

EN
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Answer given by Ms Roswall
on behalf of the European Commission
(8.9.2025)

In its Water Resilience Strategy (WRS)¹, the Commission has underlined the importance of the Water Efficiency First principle. The Commission also recognises that desalination of sea water can provide a steady water supply beyond the hydrological cycle, where necessary.

Sustainable desalination was already addressed in Horizon 2020 projects² and the Commission continues supporting research and innovation in this area, for instance through the EU Blue Economy Observatory³, Horizon Europe⁴ and the EU programme for the environment and climate action⁵.

Desalination projects are subject to EU environmental legislation, including the Water Framework Directive⁶, the Marine Strategy Framework Directive⁷, and the Environmental Impact Assessment Directive⁸. These EU laws require thorough assessments to ensure that desalination does not adversely affect marine ecosystems through brine discharge or excessive energy use. Furthermore, EU support for desalination requires that environmental degradation risks related to preserving water quality and avoiding water stress are identified and addressed in line with the relevant legislation⁹. EU co-funding of desalination projects also requires a Do No Significant Harm check, which addresses among others the sustainable use and protection of water and climate change mitigation objectives.

¹ https://commission.europa.eu/topics/environment/water-resilience-strategy_en.

² Horizon 2020 projects: <https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/101022686> and <https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/869474> and <https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/869703>.

³ https://blue-economy-observatory.ec.europa.eu/index_en.

⁴ Horizon Europe: e.g. <https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/190150864>, <https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/101188559>, <https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/101091915>.

⁵ e.g. <https://lifedesirows.eu/life-desirows-project/>, <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/life/publicWebsite/project/LIFE23-ENV-ES-SALTEAU-101148475/sustainable-drinking-and-irrigation-water-production-from-saline-alternative-water-resources>.

⁶ 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. 1–73, as amended by Commission Directive 2014/101/EU of 30 October 2014, OJ L 311, 31.10.2014, p. 32–35.

⁷ Directive 2008/56/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 June 2008 establishing a framework for community action in the field of marine environmental policy, OJ L 164, 25.6.2008, p. 19–40.

⁸ Directive 2011/92/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 December 2011 on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment, OJ L 26, 28.1.2012, p. 1–21, as amended by Directive 2014/52/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 April 2014, OJ L 124, 25.4.2014, p. 1–18.

⁹ Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2023/2485 of 27 June 2023 amending Delegated Regulation (EU) 2021/2139 establishing additional technical screening criteria for determining the conditions under which certain economic activities qualify as contributing substantially to climate change mitigation or climate change adaptation and for determining whether those activities cause no significant harm to any of the other environmental objectives, OJ L, 2023/2485, 21.11.2023 (section 5.13).