Additionally, the **Regulatory Authority for Energy, Waste and Water (RAAEY)** acts as the independent regulator for water services, overseeing tariff-setting, licensing, and ensuring service quality and consumer protection.

Greece faces **critical challenges** in achieving full compliance with EU water legislation, particularly in urban wastewater treatment. Despite efforts to reorganise investment needs, significant delays persist, especially in eastern Attica, which have led to fines exceeding €184 million since 2014 for violations of EU norms. Meeting the ambitious requirements of the 2027 Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive, including expanding secondary and tertiary treatment to smaller agglomerations, will demand substantial infrastructure upgrades and timely project implementation. Annual financing needs for the water sector in Greece are estimated at €0.9 billion, as part of a broader €5.3 billion/year investment gap to align with EU environmental targets. **Priorities** thus include accelerating the rollout of wastewater treatment plants, ensuring sustained investment in water infrastructure, and strengthening governance mechanisms to avoid further financial penalties and safeguard public health and ecosystems.⁵³

⁵⁰ Kampa, E. & Bressers, H. (2008). Evolution of the Greek national regime for water resources. *Water Policy*, 10(5), 481–500. [Ecologic Institute](#)

⁵¹ Kallia, A. (2018). NATURA 2000 and Water Framework Directive - Implementation in Greece. [Environmental Prosecutors EU](#)

⁵² Ministry of Environment and Energy, Greece (n.d.). [Legislation](#).

⁵³ European Commission (2025). [Environmental Implementation Report – Greece](#).

2.13.2 Stakeholder landscape

Table 2-12 – A high-level overview of the main water stakeholders in Greece

Stakeholder	Type	Scope	Relevance
Ministry of Environment and Energy	Public authority	National	Central authority for water policy, which includes WFD and other EU water directives implementation and climate adaptation support.
Special Secretariat for Water	Public authority	National	Within the Ministry of Environment and Energy. Responsible for national water strategy, RBMPs, and EU compliance.
Ministry of Rural Development and Food	Public authority	National	Oversees agricultural water use, irrigation, and compliance with the Nitrates Directive.
Ministry of Health	Public authority	National	Responsible for drinking water quality and public health standards.
Ministry of Infrastructure and Transport	Public authority	National	Oversees water infrastructure, flood protection, and large-scale projects.
Ministry of Climate Crisis and Civil Protection	Public authority	National	Coordinates disaster risk management, flood and drought emergency response.
Regulatory Authority for Energy, Waste and Water (RAAEY)	Public authority	National	Evaluate and approve the water tariffs of major water service providers, thereby influencing water prices at the national level. Additionally, they are also involved in the assessment and certification of water service providers
Regional Governments (e.g., Central Macedonia, Thessaly, Crete, Attica, etc.)	Public authority	Regional	Coordinate regional water policy, planning, and implementation.
River Basin Authorities (e.g., Central Macedonia, Thessaly, Attica, Crete, etc.)	Public authority	Regional	Implement RBMPs, manage water resources, support water permitting and local water planning.
Municipalities	Public authority	Local	Over 300 municipalities manage local water infrastructure and planning, also own and operate water utilities.
Water utility providers (e.g. Athens Water Supply and Sewerage Company, Thessaloniki Water Supply and Sewerage Company)	Utility provider (public)	National	Manage water supply and wastewater treatment.
Greek Union of Municipal Enterprises for Water Supply and Sewerage	Industry	National	Represents municipal water utilities (DEYA), key for service provision and local policy.
Water-intensive industries (e.g. Agrovim, FAGE)	Private company	National	Agriculture is one of the most water intensive industries in Greece.
Academic and research institutes (e.g. Sanitary Engineering Laboratory, National University of Athens)	Academia and Research Institutes	National	Academic institutions focused on water research, technical expertise, and policy support.
NGOs (e.g. Watershed)	NGO	National / International	Delivering and improving water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) facilities, especially targeted at refugees.

2.13.3 Qualitative assessment of Greece's stakeholders

At the **national level**, Greece's water governance is shaped by a strong central authority, with the Ministry of Environment and Energy and the Special Secretariat for Water providing strategic leadership and ensuring compliance with EU directives. The Ministry of Rural Development and Food is highly influential in agricultural water use, while the Ministry of Health ensures public health standards. River Basin Authorities play a critical operational role, translating national policy into basin-level planning and permitting. The Regulatory Authority for Energy, Waste and Water (RAAEY) provides independent oversight of the water sector, setting tariffs, licensing operators, and monitoring service quality, thus ensuring transparency and consumer protection across the country. Municipal utilities, coordinated by the Greek Union of Municipal Enterprises for Water Supply and Sewerage, are central to service delivery and infrastructure management. Academic institutions and NGOs contribute with technical expertise, research, and advocacy, supporting evidence-based policy and public engagement. While coordination mechanisms are well established, challenges remain in integrating local and regional perspectives, especially in island and rural areas.

At the **EU level**, Greece is an active participant in water governance, with national ministries and technical agencies engaging in the implementation and negotiation of EU directives. The Special Secretariat for Water and River Basin Authorities contribute with technical expertise and compliance data to EU working groups and reporting processes. Academic institutions participate in EU-funded research and innovation projects, while sectoral associations and utilities are members of European networks such as EurEau and Water Europe. NGOs and research institutes contribute to EU environmental campaigns and technical consultations, ensuring Greek perspectives are represented in Brussels. However, the diversity of regional and local approaches can sometimes complicate the articulation of a unified Greek stance at the EU level.

2.13.4 Observations and gaps

Greece's water governance benefits from a comprehensive legal and institutional framework, strong technical capacity, and active stakeholder engagement at multiple levels. However, persistent challenges include fragmented responsibilities between national, regional, and basin authorities, uneven capacity and investment across regions, and the need for greater integration of climate adaptation and digitalisation. Water scarcity, drought, and water quality issues remain acute, particularly in southern and island regions. While public participation is well established, there is scope to further strengthen the involvement of local authorities, smaller utilities, and non-governmental actors in strategic planning and decision-making. At the EU level, Greece's engagement is strong but sometimes hampered by internal diversity, highlighting the importance of ongoing coordination and dialogue to ensure coherent representation and effective policy implementation.

2.14 Hungary

2.14.1 Brief overview of Hungary's water governance

Hungary's water management framework is primarily defined by **Act LVII of 1995 on Water Management**⁵⁴, which serves as the cornerstone of national water law. This Act regulates the use and conservation of water resources, sets conditions for water abstraction, pollution control, flood protection, and the maintenance of waterworks. It also establishes state ownership of major water bodies and infrastructure and provides for concession rights and water fund financing for public-interest works (Act LVII of 1995 on Water Management). Complementing this, **Act CCIX of 2011 on Water Public Utility Service** governs drinking water supply and wastewater services, ensuring affordability and sustainability of water utilities. Strategic direction is provided by the National Water Strategy⁵⁵ and the **National River Basin Management Plan**, which outline objectives for achieving good ecological status under the EU Water Framework Directive, improving water retention, and adapting to climate change impacts

Hungary's water governance operates at three levels. At the **central level, the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Agriculture** are responsible for national water policy, legislation, and strategic planning, including the preparation of River Basin Management Plans (RBMPs) and Flood Risk Management Plans (FRMPs), as well as coordinating international obligations under the Danube River Basin agreements. At the **regional level, Regional Water Directorates** implement national policies within their respective river basins, monitor water status, enforce regulations, and carry out flood protection and drought mitigation measures. At the **local level, municipal authorities** manage drinking water supply, sewerage systems, and municipal wastewater treatment, typically through publicly owned water utility companies under municipal contracts, and handle emergency responses to water-related incidents such as contamination or flooding.⁵⁶

Hungary faces several pressing challenges in water management. **Diffuse nutrient pollution from agriculture** remains a major problem, particularly in the Great Plain region, where intensive farming leads to high nitrogen and phosphorus loads in rivers and lakes, contributing to eutrophication. **Urban wastewater management** is another concern, as some smaller settlements still lack adequate treatment facilities, resulting in localized contamination of surface waters. **Hydro-morphological alterations**, such as river regulation, embankments, and artificial channels, have significantly **impacted natural habitats and disrupted fish migration routes**. Climate change compounds these issues by increasing the frequency and severity of **floods** (approx. 25% of Hungary lies on floodplains) and **droughts**, which threaten water availability for agriculture and ecosystems. These combined pressures make achieving “good ecological status” under the EU Water Framework Directive particularly challenging.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ Act No. LVII of 1995 on water management of Hungary

⁵⁵ [National Water Strategy 2017 of Hungary](#)

⁵⁶ Committee of the Regions. (n.d.). [Hungary – Water Management Overview](#)

⁵⁷ European Commission. (2025). [Environmental Implementation Review 2025 – Hungary](#)

2.14.2 Stakeholder landscape

Table 2-13 – A high-level overview of the main water stakeholders in the Hungarian context

Stakeholder	Type	Scope	Relevance
Ministry of Interior	Public authority	National	Oversees water utility regulation, flood protection, and emergency water management.
Ministry of Agriculture	Public authority	National	Responsible for irrigation, agricultural water use, and compliance with EU nitrates directive.
General Directorate of Water Management	Public authority	National	Central body for river basin management, flood control, and water infrastructure. Brings together the regional directorates of water management. Operates under the Ministry of Interior.
Regional Water Directorates	Public authority	Regional	Management of regional water resources, flood protection, and infrastructure maintenance.
Hungarian Consumer Protection Authority	Public authority	National	Ensures compliance with drinking water quality standards and consumer rights.
Water utility providers (e.g. Szeged Waterworks, Debrecen Waterworks)	Utility provider (public)	Regional	Management of drinking water and wastewater for different regions.
Business organisation (umbrella) (e.g. Hungarian Water Utility Association, Hungarian Water Association)	Industry	National	Professional networks representing water utilities, advocates for sectoral interests and EU compliance.
Water-intensive industries (e.g. MOL)	Private company	National	Major oil and gas company; significant water user in refining and petrochemical processes.
Academic and research institutes (e.g. Hungarian Hydrological Society, Hungarian Academy of Science)	Academia and Research Institutes	National	Scientific research into water resources, management, hydrology or climate adaptations.
NGOs and civil society organisations (e.g. WWF, Hungarian Ornithological and Nature Conservation Society)	NGO	National	Advocating for water ecosystem protection, conservation and restoration, including rivers, wetlands, etc.

2.14.3 Qualitative assessment of Hungary's stakeholders

Hungary's **national** water governance is supported by a broad and well-integrated set of stakeholder categories. Public authorities play a central role, particularly in policy development, infrastructure planning, and compliance with EU directives. Regional authorities and utility providers are highly relevant for operational delivery and flood protection, though their strategic influence is more limited. Sectoral organisations contribute to standard-setting and advocacy, while research and academic institutions provide strong support through technical expertise and innovation. NGOs are active in environmental protection and ecosystem restoration, with moderate relevance in shaping national water policy. The private sector, including water-intensive industries and clean technology providers, is present and increasingly engaged in water efficiency and pollution control. **Overall, stakeholder relevance is high across public, academic, and sectoral categories, with growing contributions from civil society and industry.**

At the **EU-level**, Hungary's stakeholder engagement is led by national public authorities and research institutions, which actively participate in EU water governance forums, technical committees, and innovation programmes. Sectoral organisations maintain strong visibility through European networks, contributing to regulatory discussions and compliance efforts. Academic and research bodies are well-

represented in EU-funded projects (e.g. DALIA or AdaptWater), particularly in water engineering and climate adaptation. NGOs contribute to EU biodiversity and conservation initiatives, while private sector actors engage in sustainability and clean technology programmes. Local utilities and regional actors have limited direct influence at the EU level, with their contributions primarily channelled through national or umbrella organisations (e.g. Hungarian Water Utility and Hungarian Water Association). **Overall, Hungary maintains a robust presence in EU water governance through its institutional expertise, sectoral representation, and research engagement.**

2.14.4 Observations and gaps

Hungary's water governance benefits from a comprehensive and well-structured stakeholder landscape, with strong engagement from public authorities, research institutions, and sectoral organisations. However, several gaps remain. While national-level institutions and academic actors are well integrated into both domestic and EU-level processes, regional and local utility providers tend to have limited strategic influence and minimal direct engagement in EU policymaking. NGOs, although active in environmental advocacy and conservation, often operate with constrained resources and have a relatively modest role in shaping national water policy. The private sector, including water-intensive industries and clean water technology providers, is present and participates in innovation and compliance efforts, but its involvement in strategic governance remains limited. Additionally, consumer organisations and citizen engagement platforms show moderate relevance, with potential for stronger participation in decision-making processes. These gaps suggest the need for enhanced multi-level coordination, broader inclusion of local and non-governmental actors, and more structured engagement of private and consumer sectors to ensure a more balanced and participatory water governance system in Hungary.

2.15 Ireland

2.15.1 Brief overview of Ireland's water governance

Ireland's water governance system is shaped by a suite of national strategies aligned closely with EU directives. The central strategic documents guiding national water policy include the River Basin Management Plan (RBMP) 2022–2027, which establishes measures to protect and restore water bodies, the National Water Resources Plan, which secures long-term drinking water supply, and the National Adaptation Framework, which sets out climate adaptation priorities related to flooding, drought, and coastal risk. Additional legislation, including the **Water Services Acts**⁵⁸, the **Environmental Protection Agency Act**⁵⁹, and the **Arterial Drainage Acts**⁶⁰, provides the legal basis for regulating water services, monitoring, pollution control, and flood risk management.

Ireland's institutional framework is characterised by a centralised yet coordinated governance model. The **Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH)** is the lead ministry responsible for water policy, WFD implementation, water services oversight, and coordination of the RBMP. The **Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)** plays a key regulatory and technical role, overseeing water quality monitoring, reporting, permitting, and enforcement. The operational management of drinking water and wastewater services lies with **Uisce Éireann (formerly Irish Water)**, a national public utility responsible for service delivery, infrastructure investment, and long-term planning. Local authorities implement certain environmental protection functions, enforce planning and agricultural regulations at local level, and collaborate with Uisce Éireann on connections, stormwater systems, and emergency response.

Ireland's key water management **challenges** include persistent water quality issues, especially diffuse agricultural nutrient pollution affecting rivers, lakes, and estuaries. The country faces significant compliance gaps under the Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive (UWWTD), particularly in agglomerations requiring upgraded wastewater treatment. Leakages and network inefficiencies remain a concern despite recent progress. Climate change is increasing the frequency of floods, droughts, and coastal erosion, placing pressure on infrastructure and water resources. Emerging contaminants (e.g., pharmaceuticals, pesticides, microplastics) and groundwater vulnerabilities present additional risks. Ireland's **priorities** therefore focus on reducing nutrient pollution, modernising wastewater treatment, improving water supply resilience, and accelerating climate adaptation in both urban and rural areas.

2.15.2 Stakeholder landscape

Table 2-14 – A high-level overview of the main water stakeholders in the Irish context

Stakeholder	Type	Scope	Relevance
Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH)	Public authority	National	Leads water policy, WFD implementation, RBMP coordination, and oversight of water services.
Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment (DCEE)	Public authority	National	Develops policies for adaptation to floods, droughts, and extreme weather.

⁵⁸ Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (2020). Water Services Legislation. [Here](#).

⁵⁹ Irish Statute Book (1992). Environmental Protection Agency Act, 1992. [Here](#).

⁶⁰ Irish Statute Book (1945). Arterial Drainage Act. [Here](#).

Stakeholder	Type	Scope	Relevance
Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM)	Public authority	National	Formulate policies to support the strategic development of the agri-food sector
Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)	Public authority	National	Operates independently under the Department of Climate, Energy, and the Environment. Regulates water quality, issues permits, conducts monitoring, enforces compliance, and reports to the EU.
Office of Public Works (OPW)	Public authority	National	Leads flood risk management, arterial drainage, and implementation of the Floods Directive.
Local authorities (e.g. Local Authority Waters Programme (LAWPRO))	Public authority	Regional / Local	Implement environmental enforcement, spatial planning, agricultural regulation, and stormwater management. Coordinates efforts to achieve good or high water quality in rivers, lakes, transitional and coastal waters, and groundwater.
Teagasc (Agriculture and Food Development Authority)	Public authority	National	Provides scientific research and advisory services on sustainable agriculture, nutrient management, and land use.
Commission for Regulation of Utilities (CRU)	Public authority	National	Independent economic regulator for energy and public water services (customer protection, connections, charges).
The Water Forum	Public authority	National	National statutory body representative of all stakeholders with an interest in the quality of Ireland's water resources. The Forum ensures diverse perspectives contributing meaningfully to policy development.
Cross-border public authority (e.g. Loughs Agency (Foyle & Carlingford), Waterways Ireland)	Public authority	International	Cross-border public authority established in 1999, funded by the Irish and Northern Irish governments. Coordinate water management and environmental protection between Ireland and Northern Ireland.
Uisce Éireann (Irish Water)	Utility provider (public and private)	National	Operates drinking water and wastewater services, manages infrastructure investment, and ensures UWWTD compliance.
Agricultural and farming associations (e.g. Irish Farmers' Association)	Industry	National	Influence nutrient policy, land management practices, and implementation of the Nitrates Directive.
Universities and research centres (e.g. Trinity, Marine Institute)	Academia and Research Institutes	National	Conduct research on water quality, hydrology, ecosystems, climate adaptation, and emerging pollutants.
Environmental NGOs (e.g. An Taisce)	NGO	National	Advocate for water protection, biodiversity, reduced pollution, and stronger enforcement of WFD measures.

2.15.3 Qualitative assessment of Ireland's stakeholders

At **national level**, Ireland's water governance is shaped primarily by a set of central public authorities. DHLGH, DCEE, DAFM, and the EPA are the most influential actors, as they lead national water policy, oversee WFD implementation, regulate environmental compliance, and define strategic priorities for

water protection, wastewater treatment, and flood risk. Their decisions' structure the overall policy framework within which all other stakeholders operate. Uisce Éireann holds a similarly high level of influence due to its responsibility for national water and wastewater service provision and its substantial investment programme. Its performance directly affects service quality, UWWTD compliance, and long-term water security.

Medium-impact stakeholders include local authorities, which enforce planning, agricultural, and environmental rules, though their capacity varies and leads to uneven implementation across regions. However, LAWPRO coordinates efforts of local authorities and other public bodies to achieve good or high-water quality in our rivers, lakes, transitional and coastal waters, and groundwater, helping to coordinate measures in areas of action. Universities provide key scientific and advisory input on agriculture, water quality, and climate impacts, shaping debates without holding regulatory authority. Agricultural organisations have strong influence on nutrient management and land-use policy due to their central role in Ireland's pollution challenges. Environmental NGOs engage through advocacy and consultations but have limited formal decision-making power. Private-sector actors, including industry and tourism, affect water use and local environmental pressures, though their role remains primarily focused on compliance and stakeholder engagement. However, stakeholders like The Water Forum ensure that diverse perspectives from stakeholders contribute meaningfully to policy development.

At **EU level**, Ireland's engagement is led principally by DHLGH, DCEE, DAFM, and the EPA, which represent the country in negotiating and implementing EU directives, reporting on water quality and compliance, and contributing to technical working groups under the WFD, UWWTD, and Floods Directive. The EPA is highly active in EU data platforms and expert groups, and its monitoring work informs EU assessments of environmental performance. Uisce Éireann contributes indirectly by meeting regulatory compliance obligations and participating in water governance networks, including the Commission for Regulation of Utilities (CRU) and the EPA. It must also comply with European legislation, such as the WFD, UWWTD, DWD, Birds and Habitats directives. In parallel, research institutions participate actively in Horizon Europe, LIFE, and Interreg projects, providing scientific input relevant to EU environmental policymaking. Agricultural organisations influence EU-level nutrient and land-use debates through European federations. NGOs contribute through European environmental networks advocating for stricter implementation of the WFD and stronger measures to protect freshwater and marine ecosystems.

2.15.4 Observations and gaps

Ireland's water governance system benefits from strong national institutions, a centralised utility structure, and a well-developed regulatory framework. However, persistent nutrient pollution, wastewater treatment gaps, and uneven local enforcement present significant challenges. Stakeholder engagement is robust at national level but less consistent across local authorities, and coordination across sectors remains difficult. At EU level, Ireland's engagement is strong but concentrated among a few national agencies, with limited participation by utilities and civil society. Strengthening cross-sector cooperation, enhancing local capacity, and accelerating investment in wastewater and agricultural measures will be critical for achieving long-term water quality and climate resilience goals.

2.16 Italy

2.16.1 Brief overview of Italy's water governance

Italy's water policy has evolved through several key legislative milestones. The pivotal **Law of 5 January 1994, No. 36 – Provisions on Water Resources or the Galli Law** reformed the highly fragmented water sector by consolidating local utilities into “Optimal Territorial Areas” and introducing integrated water service management, cost recovery, and regional coordination.^{61 62} This was followed by the adoption of the EU Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC), which was transposed into Italian law through **Legislative Decree No. 152/2006** (the “Environmental Code”), establishing river basin districts, ecological objectives, and comprehensive water protection measures. Furthermore, the Legislative Decree No. 152/2006 replaced the Galli Law, while maintaining its content and introducing principles of “efficiency, effectiveness and economy”.^{63 64 65 66} Additionally, reforms such as the **Decree 49/2010** (implementing the Floods Directive) and subsequent laws, completed the integration of EU directives and strengthened basin-level governance.⁶⁷

Building on this legislative foundation, Italy's current water governance operates on a decentralised, multi-level system anchored by the **Ministry of Ecological Transition (MITE/MASE)**, which sets national policy, oversees compliance with EU directives, and coordinates with regional and local authorities. The **Regulatory Authority for Energy, Networks and Environment (ARERA)** which is institutionally independent, regulates tariffs, service quality, and investment in the water sector. Operational management is largely delegated to **River Basin District Authorities**, which are responsible for river basin management plans, flood risk management, and coordination across regions. **Regions** play a key role in planning, financing, and implementing water policy, while **municipalities** and **inter-municipal utilities** are responsible for local water supply, wastewater treatment, and infrastructure. Water networks and facilities remain publicly owned, but management can be delegated to third-party operators. The sector is characterised by a mix of publicly owned and privately managed utilities, with large operators such as Acea S.p.A., Hera Group, Società Metropolitana Acque Torino S.p.A. (SMAT), Acquedotto Pugliese, Gruppo CAP, and Iren providing services across multiple regions under regulated contracts.

Italy faces persistent challenges related to **water scarcity**, particularly in the south and during summer months, exacerbated by climate change, droughts, and uneven rainfall. Outdated infrastructure leads to high water losses, with non-revenue water rates among the highest in Europe. Water quality is threatened by diffuse agricultural pollution, urban wastewater, and industrial discharges. Flood risk is increasing due to extreme weather events and land use changes. Key **priorities** include modernising infrastructure, reducing water losses, improving wastewater treatment, strengthening resilience to droughts and floods, and ensuring compliance with EU directives such as the Water Framework Directive (WFD) and Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive (UWWTD). There is also a focus on integrating climate adaptation, digitalisation, and circular economy principles into water management, as well as enhancing stakeholder participation and governance efficiency.⁶⁸

⁶¹ Act No. 36 on Water Resources, 1994 (Galli). [InforMEA](#)

⁶² Galli G. (2005). The law of 5 January 1994 n. 36: foundations of the reform of water services in Italy. [CIHEAM](#)

⁶³ Legislative Decree No. 152/2006 approving the Code on the Environment. [ECOLEX](#)

⁶⁴ DECRETO LEGISLATIVO 3 aprile 2006, n. 152 - Normattiva. [Normattiva](#)

⁶⁵ The transposition of Directives 2000/60/EC (WFD) and 2007/60/EC (FRD) into the Italian legal and institutional framework. [ISPRA](#)

⁶⁶ Allegri Ecologia (n.d.). [Servizio Idrico Integrato in Italia | Allegri Ecologia](#)

⁶⁷ Water Governance in Italy: From Fragmentation to Coherence Through Coordination Attempts. [Springer](#)

⁶⁸ European Commission. (2025). [Environmental Implementation Review 2025 – Italy](#).

2.16.2 Stakeholder landscape

Table 2-15 – A high-level overview of the main water stakeholders in Italy

Stakeholder	Type	Scope	Relevance
Ministry of Ecological Transition (MITE/MASE)	Public authority	National	Sets national water policy, oversees EU compliance, and coordinates with regions.
Regulatory Authority for Energy, Networks and Environment (ARERA)	Public authority	National	Independent public authority that regulates tariffs, service quality, and investment in the water sector. It also advises government and Parliament in these areas.
River Basin District Authorities (e.g., Po, Eastern Alps, Central Apennines)	Public authority	Regional	Responsible for river basin management plans, flood risk management plans, and coordination across regions.
Regional governments	Public authority	Regional	Prepare and adopt regional water protection plans and integrate water policy into regional and environmental territorial planning. They also manage regional funding for water infrastructure.
Municipalities	Public authority	Local	Manage local water supply, wastewater, and infrastructure; often own utilities.
Water utility providers (e.g. Acea S.p.A., Hera Group, Acquedotto Pugliese)	Utility service provider (public and private) ⁶⁹	Local / Regional	Mix of public and private water utility providers covering a range of services including water supply, wastewater collection and treatment, desalination, stormwater management etc.
Water-intensive industries (e.g. Barilla Group, Eni S.p.A)	Private company	National	Agriculture, food and beverage and the energy production sectors are amongst the most water intensive sectors.
Academia and research institutes (e.g. Fondazione Eni Enrico Mattei -FEEM-, CIMA Research Foundation)	Academia and Research Institutes	National	Provide expertise on hydrology, drought, water cycle modelling, water economics, policy instruments, amongst other such subjects.
NGOs and civil society groups (e.g. Italian Forum of Water Movements/Forum Italiano dei Movimenti per l'Acqua)	NGO	Local / National	Advocate for water as a common good, public participation and stronger implementation of water protection measures.

⁶⁹ Note that water networks and facilities remain publicly owned, but management can be delegated to third-party/private operators.

2.16.3 Qualitative assessment of the Italy's stakeholders

At the **national level**, Italy's water governance is shaped by a complex interplay between central, regional, and local authorities. The Ministry of Ecological Transition provides strategic leadership and ensures compliance with EU directives, while ARERA defines the national tariff methodology for the Integrated Water Service, approves tariffs proposed, develops performance indicators for service quality and regulates tariff updates, thereby driving investment and efficiency. River Basin District Authorities play a pivotal role in integrated water management, coordinating planning and risk management across regions. Regions and municipalities are responsible for implementation, with a diverse landscape of public and private utilities delivering water and wastewater services. Research institutions and NGOs contribute with technical expertise, innovation, and advocacy, supporting evidence-based policy and public engagement. However, fragmentation of responsibilities, uneven investment, and varying capacity across regions and utilities present ongoing challenges to effective governance and service delivery.

At the **EU level**, Italy is an active participant in water governance, with national ministries, ARERA, and technical agencies engaging in the implementation and negotiation of EU directives. River Basin District Authorities and utilities contribute with technical expertise and compliance data to EU working groups and reporting processes. Italian research institutions participate in EU-funded projects (e.g. AG-WaMED, JustWATER), while sectoral associations and utilities are members of European networks such as EurEau and Water Europe. NGOs and advocacy groups contribute to EU environmental campaigns and technical consultations, ensuring Italian perspectives are represented in Brussels.

2.16.4 Observations and gaps

Italy's water governance benefits from a comprehensive legal and institutional framework, strong technical capacity, and active stakeholder engagement at multiple levels. However, persistent challenges remain. Italy faces significant issues with **fragmentation of responsibilities**, which leads to inefficiencies and delays in decision-making and investment. The high number of utilities and the coexistence of public and private operators result in uneven service quality and investment levels across regions. **Water losses** due to ageing infrastructure are among the highest in Europe, and there is a need for substantial investment in modernisation and digitalisation. **Climate change** is increasing the frequency and severity of droughts and floods, highlighting the need for integrated risk management and adaptation strategies. While public participation and stakeholder engagement are well established, there is scope to further strengthen coordination between national, regional, and local actors, and to enhance the role of research and innovation in addressing emerging challenges.⁶⁸

2.17 Latvia

2.17.1 Brief overview of Latvia's water governance

Latvia's water governance framework is based on the **Water Management Law**⁷⁰, which aligns with the EU Water Framework Directive (WFD) and defines and enforces river basin planning, environmental objectives, monitoring, and programmes of measures for environmental protection. The Law mandates the preparation and regular updating of River Basin Management Plans (RBMPs) for each river basin district, approved by the Minister for Environmental Protection and Regional Development. These plans provide the strategic backbone for improving ecological and chemical status, mitigating flood risks, and coordinating investments in water infrastructure. Latvia also implements the Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive, Nitrates Directive and other sectoral EU legislation through specific regulations and national programmes (i.e. Water Management Law, Cabinet Regulation No. 34 (2002)⁷¹, Cabinet Regulation No. 834 (2015)⁷²), that target wastewater treatment, diffuse pollution and hydromorphological pressures.

The **Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development (MEPRD)** is the central authority for water policy, legislation, and EU-level coordination. It oversees implementation of the Water Management Law, approves RBMPs and FRMPs, ensures consistency with spatial planning and climate policy, and leads international cooperation in transboundary basins. Operating under MEPRD, the **Latvian Environment, Geology and Meteorology Centre (LVGMC)** acts as the key technical and implementing body, responsible for surface and groundwater monitoring, pressure and impact analysis, economic analysis, and preparation of river basin plans and programmes of measures. Established in 2023, the **Ministry of Climate and Energy (MCE)** centralizes climate and energy policies and oversees climate neutrality, renewable energy transition, and energy security. The **State Environmental Service (SES)**, a state institution operating under MEPRD, handles environmental inspections, permitting and enforcement of water-related regulations. Municipalities and municipal utilities are responsible for drinking water supply, wastewater collection and treatment, and local stormwater management, while the national regulator, the **Public Utilities Commission (PUC)**, regulates tariffs and service quality in the water sector.

Latvia's main **challenges** relate to the ecological status of water bodies and the implementation of RBMP measures. A significant share of surface waters remains "at risk", particularly due to nutrient and organic pollution from agriculture, forestry and urban wastewater, as well as hydromorphological alterations linked to drainage systems and river regulation. Climate change is expected to intensify flood risks, alter runoff regimes and affect water quality, requiring better integration of flood risk management, land drainage and nature-based solutions. Further **priorities** include improving wastewater treatment in smaller agglomerations, reducing nutrient loads to the Baltic Sea, strengthening monitoring systems and data, and ensuring adequate capacity and financing for local-level implementation.

⁷⁰ State Language Centre (2020). Water Management Law (with amendments to 21.05.2020). Available [here](#).

⁷¹ State Language Centre (2022). Cab. Reg. No. 34 - Regulations Regarding Discharge of Polluting Substances into Water (with amendments to 19.02.2013.). Available [here](#).

⁷² State Language Centre (2022). Cab. Reg. No. 834 - Requirements Regarding the Protection of Water, Soil and Air from Pollution Caused by Agricultural Activity (with amendments to 09.10.2018.) Available [here](#).

2.17.2 Stakeholder landscape

Table 2-16 – A high-level overview of the main water stakeholders in the Latvian context

Stakeholder	Type	Scope	Relevance
Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development (MEPRD)	Public authority	National	Lead ministry for water policy, WFD and Floods Directive implementation, approval of RBMPs/FRMPs, coordination of measures and international river basin cooperation.
Ministry of Climate and Energy (MCE)	Public authority	National	Leading institution in the management of climate and energy policy areas.
Latvian Environment, Geology and Meteorology Centre (LVGMC)	Public authority	National	Operates under the MEPRD. Main body for water monitoring, status assessment, pressure and impact analysis, economic analysis, and preparation of RBMPs and Flood Risk management plans.
State Environmental Service (SES)	Public authority	National	Operates under the MEPRD. Conducts environmental inspections, issues and controls permits and enforces compliance with water and environmental legislation.
Public Utilities Commission (PUC)	Public authority	National	Regulates tariffs and service quality for water supply and wastewater utilities; supervises performance of service providers.
River basin district authorities (e.g. Daugava, Gauja, Lielupe, Venta)	Public authority	Regional	Frameworks for RBMP implementation and coordination of measures at basin scale, supported and led by LVGMC.
Municipal water utilities (e.g. Rīgas Ūdens)	Utility provider (public)	Local	Provide drinking water, wastewater collection and treatment, stormwater management and local infrastructure; key for on-the-ground implementation of measures.
Water associations (e.g. Latvian Water and Wastewater Works Association)	Industry	National	Represents water and wastewater service providers, supports capacity building and exchange of good practices in water services.
Research institutions (e.g. University of Latvia)	Academia and Research Institutes	National	Provide expertise on aquatic ecology, status assessment and impacts, and contribute to WFD reporting and method development.
Environmental NGOs and civil society groups (e.g. Latvian Fund for Nature, Baltic Environmental Forum)	NGO	National	Advocate for water and habitat protection, public participation and stronger implementation of river basin measures.
Transboundary bodies (e.g. HELCOM)	International organisations	Regional / International	Coordinate Baltic Sea protection, nutrient reduction and transboundary water issues relevant to Latvia's coastal and marine waters.

2.17.3 Qualitative assessment of the Latvia's stakeholders

At the **national level**, Latvia's water governance is dominated by several high-impact public bodies: MEPRD, MCE, LVGMC, SES, and PUC. At the apex of Latvia's water governance system are the ministries responsible for strategic direction and political accountability (MEPRD, MCE). MEPRD sets strategic policy direction, aligns national goals with EU requirements, and approves river basin and flood risk management plans, giving it significant influence over priority setting. MCE complements this role by shaping policies related to climate change mitigation and adaptation, renewable energy, and energy efficiency, which increasingly intersect with water governance through hydropower regulation, climate resilience planning, and adaptation measures affecting water resources. LVGMC, reporting to the MEPRD, holds substantial operational and technical authority due to its central role in monitoring, modelling, status assessment, and preparation of RBMPs; its scientific and analytical capacity makes it indispensable to all planning and reporting processes. LVGMC supplies SES and PUC with information used by both bodies. SES, operating under MCE, provides the enforcement mechanism that underpins compliance, controlling pollution permits and carrying out inspections, and therefore has major regulatory impact. Acting as an independent regulator to large water management company, the PUC also has system-wide influence in the regulated water services sector, shaping tariffs, service standards, and investment conditions.

Municipalities and their water utilities exert medium-to-high impact because they operate drinking water and wastewater systems, implement infrastructure measures, and are directly responsible for meeting service-level and environmental standards. However, their capacity and performance vary across regions. Research institutions contribute to monitoring, method development, and ecological expertise, influencing policy indirectly through science and evidence. Environmental NGOs and civil society groups have lower formal decision-making power but contribute to public debate, policy consultations, and calls for stronger protection of freshwater and marine ecosystems, such as NGOs in the Baltic, including WWF Latvia, or *Pasaules Dabas Fonds*, calling for EU decision-makers to urgently agree on a Baltic Sea Recovery Plan “that includes adopting precautionary limits that restore and maintain resilient fish populations amid the ecosystem and climate crisis”⁷³. Agricultural and forestry organisations play a significant but sector-specific role, shaping land-use practices, nutrient runoff, and drainage decisions that have major impacts on water status, even if they are less integrated into core water governance structures.

At **EU level**, Latvia's engagement is channelled primarily through MEPRD and LVGMC, which represent the country in WFD and Floods Directive working groups, submit monitoring and compliance reports, and participate in EU technical committees. Their contributions are essential to reporting, data collection, and the development of EU-wide implementation tools. SES contributes indirectly through enforcement-related reporting, while PUC engages in regulatory networks relevant to water services. Research institutions participate in EU-funded projects and provide scientific input on ecological status and modelling. NGOs take part in European environmental coalitions or programmes (i.e. Climate Action Network Europe, Coalition Clean Baltic, EU LIFE programmes) but with more limited influence. Latvia is also an active participant in HELCOM, where national authorities and experts contribute to Baltic Sea action plans, nutrient reduction targets, and regional assessments that feed into EU marine environmental policy.

⁷³ WWF Baltic (2025). NGOs to EU decision makers: commit to a genuine Baltic Sea recovery plan. Available [here](#).

2.17.4 Observations and gaps

Latvia's water governance system benefits from strong national authorities, clear institutional responsibilities, and a technically capable central agency in LVGMC. However, significant implementation gaps remain, particularly regarding diffuse pollution from agriculture and land drainage, the ecological status of rivers and lakes, and compliance with EU wastewater requirements in smaller settlements. Local capacities are uneven, and municipalities often face resource constraints in implementing RBMP measures. Stakeholder engagement remains concentrated among central authorities, with limited structured involvement of smaller utilities, private land managers, and civil society. At EU level, Latvia's presence is consistent but reliant on a small group of national actors, which narrows the diversity of inputs into EU-level decision-making. Addressing these gaps will require stronger cross-sector coordination, enhanced municipal capacity, and deeper engagement of non-state stakeholders in the planning and implementation of water measures.

2.18 Lithuania

2.18.1.1 Brief overview of the Lithuania's water governance

Since its independence, Lithuania has transitioned from a Soviet-era water management model, rooted in centralised monitoring and pollution control from the 1950s, towards a comprehensive, EU-aligned governance framework. Under Soviet rule, surface water-quality monitoring began in the 1950s, statutory discharge controls from 1962 and wastewater standards were introduced in 1957 and 1966.⁷⁴ Following independence in 1991, Lithuania enacted its foundational **Law on Water** (1997/1999), which formalised ownership, sustainable use, and protection of surface and groundwater.⁷⁵ This was reinforced in 2006 by the **Law on Drinking Water Supply and Waste-Water Management**, defining state regulation of water services, ensuring consumer rights, and clarifying roles for the Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Health, municipalities, and regulators.⁷⁶ With EU accession came implementation of the Water Framework Directive through national River Basin Management Plans, though challenges remain in meeting ecological and chemical water status goals.⁷⁷

Lithuania's water governance is anchored in a centralised yet multi-actor framework, with the **Ministry of Environment** as the lead authority responsible for water policy, resource protection, sustainable use, and coordination with other ministries. Other relevant bodies that operate within the structure of the Ministry of Environment include the Environmental Protection Agency, Environmental Protection Department and the Lithuanian Geological Survey. The **Environmental Protection Agency** plays a crucial role in river basin management planning, monitoring, and reporting, ensuring compliance with the EU Water Framework Directive (WFD). The **Environmental Protection Department** enforces water pollution control and compliance, while the **Lithuanian Geological Survey** manages groundwater monitoring and supports EU obligations on groundwater bodies. The **Ministry of Agriculture** is a key actor due to the significant impact of agricultural runoff on water quality. They work closely with environmental authorities to design measures to prevent water pollution. **Municipalities** are responsible for organising water supply and wastewater treatment services, often through municipally owned utilities. The **National Energy Regulatory Council** regulates tariffs and licenses utilities, ensuring financial sustainability and alignment with EU standards. This institutional setup is complemented by coordination councils that facilitate cross-sectoral dialogue and policy alignment.

Lithuania faces several persistent **challenges** in water management. Diffuse pollution from agriculture, notably nutrients and pesticides remain a major issue, affecting both surface and groundwater quality. The country also contends with insufficient wastewater treatment infrastructure, particularly in smaller settlements, which hampers compliance with the Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive (UWWTD). Hydro morphological alterations (e.g., river regulation, drainage) and the loss of wetlands have degraded aquatic ecosystems and reduced resilience to floods and droughts. Climate change is intensifying these pressures, increasing the frequency of extreme weather events and impacting water availability. Key **priorities** include improving wastewater treatment coverage, reducing nutrient loads, restoring wetlands and river continuity, modernising water infrastructure, and strengthening cross-sectoral coordination,

⁷⁴ A. Cetkauskaitė, D. Zarkov & L. Stoskus, *Water-Quality Control, Monitoring and Wastewater Treatment in Lithuania 1950 to 1999*, 30 *Ambio* 297–305 (2001).

⁷⁵ Republic of Lithuania, *Law on Water*, Oct 21 1997 (amended 1999), No. VIII-474. [cawater-info.net], [leap.unep.org]

⁷⁶ Republic of Lithuania, *Law on Drinking Water Supply and Waste Water Management*, July 13 2006, No. X-764.

⁷⁷ European Commission, *Water Wise EU – Lithuania* (noting ongoing ecological pressure), and WFD implementation via River Basin Management Plans.

especially between agriculture and environmental authorities to achieve good ecological status under the WFD and ensure long-term water security.⁷⁸

2.18.2 Stakeholder landscape

Table 2-17 – A high-level overview of the main water stakeholders in the Lithuanian context

Stakeholder	Type	Scope	Relevance
Ministry of Environment	Public authority	National	Lead authority for water management, policy, and EU directive implementation.
Environmental Protection Agency	Public authority	National	Competent authority for water monitoring, RBMP preparation, and EU reporting.
Environmental Protection Department	Public authority	National	Enforcement authority for water pollution control and compliance.
Lithuanian Geological Survey	Public authority/Technical body	National	Manages groundwater monitoring and supports EU obligations on groundwater bodies.
Ministry of Agriculture	Public authority	National	Responsible for the implementation of the Nitrates Directive.
National Energy Regulatory Council (NERC)	Public authority	National	Regulates tariffs, licenses utilities, ensures financial sustainability and EU compliance.
State Service for Protected Areas	Public authority	National	Manages protected waterbodies, integrates conservation into water planning.
Coordination Councils	Public authority	National	They function as policy-dialogue forums, helping set targets (e.g., for infrastructure, sanitation) and monitoring progress.
Municipalities	Public authority	Local	The municipalities (local governments) are primarily responsible for organising water supply and wastewater treatment services.
Water utility providers (e.g. UAB Kauno Vandenyys (Kaunas Water Utility), UAB Šiaulių Vandenyys (Šiauliai Water Utility))	Utility providers (public)	National	Provide water supply and wastewater collection and treatment services.
Water intensive industries (e.g. Ignitis Gamyba)	Private company	National	Energy companies have the most highly water intensive operations required for aspects, such as cooling systems.
Academic and research institutes, think tanks (e.g. State Research Institute, The Nature Research Centre)	Academia and Research Institutes	National	Conducts waterbody monitoring and hydrological research.
NGO (e.g. Environmental Centre for Administration and Technology (ECAT-Lithuania))	NGO	National	Works on water pollution, water quality conservation, and capacity building efforts.

2.18.3 Qualitative assessment of the Lithuania’s stakeholders

At the **national level**, Lithuania’s water governance benefits from a strong central authority in the Ministry of Environment, supported by specialised agencies for monitoring, enforcement, and groundwater management. The Environmental Protection Agency is mainly responsible for environmental monitoring, data collection, assessments and scientific tasks, whereas the Environment Protection Department is the regulatory and enforcement body, enforcing laws, and processing

⁷⁸ European Commission (2025). [Environmental Implementation Review 2025 – Lithuania](#).

complaints. The Ministry of Agriculture's involvement is critical for addressing diffuse pollution from farming. Municipalities and their utilities are essential for service delivery, but their capacity and performance vary, particularly in smaller or rural areas. The regulatory framework is well-aligned with EU directives, and coordination councils help bridge sectoral divides. However, challenges persist in ensuring consistent implementation, especially regarding nutrient management, infrastructure modernisation, and the integration of environmental and agricultural policies.

Lithuania's engagement at the **EU level** is led by the Ministry of Environment and the Environmental Protection Agency, which represent the country in WFD, UWWTD, and other water directive-related negotiations and reporting. These bodies provide technical input and compliance data, ensuring Lithuania's alignment with EU water policy. The Lithuanian Geological Survey and State Service for Protected Areas contribute to EU-level monitoring and conservation efforts, particularly regarding groundwater and Natura 2000 sites. Utilities and research institutes participate in EU-funded projects (e.g. EIB funded Vilnius Water and Sanitation II, LIFE programme funded project LIFE SIP Water), sharing best practices and innovation. While national authorities are well-integrated into EU processes, local actors and smaller utilities have limited direct influence, highlighting the need for broader stakeholder engagement in EU water governance.

2.18.4 Observations and gaps

Lithuania's water governance is institutionally robust, with clear mandates and strong technical capacity at the national level. The system is effective in policy development, monitoring, and compliance with EU directives. However, significant gaps remain in addressing diffuse agricultural pollution, modernising wastewater infrastructure, and ensuring consistent capacity across municipalities. Stakeholder engagement is concentrated among central authorities, with limited structured involvement of local actors, private sector, and civil society. Strengthening cross-sectoral coordination, enhancing local implementation capacity, and broadening stakeholder participation, especially from non-state actors and smaller utilities will be essential for Lithuania to achieve its long-term water quality and resilience objectives.

2.19 Luxembourg

2.19.1 Brief overview of the Luxembourg's water governance

Luxembourg's water management framework is primarily defined by the **Law of 19 December 2008 on Water**, as amended by the **Law of 23 December 2022 on the quality of water intended for human consumption**. These laws regulate water protection, drinking water standards, wastewater treatment, and prohibit the privatization of drinking water services. They also establish municipal responsibility for water distribution and set strict quality norms based on EU standards. Strategic direction is provided by the Integrated **National Energy and Climate Plan 2021–2030**⁷⁹, which includes measures for sustainable water use and adaptation to climate risks. This, and other relevant instruments, aim to ensure safe drinking water, improve ecological status of water bodies, and strengthen resilience to floods and droughts.

Water governance in Luxembourg operates at three levels. At the central level, the **Ministry of Environment, Climate and Sustainable Development** sets national water policy and oversees compliance with EU directives, supported by the **Water Management Agency**, which monitors water quality, prepares River Basin Management Plans and Flood Risk Management Plans and coordinates public participation. At the regional level, Luxembourg's 12 cantons and **inter-municipal syndicates** (e.g., SEBES) manage shared infrastructure and implement regional measures. At the local level, **municipalities** are responsible for drinking water supply, sewerage, and wastewater treatment, and issue abstraction and discharge permits. They also play a key role in emergency responses, supported by crisis coordination mechanisms under the High Commission for National Protection.⁸⁰

Luxembourg faces several challenges in water management. **Diffuse agricultural pollution**, particularly nitrates from fertilizers and slurry, continues to affect groundwater quality, while pesticide residues and emerging contaminants (e.g., PFAS) pose risks to surface water. **Hydro-morphological pressures**, such as river channelization and artificial barriers, limit ecological restoration and fish migration. Climate change is increasing the frequency of **summer droughts and urban flood risks**, requiring enhanced water retention and nature-based solutions. Many surface and groundwater bodies still fail to achieve good ecological and chemical status under the EU Water Framework Directive, and highlights **biodiversity loss linked to soil sealing and intensive land use** as a critical concern.⁸¹

2.19.2 Stakeholder landscape

Table 2-18 – A high-level overview of the main water stakeholders in the Luxembourgish context

Stakeholder	Type	Scope	Relevance
Ministry of the Environment, Climate and Biodiversity	Public authority	National	Responsible for implementing government programs on sustainable development, protecting the environment, and combating climate change. It oversees the Environment Agency (AEV), the Nature and Forest Agency (ANF), and the Water Management Agency (AGE), and coordinates with municipalities on environmental issues. Its responsibilities include air and water quality,

⁷⁹ [Luxembourg's integrated national energy and climate plan for the period 2021-2030](#)

⁸⁰ European Committee of Regions (n.d.) [Luxembourg – Water Management](#)

⁸¹ European Commission (2025) [Environmental Implementation Review 2025 - Luxembourg](#)

Stakeholder	Type	Scope	Relevance
			waste management, biodiversity, natural resources, and energy efficiency.
Water Management Agency (AGE)	Public authority	National	Ensuring the sustainable and integrated management of water resources in Luxembourg. Its responsibilities include overseeing the supply of drinking water, monitoring and protecting surface and groundwater, managing flood risks, and coordinating wastewater treatment planning. The agency also handles accidental water pollution incidents and represents Luxembourg in international river commissions.
Luxembourg Environment Agency	Public authority	National	Implements water protection measures and EU directives; strong operational and regulatory role.
Inter-municipal syndicates (e.g. Syndicat des Eaux du Barrage d'Esch-sur-Sûre (SEBES))	Utility provider (public)	Regional	Responsible for the drinking water supply in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg. It provides 90% of the Luxembourg population with drinking water.
Utility provider association (e.g. Federation of Luxembourgish Water Utilities)	Industry	National	Representing water utilities and coordinating sectoral standards and interests.
Water-intensive industries (e.g. ArcelorMittal)	Private company	National	Large steel producer, heavily reliant on water.
Clean technology providers (e.g. LiCA Technology)	Private company	National	Clean technology providers (water purification, energy efficiency, agricultural, industrial sectors)
Research & academia (e.g. Luxembourg Institute of Science and Technology)	Academia and Research Institutes	National	Key research actor in hydrology and climate adaptation; contributes to water innovation projects.
NGOs (e.g. Natur&ëmwelt, Fondation Hëllef fir d'Natur)	NGO	National	Working to safeguard biodiversity in a varied natural and cultural landscape, through awareness, advice, practical, scientific and political actions at the local, national and international level.

2.19.3 Qualitative assessment of the Luxembourg's stakeholders

Luxembourg's **national** water governance is supported by a compact but well-coordinated set of stakeholder categories. Public authorities play a central role in policy development, environmental regulation, and water resource management, with high relevance across strategic and operational functions. Utility providers are essential for service delivery and infrastructure, particularly in drinking water supply and wastewater treatment. Sectoral organisations contribute to standard-setting and coordination across water services. Research and academic institutions are active in hydrology, wastewater treatment, and climate adaptation, supporting innovation and technical expertise. NGOs are engaged in biodiversity protection and wetland restoration, with moderate influence on national policy. Consumer organisations and civil protection bodies contribute to water access, disaster preparedness, and public awareness, though their strategic impact is more limited. **Overall, Luxembourg's national stakeholder landscape demonstrates strong institutional capacity and technical depth, with balanced contributions across public, academic, and civil society categories.**

At the EU-level, Luxembourg's stakeholder engagement is led by national public authorities and research institutions, which actively participate in EU water policy forums and technical working

groups. Sectoral organisations are members of European networks, contributing to regulatory discussions and compliance efforts. Academic and research bodies are involved in EU-funded projects (e.g. Interreg projects (EmiSure and CoMinGreat⁸²), particularly in climate-water innovation. NGOs engage in EU conservation networks and advocacy campaigns (e.g. natur&ëmwelt's *Ban Lead Now* campaign has reached significant milestones with 30,000 people in Europe expressing support for ban on lead ammunition and in fishing weights⁸³), while consumer organisations contribute to EU-level transparency and quality standards. Utility providers comply with EU directives but have limited direct influence beyond national operations. **Overall, Luxembourg maintains a visible presence in EU water governance through its institutional expertise, research engagement, and sectoral representation.**

2.19.4 Observations and gaps

Luxembourg's water governance benefits from strong institutional leadership and technical expertise, particularly among public authorities, research institutions, and utility providers. However, several gaps are evident across stakeholder categories. While national authorities and academic actors are well integrated into both domestic and EU-level processes, local utility providers and consumer organisations show limited strategic influence and minimal direct engagement in EU policymaking. NGOs, though active in wetland protection and biodiversity, operate on a smaller scale and primarily contribute through project-based advocacy rather than formal policy shaping. The private sector, including water-intensive industries and clean technology providers, is present and relevant for industrial water use and innovation, but its involvement in governance remains largely operational. Additionally, citizen engagement platforms and disaster risk bodies have moderate relevance, with potential for stronger integration into strategic planning and climate adaptation efforts. These gaps suggest the need for enhanced coordination across governance levels, broader inclusion of civil society and local actors, and more structured engagement of private and consumer sectors to support a more participatory and resilient water governance system in Luxembourg.

⁸² University of Luxembourg (n.d.) Research project GreyReUse. <https://www.uni.lu/fstm-en/research-projects/greyreuse/>

⁸³ Chronicle.lu (2025). 600 Signatures in Luxembourg to Ban Lead Now Campaign. Available [here](#).

2.20 Malta

2.20.1 Brief overview of Malta's water governance

Malta's modern legal framework for water governance was formally established with the **Water Services Corporation Act (Act XXIII of 1991)**, setting up the Water Services Corporation to manage water supply, groundwater abstraction, desalination, wastewater treatment and sewage reuse.⁸⁴ In 2004, Malta transposed the EU Water Framework Directive through the **Water Policy Framework Regulations (L.N. 194/2004)**,⁸⁵ delineating river catchments and mandating ecological status monitoring, water management plans and pollution controls, which was later amended by the **Regulator for Energy and Water Services Act (2015)**,⁸⁶ strengthening regulatory oversight.

Malta's water governance is anchored in a centralised, multi-agency framework led by the **Ministry for the Environment, Energy and Regeneration (MEER)**, which sets national water policy and coordinates with the **Energy & Water Agency (EWA)** and the **Environment & Resources Authority (ERA)**. The EWA is responsible for implementing the EU Water Framework Directive, including the River Basin Management Plan (RBMP), Flood Risk Management Plan (FRMP), and projects such as desalination, treated wastewater reuse, and rainwater harvesting. They function as a government agency operating under the MEER. The ERA regulates environmental impacts, monitors water quality, and enforces water-policy instruments, including licensing and environmental assessments. While the ERA operates within Malta's national institutional framework, its statutory structure⁸⁷ provides a degree of functional autonomy in the exercise of its regulatory powers. The **Regulator for Energy & Water Services (REWS)** supervises water tariffs, licensing, and service quality, ensuring alignment with EU directives. The **Water Services Corporation (WSC)** is the main utility, providing drinking water, wastewater services, and infrastructure management. Other key actors include the **Superintendent of Public Health (SPH)** for water quality, the **Planning Authority (PA)** for infrastructure siting, and the **Ministry for Agriculture, Fisheries and Animal Rights (MAFA)** for agricultural water use.

Malta faces acute water scarcity, being one of the most water-stressed countries in the EU. The 2025 Environmental Implementation Review highlights several persistent **challenges** which include over-abstraction of groundwater, high reliance on energy-intensive desalination, and limited natural freshwater resources. Non-revenue water (leakage) remains high, and the country is vulnerable to droughts and climate change impacts. Water quality is threatened by agricultural runoff, urban pollution, and saline intrusion. Infrastructure modernisation is needed to reduce losses and improve efficiency. Key **priorities** include enhancing water security through further investment in desalination and water reuse, improving leakage control, strengthening groundwater protection, integrating water management into climate adaptation and spatial planning, and building capacity for monitoring and enforcement. The review also calls for better stakeholder engagement, improved data collection, and more effective implementation of EU directives, especially regarding the UWWTD and the WFD.⁸⁸

⁸⁴ Parliament of Malta, Water Services Corporation Act XXIII of 1991. Link: [\[parlament.mt\]](http://parlament.mt), [\[leap.unep.org\]](http://leap.unep.org)

⁸⁵ UNEP/FAOLEX, Water Policy Framework Regulations, 2004 (L.N. 194/2004); amended by Regulator for Energy and Water Services Act, 2015. Link: [\[leap.unep.org\]](http://leap.unep.org)

⁸⁶ Water Services Corporation Act, Cap. 545 (Malta), <https://legislation.mt/eli/cap/545/eng> (accessed 23 November 2025).

⁸⁷ ERA is constituted as a separate legal entity with its own powers, duties and responsibilities defined directly in primary legislation. This distinguishes it from a ministry department or a policy agency created by subsidiary legislation. [Environment Protection Act, Chapter 549 \(2024\)](#).

⁸⁸ European Commission (2025). [Environmental Implementation review – Malta](#).

2.20.2 Stakeholder landscape

Table 2-19 – A high-level overview of the main water stakeholders in the Maltese context

Stakeholder	Type	Scope	Relevance
Ministry for the Environment, Energy and Regeneration (MEER)	Public authority	National	Sets national water policy, coordinates with EWA and ERA, represents Malta at EU level.
Ministry for Agriculture, Fisheries and Animal Rights (MAFA)	Public authority	National	Manages agricultural water use, abstraction, and irrigation.
Energy & Water Agency (EWA)	Public authority	National	Implements EU directives, manages RBMP and FRMP, as well as oversees desalination, wastewater reuse, rainwater harvesting, amongst other areas. Operating under the portfolio of MEER.
Environment & Resources Authority (ERA)	Public authority	National	Regulates environmental impacts, monitors water quality, enforces RBMPs and environmental licensing. Operating under the portfolio of MEER.
Regulator for Energy & Water Services (REWS)	Public authority	National	Regulates tariffs, licenses, supervises water service provision.
Superintendent of Public Health (SPH)	Public authority	National	Ensures drinking water safety and public health standards.
Planning Authority (PA)	Public authority	National	Land-use and infrastructure planning, including water infrastructure.
Water Services Corporation (WSC)	Utility provider (public)	National	Main water utility company, they are responsible for drinking water, wastewater collection and treatment and water infrastructure management.
Water-intensive industries (e.g., General Soft Drinks)	Private company	National	Agriculture, energy and the manufacturing sector are the most water-intensive industries in Malta. They have a major impact on groundwater sources.
Academic and research institutes (e.g., University of Malta, WES TRADE Ltd.)	Academia and Research Institutes	National	Research and innovation in water management, monitoring, and technology
NGOs (e.g. BirdLife Malta, Nature Trust Malta)	NGO	National	Wetland conservation, ecosystem restoration, environmental education, advocacy efforts.

2.20.3 Qualitative assessment of the Malta's stakeholders

At the **national level**, Malta's water governance is highly centralised, with strong coordination between MEER, EWA, ERA, and WSC. The EWA plays a pivotal role in implementing EU directives and managing water resources, while the ERA ensures environmental compliance and monitoring. The WSC is critical for operational delivery, managing the entire water cycle from production to wastewater treatment. The regulatory framework is robust, with REWS overseeing tariffs and service quality. However, engagement from local authorities, smaller utilities, and non-state actors is limited. NGOs and research institutions contribute to advocacy, wetland conservation, and technical expertise, but their influence on strategic decision-making is moderate. Overall, Malta's governance system is effective in policy development and compliance, but faces challenges in stakeholder inclusion, infrastructure modernisation, and addressing water scarcity.

At the **EU level**, Malta's engagement is led by MEER, EWA, and ERA, which represent the country in negotiations, reporting, and implementation of EU directives such as the WFD and UWWTD. These bodies provide technical input and compliance data, ensuring Malta's alignment with EU water policy.

The WSC contributes with operational insights, particularly in areas such as desalination and water reuse, which are increasingly relevant in EU discussions on climate adaptation and water resilience. NGOs and research institutions participate in EU-funded projects and networks, but their direct influence on EU policy is limited. Malta's small size and unique challenges (e.g., reliance on desalination) mean its experience is often cited in EU debates on water scarcity and innovation, but its policy-shaping influence remains moderate.

2.20.4 Observations and gaps

Malta's water governance benefits from strong institutional leadership, clear regulatory frameworks, and technical capacity in central agencies. The country has made significant progress in aligning with EU directives, investing in desalination, and developing water reuse schemes. However, persistent gaps remain, such as high non-revenue water (leakage), over-abstraction of groundwater, and limited stakeholder engagement, especially at the local and non-governmental levels. Further efforts are needed to actively involve civil society organisation in water planning and decision making to strengthen stakeholder inclusion and public accountability. Infrastructure modernisation and investment in leakage reduction are critical needs. There is also a need for improved data collection, monitoring, and public participation in water planning. At the EU level, Malta's engagement is consistent but concentrated among a few central agencies, with limited participation from utilities, NGOs, and research bodies. Addressing these gaps will require enhanced cross-sector coordination, broader stakeholder inclusion, and continued investment in water security and resilience.

2.21 Netherlands

2.21.1 Brief overview of the Netherlands' water governance

The Netherlands is internationally recognised for its sophisticated approach to water management, shaped by centuries of living with water in a densely populated, low-lying delta. While this expertise has made the country a global leader, growing pressures from climate change, sea-level rise, and competing demands for space and water are testing the resilience of existing systems. In response, Dutch water governance has evolved into a highly coordinated framework that integrates long-term planning, climate adaptation, and risk management across national, regional, and local levels.

The **National Water Programme (NWP) 2022-2027** outlines national water policy and management of major waterways to keep the country safe, attractive, and liveable. It sets objectives for climate adaptation, water safety, freshwater distribution, water quality, nature, shipping, and the functions of national waters.⁸⁹ Similarly, the **Environment and Planning Act (2024)** unifies and modernises regulations on spatial planning, housing, infrastructure, environment, nature, and water. The **Delta Programme** is the national strategy for flood protection, freshwater security, and climate-resilient spatial planning. It introduces new flood-risk standards, strengthens resilience to freshwater shortages, and promotes water-robust planning. The **National Freshwater Strategy** builds on lessons from the 2018 drought, when authorities safeguarded and distributed freshwater through flexible, data-driven management of salinity and demand rather than large new infrastructure works.⁹⁰

In the Netherlands, water management is shared among several organisations. The **Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management** sets the overall water policy, establishes nationwide regulations, and determines safety standards for the primary flood protection system. **Rijkswaterstaat** (the executive body of the Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management), along with the **regional water boards** oversee the availability of water and safeguard the country against flooding. Provinces and municipalities also contribute to this system. **Provinces** translate national water policy into regional action, oversee groundwater quality, and issue permits for groundwater extraction. **Regional water boards**, which include elected members voted for by residents, appointed interest group representatives, and a chairperson who is appointed by the Crown, develop management plans to maintain water quality and manage regional flood defences, including secondary structures like canal dikes. **Municipalities** handle groundwater issues in urban areas and manage wastewater and rainwater through sewer systems.

The Netherlands' -lying geography, high population density, and climate change pose major challenges. These include rising flood risks from sea-level rise, storms, and river discharges; increasing drought and freshwater shortages; declining water quality; and competition for limited land.

To address these concerns, the Dutch government prioritises **flood protection** by maintaining and strengthening dikes and storm-surge barriers and updating safety standards.⁹¹ It also works to secure **reliable freshwater supplies during droughts**, prevent salinisation, and improve **water quality** by reducing pollution. Climate adaptation is embedded in **spatial planning**, promoting water-robust and climate-resilient development. Authorities increasingly use data, forecasting, and real-time control for smarter water management and improve coordination across institutions. National frameworks, such as

⁸⁹ Informatiepunt Leefomgeving (n.d.). The National Water Programme 2022-2027 and its development. See [here](#).

⁹⁰ Rijksoverheid (n.d.). [National Freshwater Strategy](#).

⁹¹ Rijksoverheid (n.d.). [National Delta Programme](#).

the Delta Programme and NWP, guide action, while **emergency preparedness** ensures effective response to floods, droughts, and pollution accidents.⁹²

2.21.2 Stakeholder landscape

Table 2-20 – A high-level overview of the main water stakeholders in the Dutch context

Stakeholder	Type	Scope	Relevance
Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management	Public authority	National	Ministry consists of three sections: policy, implementation, and inspection. Focuses on mobility, water management, aviation and maritime affairs, and the environment.
Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality (LNV)	Public authority	National	Focuses on promoting sustainable food systems, preserving nature, and ensuring a vibrant countryside
Ministry of Economic Affairs & Climate (EZK)	Public authority	National	Focuses on creating a strong international competitive position, encouraging innovation, and supporting businesses, while working towards a climate-neutral society and energy.
Rijkswaterstaat (The Directorate-General for Public Works and Water Management)	Public authority	National	Rijkswaterstaat is the executive body of the Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management and is responsible for managing national waters, roads, and infrastructure.
Regional water boards / Water board authority	Public authority	Regional	A water board is responsible for water management in a specific area. They focus on managing water regionally and treating wastewater.
Provinces	Public authority	Regional	The (12) Dutch provinces make groundwater policy and set rules for protecting the groundwater in groundwater protection zones. Responsible for regional spatial planning, groundwater management, and environmental policies.
Municipalities	Public authority	Local	Municipalities handle local water issues such as rainwater drainage, wastewater collection through their sewage systems, and managing urban groundwater quality.
Drinking water companies (e.g. Waternet, Vitens)	Utility provider (public and private)	Regional	Drinking water companies are responsible for sourcing, treating, and distributing safe freshwater to households and businesses.
Industry associations (e.g. COPA-COPEGA, Dutch Agricultural Youth Association, Association of Dutch Water Companies (Vewin))	Industry	National	Sectors like agriculture, industry, water and energy are key water users and influencers (lobbying).
Knowledge institutes and universities (e.g. Deltares, Wageningen University, TU Delft)	Academia and Research Institutes	National / International	Knowledge institutes and universities provide research and scientific guidance, supporting evidence-based policymaking and developing innovative solutions for climate-resilient infrastructure.
NGOs / Environmental Organisations (e.g. Natuurmonumenten, Milieudefensie)	NGO	National / International	Influences policy, public campaigns, and collaborates with companies.
International or river basin bodies (e.g. International Commission for the Protection of the Rhine, OSPAR)	River Basin organisation / International organisation	Regional / International	The Netherlands relies heavily on international commissions for the Rhine, Meuse, Scheldt, and Ems, which coordinate upstream-downstream cooperation on pollution control, water quality, and flood risk management across multiple countries.

⁹² Rijkswaterstaat and the Association of Dutch Water Authorities (2019). [Water management in the Netherlands](#).

2.21.3 Qualitative assessment of the Netherlands' stakeholders

The Netherlands manages water through a coordinated network of stakeholders with distinct but complementary roles. **Nationally**, the Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management makes national water policy. It serves as the central authority for Dutch water policy, focusing on safety against flooding, securing freshwater supplies, and improving water quality. Operating under the Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management, Rijkswaterstaat reduces flood risk, ensures resilience, works with all kinds of stakeholders to produce regional plans. Rijkswaterstaat also manages major rivers and canals, the IJsselmeer, the North Sea, and the Wadden Sea. Water boards manage local and regional freshwater supply, wastewater treatment, flood protection, and participate in circularity projects⁹³ which may recover nutrients, reuse water, and produce useful resources, while working closely with other water stakeholders, making them very impactful in the Dutch water management context. Provinces collaborate with national government and water boards on regional measures and spatial adaptation to climate change. They are also the authority to issue permits for large-scale groundwater extraction, causing other stakeholders to rely on their decisions. Similarly, municipalities manage urban water issues, such as sewer systems, and collaborate with national government and water boards on local or regional measures and spatial adaptation to climate change. Drinking water companies, operating under strict regulation from the Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management, provide safe water to entire regions.

Knowledge institutes like TU Delft underpin the engineering, design, and policy backbone of Dutch and global water infrastructure. Agriculture, industry, and energy remain major water users and influential policy actors. These sectors, along with their trade unions, exert strong influence, shaping national policy through innovation, lobbying, and collective agreements. NGOs and environmental organisations influence land use, ecological priorities, and policies through advocacy, lobbying and litigation to influence systemic change. Together, these stakeholders form an integrated system that balances flood protection, freshwater supply, water quality, climate adaptation, and sustainable spatial planning across the country.

At the **EU level**, Dutch water stakeholders collectively shape and implement European water policy. The Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management, which is highly influential due to Dutch expertise in water management and technology, represents Dutch priorities in negotiations, embedding flood safety and water quality into EU directives. Rijkswaterstaat provides data and technical expertise through European projects. Water boards influence debates on decentralised governance, are accelerating the transition to a circular economy alongside actors, such as local, regional, and national public authorities, and participate in EU-funded initiatives. Provinces and municipalities link EU rules to regional planning, wastewater, and urban resilience and may also participate in EU-funded projects. International river basin organisations ensure Dutch interests in upstream water quality and flood risk management are represented within EU frameworks.

Private stakeholders representing agriculture, industry, and energy sectors strongly affect EU policies on water quality, emissions, and resource use, often influencing through associations like COPA-COGECA. Knowledge institutes and universities shape EU research and innovation agendas, with alumni often occupying roles in ministries, utilities, and NGOs worldwide. NGOs and environmental organisations push for stricter standards via advocacy, coalition-building, and legal action. Together, these actors strengthen the Netherlands' reputation as a leader in water governance and sustainability at the European level.

⁹³ Holland Circular Hotspot. (2023). Circular Economy Implementation Programme 2019-2023. Available [here](#).

2.21.4 Observations and gaps

Overall, the Netherlands has a uniquely inclusive and multi-layered water governance system, with strong coordination between stakeholders, while Dutch influence at the EU level is strong due to its solid expertise in water management. However, there may be some underrepresented voices and gaps. For instance, farmers and industry are highly influential because of their economic weight, yet smaller water users, such as SMEs, recreation, as well as social groups vulnerable to droughts, flooding, or water pricing may have less visibility in decision-making.

Similarly, the focus of policy and investment has traditionally been on flood-prone western regions, while drought-prone sandy soils in the east and south receive less structural attention. That being said, key priorities outlined in Dutch documents on water management encompass managing both floods and droughts.

Drinking water companies, though critical for public health and freshwater security, have limited direct influence at the EU level compared to agriculture or NGOs, relying instead on sector associations. This suggests that while the Netherlands has a strong coordination between major stakeholders and does take on board stakeholder insights, future challenges, especially around drought, water quality, and equity, would benefit from **stronger involvement of drinking water utilities, smaller-scale users, and vulnerable communities.**

2.22 Poland

2.22.1 Brief overview of Poland's water governance

Poland's water management framework is primarily defined by the **Water Law Act** of 20 July 2017⁹⁴, which regulates water use, protection, and management in line with the principles of sustainable development. The Act covers ownership of waters, water services, flood and drought risk management, and introduces a cost-recovery system for water services. It also establishes the State Water Holding “Wody Polskie” as the main authority for water management, responsible for issuing permits, collecting fees, and implementing River Basin Management Plans and Flood Risk Management Plans. Complementing this, the **Act on Collective Water Supply and Collective Wastewater Disposal** (2001)⁹⁵ governs municipal water and wastewater services. Strategic direction is provided by the **2030 National Environmental Policy**⁹⁶, which sets objectives for sustainable water management, including achieving good water status, improving wastewater treatment, and adapting to climate change impacts.

Water governance in Poland operates at three levels. At the **central level**, the efforts are shared between the **Ministry of Infrastructure** (overseeing water policy and governance. This is also the Ministry supervising Wody Polskie – introduced below), the **Ministry of Climate and Environment** (responsible for environmental protection), and the **Ministry of Agriculture** (involved in water management). The **State Water Holding “Wody Polskie”** manages operational tasks such as issuing water permits, collecting fees, and implementing RBMPs and FRMPs. It also supervises regional boards and basin authorities. At the **regional level**, **Regional Water Management Boards** identify pressures on water bodies, prepare flood studies, and enforce water use regulations. At the **local level**, **municipal authorities** are responsible for drinking water supply, sewerage, and wastewater treatment, typically through municipal companies, and implement measures from RBMPs and FRMPs.⁹⁷

Poland faces significant challenges in water management. **Diffuse nutrient pollution from agriculture** remains a major issue, contributing to **eutrophication** in rivers and lakes and affecting the Baltic Sea. **Urban wastewater treatment** gaps persist, particularly in smaller settlements, despite progress under the National Programme for Urban Wastewater Treatment. **Hydro-morphological alterations**, such as river regulation and embankments, have degraded aquatic habitats and disrupted ecological continuity. Climate change exacerbates these problems by increasing the frequency of **droughts** (especially in central and eastern regions) and **flood risks in river basins** like the Vistula and Oder. There is insufficient progress toward achieving good ecological status under the EU Water Framework Directive and calls for improved wastewater infrastructure, better agricultural practices, and enhanced nature-based solutions for water retention and flood protection.⁹⁸

⁹⁴ Polish Water Law [Act](#) of 20 July 2017

⁹⁵ Polish Act on collective water supply and Collective Discharge of Waste Water (2001)

⁹⁶ Polish [2030 National Environmental Policy](#) – the Development Strategy in the Area of the Environment and Water Management

⁹⁷ European Committee of Regions (n.d.) [Water Management - Poland](#)

⁹⁸ European Commission (2025) [Environmental Implementation review - Poland](#)

2.22.2 Stakeholder landscape

Table 2-21 – A high-level overview of the main water stakeholders in the Polish context

Stakeholder	Type	Scope	Relevance
Ministry of Infrastructure	Public authority	National	Central water authority, which oversees water policy and governance. This is also the Ministry supervising Wody Polskie. Some of the key water EU directives (e.g. WFD, UWWTD) fall under the responsibility of the Ministry.
Ministry of Climate and Environment	Public authority	National	Primary responsibility for national environmental policy, including setting water quality standards and overseeing overall environmental protection efforts.
State Water Holding Polish Waters ("Wody Polskie")	Public authority	National	Main entity for water management - manages rivers, reservoirs, flood protection, and water supply.
Regional Water Management Boards	Public authority	Regional	Falling under 'Polish Waters' - 11 Regional Water Management Boards (Regionalne Zarządy Gospodarki Wodnej), each responsible for water management within their designated regions. Their tasks include flood protection, water quality management, and operating facilities like dams and reservoirs.
Public Utility Providers (e.g. Warsaw, Krakow, Gdansk, Silesia)	Utility provider (public and private)	Regional	Regional water utility ensuring water security for its region and surrounding areas.
Local Polish Water Partnerships	Public authority (encompassing all stakeholder types)	Local	Local water partnerships were established to improve the management of water resources in rural areas. Collaboration with farmers, representatives of water companies, local governments, local bodies of Polish Waters, State Forests, or NGOs
Water-intensive industries (e.g. Orlen Group, KGHM Polska Miedź)	Private company	National	Major industrial water users; relevant for water efficiency and pollution control in petrochemical sector.
Research & academia (e.g. Institute of Environmental Protection – National Research Institute, Warsaw University of Life Sciences, AGH University of Science and Technology)	Academia and Research Institutes	National	Research and scientific institutions focusing on water engineering, hydrology, water management, groundwater or climate impacts
NGOs & civil society organisations (e.g. WWF Poland, Polish Ecological Club)	NGO	National	Advocates for water ecosystem protection and biodiversity; focuses on water quality improvement and pollution prevention initiatives.

2.22.3 Qualitative assessment of stakeholders

Poland's **national** water governance is supported by a broad and diverse set of stakeholder categories. The Ministry of Climate and Environment and Ministry of Environment play a central role in policy development, infrastructure planning, environmental regulation, and implementation of EU directives. Utility providers are highly relevant for operational delivery of water supply and wastewater services, with strong regional presence across major cities. Sectoral organisations contribute to standard-setting, coordination, and advocacy for water services and infrastructure. Research and academic institutions are active in hydrology, water engineering, and climate adaptation, supporting innovation and policy development. NGOs are engaged in biodiversity protection, pollution control, and river restoration, with moderate influence on national policy. The private sector, including water-intensive industries and clean technology providers, is present and contributes to water efficiency and compliance, though its strategic role remains limited. **Overall, Poland's national stakeholder landscape demonstrates strong**

institutional capacity and operational depth, with active contributions across public, academic, and civil society categories.

At the **EU-level**, Poland's stakeholder engagement is led by national public authorities and research institutions, which actively participate in EU water policy forums, technical committees, and river basin cooperation platforms. Sectoral organisations are members of European networks and contribute to regulatory discussions and compliance efforts. Academic and research bodies are involved in EU-funded projects (e.g. Horizon Europe/Horizon 2020 projects, European Cooperation in Science and Technology, Interreg), particularly in water quality, hydrology, and climate resilience. NGOs engage in EU conservation networks and advocacy campaigns, while private sector actors participate in sustainability initiatives and clean technology. For example, in its 2024 sustainability report⁹⁹, Saur (which Saur Polska is part of) highlights its role in developing desalination infrastructure in Mayotte and investing in leak reduction, energy-efficient pumping, and innovative water monitoring and reuse technologies to support the water transition. The company has also endorsed the EU's Water Resilience Strategy, deploying digital tools like AI-driven groundwater forecasting and smart metering, as well as reuse systems and nature-based solutions, to improve water efficiency and circularity¹⁰⁰. Utility providers comply with EU directives and are represented through umbrella organisations, but their direct influence on EU policymaking is limited. **Overall, Poland maintains a visible and technically competent presence in EU water governance through its institutional expertise, research engagement, and sectoral representation.**

2.22.4 Observations and gaps

Poland's water governance system is institutionally robust, with strong engagement from national public authorities, research institutions, and sectoral organisations. However, several gaps and limitations are evident. While national-level actors are well integrated into both domestic and EU-level processes, regional and local utility providers often have limited strategic influence and minimal direct engagement in EU policymaking. NGOs, although active in environmental protection and biodiversity, tend to operate on a smaller scale and are primarily involved in advocacy and project-based activities rather than formal policy development. The private sector, including water-intensive industries and clean water technology providers, is present and relevant for compliance and innovation, but its role in strategic governance remains modest. Consumer organisations and citizen engagement platforms show moderate relevance, with potential for stronger involvement in shaping water policy and service delivery. These observations highlight the need for improved multi-level coordination, enhanced inclusion of civil society and local actors, and more structured engagement of private and consumer sectors to foster a more participatory and resilient water governance framework in Poland.

⁹⁹ Saur (2024). CSR Report. Safeguarding water: the challenge we all share. Available [here](#).

¹⁰⁰ Saur (2025). Saur welcomes and encourages the European Union's Water Resilience Strategy — A turning point for Europe, and a daily commitment for Saur. Available [here](#).

2.23 Portugal

2.23.1 Brief overview of Portugal's water governance

Portugal's water governance is built around the **Water Law (Law no. 58/2005)**¹⁰¹, which transposes the EU Water Framework Directive and establishes a sustainable management framework for surface and groundwater, organised in six-year planning cycles through River Basin Management Plans (RBMPs). The Water Law is complemented by the **Water for Human Consumption (Decree-Law No. 306/2007)**¹⁰², **Legal Framework on the Use of Water Resources (Decree-Law 226-A/2007)** and the **National Water Plan (Decree-Law 76/2016)**¹⁰³, which define permitting rules, economic instruments, and national priorities for water quantity and quality. Portugal also prepares Flood Risk Management Plans in line with the Floods Directive and implements the UWWTD and Nitrates Directive through specific regulations and investment programmes. Moreover, the **Water that Unites strategy (2025)**¹⁰⁴ aims to support the revision of the **National Water Plan (2025-2035)**, the updating of the Public Irrigation 2014-2020 through the Irrigation Plan (to be developed), and alignment with existing and forthcoming planning instruments, including the Strategic Plan for Water Supply and Wastewater and Stormwater Management (PENSAARP 2030)¹⁰⁵. It sets out a national commitment to more efficient, resilient, and integrated water management, balancing the needs of agriculture, the environment, and society. Through a multi-sectoral approach, it promotes territorial cohesion, strengthens climate resilience, and ensures the sustainability of water resources, population well-being, and economic viability. To develop this new national water strategy, a multidisciplinary Working Group was established in July 2024 by joint order of the Ministers of Environment and Energy and of Agriculture and Fisheries, bringing together key national water and agriculture institutions.

The **Ministry of Environment and Climate Action** sets overall environmental and climate policy, and steers alignment of water policy with climate and spatial planning agendas. Under the Ministry of Environment and Climate Action, the **Portuguese Environment Agency (APA)** acts as the National Water Authority, responsible for water resources planning, licensing, monitoring and coordination of RBMPs, as well as dam safety and broader environmental policy. APA operates through deconcentrated **River Basin District Administrations**, which cover all mainland river basins and lead basin-level planning, permitting and enforcement. The **Water and Waste Services Regulation Authority (ERSAR)** regulate water supply, wastewater and waste services, setting economic and quality standards and benchmarking utility performance. Service provision follows a multi-level model: the state-owned holding **Águas de Portugal (AdP)** operates bulk water supply and wastewater treatment systems through regional multi-municipal companies, while municipalities and municipal companies manage local distribution networks and sewerage, sometimes via concessions. Municipalities also play a role in spatial planning and stormwater management, which is increasingly important under climate change.

Portugal has made substantial progress in expanding water and wastewater infrastructure and improving treatment coverage, but it still faces important challenges. The European Commission continues to identify **non-compliance with the UWWTD** in a number of agglomerations, with recent infringement actions highlighting inadequate treatment in around 20 areas, including discharges into sensitive waters. Nutrient and organic pollution, particularly in some rivers and coastal zones, and pressures on ecological

¹⁰¹ VdA (2019). Environmental protection regulations in Portugal. [Here](#).

¹⁰² EPAL (n.d.). Applicable Legislation. [Here](#).

¹⁰³ VdA (2019). Environmental protection regulations in Portugal. [Here](#).

¹⁰⁴ Republica Portuguesa (2025). Water that unites - National Strategy for Water Management. [Here](#).

¹⁰⁵ Participa (2025). Water that Unites – National Strategy for Water Management. [Here](#).

flows remain concerns for achieving “good status” under the WFD. In addition, climate change is amplifying **droughts, floods and coastal erosion**, stressing water resources and urban drainage systems and requiring better integration of drought management, ecological flows and nature-based solutions. Priority areas include closing remaining wastewater gaps, improving resilience of urban and rural water systems, reducing nutrient and pollutant loads to rivers and the Atlantic and enhancing the efficiency and circularity of water services.

2.23.2 Stakeholder landscape

Table 2-22 – A high-level overview of the main water stakeholders in the Portuguese context

Stakeholder	Type	Scope	Relevance
Ministry of Environment and Climate Action	Public authority	National	Sets overall environmental and climate policy, oversees APA, and steers alignment of water policy with climate and spatial planning agendas.
Portuguese Environment Agency (APA)	Public authority	National	Operates within the scope of the Ministry of Environment and Climate Action. National water authority responsible for water resources planning, licensing, monitoring, RBMPs, dam safety and implementation of WFD and related directives.
ERSAR – Water and Waste Services Regulation Authority	Public authority	National	Regulates tariffs and service quality for water and wastewater utilities; benchmarks performance and protects consumer interests.
National Water Council (CNA - Conselho Nacional da Água)	Public authority	National	Independent advisory body to the Portuguese Government in the field of water planning and sustainable management.
River Basin District Administrations (e.g. ARH/APA Norte, Centro, Tejo e Oeste, Alentejo, Algarve)	Public authority	Regional	Regional arms of APA. Draft and implement RBMPs, issue permits, manage monitoring and coordinate measures at basin level.
Municipalities	Public authority	Local	Own or co-own utilities, manage distribution networks and sewerage, and lead spatial planning and local adaptation measures.
Water utility providers (e.g. AdP: Águas de Portugal Group, Aguas do Norte)	Utility provider (public and private)	Regional	Operates water supply and wastewater systems; key investor in infrastructure and service consolidation. Provide drinking water, wastewater collection and treatment, and stormwater services; core operators for meeting UWWTD and drinking water standards.
Business / sectoral organisations (e.g. Portuguese Association of Water and Wastewater Services (APDA), Portuguese Water Partnership (PWP))	Industry	National	Umbrella associations with water service companies or water and sanitation technology.
DECO / DECO PROteste	Consumer organisation	National	Main consumer body; active on water tariffs, service quality and user protection.

Stakeholder	Type	Scope	Relevance
Research and knowledge institutions (e.g. Lisbon International Centre for Water)	Academia and Research Institutes	National / International	Provide technical and scientific expertise on hydrology, hydraulics, water treatment, marine and freshwater ecosystems; support policy design and EU projects.
Environmental NGOs (e.g. ZERO, LPN)	NGO	National	Advocate for stronger water and nature protection, coastal and river restoration, and stricter enforcement of environmental law.
International bodies (e.g. OSPAR)	International organisation	Regional / International	Coordinate transboundary and marine water management, including Atlantic/Baltic protection and shared river basins with Spain.

2.23.3 Qualitative assessment of stakeholders

Nationally, Portugal's water governance is dominated by a small group of high-impact public institutions. The Ministry of Environment and Climate Action sets overall policy direction and ensures alignment with climate, energy and spatial planning. APA, as the national water authority, is responsible for implementing the Water Law, coordinating RBMPs, issuing water-use licences and integrating drought and ecological-flow considerations, with its regional ARH structures exerting strong influence at basin level. The National Water Council (CNA) plays a key domestic role by monitoring and advising on water-related plans and projects, fostering a broad ecosystem-based forum for national water policy discussion, and contributing to strategic, coordinated, and sustainable management of water systems through harmonised procedures and balanced reconciliation of sectoral and territorial interests. ERSAR plays an important role in the services domain by defining tariff frameworks, quality standards and performance benchmarks that shape utility investments and operations. AdP and its multi-municipal companies act as the primary operational and investment vehicle for bulk water supply and wastewater treatment, while large regional utilities such as EPAL and Águas do Tejo Atlântico are central players in major urban areas.

Municipalities and local utilities have medium-to-high impact, managing local distribution, sewerage and stormwater systems and often co-owning multi-municipal operators; their capacity strongly affects network renewal and adaptation efforts. Medium-impact actors also include consumer organisations such as DECO, which shape public debate on tariffs and service quality, and research institutions, which provide technical analysis and policy support. Environmental NGOs such as ZERO, LPN and Almargem act as watchdogs on water and coastal protection, contributing to consultations and advocacy but with limited formal influence. Private engineering firms, technology providers and water-intensive industries contribute through project delivery, innovation and compliance, but generally have narrower roles than core public authorities.

At the **EU-level**, Portugal's engagement is led by the Ministry of Environment and APA, which represent the country in WFD and UWWTD negotiations, working groups and reporting processes. APA's technical expertise, particularly on ecological flows, licensing and efficient water use, features in EU guidance and knowledge exchange. The CNA helps shape Portugal's official positions when engaging with EU water governance frameworks. Its advisory opinions and strategic guidance feed into the work of Portuguese ministries and agencies that directly represent Portugal in EU institutions. ERSAR participates in European regulator networks. AdP and major utilities are engaged in EU water

utility associations and innovation platforms, where they contribute with practical expertise or inputs to EU projects. Research institutions are active in Horizon Europe, LIFE and Interreg, particularly on resilience, circularity and marine pollution. NGOs participate in European environmental coalitions advocating for strong implementation of the WFD and revised UWWTD. Overall, Portugal contributes meaningfully to EU water governance, though EU-level visibility is concentrated among a relatively small number of national institutions.

2.23.4 Observations and gaps

Portugal's water governance benefits from a clear legal framework, a strong national water authority, a specialised regulator and a consolidated state-owned utility group, collectively providing significant institutional capacity. However, persistent UWWTD non-compliance in some agglomerations, continued pressures on certain river basins and coastal waters, and growing climate-related risks highlight implementation gaps, especially in smaller systems and at the interface between urban drainage, land use and ecological flows. Local capacities and financial resources vary across municipalities, and the complexity of the multi-level service model can create coordination challenges between AdP companies, municipalities and regulators. At the same time, non-state actors, including consumer groups, NGOs and knowledge institutions, are active but not always structurally embedded in decision-making processes, particularly at basin level. Strengthening cross-sector coordination, improving local implementation capacity, and broadening stakeholder engagement around RBMPs and drought and flood planning will be critical for Portugal to achieve its long-term water quality and resilience objectives.

2.24 Romania

2.24.1 Brief overview of Romania's water governance

Romania's water governance has evolved through a robust legislative and institutional trajectory, beginning with the **1898 Water Law**, which established public ownership of principal watercourses and coastal waters, and the **1924 Law on Water Regimes**, which first codified water management, including river registration and development measures. The communist era saw the creation of centralised bodies culminating in the **State Water Committee (1956–1967)** and major hydropower and flood-control infrastructure.¹⁰⁶ A significant shift occurred post-1990 with the adoption of **Law No. 107/1996**, establishing a modern water framework defining public-domain waters, regulating uses across quantitative, qualitative, ecological, and flood protection dimensions.¹⁰⁷ ¹⁰⁸ Following EU accession in 2007, Romania transposed the EU Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC) and related legislation, developing comprehensive River Basin Management Plans (RBMPs) and the national water management plan (updated for 2016–2021 and 2021–2027), led by the **National Administration Romanian Waters (ANAR)** and basin administrations.¹⁰⁹ ¹¹⁰

Romania's water governance is anchored in a centralised institutional framework led by the **Ministry of Environment, Waters and Forests (MMAP)**, which is responsible for water policy, legislation, and the transposition of EU directives, including the Water Framework Directive (WFD), Floods Directive, Drinking Water Directive and the Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive. The **National Administration "Romanian Waters" (ANAR/Apele Române)** is the main operational authority, managing surface and groundwater resources, flood protection infrastructure, and the implementation of RBMPs across 11 River Basin Administrations. The **National Regulatory Authority for Public Services (ANRSC)** oversees licensing, tariff regulation, and water quality monitoring for water and wastewater services. At the local and regional levels, **municipalities** and **Intercommunal Development Associations (IDAs)** coordinate water supply and sanitation services, typically delegating operations to **Regional Water Operating Companies (ROCs)**, which are corporatised entities owned by local authorities. The **Ministry of Health** is co-responsible for drinking water quality and public health compliance. The institutional landscape is complemented by sectoral associations (e.g., ARA – Romanian Water Association), research institutes (e.g., INHGA), and private water utility actors such as Veolia Romania, as well as NGOs and academic stakeholders.

Romania faces persistent **challenges** in water management, including insufficient progress in improving water quality, particularly due to nutrient pollution from agriculture and urban wastewater, as well as hydro morphological pressures from infrastructure and land use. The country continues to struggle with the implementation of the Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive (UWWTD), with gaps in wastewater collection and treatment, especially in smaller settlements. Outdated infrastructure, high water losses, and underinvestment in modernisation further hinder service quality and compliance. Climate change is intensifying droughts and floods, putting additional pressure on water resources and infrastructure. Key **priorities** identified in the 2025 Environmental Implementation Review include accelerating investment in wastewater treatment, reducing nutrient pollution, improving water retention and resilience to climate extremes, and strengthening cross-sectoral coordination, particularly with agriculture and energy

¹⁰⁶ Administrația Națională Apele Române (2023). History of the institution. Available [here](#).

¹⁰⁷ Romanian Parliament (1996). Law No. 107/1996 – Water Law.

¹⁰⁸ Romanian Parliament (2020). Law No. 122/2020 – Amendments to Water Law.

¹⁰⁹ ANAR (2023). National Management Plans and RBMPs. Available [here](#).

¹¹⁰ European Commission (2023). Implementation of EU Water Framework Directive in Romania.

stakeholders. Enhanced stakeholder engagement, capacity building at the local level, and better integration of climate adaptation into water planning are also highlighted as critical needs.¹¹¹

2.24.2 Stakeholder landscape

Table 2-23 - A high-level overview of the main water stakeholders in the Romanian context

Stakeholder	Type	Scope	Relevance
Ministry of Environment, Waters and Forests (MMAF)	Public authority	National	Lead authority for water policy, legislation and EU Water Directives.
National Administration Romanian Waters (ANAR)	Public authority	National	Formulates water policies, prepares strategic plans, oversees investment and economic governance in water, and steers mitigation of water-related natural disasters.
Ministry of Health	Public authority	National	Drinking water quality, public health compliance.
National Regulatory Authority for Public Services (ANRSC)	Public authority	National	Licensing, tariff regulation, quality monitoring for water and wastewater services.
Intercommunal Development Associations (IDAs)	Public authority	Regional	Coordinate water utilities at regional level, influence tariffs and investment decisions.
Municipalities	Public authority	Local	Own water infrastructure, propose projects, approve local plans.
Water utility providers (e.g. Regional Water Operating Companies (ROCs))	Utility service provider (public)	Regional	Main water service providers (water & sanitation), manage, operate and maintain infrastructure.
Water utility providers (e.g. Veolia Romania)	Utility service provider (private)	Regional	Major private water and sanitation service provider.
Business organisation (umbrella) (e.g. Asociația Română a Apei (ARA) – Romanian Water Association)	Industry	National	Represents the water sector in EU associations.
Academic and research institutes (e.g. INHGA – National Institute of Hydrology and Water Management)	Academia and Research Institutes	National	Scientific and technical expertise for hydrology, hydrogeology and water management.
NGOs (e.g. Asociația MaiMultVerde)	NGO	National	Advocacy, research, technical input, public engagement.

2.24.3 Qualitative assessment of Romania’s stakeholders

At the **national level**, Romania’s water governance is characterised by a centralised but multi-actor system. The Ministry of Environment, Waters and Forests (MMAF) and ANAR are the most influential actors, setting policy, managing resources, and ensuring compliance with EU directives. Regional Water Operating Companies and Intercommunal Development Associations play a critical role in service delivery and infrastructure management, while the Ministry of Health ensures public health standards

¹¹¹ European Commission (2025). [Environmental Implementation Report – Romania](#).

for drinking water. Sectoral associations (ARA) and research institutes (INHGA) provide technical expertise. Private utility companies (e.g. Veolia) provide operational services. NGOs and academic institutions contribute to advocacy, research, and public engagement, though their influence on strategic decision-making is moderate. The system's strengths lie in its clear legal mandates and operational capacity at the national and regional levels, but challenges remain in local capacity, stakeholder coordination, and the integration of non-state actors.

At the **EU level**, Romania's engagement is led by central authorities (MMAP, ANAR, ANRSC), which represent the country in negotiations, reporting, and implementation of EU directives. These bodies participate in EU technical working groups, compliance reporting, and transboundary river basin cooperation (e.g., ICPDR for the Danube). Sectoral associations (ARA) and private utility operators (Veolia) are active in European networks such as EurEau and EWA, contributing to the definition of technical standards and in policy debates. Research institutes and NGOs may participate in EU-funded projects and advocacy campaigns, providing scientific input and supporting compliance. However, the visibility and influence of local authorities, smaller utilities, and non-state actors at the EU level remains limited, with most engagement concentrated among a small group of national institutions.

2.24.4 Observations and gaps

Romania's water governance benefits from a robust institutional framework and strong engagement from national authorities, regional operators, and sectoral associations. Several gaps persist, as local capacity and investment remain uneven, especially in smaller municipalities. Furthermore, stakeholder engagement is concentrated among central actors, with limited structured involvement of local authorities, the private sector, and civil society. Similarly, progress on wastewater treatment, nutrient pollution reduction, and infrastructure modernisation remains slow. At the EU level, Romania's presence is consistent but relies heavily on a few institutions, narrowing the diversity of inputs into EU decision-making. Addressing these gaps will require enhanced cross-sectoral coordination, greater inclusion of local and non-governmental actors, and accelerated investment in infrastructure and compliance measures to achieve long-term water quality and resilience objectives.

2.25 Slovakia

2.25.1 Brief overview of Slovakia’s water governance

Slovakia’s water management framework is primarily defined by the **Water Act** No. 364/2004 Coll. on Water¹¹², as amended in 2023, which regulates the protection and sustainable use of water resources, water services, flood and drought risk management, and compliance with EU directives. The Act establishes conditions for water abstraction, wastewater discharge, and monitoring, and provides the legal basis for River Basin Management Plans and Flood Risk Management Plans. Complementing this, the Strategy of the Environmental Policy of the Slovak Republic until 2030 (**Envirostrategy 2030**)¹¹³ sets long-term objectives for water protection, including improving water quality, increasing wastewater treatment coverage, preventing pollution, and enhancing water retention in the landscape. Strategic planning is operationalised through the **Water Plan of the Slovak Republic**¹¹⁴ which integrates river basin plans for the Danube and Vistula basins.

Water governance in Slovakia operates at three levels. At the central level, the **Ministry of Environment** is the lead authority, responsible for water policy, legislation, RBMPs, FRMPs, and international cooperation on transboundary waters. It is supported by specialized agencies such as the Water Research Institute, Slovak Hydrometeorological Institute, and the Slovak Water Management Enterprise, which handle monitoring, planning, and infrastructure management. At the regional level, district offices of state administration provide permits, enforce water protection measures, and supervise compliance. At the local level, municipalities manage drinking water supply, sewerage, and wastewater treatment, typically through municipally owned companies, and issue permits for small-scale water abstraction and discharge.¹¹⁵

Slovakia faces several challenges in water management. Diffuse agricultural pollution, particularly nitrates and pesticides, continues to affect **groundwater and surface water quality**, contributing to **eutrophication** in rivers and reservoirs. **Urban wastewater treatment gaps persist** in smaller municipalities, despite progress under EU-funded programmes. **Hydro-morphological alterations**, such as river channelization and artificial barriers, limit ecological restoration and fish migration. Climate change is **increasing the frequency of floods** (especially in the Danube and Váh basins) **and droughts**, which threaten **water availability and soil moisture**. There is insufficient progress towards achieving good ecological status under the EU Water Framework Directive, calls for improved agricultural practices, enhanced wastewater infrastructure, and greater use of nature-based solutions for water retention and flood protection.¹¹⁶

2.25.2 Stakeholder landscape

Table 2-24 – A high-level overview of the main water stakeholders in the Slovak context

Stakeholder	Type	Scope	Relevance
Ministry of Environment	Public authority	National	Responsible for nature protection, waste management, and the protection of water resources and water quality. It prepares and implements water management policies, river

¹¹² Slovak Act No. 364/2004 Coll. on Water

¹¹³ Strategy of the Environmental Policy of the Slovak Republic until 2030

¹¹⁴ Water Plan of the Slovak Republic 2021

¹¹⁵ European Committee of Regions (n.d.) Water Management - Slovakia

¹¹⁶ European Commission (2025) Environmental Implementation Report - Slovakia

Stakeholder	Type	Scope	Relevance
			basin plans, and oversees the sustainable use and monitoring of both surface and groundwater
Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development	Public authority	National	Manages agricultural and rural development policies, including the protection and use of agricultural land and irrigation systems. It is responsible for water use in agriculture, monitoring irrigation water quality, and promoting sustainable water management practices to support food production and rural livelihoods
Slovak Environment Agency	Public authority	National	Professional organization of the MoE with nationwide scope focused on environmental care and landscape creation in accordance with the principles of sustainable development.
Slovak Hydrometeorological Institute	Public authority	National	Ensures the performance of the state hydrological service and the state meteorological service. SHMÚ focuses on collecting information on water and air in the territory of Slovakia, provides information such as weather forecasts, and is also dedicated to the study and description of events in the atmosphere and hydrosphere.
Slovak Water Management Enterprise	Public authority	National	State-owned enterprise with a regulated management method, because it also manages assets that are in the exclusive ownership of the state. It ensures the care of watercourses and tangible capital assets built on them and takes care of the quantity and quality of surface and groundwater.
Regional water companies (e.g. Bratislava Water Management Company)	Utility provider (public)	Regional	Supplies drinking water to its permanent customers in its respective regions.
Association of Slovak Water Companies	Industry	National	Water supply companies. Members of the association provide about 95% of water services related to the operation of public water supply and public sewerage systems in Slovakia.
Water-intensive industries (e.g. Slovak Energies, US Steel Kosice, Duslo)	Private company	National	Large industrial water users, relevant for water efficiency and pollution control.
Research and academia (e.g. Water Management Research Institute)	Academia and Research Institutes	National	Scientific and applied research base for Slovakia's water sector. It is part of a global highly specialised research institute network and a full member of Europe's research community.
NGOs and civil society organisations (e.g. WWF Slovakia, BROZ)	NGO	National	Protection and restoration of rare habitats throughout Slovakia. Practical protection and restoration of forests, meadows and wetlands in Natura 2000 areas.
Association of towns and municipalities of Slovakia	NGO	Local	The largest non-governmental organisation associating, representing and representing towns, municipalities and city districts in Slovakia as legal entities.

2.25.3 Qualitative assessment of Slovakia's stakeholders

Slovakia's **national** water governance is supported by a diverse and well-established set of stakeholder categories. Public authorities play a central role in policy development, environmental regulation, flood protection, and implementation of EU directives. Utility providers are highly relevant for operational delivery of water supply and wastewater services, with strong regional coverage and infrastructure responsibilities. Sectoral organisations contribute to coordination, standard-setting, and advocacy across water services. Research and academic institutions are active in hydrology, water engineering, and climate adaptation, providing technical expertise and supporting policy development. NGOs are

engaged in biodiversity protection, wetland restoration, and public awareness, with moderate influence on national water policy. The private sector, including water-intensive industries and clean technology providers, contributes to water efficiency and pollution control, though its strategic role remains limited. **Overall, Slovakia's national stakeholder landscape demonstrates strong institutional capacity and operational depth, with active contributions across public, academic, and civil society categories.**

At the **EU-level**, Slovakia's stakeholder engagement is led by national public authorities and research institutions, which actively participate in EU water policy forums, technical committees, and cross-border cooperation platforms. Sectoral organisations are members of European networks and contribute to regulatory discussions and compliance efforts. Academic and research bodies are involved in EU-funded projects, particularly in water quality, hydrology, and climate resilience. NGOs engage in EU conservation networks and advocacy campaigns, while private sector actors participate in sustainability and clean technology programmes. Utility providers comply with EU directives and are represented through umbrella organisations (e.g. Association of Slovak Water Companies), but their direct influence on EU policymaking is limited. **Overall, Slovakia maintains a visible and technically competent presence in EU water governance through its institutional expertise, research engagement, and sectoral representation.**

2.25.4 Observations and gaps

Slovakia's water governance system is supported by a wide range of stakeholder categories, with strong engagement from national public authorities, utility providers, and research institutions. However, several gaps persist. While public authorities and academic actors are well integrated into national and EU-level processes, regional and local utility providers and municipal associations often have limited strategic influence and minimal direct engagement in EU policymaking. The private sector, including water-intensive industries and clean technology providers, plays a role in compliance and innovation but remains underrepresented in strategic governance discussions. Consumer organisations and trade unions show moderate relevance, with potential for stronger involvement in shaping water-related policies and ensuring social equity. NGOs, although active in wetland restoration and biodiversity protection, tend to operate at a local scale and are primarily involved in project implementation rather than policy development. These observations point to the need for enhanced multi-level coordination, broader inclusion of civil society and local actors, and more structured engagement of private and consumer sectors to support a more participatory and resilient water governance framework in Slovakia.

2.26 Slovenia

2.26.1 Brief overview of Slovenia's water governance

Slovenia's water governance is built around the **Water Act** (Zakon o vodah, ZV-1, 2002 and subsequent amendments)¹¹⁷, which provides the general legal and regulatory framework for water management and transposes the EU Water Framework Directive (WFD) and related legislation into national law. The Act regulates water as a public good, sets rules for water protection, planning and use, and defines water-related public services and infrastructure. It is implemented through **Water Management Plans** for the **Danube** and **Adriatic Sea** river basin districts, prepared on six-year cycles in line with the WFD, as well as Flood Risk Management Plans under the Floods Directive.¹¹⁸ In 2016, Slovenia also amended its Constitution to recognise access to drinking water as a fundamental right, reinforcing the public-interest status of water services and resources.

The **Ministry of Natural Resources and Spatial Planning** is responsible for the management of natural resources, water and physical space, and for coordinating sustainable development based on efficient use of these resources. Within the ministry, the **Water Directorate** formulates water policies and performs tasks related to water management and protection, decisions on water use, economic governance, investments and cohesion policy, as well as mitigation of damage from natural disasters. The **Slovenian Water Agency** is the key implementing authority for water rights and infrastructure: it grants water permits, issues water consents and opinions on spatial planning, and manages state-owned water and coastal land. Water-quality and hydrological monitoring, environmental data management and forecasting are carried out by the **Slovenian Environment Agency (ARSO)**, which operates national monitoring networks for soil, water and air and provides assessments and warnings. Municipalities and public utilities provide drinking water supply, wastewater collection and treatment and local stormwater management, operating under the Water Act and sectoral public-services legislation.

Slovenia's key water challenges relate to achieving good status for all water bodies and adapting to climate change. While the quantitative status of groundwater is generally favourable, nitrate contamination from agriculture remains an issue in parts of north-eastern Slovenia. Some surface waters continue to face pressures from nutrient and organic pollution, hydro morphological alterations, and legacy infrastructure. Climate change is increasing the frequency and intensity of floods and droughts, yet recent analyses underline that the Water Act still lacks explicit mechanisms for managing groundwater during droughts or protecting recharge areas, raising concerns about long-term sustainability. Priorities include improving implementation of RBMP and FRMP measures, strengthening integration between water management, agriculture and spatial planning, and enhancing resilience to extreme events through a mix of grey and nature-based solutions.

¹¹⁷ Republika Slovenija (n.d). Water Act (ZV-1). [Here](#).

¹¹⁸ OECD (2019). Slovenia. Agriculture and water policies: Main characteristics and evolution from 2009 to 2019. [Here](#).

2.26.2 Stakeholder landscape

Table 2-25 – High-level overview of the main water stakeholders in the Slovenian context

Stakeholder	Type	Scope	Relevance
Ministry of Natural Resources and Spatial Planning	Public authority	National	Lead ministry for water, natural resources and spatial planning; sets water policy, oversees implementation of the Water Act and WFD, and coordinates sustainable development and cohesion policy.
Water Directorate (within the Ministry of Natural Resources and Spatial Planning)	Public authority	National	Formulates water policies, prepares strategic plans, oversees investment and economic governance in water, and steers mitigation of water-related natural disasters.
Water Maintenance Office	Public authority	National	One of the organisational units of the Water Directorate: The Water Management Office carries out work and tasks in the field of water management in the context of preserving and regulating water quantities, protecting against harmful effects of water, maintaining water and coastal lands, and taking care of the hydro morphological state of waters.
Directorate for Spatial Planning and Construction (within the Ministry of Natural Resources and Spatial Planning)	Public authority	National	Formulate policies and carry out tasks in the areas of spatial planning, land policy and construction. Key for land-use, permitting and siting of major water/flood projects
Directorate for Nature (within the Ministry of Natural Resources and Spatial Planning)	Public authority	National	Formulate policies and carry out tasks for nature conservation and mining. Important where water meets Natura 2000, river ecology and biodiversity obligations.
Slovenian Water Agency	Public authority	National	An executive body under the Ministry of Natural Resources and Spatial Planning, responsible for professional and administrative water management tasks. Focuses on the management of water infrastructure, flood risk, and implementing rehabilitation measures.
Slovenian Environment Agency (ARSO)	Public authority	National	Monitors hydrology and water quality, operates environmental data systems, issues warnings and assessments, and supports WFD status evaluation and reporting.
Government Office for Flood and Landslide Reconstruction	Public authority	National	Coordination of emergency measures to eliminate the consequences of the floods and landslides.
National Institute of Public Health (NIJZ)	Public authority	National	Provides guidance on drinking-water safety and health-related aspects of water supply.
Water and wastewater utilities (e.g. JP Voka Snaga, Mariborski vodovod)	Utility provider (public)	Regional / Local	Provide drinking water and wastewater services, operate and maintain networks and treatment plants, and implement investment projects; central for UWWTD compliance and service quality.
Chambers and associations (e.g. Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Slovenia, Chamber of	Industry	National	Represent utilities, engineering and construction firms, SMEs and workers; influence sector development, investment and regulatory debates.

Stakeholder	Type	Scope	Relevance
Public Utilities, Chamber of Craft and Small Business)			
Water-engineering / water-intensive companies (e.g. Hidrotehnik d.o.o.)	Private company	National	Water-engineering company active in hydrotechnical work, specialising in civil engineering, hydraulic engineering, and water management.
Research institutions (e.g. University of Ljubljana, Geological Survey of Slovenia, JSI)	Academia and Research Institutes	National	Conduct research on hydrology, ecology, hydrogeology, water treatment and climate impacts; support method development and policy design.
Environmental NGOs (e.g. AAG, Focus Association for Sustainable Development)	NGO	National	Advocate for sustainable development, climate and water protection, and public participation; engage in campaigns, consultations and, at times, litigation.
International river basin commissions (e.g. ICPDR, International Sava River Basin Commission)	River Basin organisations	Regional / International	Coordinate transboundary water management, flood protection and pollution control in shared Danube and Sava basins.

2.26.3 Qualitative assessment of Slovenia’s stakeholders

Nationally, Slovenia’s water governance is led by a small group of high-impact public authorities. The Ministry of Natural Resources and Spatial Planning and its Water Directorate set strategic direction, integrate water policy with spatial planning, and guide the preparation of water management plans. The Slovenian Water Agency plays the central implementation role, issuing water permits and consents, managing state-owned water and coastal land, and overseeing public water-management services. ARSO ensures monitoring data and assessments that underpin WFD evaluations, risk analyses and policy decisions. The Government Office for Flood and Landslide Reconstruction coordinates emergency measures to eliminate the consequences of the floods and landslides.

Public utilities such as JP Voka Snaga, Mariborski vodovod, Komunalno podjetje Velenje and Rižanski vodovod Koper have medium-to-high impact because they operate drinking water, wastewater and stormwater services. With their capacity and investment decisions strongly influencing compliance and resilience at local and regional levels. Business and professional organisations support technical exchange and represent utilities, engineering firms and SMEs, shaping implementation practices.

Research institutions, including the University of Ljubljana, the Institute for Water, the National Institute of Biology, the Jožef Stefan Institute and the Geological Survey, provide essential scientific and technical input through modelling, method development and ecological assessments. NGOs such as Umanotera, Focus and Alpe Adria Green contribute to advocacy and public scrutiny but hold limited formal authority.

At the **EU level**, Slovenia’s voice is primarily channelled through the Ministry of Natural Resources and Spatial Planning, the Water Directorate and the Slovenian Water Agency, which act as competent authorities for the WFD and Floods Directive, participate in Common Implementation Strategy working groups and represent Slovenia in international river basin fora for the Danube and Sava. They provide data, technical input and experience on issues such as river basin planning, flood protection and ecological flows. ARSO is a key contributor to EU-level data and assessments through its monitoring

programmes and participation in EEA and other European networks. Research institutions are active in EU-funded projects (Horizon Europe, LIFE, Interreg), particularly around groundwater protection, forest–water interactions and climate adaptation and thereby contribute indirectly to European policy development and best practices. Slovenian NGOs connect to European environmental networks and advocate for strong implementation of the WFD and related legislation, but their visibility remains lower than that of state institutions. Overall, Slovenia is a recognised participant in EU water governance, though the number of institutions with strong and continuous EU-level engagement is relatively limited compared with the breadth of the domestic stakeholder base.

2.26.4 Observations and gaps

Slovenia’s water governance system is institutionally well defined, with clear mandates for the Ministry of Natural Resources and Spatial Planning, Water Directorate, Water Agency and ARSO, and robust technical capacity in monitoring and research. The presence of a constitutional right to water and a dedicated water agency (Slovenian Water Agency) underlines the political importance attached to water as a public good. However, implementation gaps remain in achieving good status for all water bodies and in addressing diffuse agricultural pollution, hydro morphological impacts and emerging climate risks. Municipalities and utilities show variable capacity, which can lead to uneven performance across regions. While non-state stakeholders – research institutions, NGOs, chambers and professional associations – are active and reasonably well organised, their involvement in strategic decision-making and basin-level planning is still limited compared to central authorities. Strengthening cross-sector coordination (especially with agriculture and spatial planning), enhancing municipal capacity and more systematically integrating non-state actors into RBMP and adaptation processes will be crucial for Slovenia to meet its long-term water quality and resilience objectives.

2.27 Spain

2.27.1 Brief overview of Spain's water governance

Spain's modern water policy traces its roots to the **1985 Water Law**,¹¹⁹ which replaced obsolete 19th-century legislation and established water as a public domain, reinforced integrated planning, empowered autonomous river basin authorities, and formalised co-decision mechanisms involving users and administrations. The **1999 Water Law reform**¹¹⁹ introduced water rights trading, strengthened financial regimes for infrastructure, and recognised desalinated and reused water as public resources, underpinning more market-oriented tools for allocation. The turn of the century marked a shift with the adoption of the **European Union's Water Framework Directive (2000)**,¹¹⁹ which Spain transposed by 2003, embedding principles of ecological protection, cost recovery, and stakeholder participation. This alignment with EU norms also catalysed a move away from large hydraulic infrastructure toward conservation, reuse, and environmental flows which was further crystallised during the political debates over the Ebro water transfer project post-2004.¹²⁰

Spain's water governance is characterised by a multi-level, decentralised system, with strong coordination between national and regional authorities¹²¹. At the central level, the **Ministry for the Ecological Transition and the Demographic Challenge (MITECO)** leads on water policy, hydrological planning and compliance with EU directives. Within MITECO, the **Director General for Water** oversees national water policy implementation, hydrological planning, infrastructure, and regulatory compliance. The **Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAPA)** plays a strategic role, particularly in irrigation and drought response. Water management is further decentralised through **River Basin Authorities (Confederaciones Hidrográficas)**, which operate on hydrological boundaries rather than administrative ones, ensuring integrated planning, allocation, and stakeholder participation at the basin level. The **Ministry of Territorial Policy and Democratic Memory** oversees Spain's outer regions (i.e. the Canary Islands), addressing issues such as intergovernmental coordination, disaster recovery, and allocation of public service and social policy funds. Autonomous community governments and agencies, such as the **Catalonia Water Agency (ACA)** and **Basque Water Agency (URA)**, manage internal basins within autonomous communities. Local authorities and municipalities are responsible for water supply, sanitation, and infrastructure at the local level, often in partnership with public or private utilities. This structure is complemented by consultative bodies like the **National Council on Water**, which links national, regional, and basin-level decision-making.

Spain faces acute **water management challenges**, primarily driven by **water scarcity**, frequent droughts, and increasing competition among agricultural, urban, and industrial users. Climate change exacerbates these pressures, leading to declining rainfall, more intense droughts, and heightened flood risks. Furthermore, water quality is threatened by diffuse agricultural pollution, over-abstraction, and contamination from urban and industrial sources. The country's **priorities** include modernising irrigation systems, promoting water savings and reuse, strengthening drought and flood resilience, improving water quality, and ensuring compliance with EU directives such as the Water Framework Directive (WFD). There is also a strong focus on digitalisation, stakeholder engagement, and the

¹¹⁹ Water Management in Spain: An Example of Changing Paradigms (2007). [Here](#).

¹²⁰ The Botín Foundation and the International Rosenberg Forum on Water Policy (2015). [The Waters of Spain and Their Management: An Overview](#).

¹²¹ As identified in the 2020 Spanish Green Book on Water Governance, which highlights the distribution of competencies and the need to improve coherence and coordination among different administrative levels. [Libro Verde de la Gobernanza del Agua en España \(2020\)](#).

integration of climate adaptation into water management strategies, as articulated in Spain’s Strategic Orientations on Water and Climate Change, which aligns national planning with climate resilience, ecosystem protection, water security and relevant EU obligations.^{122 123}

2.27.2 Stakeholder landscape

Table 2-26 – High-level overview of the main water stakeholders in the Spanish context

Stakeholder	Type	Scope	Relevance
Ministry for the Ecological Transition and the Demographic Challenge (MITECO)	Public authority	National	Central policy authority for water, responsible for hydrological planning, national water strategy, EU compliance, and climate adaptation. Leads the approval of River Basin Management Plans and coordinates national investment in water infrastructure.
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAPA)	Public authority	National	Strategic for irrigation, drought response, rural development, and agricultural water use. Plays a key role in CAP negotiations and implementation of the Nitrates Directive.
Ministry of Health	Public authority	National	Responsible for drinking water quality standards, surveillance of contaminants, and public health criteria in water reuse regulations.
National Council on Water (Consejo Nacional del Agua)	Public authority	National	Consultative body linking national government, river basin authorities, and regional governments for water-policy decision-making.
River Basin Authorities (e.g. Confederaciones Hidrográficas: Ebro, Guadalquivir, Tagus, Segura, Júcar, Guadiana, Duero, Miño-Sil, Cantabrian,)	Public authority	Regional / National	Grants water rights and permits, issues water consents, manages state-owned water and coastal land, and oversees public services in water management and infrastructure maintenance.
Autonomous Communities Water Agencies (e.g. Catalonia Water Agency/Agència Catalana de l’Aigua, Basque Water Agency/URA – Agencia Vasca del Agua)	Public authority	Regional	Water management authorities for the Autonomous Communities. They are responsible for implementing water policy, managing internal basins and coordinating with MITECO for any inter-community issues.
Regional Governments (e.g. Madrid, Murcia, Extremadura)	Public authority	Regional	Regional ministries and agencies with strong influence on water policy, infrastructure, and investment. Implement national and EU directives at the regional level, manage regional water resources, and coordinate with basin authorities.
Municipalities	Public authority	Local	Over 8,000 municipalities manage local water infrastructure, supply, sanitation, and planning. Often own or operate utilities and play a key role in local implementation of water policies, flood protection, and drought resilience.
Water utility providers (e.g. Grupo Agbar (Veolia), Acciona Agua, FCC Aqualia)	Utility service provider (private)	National	Private water utility companies dominate the market providing drinking water supply, wastewater

¹²² European Commission (2025). [Environmental Implementation Report – Spain](#).

¹²³ MITECO (2022). [Strategic Orientations on Water and Climate Change](#).

Stakeholder	Type	Scope	Relevance
			collection, treatment and reuse, desalination, sewage and drainage services.
Water utility providers (e.g. Canal Isabel II)	Utility service provider (public)	Regional	Public utility providers are a minority but there exist few, such as in Madrid, and are responsible for the entire water cycle.
Business organisation (umbrella) (e.g. DAQUAS -Spanish Association of Water Supply and Sanitation Management Entities-, AguaEspaña -Spanish Association of Water Sector Companies-)	Industry	National	Business associations representing professionals in the water sector. They provide sectoral coordination, policy input, and technical expertise. Active in EU and international organisations (e.g., EurEau), as well as in consultation with national ministries.
Water intensive industries (e.g. Agro Sevilla, Mahou San Miguel)	Private company	National	Water-intensive industries include the agricultural and beverage sector. They participate in agricultural and irrigation associations, lobby for technical standards, and contribute to policy discussions on water use efficiency and sustainability.
Academic and research institutes, think tanks (e.g. IMDEA Water, ICRA, IIAMA)	Academia and Research Institutes	National	Leading research institutes providing scientific support, technical expertise, and policy advice. Participate in EU-funded projects, inform national and regional policy, and contribute to innovation in water management.
NGO (e.g. Fundación Nueva Cultura del Agua, SEO/Birdlife)	NGO	National	Play a role in advocacy, biodiversity protection and may provide technical inputs to policy.

2.27.3 Qualitative assessment of Spain's stakeholders

At the **national level**, Spain's water governance is marked by a high degree of complexity and multi-actor engagement. **MITECO** provides strategic leadership, while **MAPA** and the river basin authorities ensure operational delivery and technical planning. The river basin authorities are particularly influential, as they integrate hydrological, environmental, and stakeholder considerations into basin-level plans, manage allocations, and coordinate drought and flood responses. Regional governments and agencies play a critical role in managing internal basins and implementing national policy within their territories. Private utilities such as **Grupo Agbar**, **Acciona Agua**, and **FCC Aqualia** are central to service delivery, innovation, and infrastructure investment, often operating under public-private partnership models. Research institutes and technical bodies provide scientific support and policy advice. Overall, stakeholder engagement is robust, with strong mechanisms for public participation and cross-sectoral coordination, though challenges remain in ensuring coherence across regions and sectors. In this regard, Spain's Green Book on Water Governance¹²¹ recommends enhancing public participation, reinforcing cooperation between administrations at different levels, and improving coordination among sectoral policies to address fragmentation and strengthen the effectiveness of water governance.

At the EU level, Spain is a highly active and influential Member State, particularly through **MITECO**, the river basin authorities, and sectoral associations such as **DAQUAS** and **AguaEspaña**. Spanish authorities are deeply engaged in the implementation and negotiation of EU directives, contributing with technical expertise, compliance data, and policy feedback. River basin authorities are recognised for

their experience in integrated water management and transboundary cooperation, especially in basins shared with Portugal and France. Spanish utilities and research institutes participate in EU-funded projects and technical working groups, shaping innovation and best practices. Sectoral associations and private companies are active in European networks such as EurEau and Water Europe, ensuring that Spanish perspectives are represented in Brussels. While national and regional authorities have strong EU engagement, the diversity of regional approaches can sometimes complicate the articulation of a unified Spanish stance at the EU level.

2.27.4 Observations and gaps

Spain's water governance benefits from a comprehensive legal and institutional framework, strong technical capacity, and active stakeholder engagement at multiple levels. However, persistent challenges include fragmented responsibilities between national, regional, and basin authorities, uneven capacity and investment across regions, and the need for greater integration of climate adaptation and digitalisation. Water scarcity, drought, and quality issues remain acute, particularly in southern and eastern regions. While public participation is well established, there is scope to further strengthen the involvement of local authorities, smaller utilities, and non-governmental actors in strategic planning and decision-making. At the EU level, Spain's engagement is strong but sometimes hampered by internal diversity, highlighting the importance of ongoing coordination and dialogue to ensure coherent representation and effective policy implementation.

2.28 Sweden

2.28.1 Brief overview of Sweden's water governance

Sweden's water management framework is primarily based on its **Environmental Code**¹²⁴, which provides overarching principles for sustainable use of natural resources, including water. It incorporates key principles such as precaution, polluter pays, and sustainable resource management, and serves as the legal basis for water protection and permitting. Complementing this, the **Water Act**¹²⁵ regulates water projects, abstraction, drainage, and water rights, while the **Public Water Services Act**¹²⁶ governs municipal water supply and sewerage services. Strategic direction is provided by Sweden's **Environmental Quality Objectives system**¹²⁷, which includes targets such as 'flourishing lakes and streams' and 'good-quality groundwater' and by the **National Energy and Climate Plan 2021–2030**¹²⁸, which integrates water resilience into climate adaptation measures.

Water governance in Sweden operates at three levels. At the **central level**, the **Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management (SwAM)** and the **Swedish Environmental Protection Agency** coordinate national water policy, oversee compliance with EU directives, and manage reporting to the European Commission. They also guide the implementation of RBMPs and FRMPs. At the **regional level**, Sweden is divided into five water districts, each managed by a **County Administrative Board** acting as a water authority. These authorities prepare RBMPs, set environmental quality standards, and coordinate monitoring and public participation. At the **local level**, **municipalities** are responsible for drinking water supply, sewerage, and wastewater treatment, typically through municipally owned companies, and enforce local water protection measures. Local water councils also play an advisory role, providing stakeholder input and local knowledge.¹²⁹

Sweden faces growing challenges in water management. **Diffuse nutrient pollution from agriculture and forestry** continues to affect lakes and coastal waters, contributing to eutrophication in the Baltic Sea. **Emerging contaminants**, such as PFAS, pharmaceuticals, and microplastics, pose risks to drinking water sources and aquatic ecosystems and have already led to severe local incidents, including the world's worst known case of PFAs contamination, discovered in 2013 in the community of Kallinge in northern Sweden.¹³⁰ Hydro morphological pressures, including river regulation and barriers, limit ecological restoration and fish migration. Climate change exacerbates these issues by **increasing the frequency of droughts and intense rainfall events**, which strain **ageing water and wastewater infrastructure and raise flood risks in urban areas**. Many water bodies still fail to achieve good ecological status under the EU Water Framework Directive. This situation calls for improved agricultural practices, enhanced wastewater treatment, and stronger nature-based solutions for water retention and flood protection.¹³¹

¹²⁴ Swedish Environmental Code ([Miljöbalken, SFS 1998:808](#))

¹²⁵ Swedish Water Act ([1983:291](#))

¹²⁶ Swedish Public Water Services Act ([SFS 2006:412](#))

¹²⁷ Swedish Environmental Protection Agency (n.d.) [Swedish environmental objectives](#)

¹²⁸ Swedish National Energy and Climate Plan ([NECP](#)) 2021–2030

¹²⁹ European Committee of the Regions (n.d.) [Water Management - Sweden](#)

¹³⁰ The Guardian (2025) [Poison in the water: the town with the world's worst case of forever chemicals contamination](#)

¹³¹ European Commission (2025) [Environmental Implementation Report - Sweden](#)

2.28.2 Stakeholder landscape

Table 2-27 – High-level overview of the main water stakeholders in the Swedish context

Stakeholder	Type	Scope	Relevance
Ministry of Climate and Enterprise	Public authority	National	Oversees climate adaptation, water policy, and environmental protection; leads EU directives implementation.
Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management	Public authority	National	Central authority for water resources and marine ecosystems. Operating under the Ministry of Climate and Enterprise
Swedish Environmental Protection Agency	Public authority	National	Overseeing water quality monitoring, pollution control, and environmental compliance; provides funding for water projects.
Water authorities (County Administrative Boards)	Public authority	Regional	Regional authorities managing water districts; implementing national and EU water policies locally.
Municipalities	Public authority	Local	Responsible for the local control and regulation of tap water quality.
Private water utility providers (e.g. Veolia, Suez)	Utility provider (private)	National	Offering innovative water treatment and waste management solutions (e.g. automation).
Public water utility Providers (e.g. Stockholm Vatten och Avfall, Gothenburg Water, Malmö Water Utility)	Utility provider (public)	Regional	Management of drinking water and wastewater in their respective regions.
Business organisations (e.g. Swedish Water & Waste Water Associations)	Industry	National	Umbrella organisation for 290 municipal water utilities; member of EurEau.
Water-intensive industries (e.g. LKAB)	Private company	National	Mining company, being a significant water user for ore processing.
Academic and research institutes (e.g. RISE Research Institute of Sweden, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, Lund University)	Academia and Research Institutes	National	Research into water-related topics, such as hydrology, water engineering, water use in agriculture, climate adaptation. Water ecosystems, etc.
NGOs and civil society organisations (e.g. WWF Sweden, Swedish Society for Nature Conservation)	NGO	National	Working on water quality and pollution prevention, advocating for water ecosystem protection and biodiversity.
International bodies (e.g. Swedish Water House (SIWI))	International organisation	International	Platform for policy, science, and practice; promotes sustainable water governance internationally; organizes World Water Week.

2.28.3 Qualitative assessment of Sweden’s stakeholders

Sweden’s **national** water governance is supported by a comprehensive and well-coordinated set of stakeholder categories. Public authorities hold a central role in policy development, environmental regulation, and implementation of EU directives, ensuring strategic leadership and compliance. Utility providers are highly relevant for operational delivery of drinking water and wastewater services, with strong regional and municipal presence. Sectoral organisations contribute to coordination, technical standards, and advocacy for water services. Research and academic institutions are active in hydrology, water engineering, and climate adaptation, providing technical expertise and supporting innovation. NGOs are engaged in biodiversity protection, river restoration, and public awareness campaigns, with moderate influence on national policy. The private sector, including water-intensive industries and clean

technology providers, participates in water efficiency and pollution control initiatives, though its strategic role remains limited. **Overall, Sweden's national stakeholder landscape demonstrates strong institutional capacity and technical depth, with active contributions across public, academic, and civil society categories.**

At the **EU-level**, Sweden's stakeholder engagement is led by national public authorities and research institutions, which actively participate in EU water policy forums, technical committees, and cross-border cooperation platforms. Sectoral organisations are members of European networks (e.g. EurEau or the European Water Association) and contribute to regulatory discussions and compliance efforts. Academic and research bodies are involved in EU-funded projects, particularly in water quality, hydrology, and climate resilience. NGOs engage in EU conservation networks and advocacy campaigns, while private sector actors participate in sustainability and clean technology programmes. Utility providers comply with EU directives and are represented through umbrella organisations, but their direct influence on EU policymaking is limited. **Overall, Sweden maintains a visible and technically competent presence in EU water governance through its institutional expertise, research engagement, and sectoral representation.**

2.28.4 Observations and gaps

Sweden's water governance system is well-developed, with strong engagement from public authorities, research institutions, and sectoral organisations. However, several gaps remain across stakeholder categories. While national-level actors are highly integrated into both domestic and EU-level processes, regional and local utility providers have limited strategic influence and minimal direct involvement in EU policymaking. NGOs, although active in environmental advocacy and river restoration, often operate on a smaller scale and primarily contribute through project-based initiatives rather than formal policy development. The private sector, including water-intensive industries and clean technology providers, plays a role in compliance and innovation but remains underrepresented in strategic governance discussions. Consumer organisations and citizen engagement platforms show moderate relevance, with potential for stronger participation in shaping water policy and service delivery. These gaps highlight the need for improved multi-level coordination, greater inclusion of civil society and local actors, and more structured engagement of private and consumer sectors to ensure a more participatory and resilient water governance framework in Sweden.

2.29 Key international stakeholders

Global governance of freshwater is shaped by a diverse set of international institutions, scientific bodies, financial actors, and stakeholder networks that complement and influence national and EU-level water policy. At the core of the **United Nations system**, UN-Water¹³² serves as the main coordination mechanism for freshwater issues across UN agencies, while the UN General Assembly (UNGA) adopts global water resolutions such as the Water Action Decade. Additionally, the UN Special Rapporteur¹³³ on human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation contributes with human rights expertise to UN Water discussions. In this regard, UN Water provides a coordination platform where the human rights dimension of water and sanitation can be integrated into broader UN water policy, development and environmental work. Key UN agencies include UN Environment Programme (UNEP), which leads global water assessments and ecosystem protection; UN Development Programme (UNDP), a major actor in water governance and capacity-building; and UNESCO, through its International Hydrological Programme (IHP) and World Water Assessment Programme (WWAP). Other critical bodies include the World Health Organisation (WHO) for drinking-water standards, Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) for irrigation and water accounting, UNICEF for WASH services, and UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), which administers the Water Convention (Helsinki Convention), where EU Member States are active participants.

International financial institutions and development banks play a pivotal role in shaping water investment and infrastructure globally. The World Bank Group is the largest global funder of water infrastructure and governance reforms, while the International Monetary Fund (IMF) influences macroeconomic policies that affect water sector financing. Within Europe, the European Investment Bank (EIB) and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) are key actors, financing water and wastewater projects both within the EU and in neighbouring regions. Regional investment banks, such as the Nordic Investment Bank (NIB), also contribute to water financing. Beyond Europe, the African Development Bank (AfDB) and Asian Development Bank (ADB) collaborate closely with the EU on water initiatives, reinforcing the link between development finance and global water policy.

Multilateral environmental agreements and transboundary river basin organisations further anchor international water governance. The UNECE Water Convention and the UN Watercourses Convention provide frameworks for managing shared water resources, while the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), and the UNFCCC integrate water concerns into biodiversity and climate agendas. Furthermore, transboundary cooperation is supported by organisations such as the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR), the International Commission for the Protection of the Rhine (ICPR), and the International Sava River Basin Commission (ISRBC), which align closely with EU legislation and facilitate coordination across Member States and neighbouring countries.

Global water networks, NGOs, research bodies, and private-sector platforms complement institutional frameworks by driving advocacy, knowledge exchange, and innovation. Networks such as the Global Water Partnership (GWP), World Water Council (WWC), and International Water

¹³² UN Water is an inter-agency coordination mechanism formally established within the United Nations system to ensure coherence and coordination on freshwater and sanitation related issues. It was established in 2003 by the UN Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB), which is the highest-level coordination forum of the UN system, chaired by the UN Secretary General. Its creation responded to the fragmented way water issues were being addressed across multiple UN entities.

¹³³ UN Special Rapporteur reports directly to the Human Rights Council and the General Assembly.

Association (IWA) promote integrated water resources management and convene global forums. Civil society actors like WWF, Greenpeace, and WaterAid advocate for freshwater conservation, pollution control, and WASH services. Research and policy bodies such as the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), International Water Management Institute (IWMI), Stockholm International Water Institute (SIWI), and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) provide scientific evidence and governance indicators. Finally, private-sector platforms like AquaFed (federation of private water operators), the CEO Water Mandate (under UN Global Compact), and the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD) advance corporate water stewardship and sustainability commitments.

Global water governance benefits from a **highly developed and diverse institutional architecture**, with strong participation from UN agencies, multilateral development banks, scientific bodies and transboundary river basin organisations. Coordination mechanisms such as **UN-Water** and conventions like the **UNECE Water Convention** provide important platforms for alignment, while international financial institutions play a decisive role in shaping investment priorities and reforms. Research institutions, global networks and NGOs contribute substantially to knowledge generation, agenda-setting, and advocacy, ensuring that water is increasingly linked to climate, biodiversity and development agendas. Together, these actors form a multi-layered global governance system that shapes water policy, investment, and sustainability agendas worldwide.

However, **significant gaps remain in terms of coherence, inclusiveness and implementation impact**. The global water governance landscape is fragmented, with overlapping mandates and limited binding authority, leading to weak accountability and uneven follow-ups at the national and local levels. Local utilities, sub-national authorities, and community-based actors are often underrepresented in global forums, despite being central to implementation. Civil society influence varies widely across regions and is often constrained by funding and access to decision-making spaces, while private-sector engagement is growing but remains uneven and sometimes focused more on voluntary commitments than systemic change. These gaps highlight the need for stronger vertical integration between global, regional and local levels, clearer leadership on freshwater governance, and more inclusive participation of implementers and affected communities in international water policy processes.



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