

MARUF 2025
"On the Shore of All Possibilities"
International urban forum organised
by Marmara Municipalities Union (1-3 October 2025)

Panel discussion co-organised with the Congress on "Local Resilience and Crisis Preparedness: Addressing Environmental and Climate Challenges"

Istanbul, 1 October 2025

Speaking points for Mr Teuvo HATVA, Regional Councillor at Kainuu (Finland) and Congress of Local and Regional Authorities' co-rapporteur on "Water resources under stress: towards better local and regional governance"

Introduction (4 minutes)

- When we speak about local resilience and crisis preparedness in the face of environmental and climate challenges, my country, Finland, often comes to mind as a place blessed with natural abundance: vast forests, clean air, and plenty of lakes.
- But the reality is somewhat different. Finland, like the rest of Europe, is already experiencing the effects of the climate crisis: unpredictable rainfall, floods in some areas, droughts in others, and risks to water quality and ecosystems: we really are all in this together
- I am a co-rapporteur for the Congress report on **Water resources under stress** (which you can find in the library here in the Centre). This report provides both

a realistic analysis and practical tools for developing strategic water governance. Only through decisive, forward-looking political leadership can we effectively meet water-related challenges and secure water security, sustainability, and resilience for the long term.

- In the north of Europe, we have much water. But water governance is not just about quantity — it's about quality, timing, preparedness and resilience in the face of rapid change.
- And after all, the wider environmental crisis — connects us all in Europe and beyond. The Congress adopted the report on water governance in March of this year, and the United Nations has recognised access to drinking water and sanitation as a human right.
- The European Court of Human Rights has also issued several rulings regarding accessibility and quality of water. This human rights-based approach is of key importance, including for local and regional politicians, guiding us towards the right policy decisions.
- Cities and regions are at the forefront of managing water resources. They provide drinking water and sanitation, while also safeguarding ecosystems and biodiversity.
- Yet, these responsibilities are facing ever greater challenges. We are confronted with increasing extremes: too much water, too little water, or polluted water. Climate change, population growth, unsustainable agricultural practices, aging infrastructure, and poor governance all intensify water stress.
- The Russian war of aggression against Ukraine has created an environmental and water catastrophe with effects far beyond the borders of Ukraine. Türkiye being close, just across the Black Sea, knows this very well. The additional

stress from altered shipping trade, drifting sea mines and marine pollution exacerbate ecological pressures.

- While the impact of conflict on water can be unexpected, we can very well anticipate further climate-related problems.
- In recent years, severe weather has taken a heavy toll in Europe. Major floods in 2024 and 2025 devastated various parts of Europe. Türkiye's northern Black Sea region, already battered by floods and landslides in 2024, has once again suffered severe flooding this year,
- Projections indicate that such extreme weather events will become more frequent and more intense. These events make water resources scarcer, less predictable, and more polluted. They destabilise communities, erode soils, and undermine food and energy security.
- According to the UN World Meteorological Organization, Europe faces one of the largest projected increases in flood risk, while also being the fastest-warming continent in the world.
- We must be ready to act and interact across all levels and borders—local, regional, national, and international.
- Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive and strategic approach to water governance which must be multilevel, with central governments working in partnership with local and regional authorities. It must also be multistakeholder and inclusive, involving the private sector and civil society.

Points for the discussion

- Let me emphasize five additional points:

- Water doesn't stop at city or regional borders—it flows naturally through rivers and their basins. For this reason, managing water is more effective if it's done at the level of the whole **river basin**, not just one town or region. That's why it's important for municipalities and regions to help set up river basin committees - groups that bring together all stakeholders in the basin. For them to work well, local authorities need to provide enough resources and support.
- **Cooperation between cities and their rural surroundings** (urban-rural interplay) is also essential. Water is central to landscape planning that strengthens resilience and climate adaptation. Water reuse must become the norm, with wastewater treated as a circular resource in both urban and rural settings. Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems—using natural solutions such as ponds, wetlands, and marshes—should be widely adopted.
- **Digital technologies** are transforming water management. Real-time monitoring and modelling improve water quality oversight, flow management, and responses to droughts and floods. They also enhance transparency, foster stakeholder engagement, and build trust. These tools are central to the future of water governance.
- **Public procurement**, with its significant investment potential, can further stimulate innovation. Cutting-edge solutions include smart water metering, advanced recycling technologies, and rainwater harvesting systems. Green infrastructure innovations—such as green roofs, permeable pavements, and constructed wetlands—improve water absorption, reduce flooding, and limit pollution.
- Local and regional authorities must **lead by example and act as agents of change**.