

Water resources, abstraction and use in European countries

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Uneven intensity of water use in Europe

Water quality and availability are a major concerns both world-wide and at regional level. Water resources are limited and water quality is affected by human activities such as industrial production, household discharges, animal husbandry, arable farming, etc. At the same time water is essential for human life and activities. Economic development and growing populations put increasing pressure on water quantity and quality.

Because the quality of available water is deteriorating and the quantity is limited, there is a need to reconsider the use of different sources of water as well as the environmental demand on water, as set out in the recent Water Framework Directive.

To quantify the use and estimate the quality of water resources, it is necessary to produce statistics on the complete water cycle, i.e., abstraction, purification, distribution, sewerage and waste water treatment.

Statistics in focus

ENVIRONMENT AND ENERGY

THEME 8 – 6/2001

ENVIRONMENT

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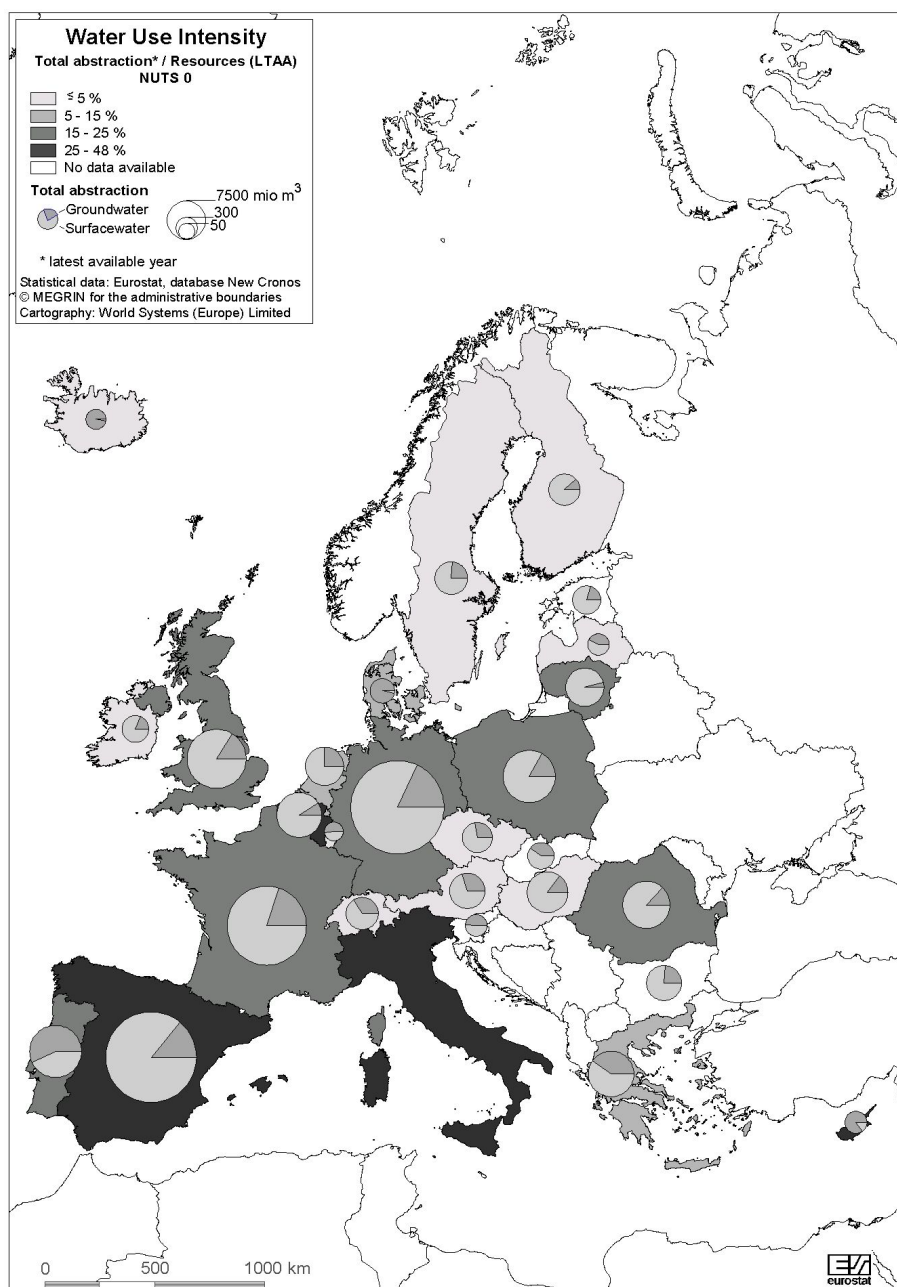
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The water use intensity indicator shown in the map illustrates the stress on water resources by comparing resources (expressed as the Long Term Annual Average) to water abstraction.

Within the European Union, Belgium, Italy and Spain have the highest intensity rates. For Belgium this includes about 60% of water abstracted for electricity cooling purposes. Germany and United

Kingdom form a second group with rates of around 20%. The third group of countries is made up of Denmark, Greece, France and Portugal (with rates circa 15%). Water use intensity in the remaining countries is 5 % or less.

In the Candidate countries, Poland, Romania and Lithuania have intensity rates above 15 %, while all other countries fall below 5 %.

Heavy reliance on surface water

In most Member States, surface water is the predominant source of freshwater, typically accounting for 70 to 90 % of total abstraction. The exceptions are Denmark, where surface water is negligible, Portugal and Luxembourg.

Outside the EU territory, surface water also dominates; only Iceland extracts more groundwater than surface water, while in the Slovak Republic and Slovenia, both sources are roughly on the same level.

Table 1: Water abstraction by source

	Water resources (Long Term Annual Average)	Water abstraction									
		Surface water					Groundwater				
		1980	1985	1990	1995	1999	1980	1985	1990	1995	1999
B	16 500	:	:	:	7 466	6 802 -	:	:	:	679	641 -
DK	6 115	45	:	:	:	20 -	1 160	:	1 261	887	734 -
D *	182 000	:	:	39 180 +	35 751	:	:	:	7 092 +	7 623	:
EL *	72 000	3 470	:	5 827	4 614	:	1 570	:	2 009	3 119	:
E	111 000	34 800	40 840	31 400 +	27 880	35 323 --	5 120	5 410	5 500 +	5 408	5 532 --
F	191 000	:	28 714	31 485	34 644	24 240 -	:	6 173	6 201	6 027 -	6 101 --
IRL	52 198	945	:	:	951 -	:	125	:	:	225 -	:
I	175 000	:	40 000	:	:	:	:	12 000	:	:	:
L	1 644	:	22	:	28	29	:	45	:	29	32
NL *	91 000	8 190	8 242	6 751 +	3 502 +	:	1 008	1 108	1 049 +	1 153 +	:
A	84 000	2 207	2 195	2 561	2 285	2 496 -	1 135	1 168	1 174	1 083	1 065 --
P *	72 885	8 500	:	4 223 -	:	4 800 -	2 000	:	3 065 -	:	6 290 -
FIN	110 000	3 510	3 680	2 087	2 230 -	2 043	190	320	240	258 -	285
S	179 000	3 511	2 348	2 360	2 068	:	595	622	608	643	:
UK *	68 254	12 006	10 426	11 528	9 482	12 828 -	2 491	2 521	2 709	2 634	2 428 -
IS	170 000	5	8	7 ++	6	4	103	104	160 ++	158	152
NO	393 000	:	1 620	:	:	:	:	405	:	:	:
CH	53 250	1 667	1 693	1 724	1 679	1 689 -	922	953	941	892	877 -
BG	:	:	:	:	2 034	2 645 -	:	:	:	942	835 -
CY	790	:	:	66 -	:	:	:	:	309 -	:	:
CZ	15 977	2 820	2 873	2 787	2 024	1 419	802	806	836	719	557
EE	:	2 791	2 620	2 720	1 430	1 228	338	427	495	350	299
HU	120 000	3 551	4 880	5 266	5 079	4 822 -	1 254	1 386	1 026	897	831 -
LV	34 224	:	:	:	222	174	:	:	:	195	134
LT	24 500	:	2 329	3 813	4 278	4 461	:	481	498	304	183
PL	63 100	11 899	13 076	11 928	10 078	9 339	2 285	2 377	2 320	1 988	1 936
RO	42 293	:	:	14 670	9 020	7 436	:	:	2 840	1 280	1 134
SK	:	1 575	1 389	1 388	808	684	657	671	728	578	465
SL	:	292	337	279	222	169 -	99	160	165	164	159 --
TR	234 000	11 800	14 100	25 600 +	27 500	29 552 -	4 400	5 300	6 600 +	7 600	6 000 --

Notes: + or - refers to the closest year available (e.i. Data for Austria for 1999 refers to 1997).

| break in the time series.

D: totals in 1995 are Eurostat estimates.

EL: totals are Eurostat estimates.

NL: the fall in surface water abstractions in 1995 is due to a reduction of water abstraction for electricity cooling purposes.

P: the increase in groundwater abstraction in 1998 is mainly due to better estimates of water abstractions.

UK: the fall in surface water abstractions in 1995 is largely as a result of reduced abstractions for miscellaneous uses for power generation.

Source: Eurostat (for CY and TR, see methodological notes).

Box 1: Other Water (marine or brackish)

mio m³/year

Countries	B	EL	E	IRL	NL	FIN	S	UK	BG	EE	LT
Year	1998	1998	1995	1980	1996	1999	1995	1998	1998	1999	1999
Total abstraction of which:	32	:	17 080	2 185	5 353	:	9 355	7 699	6	6	35
- agriculture	5	:	29	:	:	:	:	1	:	1	:
- manufacturing industry	18	:	:	2 185	1 568	1 171	538	905	:	5	5
- Electricity cooling	:	228	17 000	:	3 784	4 343	8 814	6 782	:	:	1
- Public water supply	:	:	50	:	:	:	:	:	3	:	2

Source: Eurostat.

Other types of water (marine and brackish water) are also abstracted and used for different purposes. Most of this water is used for cooling purposes in the manufacturing industry and the production of electricity.

Desalinated water is increasingly used in Southern countries for different purposes including public water supply.

Higher abstraction per capita in Southern countries

Table 2: Water resources and water abstraction

(m³/capita/year)

	Water resources (Long Term Annual Average)	Year	Total abstraction	of which for: Public water supply	Water loss
B	1 617	1998	729	72	:
DK	1 165	1997	183	98	:
D	2 232	1995	532	71	10
EL	6 866	1997	829	82	18
E	2 825	1997	1 040	137	:
F	3 265	1997	519	101	:
IRL	14 568	1994	328	131	:
I	3 040	1995	976	176	37
L	3 831	1999	142	88	:
NL	5 873	1996	300	82	4
A	10 412	1997	441	75	:
P	7 382	1998	1 170	80	:
FIN	21 662	1999	450	78	:
S	20 303	1995	307	106	15
UK	1 307	1998	292	117	:
IS	616 585	1999	566	268	44
NO	89 932	1996	:	197	69
CH	7 520	1997	374	149	19
BG	:	1998	423	294	:
CY	1 088	1994	567	75	:
CZ	1 554	1999	192	81	20
EE	:	1999	1 056	:	21
HU	11 840	1998	558	71	15
LV	14 029	1999	:	:	:
LT	6 622	1999	1 255	:	12
PL	1 632	1999	292	62	11
RO	1 883	1999	382	123	34
SK	:	1999	213	80	:
SI	:	1997	164	127	:
TR	4 358	1997	662	87	:

Source: Eurostat (for CY and TR, see methodological notes).

Abstracted water enters the economic sphere for use in industry or agriculture and by the general public. Total abstraction includes water collected by water companies and water abstracted directly by major water consumers (e.g. electricity generation and agriculture).

The abstraction, purification, quality control, transport and distribution of water constitutes an economic activity or sector, and is referred to as the Public Water Supply (PWS) in this report. In general, abstractions for public water supply are a small percentage of total abstraction (less than 20 % for nine countries out of fifteen EU countries). The average European (EU-15) has approximately 7090 m³ per capita of water at his disposal, (based on Long Term Annual Average), with large differences between countries: from 1165 m³ per capita in Denmark to 21662 m³ in Finland. Ireland, Austria, Finland and Sweden register the highest values of resources per capita (over 10000 m³/capita), while Belgium, Denmark and United Kingdom have less than 2000 m³ of fresh water available per capita.

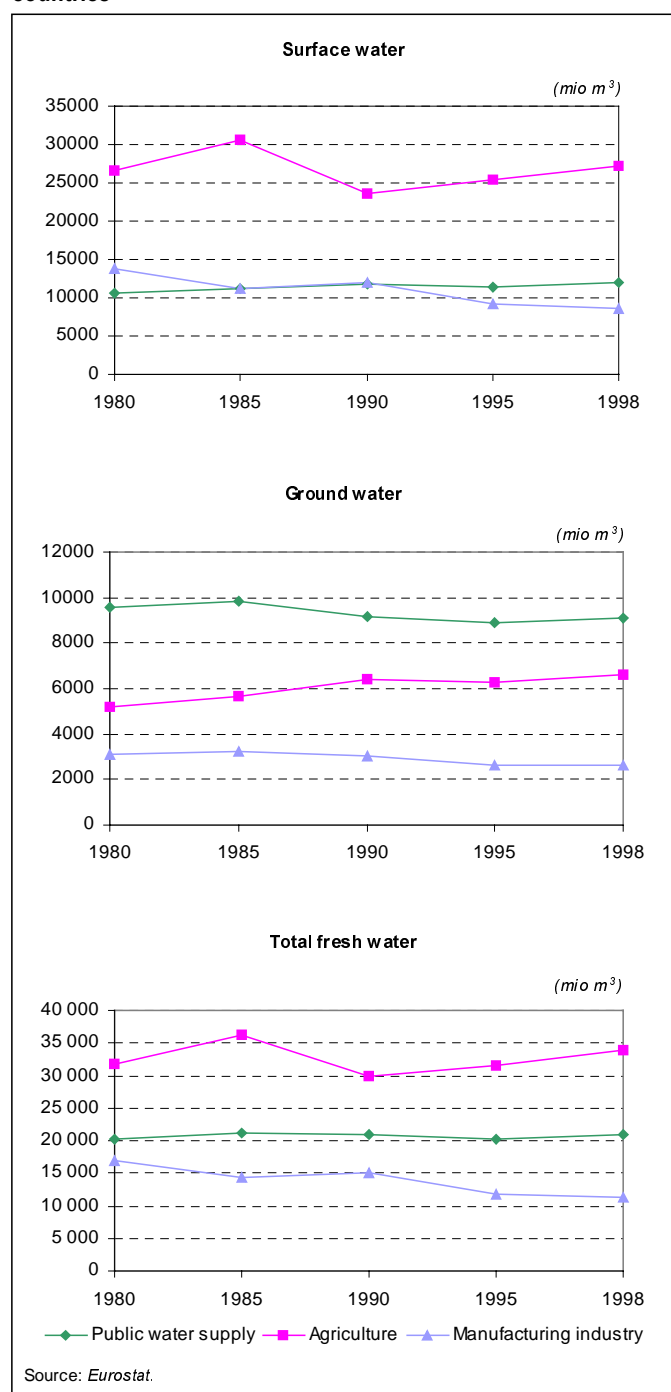
The highest level of abstraction per capita are found in Southern countries, i.e., Greece, Spain, Italy and Portugal (with the highest value: 1170 m³). Countries with the lowest values are Denmark and Luxembourg, with 183 and 142 m³ per capita respectively. These huge differences are due to the fact that data for different sectors included in total abstraction are not always available for all countries. The total abstraction of water can include water for irrigation, for cooling in electricity generation or for cooling in the industry, but all possible combinations are found. Some countries include data on cooling for manufacturing use while other countries exclude cooling uses. Data for agricultural abstractions are often partial and refer mainly to abstraction for irrigation purposes.

In Candidate countries, the resources available per capita range from 1088 m³/capita (Cyprus) to 14029 m³/capita (Latvia).

Significant losses of water are recorded during distribution. However caution is needed in interpreting these data because differences among countries may simply reflect weaknesses in the data.

Large differences between countries on water abstracted by sector

Figure 1: Water abstraction by source and sector for selected countries ¹⁾



¹⁾ DK, E, F, NL, A, FIN, S, UK

Although limited by the small number of countries for which time series are available, the trends show that abstraction for use in the agriculture sector predominate (mainly for irrigation) with an increase on ground water abstractions in the 90's. Water abstraction for industrial purposes is decreasing while total abstractions for public water supply remains stable. Although groundwater is the main source of water for the public water supply, an increased reliance on surface water can be observed.

Table 3: Water abstraction by sector

		<i>mio m³</i>			
	Year	Public Water Supply	Production of electricity	Agri-culture	Manu-facturing Industry
B	1998	730	4 244	18	1 404
DK	1996	514	:	360	53
D	1995	5 810	27 777	616	6 043
EL	1997	861	124	7 600	110
E	1997	5 393	5 679	27 863	1 920
F	1997	5 890	17 211	3 350	3 890
IRL	1994	470	277	179	250
I	1998	10 116	10 678	25 852	9 554
L	1999	38	:	:	14
NL	1996	1 267	2 411	230	740
A	1997	604	1 571	100	1 286
P	1998	759	1 237	8 767	373
FIN	1999	404	256	50	1 569
S	1995	936	:	137	1 440
UK	1998	6 119	232	2 149	907
IS	1999	74	:	70	10
NO	1996	860	:	293	:
CH	1998	1 063	1 503	:	:
BG	1998	2 416	539	28	399
CY	1994	55	:	180	0.5
CZ	1999	830	544	13	429
EE *	1999	:	1 124	38	52
HU	1998	720	4 263	407	119
LV	1999	:	25	52	52
LT *	1999	:	4 329	94	53
PL	1999	2 393	6 781	1 045	800
RO	1999	2 770	3 640	1 027	949
SK	1999	431	:	24	671
SI	1997	254	:	:	72
TR	1997	4 650	48	27 204	3 500

Notes: Agriculture data refers mainly to irrigation.

EE, LT: data refers to water supply.

Source: Eurostat (for CY and TR, see methodological notes).

Water abstraction from the different sectors (public water supply, agriculture, industry and electricity) shows a largely uneven pattern. In Denmark and Luxembourg more than 50% of total abstraction is for public supply, followed by UK and Ireland with values around 40%. On the other hand, public supply in Portugal, Belgium and Greece account for less than 10% due to the use of large quantities for irrigation purposes (Portugal and Greece) and for industrial and electricity cooling purposes in Belgium.

For EFTA countries, most of the water abstracted goes to the Public water supply in Iceland and Norway, while in Switzerland water is mainly abstracted for the production of electricity.

As for Candidate countries, water abstracted is mainly for public water supply in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic and Slovenia, while in Hungary, Poland and Romania the largest demand comes from electricity sector and in the Slovak Republic, from the manufacturing industry. In Latvia, the main users are agriculture and manufacturing industry.

Water extracted for agriculture is mostly used for irrigation. How sustainable this is will depend on local water availability, on the historical background of how irrigation systems have been developed and on the particular irrigation techniques used.

Electricity generation by thermal and nuclear power stations needs a regular flow of cooling water to ensure the safe and efficient operation of these stations. In some countries, upstream dams are designed to stock water from wet seasons, in order to release it during low-flow periods, so that sufficient water is available for cooling purposes. In general, after use this water is returned to the water body from which it was abstracted.

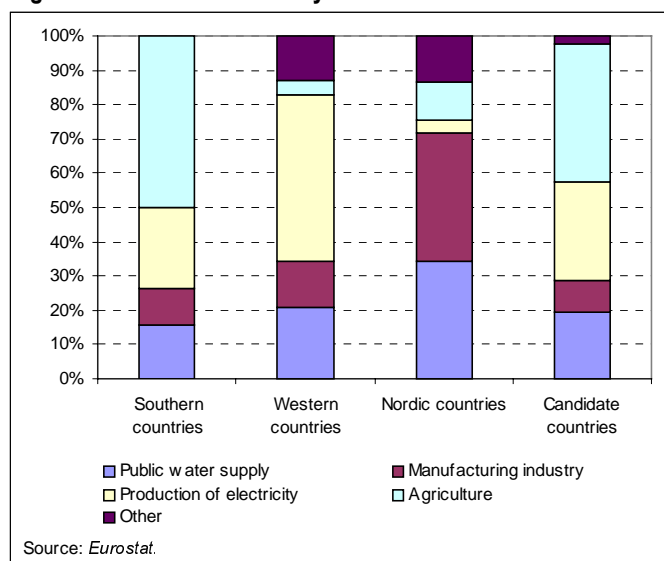
At country level, the amounts used by each of these types of major consumers are related to the economic sectoral specialisation and climatic conditions of the country.

In Southern countries, agricultural activities represent almost half of the total water abstracted. This is in contrast with the rest of Europe where this proportion is rather small, representing 4 % in the Western and 10 % in the Nordic countries.

The largest user activity in Western Countries is electricity generation with almost 50 % of the total water abstracted. In Southern countries and Nordic countries this activity uses 24 % and 3 % respectively.

In Nordic countries, manufacturing industry and the public water supply take 35 % and 32 % respectively of the total water abstracted, compared to 11 % for manufacturing industry in Southern countries and 14 % in Western countries, while public water supply in Southern countries and Western countries represents 16 and 21 % respectively.

Figure 2: Water abstraction by sector



In Candidate countries, agriculture uses 40 % of total water abstracted, the production of electricity taking 28 %. Public water supply uses 19 % of the water while manufacturing industry accounts for only 9 %.

Water abstracted for manufacturing industry is mainly surface water and most is directly abstracted (self supply): data available per NACE category (Statistical classification of economic activities in the European Community) give a breakdown of the quantities abstracted for different industrial purposes in a number of countries (Box 2).

Box 2: Water supply to manufacturing industry

(*mio m³/year*)

Countries	B *	D	NL	A	S
Year	1998	1995	1996	1994	1995
Total manufacturing industry of which:	94	467	2 522	1 244	1 978
- food processing industry	20	134	247	42	48
- basic metal	5	86	117	587	352
- transport equipment	:	6	5	2	
- textiles	4	9	9	9	9
- paper and paper products	4	9	97	212	975
- chemicals, refined petroleum	60	101	1 973	348	493
- other manufacturing industry	3	121	73	43	
Countries	BG	HU	PL	SI	LV
Year	1998	1998	1999	1997	1999
Total manufacturing industry of which:	682	161	808	95	56
- food processing industry	94	58	114	11	19
- basic metal	150	4	79	13	3
- transport equipment	6	1	14	2	1
- textiles	23	7	21	7	8
- paper and paper products	51	14	102	35	0
- chemicals, refined petroleum	237	51	389	12	16
- other manufacturing industry	120	26	90	15	10

Note: B refers to Flanders and Wallonia.

Source: Eurostat.

Caution is needed when comparing the water use of different countries for the same sector.

Each of these industry groupings covers a wide range of activities and processes, with different water consumption patterns, and which will differ from one country to another.

Moreover the importance of the different industries within a country will depend on the structure and sectoral specialisation of the country. This will also vary from one country to another.

A clearer picture would emerge if time series were available but this is not possible, for lack of data.

The domestic sector is the larger consumer of public water supply

Table 4: Water consumption in the domestic sector

	Domestic water consumption			
	Year	mio m ³	m ³ /capita/year	% of Public water supply
B *	1998	381	41	68
DK	1994	301	58	61
D	1995	3 872	47	76
EL	1997	670	64	:
E	1995	2 849	73	94
F	1994	2 384	41	:
IRL	:	:	:	:
I	1995	4 440	78	77
L	1999	23	55	64
NL	1996	733	47	59
A	1997	456	56	75
P	1998	680	71	:
FIN	1999	404	78	100
S	1995	528	60	56
UK	:	:	:	:
IS	1999	30	108	48
NO	1996	327	75	58
CH	1997	649	92	62
BG	1998	302	37	34
CY	:	:	:	:
CZ	1999	355	35	63
EE	1999	53	37	:
HU	1998	377	37	69
LV	:	:	:	:
LT	1999	118	32	:
PL	1999	1 406	36	76
RO	1999	1 188	53	43
SK	1999	:	:	:
SI	1997	86	43	79
TR	:	:	:	:

Note: B refers to Flanders and Wallonia.

Source: Eurostat.

The concentration of human populations that characterises modern times would not have been possible without the regular provision of clean water for human consumption and other uses. Public water services are primarily intended to protect human health. As public water services provide households and small businesses with equivalent services, it is difficult in regular statistics to separate these two groups. The term 'Domestic sector' then, refers to these two groups.

The demand for water is closely linked to the population density as well as to the consumption pattern of this population. Consumption patterns are closely related to the level of income but also to climatic conditions which directly affect water consumption. Strong seasonal peaks in water demand are felt in tourist areas. Tourist and high level income types of uses are specially demanding on water resources, and affect sensitive European areas, for example, the Mediterranean coast.

Within the thirteen Member States for which data is available, the highest domestic use rates are recorded in Finland, Italy, Spain, Portugal and Greece with 78, 73, 71 and 64 m³ per capita per year respectively. A second group of countries is Denmark, Luxembourg, Austria and Sweden where the annual values vary between 55 and 60 m³ per capita. Belgium, Germany, France and The Netherlands can be assembled into a third group where values vary between 41 and 47 m³ per capita per year.

For Candidate countries the highest domestic use rates are recorded in Romania (53 m³/capita) and Slovenia (43 m³/capita); all other countries have values around 35 m³/capita.

In the EFTA countries these values are much higher: 108 m³/capita in Iceland, 92 m³/capita in Switzerland and 75 m³/capita in Norway.

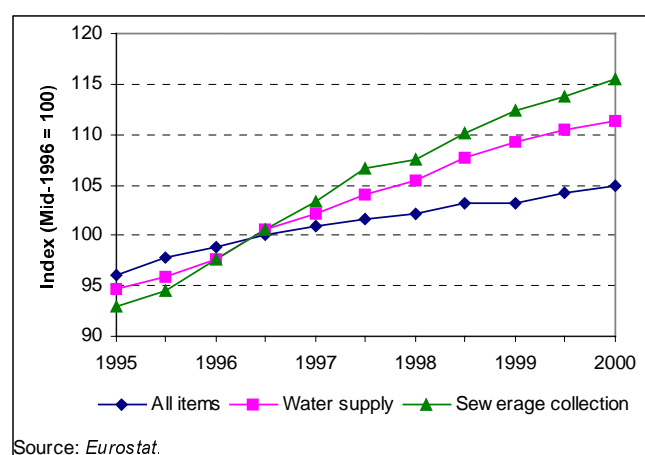
In general, the domestic sector represents the major user of water supplied by the water companies: from 56 % in Sweden to 100 % in Finland for EU-15 with a mean value of 73 %. For Candidate countries the values vary between 34 % in Bulgaria and 79 % in Slovenia.

Water pricing policies should encourage an efficient use of water resources

The main pillar of water policies in the coming decades will be the directive establishing a framework for EU action in the field of water policy (Directive 2000/60/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2000). This directive promotes the use of water pricing as an incentive for the sustainable use of water resources. In accordance with the "polluter pays" principle, it also promotes the recovery of costs of water services, to help meet the environmental objectives of sustainable development.

To embody sound environmental and economic principles, water prices should reflect both financial and environmental costs and be directly linked to the quantity used or the pollution produced. Financial costs include not only running costs linked to the distribution and treatment of water but also high infrastructure investments. This may lead to higher water prices, but in order to give users time to adjust, implementation will be phased in by the European Commission.

Figure 3: Trend in water prices in the EU-15



Source: Eurostat.

This figure illustrates the trend in prices for water supply and sewerage collection compared with the trend in the EU's general price index. From 1996 onwards a certain acceleration can be detected on both items (water supply and sewerage collection), with water treatment taxes increasing more sharply.

This information is collected within the project of Harmonised Indices of Consumer Prices (HICPs). These are designed for international comparisons of consumer price inflation in Member States. Expenses related to the supply of water and waste water treatment are among the items of household expenditure included in the COICOP classification.

➤ ESSENTIAL INFORMATION – METHODOLOGICAL NOTES

Most of the data used in this *Statistics in focus* is from the Joint Questionnaire OECD/Eurostat except for Cyprus and Turkey (for Cyprus, Source: Water resources and uses in the Mediterranean countries, Blue Plan, March 2000 and for Turkey: OECD Compendium 1999). In all the tables and figures of this publication, UK refers to England and Wales.

The definitions used in this publication are based on the UNECE standard classification of water use (CES/636) and systems of water statistics in the ECE Region (ECE/water/43).

The definition of the parameters used in this *Statistics in focus* are given below:

Renewable water resources is the quantity of water available for abstraction each year as a result of the movement of water in the hydrographic cycle during the year. It is calculated as the net result of precipitation minus evapotranspiration plus annual inflow by rivers and underground flow into a country. The Long Term Annual Average (LTAA) represents the average over a long period, normally 20 consecutive years or more and illustrates the estimated resources of water within each country.

Fresh surface water is the water which flows over, or rests on the surface of a land mass, natural watercourses such as rivers, streams, brooks, lakes, etc., as well as artificial watercourses such as irrigation, industrial and navigation canals, drainage systems and artificial reservoirs. For purposes of this questionnaire, bank filtration is covered under surface water but sea-water, permanent bodies of stagnant water both natural and artificial, and transitional waters, such as brackish swamps, lagoons and estuarine areas are not considered surface water and so are included under 'Other water'.

Fresh ground water is the water which is being held in, and can usually be recovered from, or via, an underground formation. All permanent and temporary deposits of water, both naturally and artificially charged, in the subsoil, of sufficient quality for at least seasonal use. This category includes phreatic water-bearing strata, as well as deep strata under pressure or not, contained in porous or fracture soils. For purposes of this questionnaire, ground water includes springs, both concentrated and diffused, which may be subaqueous. Excluded from ground water is bank filtration (covered under surface water).

Other water includes atmospheric precipitation, sea water, permanent bodies of stagnant water both natural and artificial, mine water, drainage water (reclamations) and transitional water, such as brackish swamps, lagoons and estuarine areas. Resources can be assessed statistically for individual components of other water, but not for the item as a whole. Other water resources may be of great importance locally, although in a national context, they are usually of lesser importance as compared to surface and groundwater resources

Water abstraction is the water removed from any source, either permanently or temporarily. Mine water and drainage water are included. Water abstractions from groundwater resources in any given time period are defined as the difference between the total amount of water withdrawn from aquifers and the total amount charged artificially or injected into aquifers. The amounts of water artificially charged or injected are attributed to abstractions from that water resource from which they were originally withdrawn.

Water supply represents the delivery of water to final users plus net abstraction of water for own final use (self-supply). The public water supply is water supply by water works (deliveries of water from one public supply undertaking to another are excluded).

Water consumption is water abstracted which is no longer available for use because it has evaporated, transpired, been incorporated into products and crops, consumed by man or livestock, ejected directly to the sea, or otherwise removed from freshwater resources. Water losses during the transport of water between the point or points of abstraction and the point or points of use are excluded.

Water losses represent the volume of water lost during transport between a point of abstraction and a point of use, or between points of use and re-use

The price of water is calculated as the monthly consumption of 15 m³, including monthly rent of meter with a capacity of 3 m³/h, including all charges and taxes. Monthly charges for waste water are also reported.

COICOP: The Classification of Individual Consumption by Purpose is used to classify the individual consumption expenditures of households, NPISHs (Non Profit Institutions Serving Households) and general government. Water supply (04.4.1) and Sewerage collection (04.4.3) are included in class 04.4 'Water supply and miscellaneous services relating to the dwelling' of this Classification.

For the purpose of this publication, some groupings have been made as follows:

Nordic countries: Denmark, Finland, Sweden, Iceland, Norway

Southern countries: Greece, Italy, France, Portugal, Spain

Western countries: Belgium, Germany, Ireland, Luxembourg, Austria, the Netherlands, Switzerland, the United Kingdom

Candidate countries: Bulgaria, Czech republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Cyprus, Turkey

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➤ Databases

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