

**48th SESSION****Water resources under stress: towards better local and regional governance**

Resolution 511 (2025)<sup>1</sup>

1. The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe (“the Congress”) refers to:
  - a. the European Charter of Local Self-Government (ETS No. 122) (“the Charter”), especially its Articles 3, 4 and 9;
  - b. the European Outline Convention on Transfrontier Co-operation between Territorial Communities and Authorities (ETS No. 106), along with its Additional Protocol (ETS No. 159), Protocol No. 2 (ETS No. 169) and Protocol No. 3 (CETS No. 206);
  - c. the Priorities of the Congress 2021-2026, specifically Priority d: Environmental issues and climate action in cities and regions;
  - d. Congress Resolution 500 (2024) “Local and regional responses to natural disasters and climate hazards: from risk preparedness to resilience”;
  - e. Congress Resolution 489 (2022) “A fundamental right to the environment: a matter for local and regional authorities - Towards a green reading of the European Charter of Local Self-Government”;
  - f. Congress Resolution 278 (2009) “Public water and sewer services for sustainable development”;
  - g. Congress Resolution 183 (2004) “The quality and quantity of drinking water”;
  - h. Congress Resolution 163 (2003) “The role of territorial authorities in the management of river basins”;
  - i. Recommendation Rec(2001)14 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the European Charter on Water Resources;
  - j. The European Green Deal, EU Water Framework Directive, Drinking Water Directive (revised), Groundwater Directive, Floods Directive and Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive;
  - k. United Nations General Assembly Resolution A/RES/70/169 (2016) “The human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation”;
  - l. the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development of the United Nations, in particular SDG 1 “End poverty in all its forms everywhere”, SDG 3 “Good health and well-being”; SDG 6 “For clean water and sanitation for all”; SDG 11 “Sustainable cities and communities”; SDG 12 “Ensuring sustainable consumption and production patterns”, SDG 13: “Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts” and SDG 14 “For life below water”.

---

<sup>1</sup> Debated and adopted by the Congress on 26 March 2025 (see document CG(2025)48-14, explanatory memorandum), co-rapporteurs: Heiða Björg HILMISDOTTIR, Iceland (L, SOC/G/PPD) and Teuvo HATVA, Finland (R, ILDG).

2. The Congress points out that:

- a. fresh water is a vital resource for European societies, economies and the environment; sustainable use and conservation of freshwater resources - including lakes, rivers, groundwater, and wetlands - are essential for sustainable development and are key to eradicating poverty and ensuring human development, health and wellbeing;
- b. access to drinking water and sanitation is recognised by the United Nations as a human right; however, many people still lack access to drinking water and sanitation, which exacerbates inequality and poses health and safety risks;
- c. Europe's water situation is increasingly precarious due to extreme weather conditions and climate-related disasters, as well as population growth, placing cities and regions at risk of water shortages, flooding, and pollution;
- d. the Russian Federation's war of aggression against Ukraine has far-reaching environmental consequences for water resources and infrastructure, highlighting the need for resilient water systems and robust water infrastructure protection;
- e. sustainable water governance which addresses water-related challenges is crucial; it requires a strategic and inclusive watershed-based approach that uncouples economic growth from water consumption, and emphasises protection, reuse, and recycling of freshwater resources;
- f. effective water governance requires a strategic, multi-level and multidisciplinary approach, with local and regional authorities, national authorities and other relevant actors - including civil society, academia and the private sector – collaborating to manage water resources and preserve ecosystems and biodiversity;
- g. local and regional authorities are uniquely well-placed to develop water governance frameworks that meet their communities' specific needs.

3. In the light of the foregoing, the Congress calls on the local and regional authorities of Council of Europe member States to:

- a. prioritise water governance and water security at the local and regional levels;
- b. formulate and enforce water governance policies that ensure freshwater availability, accessibility, affordability, acceptability, quality, and safety for all, in the light of the human rights principles and standards;
- c. integrate water management into planning and development, recognising water's interdependence with ecosystems and accounting for water balances, watershed boundaries and groundwater reserves, while incorporating flood zones into land planning;
- d. promote efficiency, effectiveness and trust in water governance through multidisciplinary and multi-stakeholder collaboration involving public, private and civil society actors to strengthen local democracy and ensure cooperation between urban and rural areas connected by rivers and aquifers;
- e. ensure sustainable freshwater management by setting consumption reduction targets, promoting circular water use, combating pollution and implementing effective water reuse schemes;
- f. encourage the development of innovative technologies and business models that promote sustainable water use; and leverage public procurement to support smart water management solutions;
- g. ensure that water service providers maintain the security and reliability of networks, invest in long-term infrastructure projects and monitor progress regularly;
- h. engage the public through consultation, education and participation for sustainable water use, and regularly communicate the progress and requirements for smart water management.

4. The Congress calls on local and regional authorities and their national associations to take account of this resolution and the accompanying explanatory memorandum in their management of water resources. It also asks its statutory bodies to take the present resolution into account in their activities.