WORK PROGRAMME 2025-2027

COMMON IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY EU WATER LAW

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1. Introduction

The Common Implementation Strategy (CIS) for the Water Framework Directive (WFD)[1] was launched in 2001, to work towards successful implementation of the core legislation on water at European Union (EU) level and in associated countries[2]. Since then, implementation of the Floods, Environmental Quality Standards (EQS) and Groundwater Directives has become closely linked with that of the WFD and part of the CIS, while coordination with the implementation of other water-related Directives (Urban Waste Water, Drinking Water, Bathing Water[3], Nitrates, Marine Strategy Framework, Nature and Industrial Emissions Directives) is gradually improving. Over the past several years, the CIS has itself been implemented through successive work programmes, each lasting three years.

In the context of CIS, there have been 67 Guidelines and technical documents published. These pertain to surface water or groundwater or both and the main topics covered are: Ecological and chemical status and monitoring.

This CIS Work Programme 2025-2027 has been drafted following discussions in the meetings of Water Directors, the Strategic Coordination Group (SCG) and the existing CIS Working Groups and Ad Hoc Task Groups. It will start as Member States are half-way through their 3rd River Basin Management Plan (RBMP) and 2nd Flood Risk Management Plan (FRMP) periods, and the Commission should already have published its assessment of those plans. A questionnaire was circulated to the SCG and Working Group members in March 2024 by DG Environment aimed to obtain feedback on the guidance documents, to develop the next CIS Work Programme, and to identify possible improvements in the organisation and modus operandi of the working groups and meetings.

The new Work Program coincides with the start of a new Commission where the development of a Water Resilience policy, as also called for by the European Council, has been flagged as a strategic priority. Therefore, it is the chance to use the CIS to usefully shape that policy.

2. Objectives of the CIS Work Programme 2025-2027

The main objectives of the CIS remain, as was the case in the previous Work Programmes, to improve implementation of the water legislation and to promote the integration of water-related issues into other environmental policies, as well as in other sectoral policies such as agriculture, transport and energy.

[1] Directive 2000/60/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2000, establishing a framework for Community action in the field of water policy (OJ L 327, 22/12/2000, p. 1) as amended by European Parliament and Council Decision 2455/2001/EC (OJ L 331, 15/12/2001, p.1)

[2] Representatives of EEA/EFTA countries are associated with the EU Water Directors meetings and the Common Implementation Strategy y and participate in the Strategic Coordination Group and relevant Working Groups.

[3] The Directives on Urban Waste Water, Drinking and Bathing Water are often referred to as the group of "Water Industry Directives".

This Work Program is the last one before the deadline of compliance of 2027 is reached, so there is a need to make the most of it. The CIS Work programme and the RBMPs and FRMPs will be implemented in the ongoing context of the European Green Deal that has also brought enhanced water protection from other legislative instruments beyond the WFD.

The main objectives of the Work Programme 2025-2027 will be to:

- contribute to beat the triple planetary crisis - climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution that the Green Deal is aimed to overcome;
- overcome the implementation deficiencies that have been identified during the assessment of the 3rd River Basin Management Plans and the 2nd Floods Risk Management Plans;
- ensure continued cooperation towards the next implementation cycles;
- contribute to the development of a Water Resilience policy as announced by the Commission but also called for by the European Council and the European Parliament;
- contribute to the future implementation of the revised lists of surface and groundwater pollutants, and the recently revised Commission Decision on intercalibration;

Moreover, since the CIS Work Programme 2022-24 was adopted, it has become even clearer that climate change will worsen extreme weather events and the impacts of already existing pressures on water. In March 2024 the Commission adopted a Communication on "Managing Climate Risks – protecting people and prosperity"[4], supported by a major report (the EUCRA[5]) from the European Environment Agency (EEA). The Communication and report emphasise the importance of ensuring appropriate water management. A further EEA report entitled "Responding to climate change impacts on human health in Europe: focus on floods, droughts and water quality"[6], conveying a similar message, was published in May. It is therefore only logical that the CIS Work Programme 2025-27 includes activities aimed at addressing water scarcity, droughts and floods (water resilience issues), and that the previous Ad Hoc Task Group on Water Scarcity and Droughts has been designated as a fully-fledged CIS Working Group.

Feedback was received advocating for deepening the work on climate change but also on integrating water protection in other policy areas such as agriculture, energy, biodiversity protection, industry or transport. Furthermore, a strong call was made to work more intensely on economics, common approaches to exemptions and invasive alien species.

The proposal to revise the lists of water pollutants under the WFD also identifies several additional substances, including per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) as posing a widespread risk, and some others (microplastics and antimicrobial resistance genes) as

[4] EUR-Lex - 52024DC0091 - EN - EUR-Lex (europa.eu)

[5] European Climate Risk Assessment — European Environment Agency (europa.eu)

[6] Responding to climate change impacts on human health in Europe: focus on floods, droughts and water quality — European Environment Agency (europa.eu)

requiring investigation. The negotiations on the proposals to revise the Urban Waste Water Treatment and Industrial Emissions Directives and to establish an Industrial Emissions Portal (IEP) have concluded, and the entry into force of the revised Directives and IEP Regulation should help in achieving the objectives of the WFD. In addition, the entry into force of the Nature Restoration Law and its targets and relevant provisions on aquatic ecosystems and free-flowing rivers is also highly relevant for the next work programme of the CIS.

The CIS Work Programme 2022-24 already placed emphasis on the exchange of best practices between Member States, and this is expected to continue, as will efforts to take a cross-sectoral approach consistent with the Green Deal. Some new guidance has been published, including through the publication of a Delegated Regulation[7] on risk assessment for water reuse, or revised, e.g. on river basin management in a changing climate, or is expected to be finalised by the end of 2024, e.g. on monitoring frequencies. The perception among the members of the CIS is that the need for additional or revised guidance documents is limited. Discussions in the 2024 meetings of the SCG and the Water Directors have confirmed support for focusing CIS activities on the exchange of best practices. It was stressed, however, that the objective of the experience-sharing should still be to improve implementation and that some additional guidance or revision of existing guidance might also be needed on some topics to support this.

3. Organisational structure

This CIS Work Programme is, as previously, based around a three-layered organisation:

[7] Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2024/1765 of 11 March 2024 supplementing Regulation (EU) 2020/741 of the European Parliament and of the Council with regard to technical specifications of the key elements of risk management, OJ L, 2024/1765, 20.6.2024, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg_del/2024/1765/oj

The Water Directors are the senior-level decision-makers on WFD/FD-related policy from the Member States.[89]

The membership of the Strategic Coordination Group and Working Groups includes not only officials from the Commission and Member States[8] but also representatives from EU-level stakeholder groups (industry, NGOs etc).

For the 2025-27 Work Programme, the existing CIS Working Groups (Chemicals, Ecological Status, Economics, Groundwater, Data and Information Sharing, Water Reuse, Floods) should continue to function. There will be two novelties, the existing Working Groups will be complemented by:

- a new Working Group on Water Scarcity and Droughts (hitherto an Ad Hoc Task Group).
- A new Task Force on Exemptions, with the mandate of setting an understanding on the application of exemptions after 2027 and clarifying the level of detail that needs to be reported in RBMPs.

Thus, the Working Groups structure is as follows:

[8] Representatives of EEA/EFTA countries are associated with the EU Water Directors meetings and the Common Implementation Strategy and participate in the Strategic Coordination Group and relevant Working Groups.

[9] Note: For the Comitology process required for the adoption of Implementing Acts (such as Commission Decisions) relating to the WFD and its daughter directives, the WFD Article 21 (Regulatory) Committee (composed of Member State officials) is responsible. The subject matter is commonly discussed in meetings of the SCG before being considered by the WFD Article 21 Committee.

Although the Work Programme tasks are set out in the following sections, it may be necessary to adjust these tasks and their timelines or to accommodate additional tasks due to policy developments during the Programme period.

4. Tasks for the Strategic Coordination Group

In addition to its coordination role, the Strategic Coordination Group is assigned a number of tasks that do not fall under the remit of any of the existing Working Groups or that have a less technical and more strategic character[10]. These tasks can be carried out by the Strategic Coordination Group itself (e.g. by organising back-to-back workshops together with the meetings of the Group) or be mandated to an Ad-hoc Task Force.

The following tasks have been identified for the Strategic Coordination Group:

1. Exchange on relevant Green Deal initiatives and on potential coherence and synergies with sectoral policies and legislation, such as biodiversity, agriculture, chemicals, digitalisation, research and development and innovation, health, industry, energy, waste water treatment, disaster risk management, climate adaptation and water quantity management, transport and land use planning, and on challenges linked to those policies, with a view to better mainstreaming sustainable freshwater management.
   Working method: Discussion at the level of the Strategic Coordination Group and via exchange platform for integration and outreach, including targeted meetings.
   Timing: 2025-2027

2. Exchange on the conclusions of the assessment of the third River Basin Management Plans and second Flood Risk Management Plans, with a view to improving the implementation so that the objectives of the Directives can be reached.
   Working method: Discussion at the level of the Strategic Coordination Group and, where needed, targeted meetings.
   Timing: 2025

3. Exchange of experience on water quantity management, including water scarcity, ecological flows, drought management, mainstreaming and upscaling natural water retention measures and other nature-based solutions, biodiversity protection, water efficiency and relevant climate adaptation actions.
   Working method: Discussion at the level of the Strategic Coordination Group
   Timing: 2025-2027

4. Endorsement of guidance documents or reports produced by the Working Groups.
   Timing: 2025-2027

[10] Mandate SCG June 2018: wfd - Library (europa.eu)

As a novelty, concerning the meetings of the SCG, it is proposed to hold one meeting only in presence in the spring in Brussels and one hybrid during the autumn for the three years of the life span of this Work Programme. Additional online meetings of the SCG could take place when needed.

5. Tasks for the Working Groups

The purpose of all the CIS Working Groups' work is to support the implementation of the WFD, FD, and other water policies by:

1. facilitating information exchange between Member States, the Commission and stakeholders on good practice, policy, research/projects and new approaches to monitoring and the assessment of status and potential under the WFD,
2. drafting guidance and guidelines to ensure coherent implementation of the WFD and other policy instruments,
3. discussing feedback on the implementation of the WFD and its reporting with a view to reaching a common understanding on the requirements for its implementation and efficient and effective reporting, and
4. establishing links between the Member States and the relevant Commission services and international bodies, such as promoting coherence between activities and policies relevant to the implementation of the WFD and other water policy instruments.

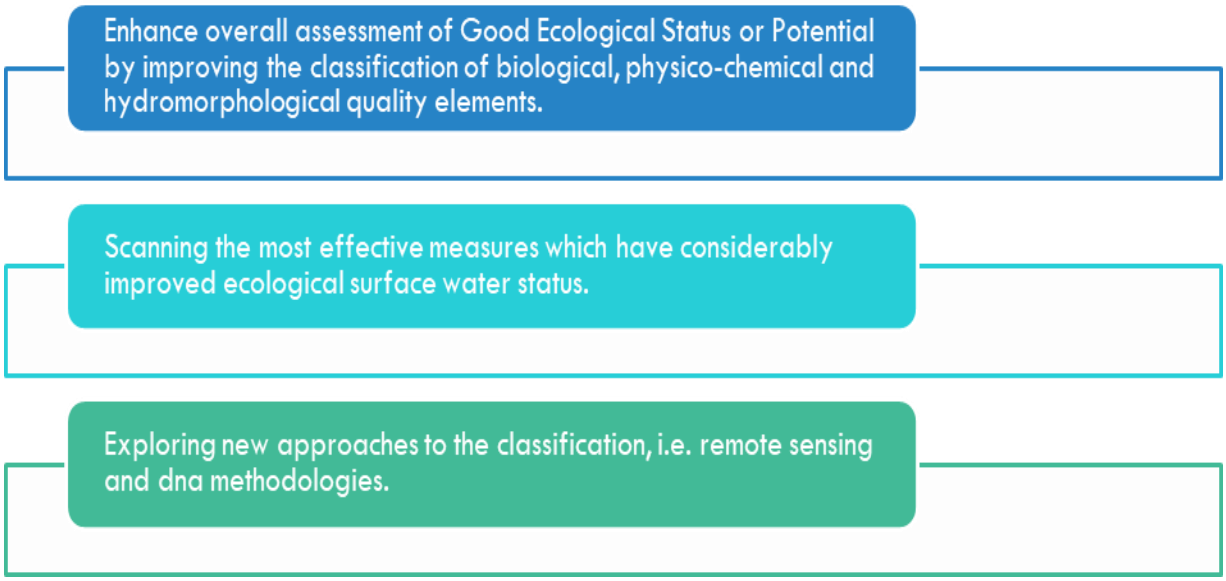
To assist the Working Groups in their work, the Commission has in place a number of contracts with external consultants that can be called on to provide input and stock taking assessments to contribute to the different deliverables.

Cooperation between different Working Groups: while every Working Group has its own mandate, it is apparent that some of the tasks and deliverables will benefit from the broader input of other members of the CIS. Thus, the inter-group consultation is very much encouraged. In fact, for some for the tasks the cooperation between different WG will be a sine qua non condition to produce some of the deliverables. For that reason, a sort of "cooperation etiquette" needs to be followed whereby the necessary experts are warned in advanced from the lead WG that their input will be sought and when they will be called to contribute.

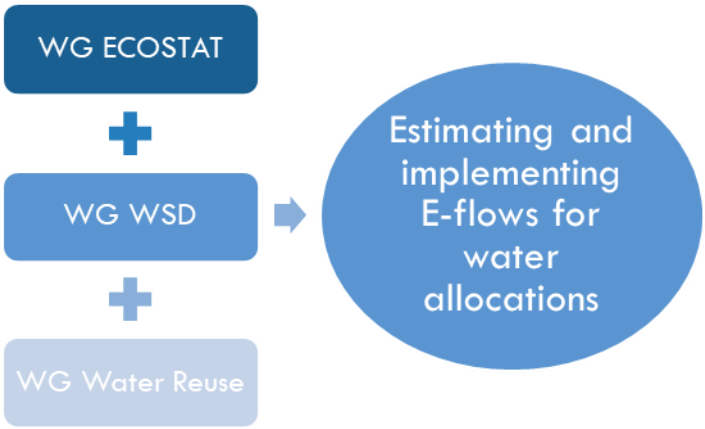
Thus, for some deliverables which clearly would benefit from the cooperation of different Working Groups, these have already been flagged as "joint ventures" in this work plan.

WORKING GROUP ECOSTAT

The worksheet in Annex includes more information on the specific tasks and deliverables to be carried out by the Working Group. But by way of reference, the graph below depicts the main thrust of the activities of this WG.



In addition to the above, the assessment of the River Basin Management Plans revealed that a number of Member States have difficulties on defining and implementing adequate ecological flows and applying those in their decision on how much water can be allocated to different sectors. Therefore, the most relevant Working Groups, namely Water Reuse, Water Scarcity and Droughts and ECOSTAT will be called upon to work together to assist in the endeavour of establishing and applying ecological flows in decision making.

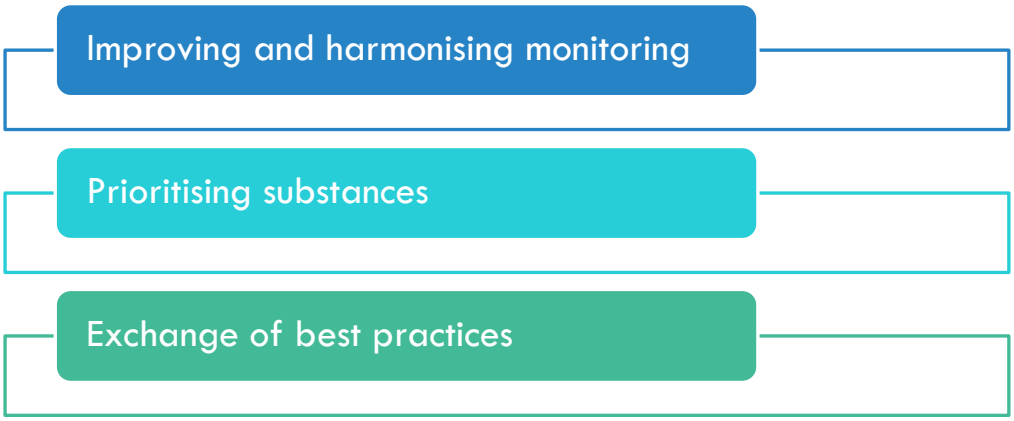


Equally, the links between water and land are gaining increased attention also with the upcoming adoption of the Soil Monitoring Law and the Forest Monitoring Law. In this context,

more work might be needed on exchanging information on the management of sediments from the quantitative and qualitative aspects. If necessary, the Commission will organise a workshop on barriers and successes of sediment management.

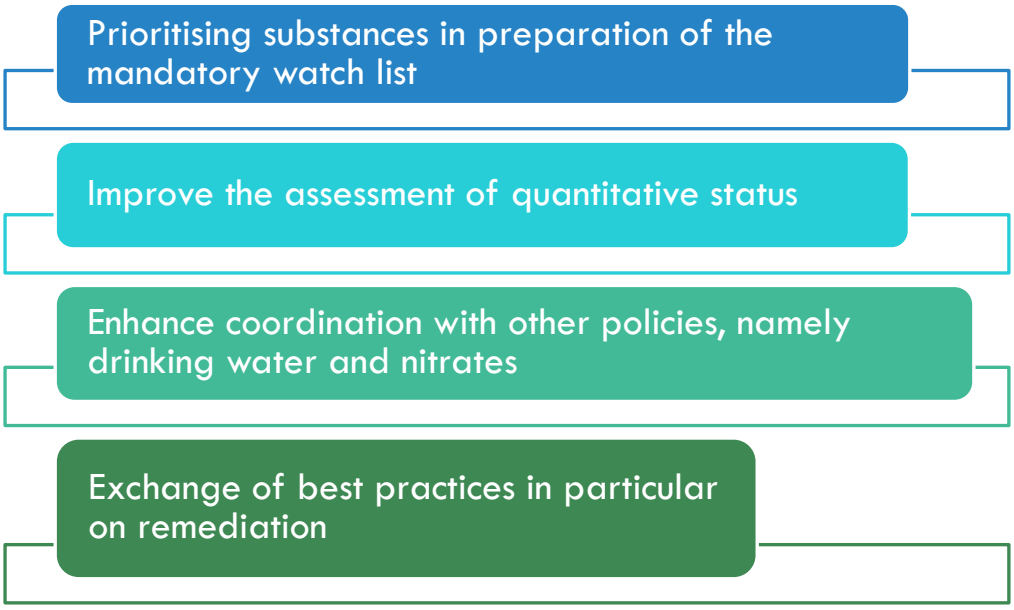
WORKING GROUP CHEMICALS

The worksheet in Annex includes a detailed account of the tasks and deliverables to be carried out by the Working Group. But by way of reference, the graph below depicts the main thrust of the activities of this WG.

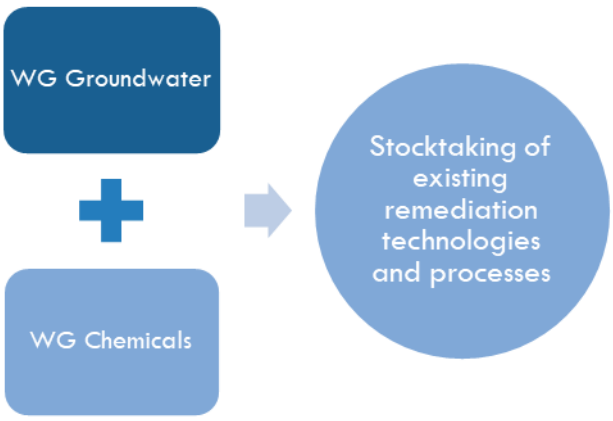


WORKING GROUP GROUNDWATER

The worksheet in Annex includes a detailed account of the tasks and deliverables to be carried out by the Working Group. But by way of reference, the graph below depicts the main thrust of the activities of this WG.

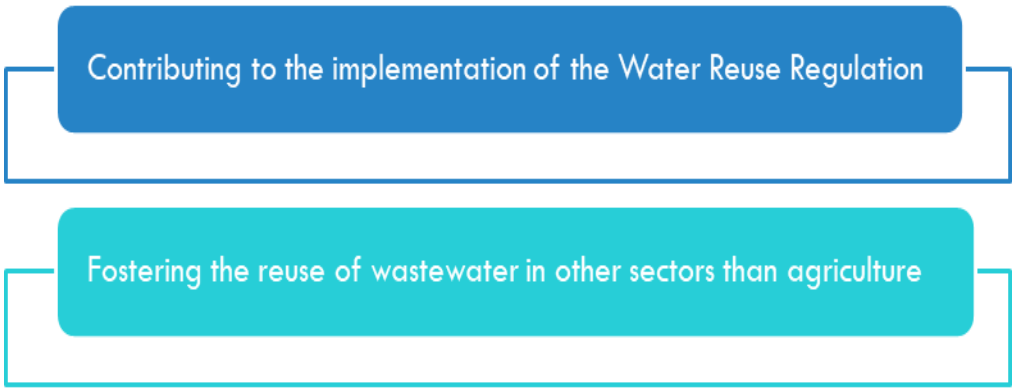


Both the Chemicals and Groundwater WGs will be called upon to work on assisting Member States to improve their response to existing water pollution. For that reason, in addition to the objectives set above, the two groups will **jointly work on exchanging best practices on REMEDIATION** of polluted water from ubiquitous and non-ubiquitous pollutants. They will cooperate whenever possible on prioritising substances for the watch lists and main lists of pollutants in groundwater and surface water.



WORKING GROUP WATER REUSE

The worksheet in Annex includes a detailed account of the tasks and deliverables to be carried out by the Working Group. But by way of reference, the graph below depicts the main thrust of the activities of this WG.

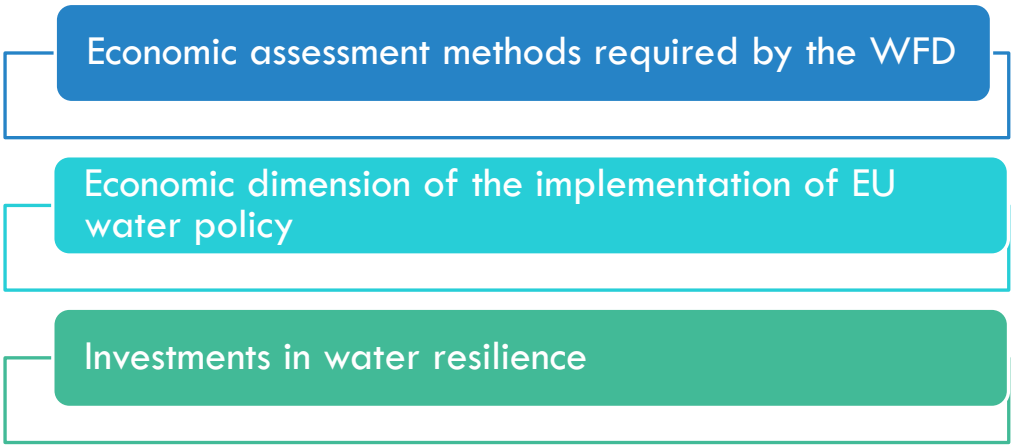


WORKING GROUP ON FLOODS

The worksheet in Annex includes a detailed account of the tasks and deliverables to be carried out by the Working Group. But by way of reference, the graph below depicts the main thrust of the activities of this WG.

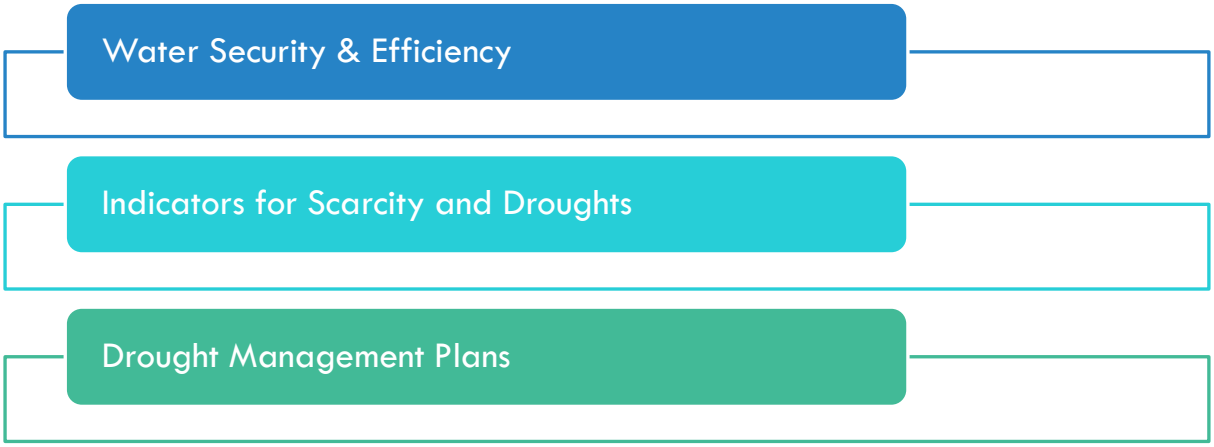
WORKING GROUP ECONOMICS

The worksheet in Annex includes a detailed account of the tasks and deliverables to be carried out by the Working Group. But by way of reference, the graph below depicts the main thrust of the activities of this WG.



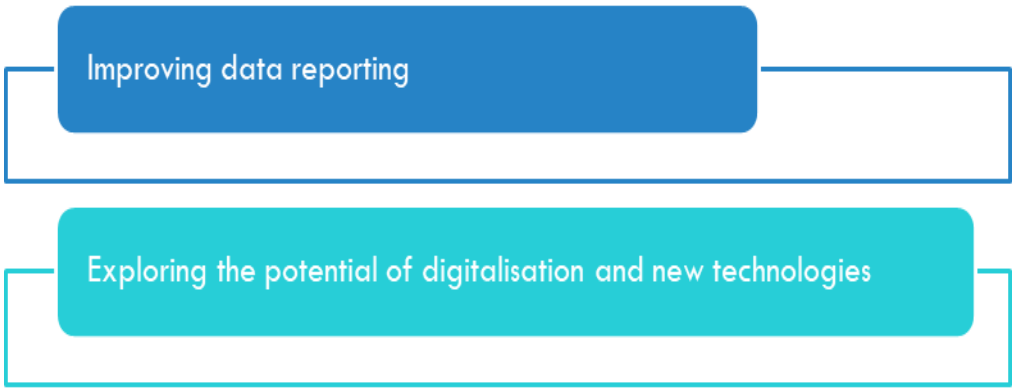
WORKING GROUP ON WATER SCARCITY AND DROUGHTS

The worksheet in Annex includes a detailed account of the tasks and deliverables to be carried out by the Working Group. But by way of reference, the graph below depicts the main thrust of the activities of this WG.



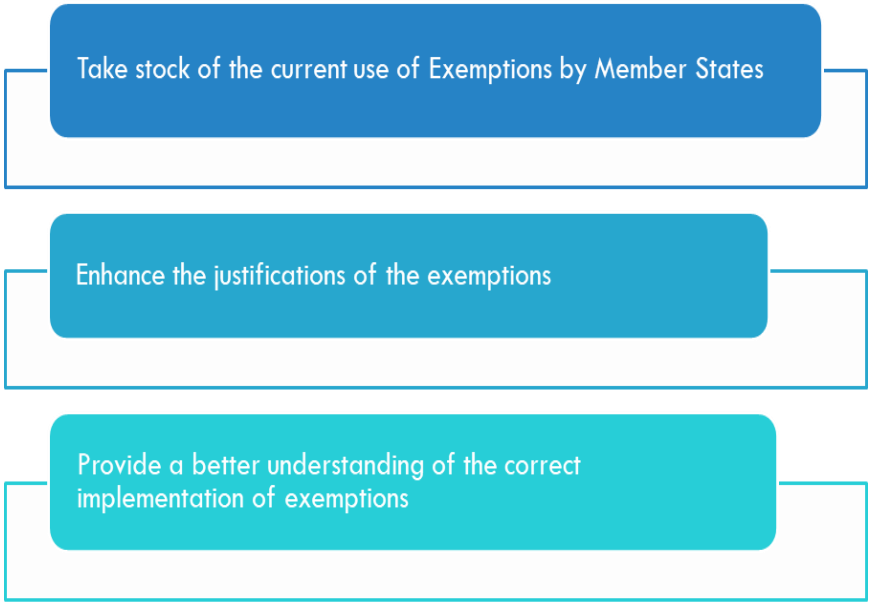
WORKING GROUP DIS

The worksheet in Annex includes a detailed account of the tasks and deliverables to be carried out by the Working Group. But by way of reference, the graph below depicts the main thrust of the activities of this WG.



TASK FORCE ON EXEMPTIONS

The worksheet in Annex includes a detailed account of the tasks and deliverables to be carried out by the Task Force. But by way of reference, the graph below depicts the main thrust of the activities of this Task Force.



6. Modification of the CIS Work Programme 2025-2027

The Commission, the Water Directors, the Strategic Coordination Group, Working Groups and any Ad-hoc Task Groups can propose modifications to the CIS Work Programme. Any proposals for modifications should be discussed by the Strategic Coordination Group before forwarding to Water Directors for endorsement.

Changes in the co-leads of each Working Group can also be proposed, if necessary, by the Working Group concerned. Those changes should be presented to the Strategic Coordination Group for endorsement and to the Water Directors for information.

ANNEX I – Detailed mandate of the Working Groups and the new Task Force

1. WG ECOSTAT

Chairs: EC DG Joint Research Centre, Italy, Sweden, Germany, EC DG Environment

OVERALL OBJECTIVES

The WFD sets the environmental objectives for all European surface waters to protect and enhance the status of aquatic ecosystems and prevent their further deterioration. The CIS Working Group ECOSTAT addresses the issues related to harmonised monitoring and assessment of biological, physico-chemical and hydromorphological quality elements to achieve the good ecological status or potential of rivers, lakes, transitional waters and coastal waters.

EMERGING NEEDS FOR THE CIS 2025-2027

During 2025-2027, ECOSTAT will respond to several needs which have emerged from earlier years. The tasks have been prepared together with ECOSTAT members and discussed in ECOSTAT plenary meetings in 2024.

For the overall classification of ecological status, the use of all quality elements is not sufficiently comprehensive, especially the inclusion of hydromorphological conditions in the status assessment. Subsequently, we need to understand better the impact of climate change on reference conditions and to consider invasive alien species in ecological status.

For the hydromorphological quality elements, the understanding of the relationship between free-flowing rivers concept and river continuity conditions will improve the overall assessment of status of surface waters. On the other hand, the characterisation, monitoring and classification of temporary rivers need a coherent EU-wide approach.

The work on defining and applying ecological flows is progressing slowly and, at the EU level, there is still a heterogeneous picture of how e-flows are defined and their implementation guaranteed. Exchange of information between Members States can support the definition and adoption of environmental flow, specifically ecological flow for natural waters and GEP-flow for heavily modified and artificial water bodies, when the water balance at a catchment area is considered.

An enormous work has been done to support the Member States in setting suitable boundary values for physico-chemical quality elements which reflect the status of biological quality elements. This work will continue to support the overall status assessment. Subsequently, eutrophication criteria relevant for both the WFD and Nitrates Directive should be harmonised to improve the comparability between Member States assessments. And finally,

information exchange to find best solutions to set targets for nutrient load reduction should improve planning appropriate measures to tackle nutrient emissions.

In addition to the work on biological, physico-chemical and hydromorphological quality elements, new innovations and development activities need to be introduced to improve current monitoring and assessment efforts.

SUMMARY OF TASKS

The tasks of WG ECOSTAT are grouped into 4 entities to have a comprehensive picture of the playing field. The table below shows a summary of the objectives and deliverables of each task, and a separate task description document describes in more details each task, including background information, contributing parties and related other groups, as well as the sub-deliverables and the timetable.

This separate document will work as a 'living document' managed and updated by the WG ECOSTAT. This approach secures the adaptive reaction to possible changes in the needs.

In addition to these tasks, ECOSTAT members and Member State experts may prepare and present discussion papers, propose and organise workshops under the auspices of ECOSTAT to facilitate information exchange and achieve a common understanding on other relevant themes or issues.

Specific objective	Nº	Task	Deliverables	Deadline & Lead
A: Overall classification of surface water bodies				
Improve the comparability of the overall classification of ecological status by exploring the status assessment methods used in the 3rd RBMPs and, specifically, by clarifying the role of hydromorphological quality elements in the overall assessment.	1	Comparability of overall classification of ecological status	A report on the findings about strengths and weaknesses of status assessment for different combinations of quality elements. A recommendation on improving overall status assessment.	2027 (+tbc) JRC
Deepen the understanding of status assessment in a changing climate by supporting MS in quantifying the impacts on EQRs and overall ecological status.	2	Classification of ecological status in a changing climate	A report on approaches and criteria to consider climate change in the classification, and establishment of a	2026 JRC

Specific objective	Nº	Task	Deliverables	Deadline & Lead
			core-group to examine and test various solutions	
Coordinate and facilitate the intercalibration work and ensure that new intercalibration results are reviewed by the Intercalibration Review Panel.	3	Intercalibration of class boundary values of the BQE methods	Review of intercalibration reports as they are submitted	No deadline JRC
Update the state of play in the Member States regarding the assessment of Invasive Alien Species in the monitoring and classification of surface waters and in the identification of significant pressures.	4	State of play on assessment of Invasive Alien Species related to the WFD	A report on the state of play	2027 (tbc)
B: Assessment of hydromorphological quality elements				
Improve the current methodology on Free-Flowing Rivers by testing in case studies across Europe. Exchange information among Member States to address river continuity to achieve good ecological status / potential	1	Methodology of river continuity for WFD and other EU environmental policies	A report on the assessment of river continuity in the classification of ecological status/potential.	2027 JRC/ENV
Clarify the definition of MEP/GEP, exchange information about the GEP assessment of reservoirs and other artificial lakes. Exchange information on the effect of various hydromorphological mitigation measures on sensitive BQEs and on achievement of GES/GEP and identify the most effective measures to considerably improve surface water ecological status/potential.	2	Improvement of GEP assessment and impact assessment of effective mitigation measures	A report on GEP assessment in reservoirs and other artificial lakes. A report on effect of mitigation measures.	2026 JRC
Ensure the adoption of earlier produced Lake Hydromorphology Assessment Guide, draft datasheets for lake hymo metrics, and explore the	3	Improvement of the hydromorphological assessment in lakes, transitional and coastal waters	Workshop on Lake Hydromorphology Assessment Guide and datasheets for lake hymo	(tbc) JRC

Specific objective	Nº	Task	Deliverables	Deadline & Lead
use of common approaches for hydromorphological assessment in transitional and coastal waters.			metrics with data collection methods and illustrations. For hymo assessment of transitional and coastal waters (tbc) – depending on the information exchange.	
Find a common understanding on how to characterise, monitor, classify and manage temporary rivers in arid, semiarid, and temperate climate.	4	Information exchange on monitoring and classification of temporary rivers	A guidance document collecting existing information and addressing the challenges related to temporary rivers and setting recommendations on how to address temporary rivers in terms of characterisation, monitoring, and classification.	2026 JRC
Collect in a "living document" cases from Member States on specifications and implementation of environmental flows, exchange information on environmental flows in the water balance calculations considering the objectives of WFD and other EU legislation.	5	Information exchange on environmental flows for WFD and other EU policies	'Living document' report, joint WG workshop with water reuse.	2026 JRC
C: Assessment of physico-chemical quality elements				
Ensure the uptake of the Best Practice Guide by Member States as well as providing outstanding technical support through a statistical application (ShinyApp), helpdesk, and workshops, and develop and	1	Best practice in setting physico-chemical standards	Report on setting standards in multiple pressure framework and report on relative role of different pressures	2026 JRC

Specific objective	Nº	Task	Deliverables	Deadline & Lead
assess methods for setting standards jointly across several physico-chemical quality elements.			impacting nutrient conditions and status of other physico-chemical quality elements amid climate change.	
Support the evaluation of the Nitrates Directive, explore and support MS in setting nitrogen criteria for inland, transitional and coastal waters, and explore and support MS in setting WFD compliant eutrophication criteria suitable for review of eutrophic state under Art. 6 ND.	2	Harmonisation of eutrophication criteria under WFD and Nitrates Directive	(tbc) – to be elaborated after ND evaluation	(tbc) JRC
Improve the understanding whether MS are setting nutrient load reduction targets at water body/river basin/national level and how they are assessing the current distance to good ecological status/potential; map criteria to assess the response of nutrient conditions to planned and implemented measures; and scan the most effective measures having considerable improving impact on surface water status.	3	Assessment of the nutrient load reduction targets to achieve GES/GEP	Report on best practices to set targets for nutrient input by activity/sector, including a list of most effective measures to improve the nutrient conditions.	2027 (tbc) ENV
D: Innovation and development				
Explore the use and integration of remote sensing data and derived products from Earth Observation for monitoring of biological, physico-chemical and hydromorphological quality elements, develop an approach to use the vast data provided by remote sensing and derive products for the monitoring and status	1	Exploitation of remote sensing data in WFD monitoring and classification	A technical report on best practices for monitoring and status assessment.	2027 FI JRC

Specific objective	Nº	Task	Deliverables	Deadline & Lead
assessment of mainly coastal and transitional waters but also of large lakes and rivers.				
Increase the effectiveness of monitoring, status assessment and planning of measures by finding the best approaches for using DNA technologies.	2	Use of DNA-based approaches in WFD monitoring and classification	Technical report on best approaches to include DNA metabarcoding in the existing WFD monitoring and status assessment.	2027 DE JRC
CEN has provided updates of the newest standards and also collected the needs of new standards by exploring the suggestions of ECOSTAT experts. Regular updates from CEN on the development of WFD relevant standards are further needed to be presented in the ECOSTAT plenary meetings. In the context of this work, a list of updated or new standards should be maintained. If seen needed, an amendment of Annex V to the WFD should be considered.	3	Information exchange on WFD relevant CEN standards	(tbc)	No deadline CEN
Compare updated boundaries and assessments from the MSFD reporting on monitoring in 2024 and the new WFD Intercalibration Decision 2024/721. Explore the current state of monitoring and reporting in coastal waters for the WFD and MSFD, following the recent implementation cycles.	4	Developments for the harmonization of WFD and MSFD monitoring and assessment	Report on the recent developments after the comparison between the 2024 MSFD reporting and the 2024/721 WFD Intercalibration Decision, and list recommendations from the MS.	JRC

2. WG CHEMICALS

Chairs: EC DG Environment, EC DG Joint Research Centre, Italy, Romania

OVERALL OBJECTIVES

The overall objectives for WG Chemicals include those mentioned at the start of Section 4.

The focus of the WG is on supporting the implementation of the aspects of the WFD relating to the chemical status of surface waters, and thus also on the implementation of the EQSD and the Commission Implementing Decisions on the surface water Watch List.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES, TASKS AND DELIVERABLES

Specific objective	Nº	Task	Deliverables	Deadline & Lead
Supporting the revision of the lists of pollutants	1	Provide information (monitoring and tox data) to the JRC/ECHA to facilitate the identification of priority substances, and comment on draft documents/lists	None as such, but the JRC/ECHA should be able to propose revisions to the PS list by 2028, therefore the WG will need to provide input during the 2025-27 WP	2026/2027; JRC/ECHA to lead on gathering input/comments on their reports/EQS dossiers
	2	Provide information (monitoring and tox data) to the JRC/ECHA to facilitate the revision of the watch list, and comment on draft documents/lists	None as such, but the JRC/ECHA should be able to propose revisions to the WL by 2026, therefore the WG will need to provide input before then.	2026/early 2027; JRC/ECHA to lead on gathering input to/comments on their report on SW watch list candidates.
	3	Gather information on non-target pollutants	Workshop with the Rhine Commission on non-target monitoring, if possible, to include sediments; report	By end 2025; tbc with Rhine Commission?
Improving comparability of MS status assessments	4	Harmonise EQS for RBSPs	(a) Criteria for prioritisation and list of RBSPs to address(b) EQS dossier for copper, venlafaxine (as RBSPs/candidate PS)	(a) Early 2025; ENV (b) Mid-end 2025; JRC to

Specific objective	Nº	Task	Deliverables	Deadline & Lead
			(c) EQS dossiers for other substances For (b) and (c) no CIS deliverables as such if this work becomes a legal requirement; but input needed from WG Chem anyway.	lead on gathering input (c) 2027; ECHA to lead on gathering input
	5	Compile of a list of laboratories able to analyse PS and WL substances with adequate limit of quantification	List of accredited laboratories to which MS may send samples for analysis	Mid 2025; JRC
	6	Exchange best practice on extrapolation grouping etc	Document collating MS practice; hybrid meeting/workshop, supported by consultants; report	By mid-2026; COM/consultants
Updating of existing technical guidance documents	7	Revise the Technical Guidance Document (TGD) 27 on Deriving EQS	Revised guidance, joint with WG GW and the DW Expert Group on how to derive quality standards and threshold values for GW and water abstracted for drinking water with the support of the JRC/ECHA/consultants	End 2026; tbc (consultants to assist the lead)
	8	Revise/supplement the TGD 32 on Biota Monitoring to include “alternative biota” (incl alien species) and possibly passive sampling	Revised guidance or supplement with the support of the JRC/ECHA/consultants. Workshop to share experience, possibly joint with WG GW if on passive sampling; report	End 2026; tbc
	9	Revise/supplement the TGD 33 on	Revised guidance or supplement, with the	End 2027; tbc

Specific objective	Nº	Task	Deliverables	Deadline & Lead
		Analytical Methods for Biota Monitoring	support of the JRC/ECHA/consultants	
Drafting of new technical guidance documents	10	Finalise guidance on monitoring frequency (task from CIS WP 2022-2024	Guidance on monitoring frequency	June 2025 (adoption by Water Directors); CH & DE
	11	Prepare guidance on effect-based monitoring of estrogens	TGD on EBM of estrogens – WG Chem to support COM	End 2027; COM/IT
	12	Prepare guidance on monitoring microplastics in surface and groundwater, with estimation of required sensitivity, and subsequently work further on the risk level (i.e. to refine a "PNEC")	TGD on monitoring microplastics – WGs Chem and GW to support COM; DWD guidance to be used as basis	End 2027; COM
	13	Prepare guidance on monitoring antimicrobial resistance genes (ARGs) (or other indicators of AMR) in surface water, with estimation of required sensitivity, and subsequently work further on the risk level (i.e. to refine a "PNEC")	TGD on monitoring ARGs (or other indicators of AMR) – WGs Chem and GW to support COM	End 2027; COM
Sharing of experience (see also Task 6)	14	Share experience of monitoring methods for CECs incl PFAS, PBDEs; (see also Task 8)	Hybrid meeting/workshop, possibly joint with WG GW; report	By mid-2026; JRC/ECHA
	15	Discuss how to harmonise the reporting of the inventories of emissions, taking	Hybrid meeting/workshop; report (to follow up ETC/ICM Report 3/2022: Calculating	By end 2027; COM/EEA

Specific objective	Nº	Task	Deliverables	Deadline & Lead
		account of the new provisions in the EQSD and IEPR , and how to derive indicators	emissions to water – a simplified method — Eionet Portal (europa.eu))	
	16	Share experience on remediation measures for uPBTs	Hybrid meeting/workshop, possibly joint with WG GW; report including best practices	By end 2026; tbc/COM?
Policy integration	17	Keep up to date with other policy developments and use opportunities to integrate water-quality-related actions	Ad-hoc updates/contributions	Throughout the period; all
Exploration	18	Further consider how to deal with mixture risk (all substances) in the context of the WFD	Hybrid meeting/workshop, possibly joint with WG GW; report – taking account of work under 1S1A.	By end 2026; tbc/COM?

3. WG GROUNDWATER

Chairs: EC DG Environment, Austria, Malta

OVERALL OBJECTIVES

The aim of the Working Group Groundwater (WG GW) is to support the implementation of the different aspects related to groundwater elements of the WFD the GWD and Article 8 DWD. These have a strong focus on the prevention and control of groundwater pollution as well as avoiding overexploitation and illegal use of ground water resources, with a view to ensuring the protection of drinking water sources and dependent and associated ecosystems.

Summary of the TASKS

The table below shows a summary of the tasks and deliverables, with indicative information regarding timelines as well as leading and contributing parties. Some of the tasks outlined are carry-overs from the previous CIS Work Programme 2022-2024, while other tasks come from the need to address deficiencies identified during the assessment of the RBMPs, new elements emerging from the ongoing revision of WFD/EQSD/GWD, improve harmonisation/coherence across MS with regard to monitoring and assessment methodologies also vis à vis other pieces of legislation (namely the Nitrates and the Drinking Water Directives).

With the agreement of the Working Group members, the suggested tasks, deliverables and timelines may be subject to change in order to adapt to shifting priorities during the 3-year time period of the work programme 2025-2027.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES, TASKS AND DELIVERABLES

Specific objective	Nº	Task	Deliverables	Deadline & Lead
A. Prioritising substances in preparation of the mandatory watch list				
Support for the revision of the lists of pollutants	1	Establish cooperation with JRC and ECHA and consider relevant steps to smooth the transition to a mandatory Watch List mechanism similar to that for SW. Consider issues on: deselection of Watch List substances, amounts/use patterns of substances, non-target screening data, guidance on selection of	Revised/improved concept & methodology technical document. Agreed templates for the collection of monitoring data considering particularities of GW and the	End 2025; /JRC/ECHA

Specific objective	Nº	Task	Deliverables	Deadline & Lead
		monitoring sites and monitoring frequencies.	reporting of raw data.	
	2	Data gathering on a) available monitoring/occurrences and b) hazard/toxicity information on substances of potential concern to facilitate the prioritisation of candidate substances for the GWD Annex I and II review process.	a) the WG will need to provide input during the 2025-27 WP, this will be on a voluntary basis at least until the proposal on the revision of GWD pollutants is adopted. b) a report on the substances to include in the List Facilitating, based on available monitoring data (including from GW WL monitoring) and toxicity/hazard data, including derived QS.	a) Throughout the period; JRC/EEA (EIONET) and ECHA in collaboration/consultation with WG GW; b) Mid 2026; JRC and ECHA.
	3	Identification of adequately sensitive analytical methods in relation to regulatory limit values for substances to be included in the GW WL	Report on adequately sensitive analytical methods for substances identified for inclusion in the List Facilitating	Throughout the period; ECHA, JRC in collaboration/consultation with WG GW

Specific objective	Nº	Task	Deliverables	Deadline & Lead
	4	Explore knowledge on the identification of GW ecosystems, biomonitoring including implementation of suitable indices for assessment of groundwater ecosystem health. Explore the possible development of a methodology and quality standards, that reflect the specific ecological requirements.	Workshop and technical report, with a view in developing guidance.	Tbc, consultant/COM
B. Improving assessment and monitoring				
Improvement of comparability of MS status assessments and evaluation of existing technical guidance documents	5	Exchange of experiences, difficulties and best practices in regard to the consideration of GWAAE (groundwater associated aquatic ecosystems) and GWDTE (groundwater dependent terrestrial ecosystems) in the GW quantitative and chemical status assessment. Evaluation of CIS technical reports No. 6 (GWDTE) and No. 9 (GWAAE).	Document collating MS practice; hybrid meeting/workshop, supported by consultants; report	By mid 2026; COM/consultants, with the support of Water Resources Experts Group (EuroGeo Surveys) and Geological Survey of Denmark and Greenland (GEUS)
	6	Evaluation and revision of the CIS Technical Guidance Document (TGD) No. 18 (GW status and trend assessment).	Revised guidance focusing on the consideration of the saline or other intrusions in the procedures and tests for assessing GW quantitative and chemical status.	End 2026; joint within WG GW with the support of JRC/COM/consultants, with the support of Water Resources Experts Group (EuroGeo Surveys)
	7	Revise the Technical Guidance Document (TGD) 27 on Deriving EQS to possibly cover also GW	Revised guidance, joint with WG Chemicals (to cover GW-	End 2026; tbc/consultants

Specific objective	Nº	Task	Deliverables	Deadline & Lead
		quality standards and threshold values.	associated/dependent ecosystems and risk via DW) with the support of the JRC/ECHA/consultants	
	8	Prepare guidance (taking into account research projects) on monitoring microplastics in surface and groundwater, with estimation of required sensitivity	Contribution to TGD on monitoring microplastics – WGs Chem and GW to support COM; DWD guidance to be used as basis	End 2027; COM
	9	Prepare guidance on monitoring antimicrobial resistance genes (ARGs) (or other indicators of AMR) in surface water and groundwater, with estimation of required sensitivity	Contribution to TGD on monitoring ARGs (or other indicators of AMR) – WGs Chem and GW to support COM	End 2027; COM
Continuation of the work on GW in the context of Climate Change	10	Exchange of experience on: attributing observed GW quantitative and chemical changes to the impacts of CC, revising GW typologies, remote sensing of soil moisture to assess the effects of rainfall in GW recharge, GW temperature, changed impact of GW pollutants	2 knowledge exchange workshops (quality and quantity); technical reports.	Throughout the period; Malta with the support of the Water Resource Expert Group (EuroGeoSurveys) and Geological Survey of Denmark and Greenland (GEUS)
C. Policy integration				
Policy integration between groundwater and other relevant EU legislation	11	Cooperation with the DW Expert Group on the implementation of Recast DWD and its interlinkage with the WFD. Exchange of experience (workshop) on the delineation of catchment	Exchange of experience and report on MS approaches for the identification and delineation	Throughout the period; Belgium (Wallonia)

Specific objective	Nº	Task	Deliverables	Deadline & Lead
(e.g. drinking water, nitrates)		areas and risk assessment accordingDWD Recast Art.8 and Art. 18.1b.	of catchment areas/safeguard zones (DWD, Art. 8 and Art. 18.1b), including compilation of case studies. If needed, update CIS guidance 16 (Drinking Water Protected Areas) and the test.	
	12	Cooperation with the Nitrates Expert Group, in light of the ongoing evaluation of the ND, on streamlining/overlaps between ND and WFD/GWD regarding monitoring and reporting.	Participation in interservice groups, workshops and interviews. Ad-hoc exchanges/contributions	Throughout the period; Germany, Geological Survey of Denmark and Greenland (GEUS)
D. Groundwater indicators to show progress towards good status and trend assessment updates				
Continuation of the work on GW indicators to show progress towards good status and trend assessments	13	Collect experience from MS on the applicability of the method for pesticide indicator" and draw conclusions on the way forward; Explore the applicability of the methods (for nitrates and pesticides) for other inorganic and synthetic (organic) pollutants including the development of an easy-to-use method/tool; Exchange of experience on further options for indicating progress, e.g. an indicator for salinity or a multi parameter indicator	Report summarizing the lessons learned on the implementation of the proposed methods and proposed way forward.	2027; Austria
	14	Exchange of experience on methods for trend assessments for compliance check, in particular for	Report considering results from research and	2027; Water Resources Experts Group

Specific objective	Nº	Task	Deliverables	Deadline & Lead
		micropollutants in GW where values are often reported below limit of quantifications	compilation of case studies and best practice. If needed, update CIS guidance 18 (status and trends)	(EuroGeo Surveys)
E. Sharing of experience				
Continuation of exchanging information on other issues relevant to groundwater management	15	Exchange information on legal aspects of Managed Aquifer Recharge (MAR), national data systems, microplastics (sampling and analysis) and antimicrobial resistance in groundwater	List of specific topics for the exchange of information and speakers/experts to be invited for presentations at workshops or WG GW meetings	Throughout the period; WG GW co-chairs
	16	Share experience of monitoring methods for CECs (contaminants of emerging concern) incl. PFAS, PBDEs;	Contributions to hybrid meeting/workshop (jointly with WG Chemicals); report	By mid 2026; JRC/ECHA
	17	Share experience on remediation measures for ubiquitous PBTs	Contributions to hybrid meeting/workshop (jointly with WG Chemicals); report including best practices	By end 2026; tbc/consultant/COM
	18	Exploration of how to deal with risk of mixtures of pollutants in the context of the WFD	Contribution to hybrid meeting/workshop (jointly with WG Chemicals); report	By end 2026; tbc/COM

4. WG WATER REUSE

Chairs: DG Environment, Malta, Spain

OBJECTIVES

Water scarcity issues are becoming more common in the EU, with climate change making the problems worse in certain areas. This in turn may create or worsen issues linked to over-abstraction of water from surface and groundwater bodies, a significant pressure in Europe. One of the tools that can help address such issues is the practice of water reuse.

The 2020 Water Reuse Regulation aims to encourage the take up of water reuse in agriculture to help address issues linked with water scarcity, where suitable in the framework of integrated water management.

In its 2020 Circular Economy Action Plan, the European Commission committed to work together with Member States and stakeholders to make sure that Water Reuse Regulation is properly applied. However, the Circular Economy Action Plan also clearly outlined the need to further encourage water reuse beyond agriculture and tasked the Commission with exploring ways to promote water reuse for other applications, including industry. The Commission is actively pursuing water reuse promotion by, inter alia, seeking synergies in other policy areas (e.g. industrial emissions, urban wastewater, agriculture, climate adaptation).

Furthermore, with the 2028 planned evaluation of the Water Reuse Regulation, the Commission will consider whether the scope of the Regulation should be extended to cover other sectors besides agricultural irrigation.

In light of the above considerations and the increasing need to make the management of water resources in Europe more resilient, including by reducing pressures due to abstractions on water bodies, in the next few years the Commission will need to focus its action on the following two overarching objectives:

1. Promoting water reuse in agriculture, by supporting the application of the Water Reuse Regulation.
2. Promoting water reuse in other sectors and applications.

ROLE OF THE WORKING GROUP

Under the work programmes of 2016-2018, 2019-2021 and 2022-2024, the WG Water Reuse[11] (known up to 2021 as the Ad-Hoc Task Group on water reuse) provided invaluable

11 Up to 2021 the Working Group Water Reuse was a temporary group known as the Ad-hoc Task Group on water reuse. It is with the entry into force of the Water Reuse Regulation that the group became a permanent CIS Working Group.

expertise and helped the Commission in the development of the Water Reuse Regulation, as well as guidelines and other tools for its implementation.

For the next period (2025-2027), it is proposed that the Working Group Water Reuse continues to support the Commission in developing the EU's water reuse policy, both in agriculture and beyond.

All other CIS partners are welcome to participate in the activities of WG Water Reuse. Exchanges with the WG ECOSTAT, WG Water Scarcity and Droughts and WG DIS may be of particular relevance.

MAIN AREAS OF WORK

In light of the two overarching objectives outlined above, the work programme can be articulated around four different strands, depending on the source of wastewater (or raw water for recycling) and on the final use of the reclaimed water:

- Strand 1: municipal wastewater treated in accordance with UWWTD – reclaimed water for agricultural irrigation – implementation of WRR
- Strand 2: municipal wastewater treated in accordance with UWWTD – reclaimed water for other applications
- Strand 3: other wastewater (non UWWTP) – reclaimed water used within a closed system (closed loop or business-to-business)
- Strand 4: other wastewater (non UWWTP) – reclaimed water used outside a system/released in the environment

TASKS

The tasks outlined in the following section intend to gather information, foster the exchange of best practice, provide guidance and help authorities and stakeholders engage in water reuse, with the ultimate goal of promoting water reuse in Europe and to put in place the necessary policy framework to encourage the practice.

Given the 3-year time frame for the activities proposed and the possibility of priorities shifting in the months to come, the suggested tasks, deliverables and timelines may be subject to change in coordination and with the agreement of the Working Group members.

Task	**Deliverables**	**Indicative timeline and lead**
Task 1 – risk management		
Provide support on specific aspects of risk management through the production of guidelines (and/or other tools), and the fostering of best practice exchanges,	Deliverable 1.1 Risk management recommendations, including: - on how to assess risks in applications other than agriculture	- 4th quarter 2025 - Commission (JRC and ENV) Possibility to involve consultants for

Task	Deliverables	Indicative timeline and lead
through case study collections and workshops. Relevance: strand 1, 2, 3 and 4	- on how to address environmental risks in the risk management plans.	background or stocktaking work
	Deliverable 1.2 Best practice exchange: - At least 2 workshops/webinars to illustrate risk management cases studies	- By mid-2026 - JRC, with contributions from WG WR members
Task 2 – validation monitoring		
Provide guidance and support on validation monitoring. Relevance: strand 1	**Deliverable 2.1** Validation monitoring guidelines.	- 4th quarter 2025 - Commission (JRC and ENV) Contributions from experts and WG WR members.
	Deliverable 2.2 Workshop/webinar to illustrate how to apply the guidelines.	- By mid-2026 - JRC and ENV + members WG WR contributions
Task 3 – water reuse data reporting		
Technical input and feedback on the data model and guidance for water reuse data reporting. Relevance: strand 1	No specific deliverable. Continuous exchanges to improve, enhance, facilitate reporting: - ongoing support to reporting - collection of feedback and practices - adjustments to reporting model if needed	- Throughout the work programme - EEA and Commission Engagement from WG WR members. Possibility to involve consultants for ad hoc stock taking tasks.
Task 4 – promotion of water reuse beyond agricultural irrigation		
Technical support to deliver on the Circular Economy Action plan's commitments and information exchange on topics of relevance to the advancement of safe water reuse practices in the EU. Some items for discussions are proposed, but the	Deliverable 4.1 Report on the state of play and potential of industrial/urban/environmental water reuse in Europe, considering both reuse of municipal wastewater beyond agricultural	- 4th quarter 2026 - Initial stock taking and identification of barriers – consultants. - Elaboration of recommendations and further exchanges –

Task	Deliverables	Indicative timeline and lead
Working Group will have the ability to choose the topics to focus upon and therefore the indicative list is subject to change. The provision of technical support and input may also result in guidance documents or other tools to help Member States explore water reuse opportunities beyond agriculture. Relevance: strands 2, 3 and 4.	irrigation, and of non-municipal wastewater: - Overview of water reuse practices in the EU - Identification of barriers to further deployment - Recommendations or further action The report will collect information on best practices, barriers and solutions looking at reuse in all sectors, including using municipal treated wastewater and wastewater from other sources, for different purposes.	Commission and WG WR members.
	Deliverable 4.2 Exchange of best practice on industrial/urban/environmental applications: - Workshops/webinars on various reuse practices - Regular exchanges in WG WR meetings	- Throughout the work programme - Commission (JRC and ENV) with contributions from WG WR members
Task 5 – reclaimed water budgeting		
Technical input and research to develop guidelines on how to plan water reuse at river basin level and accurately allocate reclaimed water resources. Task requiring the involvement of WG ECOSTAT and WG Water Scarcity and Droughts Relevance: strands 1,2,3 and 4.	Deliverable 5.1 Guidelines on reclaimed water planning.	- 4th quarter 2026 - Commission (JRC and ENV) - WG WR contributions – consider setting up specific subgroup?
	Deliverable 5.2 Exchange of best practices: - Workshops/webinars on water budgeting - Regular exchanges in WG WR meetings	- Throughout the work programme - Commission (JRC and ENV) with contributions from WG WR members - Involvement of other working groups: mainly WG

Task	Deliverables	Indicative timeline and lead
		ECOSTAT and WG Water Scarcity and Drought
	Deliverable 5.3 ECOSTAT joint workshop to explore how water reuse has been integrated in water management to ensure that e-flows are guaranteed: - how has this been done? - management of quantities, seasonality - allocation to different uses?	- 3rd quarter – 2025 - WG ECOSTAT leads - Commission (ENV and JRC) - Support from consultants
– promotion of grey water reuse		
Exchange of best practices and technical input for the promotion of grey water reuse.	Deliverable 6.1 Report on the efficient use of grey water in the context of the urban water cycle: - overview of different applications and overview of practices in Europe - assessment of barriers to uptake and identification of possible solutions	- 3rd quarter 2027 - Consultants for the stock-taking overview and assessment. - Through the work programme – continuous exchanges, knowledge sharing/best practices – Commission (ENV and JRC) and WG WR members

5. WG FLOODS

Chairs: EC DG Environment, The Netherlands, and additional co-chair/s

OBJECTIVES

The purpose of the WGF within the CIS, and in support to the SCG, is to provide a forum to support the implementation of the Floods Directive by providing for:

- information exchange between Member States, the Commission and stakeholders on good practice, policy, research/projects and new approaches to enhance flood risk management (incl. transboundary) in the European Union, and,
- feedback on the implementation of the Directive with a view to reaching a common understanding on the requirements for its implementation and potential evaluations of the FD, and,
- feedback on the reporting with a view to efficient and effective ways of reporting, and,
- linking with related activities of the CIS at EU level, and with other Commission or international activities for support of the implementation of the Directive and the improvement of flood risk management.

The objective of the work programme for this period is to provide a platform for coordination and information exchange between Member States, the Commission and other actors as described above (including other CIS Working Groups) on themes relevant to the enhanced implementation of the Floods Directive. This will include the continuation of the work to improve the Floods Viewer hosted by the EEA, as a key tool for raising awareness among a broader public of the risks of floods.

Similarly, MS and stakeholders will support outreach towards national and local relevant parties via their own channels.

TASKS

These activities will be supplemented by tasks, as outlined in the table below.

Task	Deliverable	Indicative timeline
Support to MS, based on information exchange of good practice and lessons learnt, in the implementation of the Floods Directive, including reporting of the 3rd PFRAs (2025) and FHRMs (2026) and preparing for the reporting of the 3rd FRMPs (2028) and by extension the 4th cycle (from 2028 onwards)		

Task	Deliverable	Indicative timeline
Exchange of best practices and technical input on priority themes relevant to flood risk management and the implementation of the Floods Directive, particularly on a) Consideration of aspects due to climate change. b) Improvement and development of target oriented (public, stakeholders, sectors) products (especially maps) in the frame of the FD implementation. c) Transboundary aspects in flood risk management d) Nature based solutions to mitigate flooding. e) Better understanding the vulnerability aspects of flood risk. f) Incorporation and reflection on highly uncertain (climate change driven) flood process like pluvial flooding, coastal flooding in the frame of flood risk management. g) Discussion of monitoring the progress in achieving the goals and evaluation of measures and their implementation, including the connection between measures and objectives and the prioritisation of measures. h) Permanent review and revision of reporting tools, depending on IT technological progress and reported content to support implementation and policy making.	As per the established practice of the WGF, workshops around these themes will be organised (back-to-back with WGF meetings) and reports on the basis of the findings will be drafted. The reports in most cases include the results from questionnaires responded to by the members of the WGF, depending on the subject with inputs from stakeholder organisations.	At a pace of approx. two WGF meetings per year (autumn and spring), plus the associated workshops. By the end of the mandate, depending on the availability of resources (including background consultant work), the expertise around each subject and the prioritisation decided by the WGF, its co-chairs, its members and the Member States hosting the workshops.

The full mandate of the WGF is available in CIRCABC, https://circabc.europa.eu/ui/group/9ab5926d-bed4-4322-9aa7-9964bbe8312d/library/33463f6c-ae2e-4f13-8448-00cdb5b3fcf7?p=1&n=10&sort=modified_DESC

6. WG ECONOMICS

Chair: EC DG Environment

OBJECTIVES

The purpose of the WG economics within the CIS, and in support to the SCG, is to work on economic issues that are related to the implementation of the Water Framework Directive (WFD).

The first focus of the WG will be to take stock of the Commission assessment of the 3rd RBMPs and 2nd FRMPs, which identify a number of (technical) economic issues that merit further discussion in the CIS framework. Also other Working Groups, including the one on Water Scarcity and Droughts and the Task Force on Exemptions, work on issues that present also economic aspects fon which the WG should be cinvolved.

In addition, the WG should remain the main recipient of economic studies with a bearing on the water acquis coming, whether from DG ENV and their consultants (including OECD), stakeholders and national government and authorities. In particular, the latter group has appeared mostly lacking.

TASKS

The tasks below reflect the Commission's view on the tasks of this WG, and which members wish to be actively involved in.

1. Economic assessment methods required by the WFD:

Exchange of views and sharing best practices as regards the economic methods relevant for the EU water acquis implementation, namely in the domains of valuation and pricing, prioritisation of investments and other measures, financing, cost appraisals, (the use of) economic water models. The WG sends a summary of the discussion to the SCG and where the WG sees merit, also conclusions and recommendations.
At this stage, two topics stand out:

a) Cost-effectiveness assessment of measures

b) Economic analysis of water services and other water uses (volumes, cost of the services, accountability, pricing policies, allocation schemes)

Ad a)
Cost-effectiveness assessments (required by the WFD) as regards both the measure selection for the PoM and exemptions (disproportionate costs assessment have been flagged as underused and frequently encountering bottlenecks by the assessment of the 3rd RBMPs and the consultant's report on exemptions.

There is need for a continued discussion on the economic aspects of these assessments that can be used as input to and reflection on the work on exemptions carried out by the putative Task Force on Exemptions.

Ad b)
The evaluation of the 3rd RBMPs shows an often occurring frequent insufficient on economic analysis (or reporting on it) as many items from WFD Annex III(a) are missing or poorly elaborated. This concerns in particular the development of an analysis based on long-term water supply and demand scenarios, while also best practices need to be highlighted a regards the economic foundation of investment decisions in the water sector and water user sectors, such as investment forecasts based on estimated future water demand and "essential" demand and how to use of water models et cetera. There is a clear link with the work under the WG Water Scarcity and Droughts.

2. Consider the economic dimension of the implementation of EU water policy,

Consider the economic dimension of the implementation of the EU water policy, notably the Water Framework Directive, and of the functioning of the water economy (i.e. the water services sector and the key water user sectors), ***specifically as regards designing effective cost recovery mechanisms (WFD art 9(1)):***

i) The potential of pricing policies to foster rational use of water, contribute to the achievement of environmental objectives and enhance fairness.
ii) Application of the polluter pays principle (PPP).

The assessment of the 3rd RBMPs reveals a number of weaknesses in these reports as regards explaining and using the WFD cost recovery mechanism in service of the WFD environmental objectives.

Particular concerns are lack of attention in pricing policies for scarcity conditions (incl. overly wide exemptions to pricing, and how to determine the price component related to the "resource costs" and how to combine the pricing instrument with allocation mechanisms), and, more generally, the role of pricing in the cost recovery efforts, the exclusion of part of the capital costs in price setting, the possible role of the price regulator be relevant topics not elaborated in the available guidance.

The application of PPP in the water acquis merits close scrutiny in view of new policy developments (enhanced producer responsibility in the recast UWWTD) as well as an upcoming DG ENV note on PPP application in the environmental acquis.

The WG needs to *share experiences* on the practical economic-related challenges of setting water policy in practice, to start with the regulation of water services, as regards the relation of price regulation with the efficiency objectives, quality guarantees and the social protection dimension. They also need to consider "new" ideas at *technical* level, with some distance from actual policy. Strong involvement of WAREG would be helpful.

In addition, this task can also cover discussion on the economic dimension of the functioning of the EU and national water sectors, including national water policies, and the interaction with EU policies and funding instruments affecting the water domain (cf. the implementation of the national Recovery and Resilience Plans, the EU taxonomy for

sustainable activities, the EU strategy on adaptation to climate change, other policies, such as agriculture, et cetera).

Next to the 3rd RBMPs, 2nd FRMPs and the Commission' assessment of these plans, these discussions can be based on relevant economic studies and publications with a view of an exchange between experts and where the WG deems necessary to report to the SCG the WG viewpoint and recommendations. It includes items such as:

- Relevant special reports by the European Court of Auditors.
- Development of statistics and indicators relevant for the economic dimension of the EU water acquis implementation, notably the EEA work stream on developing cost recovery and / or water pricing indicators as well as Eurostat work on the environmental-economic accounts, including the water accounts.
- Discussion on how to apply the concept "Payment for Ecosystem Services" (PES) for water uses and water services.
- Economic elements of the Biodiversity Strategy, the new CAP, the EU Climate Adaptation Strategy and the Zero Pollution Action Plan.
- Case studies for appraising ERC (Environmental and Resource Costs) and including them in the cost recovery efforts, including pricing policy.
- Experience regarding the assessment of disproportionate costs linked to WFD implementation.

Deliverables should be non-papers on selected topics or agreed set of viewpoints / recommendations to be sent to the SCG.

3. Investments in water resilience

a) Estimations of investment needs and economic analysis of alternative investment options and pathways

b) Drivers and barriers to investments and their financing

The development of the Water Resilience Strategy has a strong long term investment perspective. In addition, the Commission is preparing the MFF 2027-2034, and substantial EU Funds support programs under the current MFF are running (including the Recovery and Resilience Programs).

The WG should organise a structured discussion on how water-related investments are financed in general and what the practical experiences have been in planning and funds acquirement, also tapping into the viewpoints of non-government investors.

Deliverables: recommendations on investment needs and priorities, investment planning and support, at the hand of received / submitted studies or non-paper by WG members.

- The WG sends a summary of the discussion to the SCG and where the WG sees merit, also conclusions and recommendations.

7. WG WATER SCARCITY AND DROUGHTS

Chairs: EC DG ENV, EC DG CLIMA, DG JRC, EEA, Portugal, Spain

OBJECTIVES

The purpose of the WG WS&D, within the CIS, is to provide a multi stakeholder forum to support the implementation of the WFD on aspects related to water scarcity and droughts by providing for:

- information exchange between Member States, the Commission and stakeholders on good practices, policies, research/projects and new approaches to help Member States manage droughts including through transboundary cooperation, addressing also water scarcity issues and managing long term aridity that threatens to cause desertification in some parts of the European Union; and
- provide feedback to the Commission on the implementation of the WF Directive with a view to reaching a common understanding on the requirements for its implementation and potential evaluations of the WFD on aspects remating to water quantity management other than floods; and,
- linking with related activities of the CIS at EU level, and with other Commission or international activities for support of the implementation of the Directive and the improvement of drought risk management and addressing of water scarcity issues

Based on previous work of the Ad Hoc Task Group WS&D 2022-24, it is clear that the European Union must and can further increase the security of freshwater supply in a sustainable manner, protecting biodiversity and ecosystem services, while catering for the needs of society and the economy. A successful climate adaptation strategy for water management must enhance Europe's ability to prevent as far as possible water scarcity and secure water supply for vital ecosystem services as well as socioeconomic needs, guaranteeing in particular the implementation of ecological flows and water needs of dependent aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems. This implies improving our preparedness for extreme and prolonged droughts including situations where precipitation permanently declines causing aridity; and devising comprehensive strategies to reduce scarcity while protecting nature. The Working Group WS&D will support these endeavours and thereby accompany the roll out of a Water Resilience Strategy and a Water Efficiency First Principle in the European Union.

<u>Water Security & Efficiency</u>

A first work stream will work on reducing our water demand, including through measures to implement a "Water efficiency First Principle" and reducing net water abstractions in regions affected by water stress. This work will identify in more detail water saving potentials, compiling also best practices. It will be explored how water efficiency measures can best be embedded in an integrated river basin management, promoting net water savings across all

sectors at a river basin level, and reducing abstractions where needed, ensuring the implementation of e-flows, avoiding waste, increasing water reuse (in cooperation with WG Water Reuse) and promoting best practices of digital innovation and circularity.

The first work-stream will also take stock of measures to increase water supply such as through desalination and expanding the use of reclaimed water to substitute abstractions from water bodies, beyond irrigation in agriculture. The Working Group will explore options for using water efficiency indicators as tool to reduce net consumption particularly in water stressed regions.

The Working Group should also explore how to upscale and mainstream nature-based solutions in RBMPs and across sectors, as part of an overall strategy to adapt to climate change impacts and build water and climate resilience, particularly on mitigating of extreme drought effects, on how to contribute to better address water scarcity situations derived from imbalances between water availability and demands from the different sectors, as well as to reduce vulnerability and exposure to flood risks (in relation to the work on the WG on Floods). Finally, the topic of water allocation should continue to be explored by the Working Group including aspects of regional cohesion and aspects of solidarity in transboundary river basin management.

Drought Management Plans

A second workstream will update the 2008 Technical Guidance on Drought Management Plans (Technical Report no. 23/08) . The 2008 guidance helped a first generation of drought management plans to be established in the course of the first RBMP cycle 2009-2015 by making recommendations on items needed in a Drought Management Plan. As the Stocktaking on EU Drought Management Policies in 2023 suggests, Member States however use a variety of diverging approaches, governance setups and actions at policy, planning and management levels, making cross-sectorial and transboundary cooperation on water scarcity issues more complex. Even the definition of "drought" still varies across borders. Apart from these conceptual differences, there are regional differences which should be considered in the technical guidance. Namely, droughts last significantly longer in the Mediterranean regions causing aridity and creating desertification risks while droughts in Central and Eastern European regions are shorter but nevertheless cause severe damage due to higher population density and a lower level of preparedness. This raises the question whether the recommendations on drought management plans should be broadened to cover also on the one hand the threat of desertification through aridity in Mediterranean regions, and on the other hand the phenomenon of droughts being followed by flash floods in Central Europe. Novel questions arise on measures necessary in each drought phase, and improved mechanisms for transboundary cooperation on droughts that affect large regions in Europe, causing also low flows and algal blooms on large transboundary rivers, and/or saline intrusions along coasts as well as complex knock-on effects along supply chains. After 16 years, the technical guidance is therefore in need of an update, based on the recently updated CIS 24 Guidance on River Basin Management in a Changing Climate.

Indicators for Scarcity and Droughts

A third workstream will aim at updating CIS Technical Document 05/2012 on Water Scarcity & Drought Indicators. In cooperation with EEA and JRC the Working Group should explore whether it is necessary to review and update the methodologies underpinning the main three quantitative water indicators at EU level : the Water Exploitation Index+, the Water Abstraction Index and the Combined Drought Indicator whose methodological underpinnings date back to a CIS Technical Document of WS&D Indicators of May 2012.

a. First, are these quantitative indicators still appropriate and sufficient to identify the actual level of water scarcity and drought risks in Europe?
b. Second, are there areas of improvement for the methodologies of these indicators bearing also in mind factual constraints on data availability at Member State level and the absence of secondary legislation making data compilation compulsory?

Beyond these indicator related questions, the WG WS&D should contribute to improving the European Drought Impacts Database and the European Drought Risk Atlas as well as similar data products of the EEA on droughts.

Together, all three workstreams should contribute to the development of the Water Resilience Strategy announced by Commission President Ursula von der Leyen as political priority for the new Commission. The work will involve cooperation with experts from other CIS Working Groups as appropriate.

Specific objective	N°	Task	Deliverables	Deadline
(1) WATER EFFICIENCY & WATER SECURITY				
1.1 Water Efficiency: Explore water saving potentials; explore how water efficiency measures can be embedded in an integrated river basin management to promote net water savings across all sectors . Explore which tools (e.g.: labelling) are effective for marketing water efficient solutions; Explore rebound effects.	**1**	Hybrid meetings, workshop and summary reports.	Oral or written input on best practices to enhance water efficiency A Deep Dive workshop on water efficiency in (i) agriculture (ii) energy (iii) manufacturing and (iv) the municipal sector to explore water efficiency potentials, covering also tools to promote water savings and curb rebound effects. Summarise findings in short reports.	Q4 2026

Specific objective	N°	Task	Deliverables	Deadline
			A workshop on experiences with indicators to benchmark water efficiency as a means to reduce water consumption (potentially in cooperation with WG ECON) supported by a consultant. A workshop, on the use of economic tools to increase efficiency for reducing net water consumption (with WG ECON).	
1.2 Water Security: Act as a sounding board for the design of EU policies on reduction of water abstractions, strategies to make desalination more sustainable, definition of sound social and environmental allocation schemes, and ongoing efforts at MS level to develop use cases for water reuse beyond agricultural irrigation (in cooperation with WG Water Reuse), only; Provide input on the environmental aspects of rainwater harvesting and on the construction of reservoirs, including on compliance with WFD requirements	**2**	Hybrid meetings, workshop and summary reports.	Oral or written input as appropriate; panel discussions and deep dives with experts summarise findings in short reports. Workshops to exchange best practices on the implementation of e-flows with a reinforced focus on transboundary cooperation (including with ECOSTAT on more methodological questions). Exchange best practices of nature based solutions to enhance resilience to droughts.	Q4 2027

Specific objective	Nº	Task	Deliverables	Deadline
(2) DROUGHT MANAGEMENT POLICIES				
a. Update the CIS Technical Report no. 23 of 2008 "Drought Management Plans" by considering the experience made with drought management since 2008	**1**	Update Guidance Document no 23/2008 (supported by a consultant)	Updated Technical Guidance no 23/2008 – supported by a consultant. Amongst others: measures to handle the increased temporal variability of precipitation; how to mitigate knock-on effects of drought impacts along supply chains; address saline intrusion in ground water bodies and specific problems of managing droughts in low lands; best practices for water allocation in times of scarcity; explore how to bring drought management planning into sector planning instruments; how to deal with uncertainty ; prolonged droughts. New CIS Guidance 24 "River Basin Management in a Changing Climate" to be considered.	Q4 2027
(3) BETTER DATA & INDICATORS for WS&D				
3.1. Water Abstraction Index (with EEA), Water Exploitation Index (WEI +) and Combined Drought Indicator	**1**	Update CIS Technical Document of WS&D Indicators of May 2012 on Indices as appropriate based	Q1: Are the Indicators (SPI, fAPAR, WEI+) sufficient to detect meteorologic drought risks and establish water	Q4 2026

Specific objective	Nº	Task	Deliverables	Deadline
		on expert; and Section 9.4.1 of the CIS 2016 WFD Guidance on Reporting based on discussions in the Group.	scarcity as a measure of pressures on renewable freshwater resources? Q2: Are the thresholds for compulsory reporting of data for the WEI+ still effective enough to prevent water stress? Is the concept of defining "water stress" still up to date? Q3: Are the methodologies to compute the indicators still up to date or do they need refinement?	
3.2. Europe Drought Risk Atlas 2.0 (with JRC)	**2**	Support JRC in the testing of the enhanced approach to characterise sectoral risks and in the evaluation and interpretation of the results	Deliverable is the European Drought Risk Atlas 2.0	Q4 2027
3.3. European Drought Risk Impacts Database (with JRC)	**3**	Support JRC in establishing a network of experts that can contribute to the update of the Drought Impact Database and evaluate specific sectoral content	Deliverable is the European Drought Impacts Database 2.0	Q4 2027

8. WG DATA AND INFORMATION SHARING

Chairs: EC DG Environment, EEA

OBJECTIVES

The overall objectives of WG DIS is to support the implementation of the reporting and electronic reporting under the WFD and to provide a platform for coordination and information exchange between Member States, the European Commission, European Environmental Agency, and other actors on themes relevant to the topic.

The focus of WG DIS is to contribute to better data management relating to various reporting streams and dedicated reporting tools. In order to support simplification and modernisation of water reporting and data management, WG DIS will also explore the potential of digitalisation and new technologies.

TASKS

Objective	No	Task	WG cooperation	Deliverables	Deadline
To ensure timely reporting of the 4th and future River Basin Management Plans	1	1.1 Evaluation of the 3rd reporting cycle and recommendations for future reporting cycles	All WG	Report based on (a) the support from consultants for the evaluation of WFD reporting (b) the feedback from individual MS, (c) the evaluation of relevant reporting schemas in individual Working Groups	1st Q 2026
		1.2. Cooperation between the water community and the digital community (EEA ad hoc technical IT group and external experts)		Exchange of best practices	2025 – 2027
		1.3. Preparation of reporting tools for the 4th and future reporting cycles		Reporting guidance, reporting schemas for WFD	2027
		1.4. Formalisation of preparation process before the 5th reporting cycle		Timetable for the 5th reporting cycle	2027
To support simplification and modernisation of water reporting	2	2.1 explore digitalisation and new technologies 2.2 increase coherence with other data reporting (e.g.DWD, BWD, NiD,	All WG		3rd Q 2026

Objective	No	Task	WG cooperation	Deliverables	Deadline
and data management		UWWTD and WISE-SoE reporting) 2.3 sharing of good practices and support to MS on implementation of: -high value datasets/Open Data Directive -INSPIRE (codes in registry not obligatory now) -API		Workshops on high value datasets/Open Data Directive, INSPIRE and API	
To support the European Environment Agency and the Commission in developing of visualisation tools for the data reported under the WFD and Floods Directive	3	3. Support for effective communication on progress (alternative for one-out all out) made in the implementation of the Directives through WISE Freshwater web portal	None	Regular feedback in the form of contributions and suggestions for revision of national dashboards and WISE Freshwater web portal Workshop on data visualisation	2025 – 2027 Spring meeting 2025, DE, support NL
Enhance cooperation with other working groups, especially on:	4	**4a. WG Chemicals** - Supporting the annual reporting by Member States on the Watch List required by the EQS Directive - Contribute to the implementation of the 'one substance, one assessment' approach and its actions announced in the Strategy, especially to the initiative to remove legislative obstacles for the re-use of data and better streamline the flow of chemical data between EU and national authorities. - The presentation of monitoring results (concentrations instead if exceedances, extrapolation especially for mercury, but also other pollutants) - The impact on chemical status of substances behaving like uPBTs (ubiquitous, persistent, bioaccumulative and toxic) substances - how to differentiate reporting on chemical status due to:	WG Chemicals	Contribution if needed	2027

Objective	No	Task	WG cooperation	Deliverables	Deadline
		- shift of RBSPs to chemical status - continuous enlargement of list of PS			
		4b. WG Groundwaters - continue the cooperation on the developed indicator on water quality and quantity	WG Groundwaters	Workshop, lead AT	2027
		4c. WG Ecostat - cooperation on indicators - support on ECOSTAT task "Exploitation of remote sensing data in WFD monitoring and classification"	WG Ecostat	Contribution if needed	2027
		4d. WG Floods - ensuring coordination with the reporting done under the Floods Directive	WG Floods	None	2027
		4e. WG DIKE for the Marine Strategy Framework Directive - contribute, within its areas of expertise, on tasks in order to establish links with the reporting done under the Marine Strategy Framework Directive.	WG DIKE	Contribution if needed	2027

9. TASK FORCE ON EXEMPTIONS

Overall objectives

Article 4 WFD sets out the environmental objectives of the Directive, including the achievement of good status for all surface and groundwater bodies by 2015 (with possible time exemptions until 2027) and the prevention of deterioration of the status of water bodies. An integral part of these objectives are the exemptions set under paragraphs 4 to 7 of Article 4 WFD. All exemptions can be only applied under the conditions listed in the WFD and need to be justified in the RBMPs.

Starting from the fourth cycle of RBMPs, the possibilities to apply exemptions under article 4.4 will be considerably reduced, i.e. limited to exemptions for reason of 'natural conditions', where all measures required to achieve good status are being implemented but more time is needed for nature to recover.

In light of the approaching deadline to achieve good status in 2027 and following the request made by members of the SCG and the Water Directors, an Ad-hoc Task Force on Exemptions has been created.

The primary objective of this group, the composition of which is yet to be decided, is to avoid an unlawful use of exemptions and to contribute to progress on WFD implementation. The WFD Fitness Check evaluation concluded in 2019 that "The Commission's implementation report also found that another hurdle towards effective implementation is the extensive use of exemptions, in many cases without appropriate and detailed justification." In order to achieve this objective, the objectives of the Ad-hoc Task Force will be twofold:

- take stock of the current application of exemptions. Sharing this information is expected to provide further detailed insights into the main problems faced by Member States, where possible, according to activities/impacts affecting water bodies, main substances of concern, transboundary issues, conflicting interests, etc. The exchange may also provide an opportunity to support Member States by identifying solutions to common problems, thereby accelerating the process of achieving objectives.
- provide a better understanding of: 1) how to interpret and apply the conditions for the application of exemptions and 2) the amount of detail to be provided for that purpose in the next cycle RBMPs so as to enable the Commission/civil society to verify compliance with the criteria these should be justified, during the course of the current cycle of RBMPs and when preparing the fourth RBMPs. The task would build on the findings established in the 2023 report on the use of Article 4(5) in order to deepen the understanding of currently applied methodologies to justify exemptions, including possible identification of good practices and/or tools that may be used for that purpose. The work would mainly focus on Article 4(5), but should address other exemptions that are allowed beyond 2027, i.e. exemptions under Article 4(4) (natural conditions), Article 4(6) (temporary deterioration) and Article 4(7) (new projects). Secondly, the task would build on an analysis of the various levels of detail provided by Member States in their

justifications of exemptions in the third RBMPs, with the aim to conclude on what can be considered an appropriate level of detail for the purpose of the next RBMPs.

Summary of tasks

The primary aim of the Ad-hoc Task Force on Exemptions should be avoid an unlawful use of exemptions and to contribute to progress on WFD implementation. The tasks of the Ad-hoc Task Force on Exemptions follow two complementary strands, focussing on the current application of exemptions and on the application of exemptions after 2027, to provide a comprehensive picture of the playing field, support Member States to foster WFD implementation, and address the difficulties and solutions identified.

The table below shows a summary of the tasks and deliverables foreseen to achieve the objectives of this group.

Specific objectives, tasks and deliverables

Overview of current application of exemptions	Task 1: Provide a critical overview of the application of exemptions across Member States in the third RBMPs.
	Objective and description: In order to support Member States in the run-up to 2027 and to prepare for the next cycle of RBMPs, the first task is to provide a comprehensive picture of the current use of exemptions across Member States, through a critical overview. This overview should produce a comprehensive, yet granular picture of the use of exemptions, identifying trends and common elements overall, but also in relation to, inter alia, different types of water bodies (raising similar issues), different types of activities/sectors (raising similar issues), different (groups of) substances of concern (raising similar issues), transboundary issues. The discussion should also address the reasoning behind the application of exemptions, the amount of detail of the justifications provided in the RBMPs, and the different solutions adopted. Because Member States will not be allowed in the fourth RBMPs to apply time exemptions for reason of technical feasibility or disproportionate costs under Article 4(4) WFD, the Ad-hoc Task Group should also focus on the use made of these exemptions in the third RBMPs, to prepare the ground for the second task and, in particular, verify if these exemptions might be turned into exemptions under Article 4(5) WFD in the next cycle or, on the contrary, if this would depend on the implementation of additional measures under the current cycle.
	Deliverables: hybrid/in-person meetings/workshops; report(s).
	Consultant contribution: If deemed necessary by the Task Force, a contractor may be asked to analyse information from EEA dashboards, distinguishing between activities, substances of concern, types of water bodies, other; also identifying, for each type of problem, the main solutions applied by Member States. Member States may find inspiration in still applying additional solutions during the third RBMPs.
Application of	Task 2: Gain a better common understanding of the conditions for the application of exemptions after 2027 and the appropriate level of justification to be provided in the RBMPs.

exemptions after 2027	Objective and description: In order to support Member States in setting up and implementing adequate measures during the current cycle of RBMPs, with a view to the future possible need to apply exemptions, and to assist them in correctly invoking exemptions in the fourth RBMPs, the second task is to gain a better understanding of the conditions for the application of exemptions after 2027. Based on the overview provided as part of the first task, the Ad-hoc Task Group should reflect on the situation of the water bodies covered by exemptions under Article 4(4) WFD, i.e. whether there will be no further need of an exemption in the fourth RBMPs or whether and how Article 4(5) WFD could be invoked instead. This task should be the continuation of the work done in the report mentioned above on Article 4(5) WFD, to further inquire into unclear aspects and gain a common better understanding of the conditions for the application of this exemption and the level of justification required in the RBMPs. The assessment of the meaning and practical implications of "disproportionately expensive" and "disproportionate costs" should be done in cooperation with WG Economics. Although a clarification and common interpretation of the exemption under Article 4(5) should be the main aim of this task, the Ad-hoc Task Group should also address the conditions for the application of the other exemptions under Article 4 WFD, in particular the exemption under Article 4(6) allowing for deterioration if the result of unforeseen/unforeseeable circumstances.
	Deliverables: Hybrid/in person meetings/workshops; report.
	Consultant contribution: If deemed necessary by the Ad-hoc Task Group, consultant work might be required to assess the application of one or more exemptions across Member States, identify good practices and gain a better understanding of the meaning and practical implications of the conditions to invoke exemptions, the processes to meet them and the level of justification provided in the RBMPs.

ANNEX II – Organisation of the CIS

The Strategic Coordination Group will be co-chaired by the Commission and one Member State. In addition to its role in ensuring the coordination among the work done by different Working Groups, the Strategic Coordination Group is also assigned in this Work Programme a number of activities that do not fall under the scope of one of the existing Working Groups. For that purpose, the Strategic Coordination Group can establish Ad-hoc Task Groups, to which it gives a mandate for specific tasks, with identified deliverables and deadlines. The Strategic Coordination Group can also, if and when this may be the best option to pursue an activity, set up workshops, possibly back-to-back with the meetings of the Group, to discuss specific topics.

The Water Directors will meet, in principle, twice a year. The meetings of Water Directors will be organised by the Member State holding the EU Presidency and co-chaired by the Presidency and the Commission. Water Directors are responsible for deciding on the activities undertaken under the CIS (e.g. modifying the Work Programme if necessary) and for endorsing guidance documents or other documents with a strategic character prepared by one of the CIS Groups, as proposed by the Strategic Coordination Group. In the context of the European Green Deal and its strategies, the Water Directors may also collaborate with their counterparts from other policy areas (agriculture, energy, climate change adaptation, transport, nature and biodiversity etc.).

The Water Directors and the members of the Strategic Coordination Group are expected to ensure that information exchanged within the CIS process, e.g. guidance documents or Working Group reports, is passed down to all those involved in water management at national, regional or river basin level. The Strategic Co-ordination Group may also ensure exchanges and liaison with other relevant fora including new fora created by the European Green Deal initiatives (Zero Pollution Stakeholder Platform; High Level Round Table on Chemicals; European Circular Economy Stakeholder Platform, etc.) as well as networks related to compliance promotion (IMPEL, Forum on Compliance Assurance and Governance etc.).

None of the Working Groups or Ad-hoc Task Groups foreseen in this Work Programme are permanent by nature. However, the scope of the work of the Working Groups is generally wider than is the case for any Ad-hoc Task Groups and it is foreseeable that they will need to continue to work for the whole duration of this Work Programme.

Ad-hoc Task Groups will be established by the Strategic Coordination Group on the basis of a proposal from the Commission, Member States and/or stakeholders, which identifies the future lead or co-leads of the Group. It is the responsibility of the leads initially identified in the proposal to draft a mandate, specifying the scope of the work, the working method, deliverables and timeline for the Group. The size and composition of the Ad-hoc Task Groups will depend on the complexity of the tasks included in their individual mandates. Members of the Ad-hoc Task Groups may be members of the Strategic Coordination Group or experts appointed by them and each Ad-hoc Task Group is expected to have a minimum of one and a maximum of three leads.

On specific topics, it could be envisaged that WGs or ATGs collaborate on short term deliverables. In addition, especially in the context of the different actions from the European Green Deal initiatives, Working Groups or ATGs may collaborate with relevant Working Groups from other policy sectors outside the CIS (agriculture, energy, climate adaptation, transport, nature and biodiversity etc.).

The Strategic Coordination Group will inform the Water Directors about the mandates given to Ad-hoc Task Groups, indicating which of the activities identified in the Work Programme each Ad-hoc Task Group will contribute to.

Each Working Group will have autonomy in deciding when and where to meet and how to organise the work in order to deliver the products foreseen within the timetable set by the Work Programme. In this framework, Working Groups may decide to create smaller sub-groups to work on specific tasks. In this case, the Working Group leads need to inform the Strategic Coordination Group about the creation of such sub-groups and the tasks assigned to them.

Each Working Group will have a minimum of two and a maximum of four co-leads, of which at least one from the Commission and one from a Member State. The initial co-leads of each Working Group are identified in this Work Programme and can be changed following a proposal from the Commission or a Member State, with the approval of the Strategic Coordination Group.

The co-leads of each Working Group are responsible for coordinating the work of the Group, ensuring that the requests from the Strategic Coordination Group are correctly understood by the members of the Working Group, reporting back to the Strategic Coordination Group on the activities of the Working Group, ensuring that the requested deliverables are produced on time and organising and setting up an agenda for the meetings of the Working Group. The co-leads are also responsible for ensuring coordination with the work of other Working Groups or Ad-hoc Task Groups when relevant.

Members of the Working Groups are expected to have the necessary technical expertise to contribute to the work of the Group. This may lead, in some cases, to the participation in some activities of the Group by different experts from a Member State or stakeholder organisation in order to cover the different technical issues involved (e.g. the inclusion of hydromorphology experts in activities of the Working Group on Ecological Status when necessary).

In organising their work, the Working Groups and in particular the co-leads need to make sure that the limited resources available are used in an efficient way. This may include, for example, the replacement of physical meetings with web or phone conferences when justified. In order for the meetings to be well prepared and have the necessary follow-up, **it is important that all documents for a meeting are available in CIRCABC at least 10 working days before the meeting**, that the presentations are available to the extent possible one week before the meeting, and that minutes of the meetings, or at least operational conclusions, are available no more than 15 days after the meetings.

Practical activities and organisational issues

All documents, e.g. minutes, presentations, deliverables, are in principle made and will be made available in CIRCABC[12] which is publicly accessible. Coordination will be provided by the co-chairs for organizing meetings, preparing agenda points, and chairing meetings.

Working groups plenary meetings, will be organised at regular intervals (biannually) to follow the progress of the tasks and to provide a platform for information exchange and for discussion on key implementation issues. At least one annual meeting is organised physically with the possibility of online participation. The other annual meeting is organised online if not otherwise agreed.

Development of documents, such as questionnaires, reports, handbooks, studies, guidelines, guidance and eventual updates, or other documents will be drafted in core groups or ad hoc groups. All produced drafts are introduced in the plenary meetings and are submitted to all members for comments. Subject to the specific nature of relevant policy papers, these actions may require approval by the SCG and their products endorsement by the Water Directors.

Members of the working groups comprise in principle one main contact person and other representatives of the EU Member States, EFTA countries and EU candidate countries, as well as civil society organisations, or international/inter-governmental bodies, such as international river basin commissions. The European Commission keeps and updates the contacts of the Members. Generally, stakeholder organisations at regional, European or higher level may be members according to the CIS/SCG rules of procedure in force at the time. Additional participants, speakers or experts may be invited to attend the meetings as the need may arise, e.g. relevant EU researchers, academics or project managers, may be invited on an ad-hoc basis.

Core-groups for coordinating specific tasks or drafting specific documents may be set up to facilitate the delivery. Core groups may be chaired by others than the co-chairs of each working group, following agreement by the latter.

[12] https://circabc.europa.eu/ui/group/9ab5926d-bed4-4322-9aa7-9964bbe8312d/library/82c444c2-530b-4a3a-baa4-61de2138e9dc