

Discussion Paper

Water Resilience Strategy March 2025

Introduction

The European Union's Water Resilience Strategy is a critical initiative aimed at addressing the continent's growing water challenges, including climate change, pollution, and overuse. This strategy seeks to enhance water efficiency, protect aquatic ecosystems, and ensure fair access to water resources. European standardization, led by organizations like CEN and CENELEC, can play a pivotal role in supporting these objectives by providing technical frameworks that interpret and implement policy actions effectively.

CEN and CENELEC have extensive experience in developing standardization deliverables in support of many important EU environmental legislations and especially in the water sector, such as:

- Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive (2024/3019/EU)
- Drinking Water Directive (2020/2184/EU)
- Groundwater Directive (2006/118/EC)
- Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC)
- Flora Fauna Habitat Directive (92/43/EEC)

Many Technical Committees in CEN and CENELEC draft standards directly related to implement requirements given in those directives for water use and infrastructure, such as standards for wastewater treatment plants, agricultural irrigation, drinking water installations, waste water installations, renovation and reparation of water infrastructure, water quality requirements and monitoring, ecological requirements for water infrastructure, quality requirements for building products, toxicology, wastewater monitoring for viruses and pathogens (the list is not exhaustive).

This experience provides a strong basis to support the implementation of this important strategy. CEN and CENELEC are reliable Partners for the Commission to implement environmental requirements.

The Role of Standardization in Water Resilience

1. **Technical Frameworks:** CEN and CENELEC's Technical Committees are already developing standards that align with the EU Water Resilience Strategy's goals, such as enhancing water efficiency and reducing pollution. These standards serve as a catalyst for innovation, ensuring that new technologies and practices are integrated into the water sector efficiently.
2. **Implementation and Governance:** Standardization facilitates the implementation of the strategy by providing clear guidelines for infrastructure development, finance, and security measures. The CEN and CENELEC Strategic Advisory Body on Environment (SABE) is active in coordinating the activities of its Technical Committees in the environmental sector. This helps ensure consistency across Member States, enhancing the overall effectiveness of water management policies.
3. **Innovation and Competitiveness:** By supporting the development of water-smart technologies and circular economy practices, standardization can contribute to a competitive EU water industry. Innovative products for water re-use are already under development and accompanied by standardization, to ensure their broad application in the European market in line with EU product and safety regulation. This aligns with the strategy's objective of promoting a clean, water-wise circular economy.

Recommendations for Integration

1. **Incorporate Standardization into Policy Frameworks:** The EU should explicitly reference standardization in the Water Resilience Strategy to ensure that policy actions are technically supported and aligned with existing standards.
2. **Collaborative Approach:** Support and widen existing collaboration between CEN, CENELEC, and stakeholders involved in the strategy to ensure that standards reflect the needs of the water sector and support policy objectives effectively.
3. **Funding for Standardization Activities:** Allocate resources within the EU budget to support standardization efforts related to water resilience, ensuring that these activities are well-funded and integrated into broader policy initiatives.

Conclusion

By leveraging European standardization, the EU Water Resilience Strategy can be more effectively implemented, ensuring that policy actions are technically sound and aligned with the latest innovations in water management. This integration will enhance the strategy's impact, contributing to a more resilient and sustainable water future for Europe. CEN and CENELEC's are committed to supporting the EU Water Resilience Strategy with technical and pragmatic solutions through the contributions of Technical Committees CEN TC 164 Water supply and CEN TC 165 Wastewater engineering and by proposing the establishment of a new CEN Technical Committee on *Water resilience and sustainable use*, specifically tailored to address the challenges of water resilience and sustainable use as defined by EU strategy.

About CEN and CENELEC

CEN (European Committee for Standardization) and CENELEC (European Committee for Electrotechnical Standardization) are recognized by the European Union (EU) and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) as European Standardization Organizations responsible for developing standards at European level, as per European Regulation 1025/2012. The members are the National Standards Bodies (CEN) and National Electrotechnical Committees (CENELEC) from 34 European countries. European Standards (ENs) and other standardization deliverables are adopted by CEN and CENELEC, are accepted and recognized in all of these countries. These standards contribute to enhancing safety, improving quality, facilitating cross-border trade and strengthening of the European Single Market. They are developed through a process of collaboration among experts nominated by business and industry, research institutions, consumer and environmental organizations, trade unions and other societal stakeholders. CEN and CENELEC work to promote the international alignment of standards in the framework of technical cooperation agreements with ISO (International Organization for Standardization) and the IEC (International Electrotechnical Commission).