

Urban Water Agenda 2030 Strategy

Draft as of 14 June 2017

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(1) Introduction

- Local governments need to be increasingly aware of the impact of their water management policies and practices on the regional water cycle, an impact which is on the rise given that already 75 % of the EU population are living in cities today and the trend to further urbanisation is persisting.
- Only a systems-based and integrated approach to water management at all levels of government and including all key stakeholders can be effective for achieving a good status of water resources in the European Union as required by the EU Water Framework Directive. In this respect, the contribution of municipalities to sustainable water resource management must be fully acknowledged. Vice-versa, the impact of EU and national legislation on cities must be fully considered. Furthermore, it is necessary that national governments and municipalities co-operate more closely.
- It is crucial to recognise the essential role of water for achieving sustainability goals in most urban sectors. Sustainable water management at all levels is therefore also indispensable to the implementation of the EU Urban Agenda and in particular its partnerships on climate change adaptation, land-use, the circular economy and energy transition.
- This draft of the UWA2030 Strategy provides a range of entry points – here called ‘strategic directions’ - for local governments to join the initiative. Given the different situations in which local governments operate in the water sector, it has been designed considering different legal and institutional frameworks, sizes and geographical locations of cities, financial capacities, local priorities etc.
- While this strategy mainly targets local governments, its implementation relies on their strong collaboration with water utilities.

(2) UWA2030 Vision

In 2030, the Urban Water Agenda will be:

- A network of cities striving for excellence in sustainable urban water management
- A growing movement of high ambition
- A central meeting place for local governments eager to share their water management expertise
- A platform for cities to meet with stakeholders in the water sector and collaborate for making urban water management more sustainable.

(3) Overall objectives

- To contribute, through the strengthening of the urban dimension, to the implementation of EU policies and legislation for improving and safeguarding European water resources, and to the enhancement of quality of life in European cities.
- To enable local governments to accelerate the implementation of local policies and practices for sustainable urban water management.

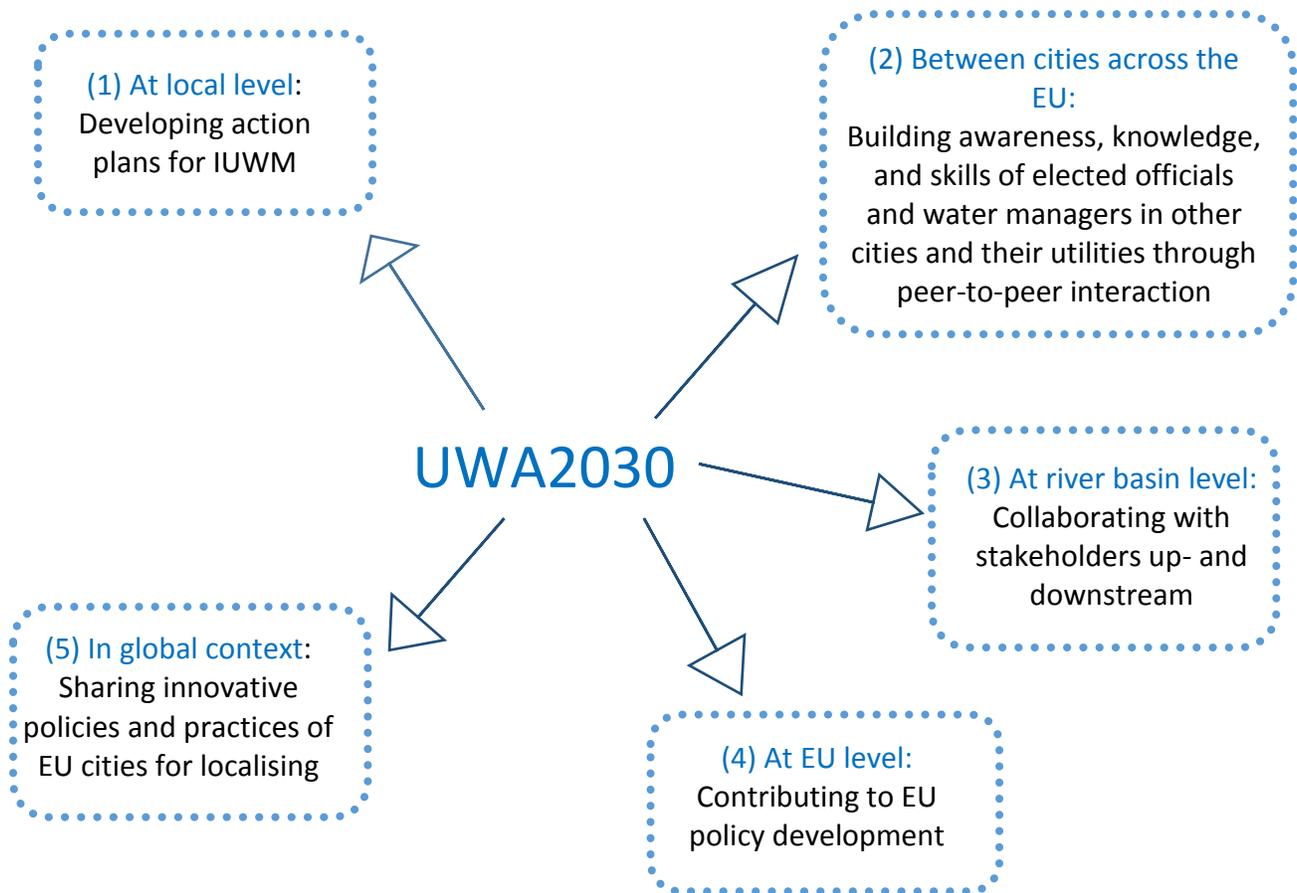
(4) Principles

In the spirit of globally recognised concepts of sustainability such as reflected in the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#) (adopted by Heads of State and Governments in New York September 2015), in the [New Urban Agenda](#) (the outcome of Habitat III that took place in Quito, Ecuador one month afterwards), as well as inspired by the [European Water Framework Directive](#) and the [OECD Water Governance Initiative](#), the Urban Water Agenda 2030 will be guided by the following key principles:

- *Systems approach:* Water should be managed by taking the entire water cycle into account, and with the shared objective of ensuring the protection of water resources from the municipal territory to the entire river basin, and including the linkages of the urban water cycle, where applicable, to the harbour, coastal and marine environment.
- *Participation:* Given the specific nature of water as a common good, the interests, needs and priorities of all water users and other stakeholders in the water sector are to be recognised.
- *Balance between human and environmental needs:* Water is a vital part of the earth's ecosystem and water uses by humans must be in balance with natural requirements.
- *Multi-level and transparent governance:* All levels of government need to coordinate their policies and actions.
- *Integration of water in overall urban management:* Water is essential for virtually all other urban sectors – in particular climate change adaptation, land-use, energy efficiency and the circular economy – and can only be sustainably managed in consideration of these sectors and integrated into the management of a city as a whole.

(5) Strategic directions

The Urban Water Agenda 2030 encompasses five strategic directions which allow local governments to identify their own tailored pathway for commitment, depending on their specific profile and situation:



In the following can be found described how local governments can engage in these five directions.

Strategic Direction 1 - Action at local level



- *Commitment by local government:*
To develop an action plan for integrated urban water management
- ✓ Commitment regarded as fulfilled once executive summary of politically endorsed action plan is published on UWA2030 website
- *Key ingredients:*
Urban water cycle management – systems approach – stakeholder engagement – mainstreaming water issues in urban planning and across all local government sectors/nexus approach - blue-green-grey integration - working towards the WFD targets
- *Services proposed to be provided through the UWA2030 initiative:*
 - Development of a methodology (guidelines for the planning process and proposed template for the actual plan)
 - Access to tools provided by the European Commission
 - Follow-up and dissemination of commitments
 - Helpdesk

Strategic Direction 2 - Action between cities



- *Commitment by local government:*
To build the awareness, knowledge and skills of elected officials and water managers in public institutions at home and in other cities through participation in one of the several modalities of peer-to-peer interaction proposed by the UWA2030.
- ✓ Commitment regarded as fulfilled once report on interactions (following certain requirements) is published on UWA2030 website
- *Key ingredients:*
Peer-to-peer capacity-building - technical visits – staff exchanges - peer-to-peer reviews – peer-to-peer coaching
- *Services proposed to be provided through the UWA2030 initiative:*
 - Guide on range of modalities for effective peer-to-peer capacity-building actions
 - Facilitation and documentation of peer-to-peer exchanges
 - Peer-learning events on selected topics (1/year)
 - Information on funding and financing opportunities

Strategic Direction 3: Action at river basin level



- *Commitment by local government:*

To engage in collaborative action with stakeholders outside municipal boundaries/elsewhere in the catchment, including between rural and urban areas around a shared commitment to sustainable water management

✓ Commitment regarded as fulfilled once the action is in motion and a description which is based on a template - highlighting the process of engaging with the stakeholders, the achieved results, and the lessons learnt so far - is published on the UWA2030 website.

- *Key ingredients:*

Comprehensive water cycle management – multi-governance approach – safeguarding water supplies – climate change adaptation beyond municipal boundaries

- *Services proposed to be provided through the UWA2030 initiative:*

- Methodology, for instance guidelines for cities on how to set up a focus group on water management, involving many different stakeholders
- Template for case description
- Follow-up and dissemination of commitments (yearly)

Strategic Direction 4: Action at EU level



- *Commitment by local government:*

To advocate for and proactively engage in opportunities/mechanisms to shape EU water policies

✓ Commitment regarded as fulfilled if city can provide evidence on regular contributions to EU water policy development (e.g. through participation in certain policy meetings or by being a member of a specific body/committee¹)

- *Key ingredients:*

Evaluation of EU Water Framework Directive - mainstreaming water in EU Urban Agenda

- *Services proposed to be provided through the UWA2030 initiative:*

- Advocacy work in favour of cities in the EU Urban Agenda Partnerships
- Facilitation of relevant discussion and exchange platforms (3 meetings/year, follow-up)
- Publication of news bits in relation to relevant policy processes

¹ Meetings/bodies/committees etc. that are considered relevant in this context would be pre-defined.

Strategic Direction 5: Action in global context



- *Commitment by local government:*

To share own innovative policies and/or practices (together with lessons learnt) for localizing water-related Sustainable Development Goals (in particular SDG 6 on clean water and sanitation, SDG 11 on sustainable cities and communities, but also more broadly SDGs 1, 3, 5, 8, 10, 13-15)

✓ Commitment regarded as fulfilled if city has provided evidence on its engagement in localizing the water-related Sustainable Development Goals, including by sharing its policies and practices through the platform for [Localising the SDGs](#).

- *Key aspects:* innovation – think global, act local
- *Services proposed to be provided through the UWA2030 initiative:*
 - Guidance for cities on how to engage in *Localising the SDGs*
 - Production of case studies (5/year)

(6) Commitment process

Local governments commit themselves to the Urban Water Agenda 2030 as such as well as for their engagement in at least one of the strategic directions - including the corresponding scheme of performance – for a duration of three years. If they want to continue with their engagement, they have to renew their commitment after three years. They can also focus then on (an)other strategic direction(s).

(7) Reporting and monitoring

Each strategic direction has its own mode of reporting and monitoring as described above in the sections “commitments regarded as fulfilled if...”. No more detailed reporting/monitoring will be required. Commitments and actions will also be showcased at three-yearly conferences.