

WFD TOOLKIT

The Water Framework Directive

Adopted in 2000, the Water Framework Directive (WFD) is essentially the EU's manual on how to sustainably use its most vital resource: water. It has also been described as “the most substantial and ambitious piece of EU environmental legislation to date”ⁱ. Whereas traditional management practices used to focus, for example, on individual pollutants and how to keep them below harmful levelsⁱⁱ, the WFD works in terms of whole catchments (e.g. river basins), which often cross-national borders. It takes the hypothetical state of catchment areas **as they would be in the absence of human pressures** and uses this as reference point: a catchment area's status improves the closer it comes to this idealⁱⁱⁱ. The WFD's objectives are strict, aiming for “good ecological status” (GES) for all water bodies by 2027 at the latest. However, member states are given considerable flexibility to choose what steps should be taken and where^{iv}. The WFD is realised through River Basin Management Plans — published by member states for each river basin within their territory — which set an agenda for how to achieve GES and run in parallel six-year cycles.

Why is the WFD important?

Ecosystems, including ones which exist around water, provide their best services to humanity when kept in a good state. Worldwide, ecosystems have been estimated to provide €26 trillion yearly in services, more than twice the value of what humans produce in an equivalent time.

Europe's rapid loss of biodiversity is a sign that our ecosystems are being seriously compromised and must not be ignored. Less than half of European surface waters are ranked at “good ecological status”^{vi}. This means their ability to provide clean water and other resources vital to the economy and human life, protect us from floods and retain water during droughts is greatly reduced. Apart from these more obvious benefits, the green spaces around rivers provide spaces for recreation, exercise and relaxation, improving the health of those who use them.

Though conserving ecosystems is to the public benefit, strong pressure from industry has led some member states to push for the WFD legislation which does so to be weakened. With the upcoming fitness check and possible review of the WFD for 2021, they will have a chance to do



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this, by arguing that the legislation is not fit for purpose.

A list of success stories showcasing the WFD's merits can be found [here](#).

The Fitness check

What is it?

- A process which helps understand the impact of the existing legislature in reaching its goal and also to identify the inconsistencies and overlaps within the legislature.
- This cycle of fitness check assesses the WFD along with its two daughter directives, namely the Groundwater Directive and the Environmental Quality Directive^{vii}.

Why is it important?

- The data collected during this period also acts as a stepping stone for the future evaluation period of the WFD and the related directives.
- This fitness check will hence be crucial to prevent any future weakening of the legislature.

Earlier success story: a similar exercise was done on the nature directives and an evaluation of the 'Fitness Check' was published, indicating the threat of opening up the nature directives with the possibility of weakening the European nature legislation. The evidence gathered during the process — supported via a wide campaign by European NGOs — proved the exercise, thus focusing on strengthening implementation without making changes to the legislation.

How is the fitness check being done for WFD?

The process towards fitness check started with the publishing of the online roadmap in 2017 and is expected to end by early 2019.

- **20 October 2017 – 17 November 2017**: Online [Roadmap](#) Published.^{viii}
- **17 September 2018 – 04 March 2019**: [Online public consultation](#) period.
- **Autumn 2018**: Implementation reports expected.
- **20-21 September 2018**: European Water Conference in Vienna. This evaluation aims to get the views from relevant stakeholders, including municipalities, authorities, cities and actors below the national level and whom are concerned with the cost of implementation.



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EU water conference **background papers** and **the programme** are available [here](#).

Implementation reports will be published based on the data collected from the member states. These are expected to act as input elements for discussion with the authorities and stakeholders.

[Weakening the WFD: arguments and rebuttals](#)

Various different stakeholders may cite arguments against the current WFD or in favour of relaxing its prescriptions. In the table on the following page, we have gathered a handful of such arguments, arranged by the stakeholder or sector most likely to use them, and given a rebuttal — in other words, the reason why we believe that this argument does not justify weakening the current WFD.

The table is meant to save you time, not to be read from start to finish. Use it as a source of ready information to further your campaign.



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STAKEHOLDER	ARGUMENTS	REBUTTAL
General	The WFD is not an effective tool for improving the quality of water bodies.	EU waters have seen a drastic improvement with the implementation of the WFD — especially the chemical status, which has improved with better management of the urban and industrial wastewater. MOST CERTAINLY, the WFD has failed to achieve its goal of good status for all rivers by 2015 as only 50% of Europe’s water was estimated to be in good condition ^{ix} . THEREFORE, there is still an urge to effectively address the impact of several pressures on the water bodies, namely pollution, over abstraction of water for agriculture, hydro morphological changes brought on by the hydropower plants, flood defence, navigation, et cetera. ^x
	The cost of implementing the WFD is disproportionate to the benefits it brings.	If the EU had met its deadline for 2015, the total yearly benefits would have reached 20 billion per year on average. ^{xi}
	Arguments against full-cost pricing of water (i.e. an increase in the cost of abstraction).	Uncontrolled abstraction of groundwater for agricultural practices can lead to lowering of water table, which in the future is likely to bring about a water crisis.
	The WFD’s strict prescriptions hamper industry/agriculture, etc., and needs to be relaxed, e.g. by making it easier to obtain exemptions.	Exemptions are already being extensively used, with very varied standards for justification, to undermine the WFD’s ambition ^{xii} . During the first WFD cycle, the number of water bodies at good ecological status only went up by 10%, so this is no time to relax any commitment.
Flood protection authorities	Traditional flood protection (i.e. building dams, dykes and levees) is the best/an adequate	Rivers are dynamic environments: - Unsustainable agriculture results in soil erosion, choking rivers with sediment;



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	<p>method to protect the population from flooding.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Channelizing rivers with concrete means that excess water can't be absorbed by the soil; - Urban environments with impermeable tarmac surfaces are particularly susceptible to floods; and - Dykes and dams are sometimes effective, but when they fail the damage is worse.^{.xiii} Restoring floodplains and river arms: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - gives the river room to expand safely; - creates new habitat for wildlife; and - can recharge groundwater (inter alia, this technique is being used in California for agriculture^{.xiv}) By comparison, 'grey' flood defences are often single-purpose structures. Flood defence is a priority as climate change increases risk: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - During the 2006 Danube floods, dykes broke in Austria and Romania, proving that these don't provide a long-term solution.^{.xv} - In Austria, the damage to private property and infrastructure amounted to €68 million.^{.xvi} - On the Romanian stretch of the Danube alone, dyke failure lead to 7 out of a total of 9 river basins to flood.^{.xvii} After the 90s floods — which caused 250.000 people to be evacuated in the Netherlands — authorities have recognised the limitations of engineered flood defences and are pioneering the 'room for the river' approach^{.xviii}. Compared to 'grey' flood defences (i.e. dykes and dams), 'green' flood defences have a better cost-benefit ratio.^{.xix}



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Hydropower sector	Hydropower plays an important part in meeting Europe's renewable energy commitment.	A considerable body of research shows that hydropower is a significant contributor to greenhouse gas emissions, especially in methane, which is about 35 times more potent than CO ₂ over the course of a century. Individual power plants may even have a footprint larger than an equivalent fossil-fuel power station. This is due to organic matter decomposing beneath the surface of reservoirs. ^{.xx}
	The WFD should fairly balance environmental, economic, climate and social interests; hydropower provides income, jobs, pleasant areas for recreation, flood protection and drinking/irrigation water, and so should be systematically granted exemptions to WFD environmental standards.	<p>Healthy ecosystems provide the following services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - River projects can bring sizeable economic gains. The Emscher River revitalisation project in Germany is estimated to generate 1400 direct jobs a year from 1992 to 2020 and to have an annual market value of over €21 million, and an annual non-market value of €107 million in local enjoyment.^{.xxiii} - Restoring floodplains increases groundwater recharge: in California, floodplains have been calculated to be three times as effective and three times as frequent at restoring groundwater than irrigation.^{.xxiv} <p>River restoration on the Danube, Vistula and many other European rivers has created river parks which can act as a getaway in hot weather — use examples from your country!</p>
	Hydro morphological status (i.e. the physical characteristics of a water body) is a supporting element in the WFD; we should focus on biological quality elements first rather than implementing hydro morphological measures (such as building fish passes in	Hydropower's main pressure on ecosystems is that it radically changes river shapes. Sometimes, no measures are available to rectify this; a research project in Finland from 2010 to 2017 found no feasible solution which would allow salmon to breed in rivers with more than 2-3 hydropower plants. ^{.xxv} This means that every effort must be made to avoid or minimise hydro



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	hydropower dams) in every case.	morphological pressures wherever possible.
Navigation	<p>The navigation sector is given inadequate information on exactly which measures will constitute River Basin Management Plans (RBMPs) and what these measures will cost.</p> <p>The links between pressure on water ecology, the measures used to tackle them, and the distance to 'good status' are unclear.</p> <p>The Environmental Agency has paid no attention to a 2009 assessment of mitigation measures, forcing the ports and navigation sector to repeat the exercise from scratch for the 2015 assessment.</p> <p>(source: UK Canal & River Trust^{xxvi})</p>	<p>These are arguments for a better implementation of existing legislation, not for weakening legislation.</p>
Water Industry	<p>It argues against relaxation of abstraction rules.</p>	<p>Over abstraction affects 17% of the total ground water area,^{xxvii} the main causes being identified as abstraction of water for public supply, industry and agriculture.</p> <p>Groundwater quantities have only improved 5% since the first RBMP.</p> <p>Thus, any relaxation of the rules would most likely lead to a deterioration in the quantitative status of the ground water.</p>
Chemical Industry	<p>Relaxation of rules on the diffuse pollution.^{xxviii}</p> <p>One of the major stakeholders fighting for relaxation of rules on diffuse pollution.</p>	<p>Report from the EEA shows that 38% of the water bodies are in good chemical status but 46% have failed to achieve good chemical status and 16% are still unknown.</p> <p>The main pressures causing failure to achieve the good chemical status is</p>



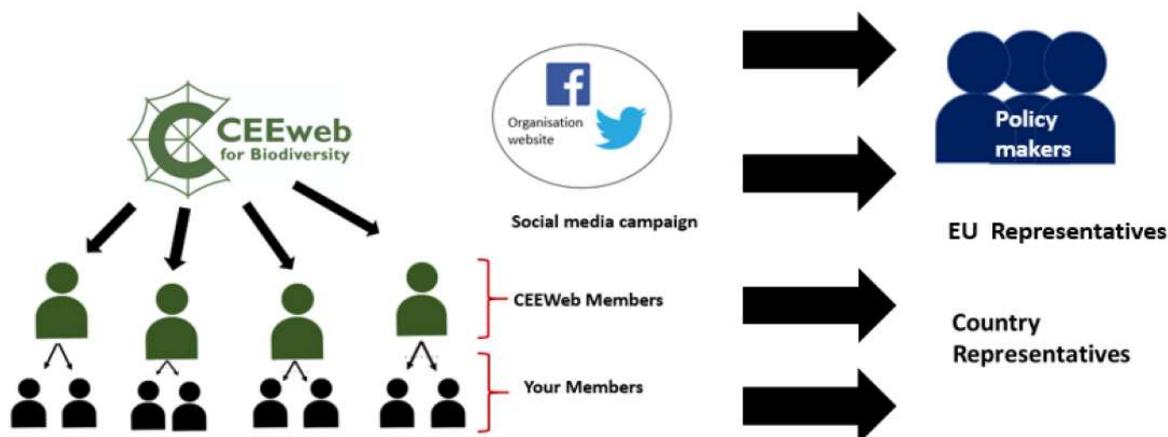
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	The chemical industry finds a strong ally with the agricultural sector in this aspect.	because of atmospheric deposition along with the waste water treatment plants. Thus, any relaxation of these rules will likely result in the deterioration of the chemical status. Keeping the quality of water high saves money by reducing the need for water treatment. ^{.xxix}
Agricultural sector	Relaxation of the regulations on the diffuse pollution; has a strong ally with the Chemical industry for this argument. ^{.xxx}	Agriculture sector has been identified as the main source for failure to achieve good chemical status for the groundwater resources in the report by EEA. ^{.xxvii} Agriculture sector has also been identified as the main source of nitrate pollution.



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WHAT CAN YOU DO?



1. Schematic of suggested campaign.

As NGOs, it is our responsibility to ensure that the WFD is not weakened any further. Even though research has shown that the WFD is cost effective, Member states are failing to achieve the goals it sets. It is this **lack of political will** that is impeding the proper implementation of the WFD.

Keep in mind that major industries, especially agriculture and chemical industry, will be using their organisations and their ministers to directly lobby and influence policy makers in Brussels. This calls for the need to ensure that nature's and people's voices are heard. As members you can influence this decision-making process and ensure that EU waters achieve good status through the WFD.

Social Media

When supporting the WFD over the internet, focus on examples from your own country/area of expertise. These will be more effective at getting your readership onboard.

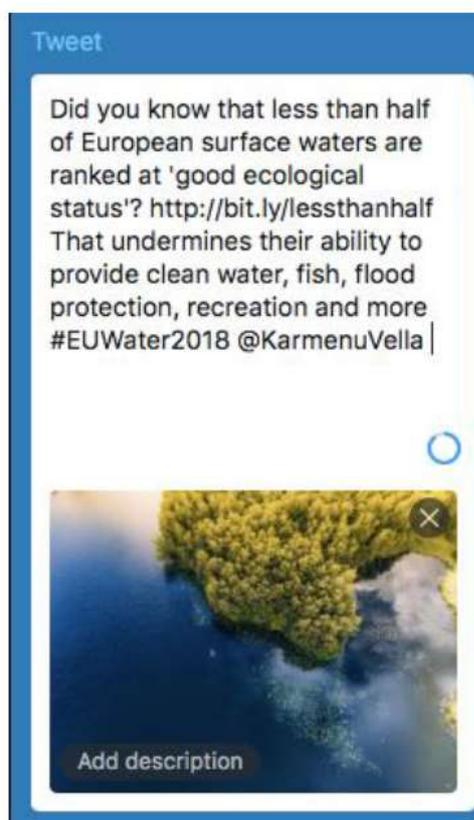
Twitter: brief, catchy tweets get bitesize chunks of information into public circulation and



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are an appetiser for links to more detailed articles or scientific papers. Be sure to target your tweets by tagging relevant MEPs, leaders of sectors and national authorities. Don't forget to retweet CEEweb as well! Some example tweets are given below:

- According to Eurobarometer, nearly half of EU citizens (47%) are worried about water pollution: <http://bit.ly/WFDintro> #EUWater2018
- #Rivers don't stop at borders. Neither does the #WFD. Every river is different, and so should be our approach to it. <http://bit.ly/WFDintro> #EUWater2018
- The #WFD is a ground-breaking piece of #EU legislation designed to protect our most precious resource: #water. Read more: <http://bit.ly/WFDintro> #EUWater2018



When tweeting, be sure to use the Hashtag #EUWater2018 to show that we are part of the same campaign!



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Facebook: while Twitter is a useful tool to target professionals and public figures, Facebook is more effective in addressing the public at large. You can post interesting news articles [like these](#) on how the WFD has driven positive change or draw people's attention to the public consultation to encourage them to take part. Here are some examples:



- Every country is striving to achieve good environmental status worldwide. This framework can be considered as a front runner which helps the EU achieve this status. As it has been in place since 2000, any changes to weaken this legislature at this point of time will result in the deterioration of water quality status.
- Europe 2020 is EU's target to achieve a green economy. Sustainable water management is an integral part of the agenda and WFD is a very crucial tool to achieve this status. Ensure that the regulations are not diluted. **Make your voices heard!**
- *“We must increase efforts to ensure our waters are as clean and resilient as they should be — our own well-being and the health of our vital water and marine*



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ecosystems depend on it. This is critical to the long-term sustainability of our waters and in meeting our long-term goals of living well within the limits of our planet,” says Hans Bruyninckx, EEA Executive Director. This calls for member states and the EU policy makers to ensure the continues implementation of the Water Framework directive. Let your representatives know that you, as a member state, want the WFD to continue and possibly made stricter so that the goals of the WFD are achieved.

- The Fitness check needs to highlight the issues with the exemption cause due to disproportionate costs. This platform should be used to ensure that these minute flaws are addressed and that a stronger legislation is set at the end of the next evaluation. Make your voices heard! Participate in the Public consultations! Use your democratic rights to ensure the good status of the water bodies in Europe.
- Water resources are one of the most crucial resources going to be affected by climate change. All the platforms are addressing this issue and how to adapt to this. WFD already lays down the rules for achieving good status and ensuring the conservation of water resources. Make your Voices heard! PARTICIPATE IN Public Consultations.

Your website: if your website has a news section, feature information about the WFD and its upcoming review to keep your visitors up to date. You could also post a link to the public consultation!

Contact your local authorities!

Ministers of agriculture, energy, the environment and local authorities like town mayors are more likely to take note of NGOs within their own country/region than any messages coming from abroad. Check which local/national authorities are in charge of activities which involve water and reach out to them or put pressure on them by e-mail, phone or in person to support renewed implementation of the WFD in its strongest form during the European water conference. Get in contact with the national authorities in charge of water



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in your country via e-mail, Twitter, phone or other channels to put pressure on them to support renewal of the WFD in its current form.

WWF Communications Packs

Furthermore, our partners from WWF have prepared their own communications packages — with diverse themes — to address the distinct topics surrounding the WFD. In this line, we would like to share with you these other options, noting that, due to WWF's regulations, the available materials cannot be shared outside the member network to other organisations.

Being rolled out one by one throughout the consultation, they are:

- **'Beer'**: What would happen if your beer were to become undrinkable, dried out, or simply a luxury? Discover a new way to talk about the deteriorating health of Europe's freshwater ecosystems and drive people to take part in the campaign! This package will also be supported by a joint statement from European breweries in favour of a strong WFD. Launched on 9 October.
- **'Wildlife'**: Puts the spotlight on European freshwater biodiversity, whose populations are rapidly declining due to dams, pollution and habitat destruction. Launch of this package: 6 November.
- **'Agriculture'**: Package showcasing the relationship between water and agriculture, courtesy of BirdLife. Launch: 20 November.
- **'Christmas and New Year'**: social media materials available mid-December.
- **'Love'**: A passionate rendez-vous unable to reach its natural conclusion. This package will explore the obstacles that prevent freshwater species from reproducing, focusing on dams, pollution and climate change. Launch of this package: 29 January (note date change).

Each of these packages include a variety of suggested social media posts, visuals, videos, and other appealing copy text which will be put at your disposal. Open files of



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materials will be provided so you can translate and adapt to suit your audiences.

BEER PACKAGE

In this folder you will find:

- 1. The slides we presented during an open webinar in September.**
- 2. All materials and open files for the ‘Beer’ package. This package includes:**
 1. Videos (the full-length video & 4 short clips, we have included the transcript in the same folder)
 2. Suggested social media posts (Twitter, Facebook, Instagram) — you are welcome to use this content / adapt it or also develop your own posts
 3. Visuals (Twitter, Facebook, Instagram - with and without the WWF logo). There is also Twitter and Facebook backdrop which can also be used as your web banner
 4. Email signature
 5. Suggested copy for your campaign page (which will accompany the iframe) — this is merely a suggestion and you are of course welcome to develop your own.
 6. Pro-WFD statement which is signed by European breweries (see [Dropbox link](#)).
 7. PRESS RELEASE: <https://www.dropbox.com/home/%23ProtectWater>
- 3. A brief overview of why we need you to join this campaign and how the iFrame works.**

NOTE: You are welcome to brand the **visuals** with your own organisation’s logo, but **videos** must remain as they are and branded with the WWF, EEB, ERN, EEA and Wetlands international logos. Please do NOT brand these with any logos from private companies, including beer companies.



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WILDLIFE PACKAGE

In the same [#ProtectWater Dropbox folder](#), we have added the following:

- **Visuals for social media** (sturgeon, otter, dragonfly & kingfisher). Remember, customisation is the beauty of this package! We have provided open files (PSD) so you can not only translate but even switch the image for that of another species to really tailor it to your audience. If you do develop visuals for other species it would be great if these could be shared with everyone, so do pass onto our WWF's Freshwater Communicator [Sophie](#)
- **Suggested social media posts** for Twitter, Facebook & Instagram
- **Banners & backdrops suitable for your website, social media accounts & email signature** — again, open files have also been provided. If you're using this package it's important to change from the beer visual across your platforms for continuity and a nice user journey
- **A bank of stats and fun facts on each of the 4 species** — really great for writing social media posts, newsletter copy, blogs, etc. This is a live document we'll keep adding to. If you have any you can add it in yourself or send it to sbauer@wwf.eu
- A reminder that two **cartoons by Seppo Leinonen** are available in the 'GENERAL' folder.

AGRICULTURE PACKAGE

Compelling GIFs and stats are now available in the same [#ProtectWater Dropbox folder](#) to use across your social media channels. Stay tuned — more materials to follow!

Joint translations in your country

When translating visuals and subtitles or discussing press strategies, join forces within your country — [here's a list of WWF colleagues](#) you can get in touch with.



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Your organisation's name on the campaign's website?

We're adding all participating NGOs' names on the general campaign website www.livingrivers.eu. By adding your organisation's name, it means that your organisation supports this campaign during the public consultation on the Water Framework Directive. It does not necessarily represent any endorsement of policy positions or further campaigning activities. If you do NOT [contact us](#) on this, we'll assume you're happy for us to include your organisation's name.

Do you have any burning questions about the #ProtectWater campaign?

We've compiled this very comprehensive [FAQ document](#) with everything you've ever wanted to know about the campaign, including responses to be sent reactively to 'sensitive' inquiries from media and stakeholders, as well as technical iframe questions. It's an internal document, but you can of course share with colleagues. As you can imagine we receive a lot of questions, many of which are now addressed in this document.



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Fitness check: evaluation criteria

All EU evaluations and fitness checks should assess the evaluation criteria of **effectiveness, efficiency, coherence, relevance and EU added value of the intervention**, or provide due justification why this is not the case.

How does the WFD scale on each of these criteria?

Effectiveness	The second RBMP analysis by the EEA shows that the amount of information available regarding water bodies has increased, which drastically improves the chances of achieving good status for all water bodies. However, Member states have failed to adequately back the WFD — instead asking for exemptions and extensions — and this has led to a failure in achieving the 2015 targets.
Efficiency	With the implementation of WFD, European waters have had the best status for freshwater resources. Every year, the number of water bodies being monitored has increased, yielding a clearer picture.
Coherence	It is seen to be major coherence of issues between the WFD and other directives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The agricultural sector will likely argue against the policy of full-cost pricing of water and issues with the Common Agricultural Policy. • The Renewable Energy Directive calls for 20% of energy in the EU to come from renewable sources by 2020
Relevance	The WFD is extremely relevant especially in working towards climate targets set by the Paris agreement and Sustainable development goals. Moreover, the Eurobarometer shows that access to clean water is of high priority to citizens.
EU added value of the intervention	This piece of legislature has ensured that whole river basins are considered, which requires cooperation across national borders.



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Consultations

The *open public consultation*, where everyone gets to have their say about the WFD, should be one of your end goals so far as social media campaigns are concerned, the aim being to educate every respondent on the issues at stake. Of course, as informed members of the public all your staff should take part to have their say.

During the *targeted consultations*, the commission will invite competent national/regional authorities of member states, NGOs, business organisations and field experts to take part in surveys, interviews, conferences and workshops. As NGOs, you can take part, and if you have links with people or organisations that fit the description above, you can get in touch with them to encourage them to do so, too, and to express your support for a strong, renewed WFD.

Read more about the consultations [here](#).

For all of the channels mentioned above, feel free to use any of the arguments and examples listed in this toolkit. CEEweb's website also has a wide selection of case studies, visuals and publications which can help support our cause. Here are a few to get you started:

Green-blue infrastructure in the water sector: http://www.ceeweb.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/Green-blue_infrastructure_CEEweb.pdf

Natural water retention measures: http://www.ceeweb.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/Final_NWRM-brochure.pdf

Materials on water and EU policy: <http://www.ceeweb.org/work-areas/priority-areas/green-infrastructure/water>



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- iv <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0264837710001262>
- v http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-04-27_en.htm
- vi <https://www.eea.europa.eu/highlights/more-than-half-of-eu>
- vii http://ec.europa.eu/environment/water/fitness_check_of_the_eu_water_legislation/index_en.htm
- viii https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/initiatives/ares-2017-5128184_en
- ix http://www.wwf.eu/what_we_do/water/living_rivers_europe/
- x http://ec.europa.eu/environment/archives/water/implrep2007/pdf/EU%20pressures%20and%20measures_Task_4b_Financing%20and%20the%20economic%20crisis_final%20version.pdf
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- xv <https://www.icpdr.org/main/sites/default/files/The%20Analysis%20of%20the%20Danube%20Floods%202006%20FINAL.pdf>
- xvi <https://www.icpdr.org/main/sites/default/files/The%20Analysis%20of%20the%20Danube%20Floods%202006%20FINAL.pdf>



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