CCMI FACTSHEET:

BLUE DEAL ACCELERATOR
(CCMI/261)

With water scarcity, climate change and unsustainable water use increasingly affecting Europe's economy and society as a whole, the EESC calls for water to be recognised as a critical resource, on par with energy, underpinning industrial competitiveness, strategic autonomy and resilience.

In its own-initiative opinion ***Blue Deal Accelerator – technology, skills and finance for a water-resilient future***, the EESC proposes concrete recommendations to support the implementation of the European Water Resilience Strategy. The opinion calls for stronger integration of water across industrial policy, including the Circular Economy Act and the Industrial Accelerator Act. It calls for scaled-up financing, skills and innovation, supported i.a. by interoperable data and water conditionalities to guide funding.

KEY FACTS: THE URGENCY TO ACT

Water challenges create **economic and strategic risks** which already **affect key industrial sectors**, infrastructure, supply chains as well as communities and ecosystems across EU.

Water systems are under pressure from **ageing infrastructure, leakage, climate extremes and rising demand**, while investment needs remain **structurally underfunded.**

The EU faces a **significant water investment gap of EUR 23 billion per year**, while up to EUR 255 billion will be needed by 2030 for water supply and sanitation alone to comply with EU legislation.

Each euro invested in water generates an estimated EUR 2.35 in economic output and creates around 16 000 jobs per EUR 1 billion invested, underlining the **strong economic return of water investments.**

The **water-energy nexus** is central to the green transition: many low-carbon technologies increase water demand, while water services depend on reliable and affordable energy.

Fragmented and incomplete data hinder effective policymaking, funding decisions and accountability. **Robust, interoperable and transparent water data systems are essential** to guide permits and investment priorities.

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE EESC OPINION CCMI/261

1) Make water a strategic pillar of EU industrial policy

- Treat water as a **critical production resource**, explicitly embedded across EU industrial strategies and instruments, including the **Investment Accelerator Act.**
- Introduce a **"water test"** for EU legislation and make water considerations, such as efficiency, reuse and retention measures, a condition for **permits, investments and public support**.

2) Establish a **Blue Deal Accelerator** as a **cross-sectoral implementation framework**

- Address water-smart technologies, workforce development, and investment mobilisation as key enabling drivers of water resilience and industrial transformation.

3) Apply "water efficiency first" as a binding principle

- Progressively integrate **water efficiency** into EU legislation, funding conditionalities and planning decisions, inspired by the energy efficiency first principle.
- Develop a **harmonised EU methodology** to monitor water efficiency across the full water cycle.

4) Scale up investment through a coherent EU water financing framework

- Design funding based on an overview of investment needs and supported by simplified governance and a single funding access point - a Blue Transition Fund.
- Strengthen project pipelines through the **Water Resilience Investment Accelerator**, including **nature-based solutions** such as wetlands as bankable assets.
- Prioritise investments with measurable outcomes, including leakage reduction.

5) Build a European Water Data Space

- Establish a **European Water Data Space** as a "single source of truth" to ensure transparency, comparability and evidence-based policymaking.
- Improve digital water monitoring, public reporting of water balances and interoperability of data systems to guide investments and track progress.

6) Invest in skills and implementation capacity to support water resilience and industrial transitions

- Develop the **European Water Academy (EWA)** as a practice-oriented platform for lifelong learning across the water value chain, aligned with the **Union of Skills** and the **European Skills Agenda**.
- Strengthen local capacity through **train-the-trainer approaches**, apprenticeships and inclusive training pathways, including specific opportunities for young people.

7) Integrate water as a strategic resource in the Circular Economy Act

- Include measures to foster water efficiency and reuse, pollution prevention, and resource recovery.
- Use public procurement to stimulate demand for water-smart, circular and resilient solutions.

8) Position water resilience at the heart of EU external action

- Make water resilience a **cross-cutting priority** of **Global Gateway** partnerships.
- Support international cooperation through **wetland partnerships**, digital water solutions and skills development, reinforcing the EU's global leadership in blue diplomacy and water technologies.

ALIGNMENT WITH EU COMMISSION PRIORITIES FOR IMPLEMENTATION (2025-2029)

The opinion contributes directly to the **European Water Resilience Strategy**, building on the EESC's work on the **EU Blue Deal**. It provides recommendations to foster water resilience via the **Clean Industrial Deal**, the **Industrial Accelerator Act**, the **Circular Economy Act** and the **Union of Skills**, positioning water resilience as a **core enabler of competitiveness, climate resilience and strategic autonomy**. In view of the UN Water Conference 2026, the opinion addresses also the international dimension of water **governance, investment and cooperation,** notably **under the Global Gateway**.