

EN

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Answer given by Ms Roswall
on behalf of the European Commission
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Solidarity and open cooperation are key in transboundary water management. Article 13 of the Water Framework Directive¹ (WFD) requires Member States sharing an international river basin to coordinate their river basin management plans, including measures to address water abstraction and ensure enough water flows to achieve good ecological status. Moreover, as Parties to the UN Economic Commission for Europe Water Convention², Member States must ensure ‘exchange of information on existing and planned uses of water and related installations that are likely to cause transboundary impact’. Article 12 of the WFD³ also allows a Member State to notify the Commission and the other Member States concerned if it faces a water management issue that it cannot resolve alone, and to propose recommendations for addressing it.

The WFD does not specify which form the cooperation between Member States should take when addressing water scarcity. In practice, Member States use a range of bilateral or multilateral agreements, which the Commission regularly assesses. However, low flows issues are not addressed consistently⁴. In its recent assessment of the WFD implementation⁵, the Commission thus recommended Member States to improve transboundary cooperation, including in the context of the river commissions on quantitative aspects of water management through relevant international cooperation mechanisms and bodies.

The integrated framework for European climate resilience and risk management⁶, will help Member States and the EU strengthen preparedness for future climate conditions. This will be an important contribution to improving water resilience and security, including across shared river basins and in other transboundary contexts.

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.

² Convention on the Protection and use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes.

³ https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=OJ:L_202600805. This article was recently amended and strengthened by making this cooperation mandatory.

⁴ An overview is available in the report ‘Assessment of the third River Basin Management Plans under the Water Framework Directive – Assessment of international cooperation under the Water Framework Directive – International River Basins’ (February 2025), available on CIRCABC: <https://circabc.europa.eu/ui/group/9ab5926d-bed4-4322-9aa7-9964bbe8312d/library/3bb909f7-04c8-4e1e-9a37-337a575239d8/details>.

⁵ Report from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament on the implementation of the Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC) and the Floods Directive (2007/60/EC) – Third river basin management plans – Second flood risk management plans, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52025DC0002>.

⁶ Scheduled for adoption in the fourth quarter of 2026.