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## Timing

The Blueprint will be released by the end of 2012. As it is closely related to the EU's 2020 strategy, its recommendations should be implemented by 2020. However, it will drive policy for a longer duration as the analysis underpinning the Blueprint will cover the period up to 2050.

If you have any questions about the Blueprint, please e-mail the European Commission at:  
ENV-BLUEPRINT-EU-WATERS@ec.europa.eu

For further information:

European Commission's water Blueprint webpage:  
[http://ec.europa.eu/environment/water/blueprint/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/water/blueprint/index_en.htm)

European Commission's webpage for EU water policies (with links to river basin management plans):  
<http://water.europa.eu/policy>

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# 2012 Blueprint to safeguard Europe's water resources

*Water is the driving force of all nature*

Leonardo da Vinci

It is a precondition for human, animal and plant life as well as a vital economic resource. Water also plays a fundamental role in climate regulation.

The main aim of EU water policy is to ensure that throughout the EU a sufficient quantity of good quality water is available for people's needs and for the environment. Since the 1970s, through a variety of measures, the EU has worked hard to create an effective and coherent water policy.

In 2000 the Water Framework Directive (WFD) established a legal basis to protect and restore clean water across Europe and ensure its long-term, sustainable use. The general objective of the WFD is to get all water — for example, lakes, rivers, streams and groundwater aquifers — into a healthy state by 2015. But the achievement of EU water policy goals is threatened by a number of old and emerging challenges, including water pollution, water abstraction for agriculture and energy production, land use and the impacts of climate change.



water

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## The response

The EU's policy response to these challenges is the forthcoming 2012 Blueprint to safeguard Europe's water resources. The overall objective of the Blueprint is to improve EU water policy to ensure good quality water, in adequate quantities, for all authorised uses.

The Blueprint will encourage a move towards what we call 'prevention and preparedness'. It will ensure a sustainable balance between water demand and supply, taking into account the needs of both people and the natural ecosystems they depend on.

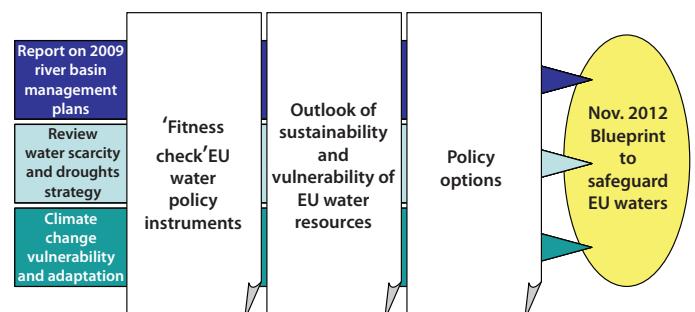
## How will the Blueprint be formed?

The Blueprint's policy recommendations will be based on the results of the following ongoing assessments.

- 1. Analysis of the WFD's **river basin management plans**:
  - giving information on how Member States have improved their water management.
- 2. Review of the 2007 policy on **water scarcity and drought**:
  - including water efficiency measures.
- 3. The evolution of water resources:
  - **water's vulnerability to climate change** and man-made pressures such as urbanisation and land use.
- 4. Outcome of the **fitness check of EU freshwater policy**:
  - a gap analysis to identify any uncovered areas and assess the adequacy of the current framework.

The results of these four reviews, together with other EU studies, will provide knowledge to help better implementation of EU water policy.

## 2012 Blueprint to safeguard EU waters



## What areas will the Blueprint cover?

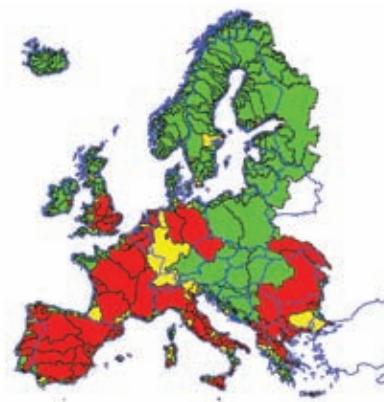
Subject to a thorough impact assessment, the Blueprint should suggest actions in seven specific areas.

➤ **Land use.** Ongoing studies of natural water retention measures should identify the most relevant measures to be implemented to reduce flood risk while also providing other benefits such as water provision, biodiversity protection and carbon storage. The best policies to accelerate implementation of these measures will also be established.

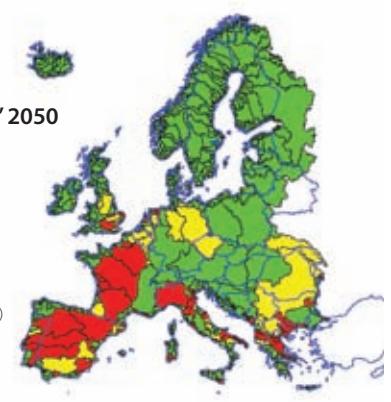
➤ **Economic incentives for efficient management of water resources.** The Blueprint should propose recommendations to use tools such as water pricing and tax incentives to reflect the true cost of water use and pollution.

## Modelling vulnerability of EU water resources

'Economy First' 2050



'Sustainability Eventually' 2050



Low stress (WEI < 20%)

Medium stress (20 % < WEI < 40%)

High stress (WEI > 40%)

WEI = water exploitation index.

➤ **Water efficiency targets.** To calculate optimum water use, the gap between water demand and availability needs to be quantified. Using water and ecosystem accounts developed with the European Environment Agency, the Blueprint will provide indicative water efficiency targets — at EU, Member State, river basin and sectoral levels — taking into account the vulnerability of water resources under different scenarios (see graph). It will also look at ways to improve water efficiency in buildings and distribution networks.

➤ **Innovation in water resource management.** The Blueprint will be complemented by an innovation partnership with stakeholders and the private sector, via which new financial, technical, technological and organisational solutions can be identified, tested and disseminated.

➤ **Governance in water policy.** The Blueprint will look at ways to improve governance, including analysing the administrative set-up and the potential to reduce administrative burden, while providing the reactive capacity needed to face emerging challenges such as climate change adaptation.

➤ **The knowledge base for water policy-making.** The Blueprint will propose ideas to improve the quality of information used to create water policy. It will seek improvements in statistics on pressure exerted by all activities on water resources; an increased use of satellite and land Global Monitoring for Environment and Security (GMES) observations; the enhancement of the Water Information System for Europe (WISE) and the development of a roadmap for water research.

➤ **The global dimension of water resource management.** The Blueprint will take into account the worldwide effects of water policy and reinforce the EU's commitment to achieve the United Nation's millennium development goals (MDGs) on access to drinking water and sanitation, while taking into account relevant outcomes of the Rio + 20 Conference.