

Finnish Water Way – International Water Strategy of Finland

– Action Plan for 2019 –

1. Introduction

The *Finnish Water Way – International Water Strategy of Finland* (2018) is a joint guiding strategy of five ministries (Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Ministry of the Environment, Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment and the Ministry of the Interior) until 2030 that stakeholders can also make use of in their activities. The Strategy is built on three pillars (I Water for Sustainable Development, II Water for People and III Water for Peace) and cross-cutting objectives that complement them.

The implementation of the Strategy is guided by an Action Plan updated annually under the leadership of the national interministerial working group on Finland's international activities on water together with stakeholders. In the Action Plan, the activities under the Strategy are adapted in response to the needs of the current operating environment and new concrete priority actions (influencing and financing) are determined for the year ahead, with not everything done every year.

The Action Plan briefly states the main influencing and financing actions taken in the previous year and shows the channelling of financing to each of the strategy pillars as well as expressing any deficiencies in financing and/of influencing. The first page of the Action Plan contains a brief evaluation of the preceding period (2018) and provides a summary in the form of conclusions. Based on the previous year's conclusions, the second page lays out the influencing and financing priorities for actions in the following year (2019).

In 2018, the following participated in the implementation of the International Water Strategy of Finland: Aalto University (A!), the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, the Academy of Finland, the Finnish Water Forum (FWF), the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of the Environment. More information about the actors can be found in the appended summary report by FWF.

2. Actions in 2018

Influencing

During the 2018 operating year, key water-related actions taken by ministries in the field of influencing were:

- updating the International Water Strategy of Finland (April–August 2018);
- organising the Workshop of the UN-Water SDG 6 Synthesis Report, New York (2 May 2018);
- SDG 6 High-Level Political Forum (HLPF), influencing and side event, New York (July 2018);
- World Water Week Stockholm, joint Finnish stand and side event, Stockholm (August 2018);
- promoting the UNECE Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention) in cooperation with, among others, the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) in Nepal (July and October 2018);
- updating the national targets of the Protocol on Water and Health to the UNECE Water Convention and harmonising them with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs);
- participating in the monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the programme of work 2017–2019 of the Protocol on Water and Health and in the planning of the programme of work 2020–2022 and the Meeting of the Parties (November 2019) as a Bureau member;

- influencing the contents of the recasting of the Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on the quality of water intended for human consumption (Drinking Water Directive);
- promoting the China Europe Water Platform (CEWP) and participating at a high level;
- promoting Water Architecture / International high-level conference on water;
- drafting and promoting the conclusions of the Council of the European Union on Water Diplomacy adopted on 19 November 2018;
- side event of the Session of the FAO Committee on Food Security (CFS) (October 2018).

During 2018, five ministries supported by Aalto University, the Finnish Environment Institute (SYKE) and the Finnish Water Forum (FWF) formulated the International Water Strategy of Finland 2018 published in three languages. The Strategy was received well at the publication events at the Dry Toilet Conference in Tampere, Finland, and the side event organised during the World Water Week in Stockholm, Sweden. Activities of public actors were coordinated actively by the national interministerial working group on Finland’s international activities on water. In 2018, Finland played an active role in providing comments on the SDG Synthesis Report and the evaluation of the HLPF’s SDG 6 evaluation. The Permanent Mission of Finland to the UN in particular participated very actively in the UN Group of Friends of Water and actively promoted Finland’s objective for global water architecture. In addition, ministries exerted joint influence in promoting the UNECE Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention) in contexts including the Meeting of the Parties and by providing expertise support to three regional events (Nepal, Peru and Vietnam). Finnish financing for the Water Convention and for the implementation of its Protocol on Water and Health was, however, declining strongly in 2018, particularly due to the significant cuts in development cooperation financing targeted at Central Asia. The implementation of the Protocol on Water and Health and the upcoming programme of work of the Water Convention were influenced as a member of the Protocol Bureau. A reform proposal concerning the national targets required by the Protocol was drawn up by a broad-based working group of four ministries and multiple stakeholders.

The internationalisation and exports of water-sector enterprises were supported by taking part in minister-led visits to countries including China and Vietnam. Ministries also provided the Finnish Water Forum (FWF) with support. During 2018, ministries and stakeholders strongly promoted the operationalisation of the Water for Peace pillar under the working title Water Diplomacy – proactive peace mediation. There was also a focus on influencing the contents of the EU Drinking Water Directive by, among other things, promoting taking the Protocol on Water and Health, and risk management relating to water intended for human consumption in accordance with the Water Safety Plan model of the World Health Organization (WHO), into account in the Directive.

In conclusion, influencing during 2018 was exceptionally active in relation to the resources available.

Financing

Known financing for the implementation of the *International Water Strategy of Finland* for 2018–2030:

Unit: euro	Water for Sustainable Development:	Water for People:	Water for Peace:
Ministries:	31,360,000	47,105,000	2,170,000
Stakeholders:	2,660,000	7,248,998	2,505,000
Total:	34,020,000	54,353,998	4,675,000

In conclusion, the actors’ financing for the water sector is at a reasonable level.

During 2018, the downward trend of development financing was reversed and the annual amount stabilised at around EUR 15 million after four years of very sharp decline. Development financing is still targeted very strongly at rural water services and sanitation in three partner countries, Nepal, Ethiopia and Kenya.

The Government's Blue Bioeconomy key project and related measures were launched during 2018. In addition, a new call for proposals took place and the projects selected have also mostly been launched.

3. Actions in 2019

Influencing

The key water-sector influencing priorities in 2019 can be divided into actions falling under the objectives of the International Water Strategy of Finland and more broadly into actions seeking to influence international water policy more broadly in Finland and elsewhere in the world.

Water for Sustainable Development:

- influencing the Government Report on Development Policy in accordance with the objectives of the Strategy;
- promoting sustainable development in a manner advancing, for example, sustainable water use or the circular economy;
- launching and developing cooperation with the UN Technology and Innovation Laboratory (UNTIL);
- participating in the Sitra World Circular Economy Forum and Water in Circular Economy 2019.

Water for People:

- including water and sanitation as one of the priorities of Finland's United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) campaign;
- organising the WASH and Disability side event during World Water Week Stockholm 2019;
- updating the national targets of the Protocol on Water and Health;
- Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol on Water and Health in Serbia, 19–21 November;
- leading the trilogue negotiations (European Parliament, Council and Commission) as the EU Presidency.

Water for Peace:

- on the basis of the joint commissioned development policy study of Aalto University, the University of Eastern Finland and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, seeking to find a continuum for water diplomacy work in selected geographic areas;
- the Ministry for Foreign Affairs (Unit for General Development Policy) will, in collaboration with UNICEF, organise a panel discussion themed on Water for Peace in conjunction with the informal joint meeting of the EU Working Party on Humanitarian Aid and Food Aid (COHAFA) and Working Party on Development Cooperation (CODEV), 15–16 July 2019;
- organising the Water Diplomacy side event during the World Water Week in Stockholm (Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry).

In addition to these, Finland will seek to influence the following entities:

- increasing international water-sector financing (actors mentioned in the Action Plan seeking to influence in their respective areas; for example, with the Ministry for Foreign Affairs influencing through the Government Programme);
- influencing the Government Programme in accordance with the objectives set by the Strategy;
- stabilising development financing at the current level and dividing activities more strategically between the pillars;
- influencing the contents of the EU water policy work programme (CIS) and evaluating the currency of legislation (streamlining);
- SDG 6 roadmap to mobilise investment;
- strengthening and operationalising the Water Stewardship Commitment;

- to guarantee the continuity of the activities of the Finnish Water Forum (FWF), seeking to influence so that the financing of the FWF's activities will be made programme-based (3–4 years);
- participating in the World Water Week in Stockholm, with a joint stand of Finnish actors and two side events; (Water and Peace (EEAS, DGENVY, DGDEVCO, UNECE) and WASH and Disability (UNICEF)), August 2019;
- UNECE Water and Health Protocol Reporting, April 2019;
- Europe International Network of Basin Organizations (INBO) 2019 water seminar in Lahti, Finland, in June and preparing the Lahti Declaration;
- high-level meeting of the China Europe Water Platform (CEWP) in Lisbon in the last quarter of 2019;
- Budapest Water Summit in October 2019;
- joint workshop of the EU's groundwater and drinking water experts in Helsinki, 15–16 October 2019;
- enterprise internationalisation and exports.

Financing

Financing priorities for 2019:

- completing the Blue Bioeconomy key project;
- operationalising the Nepal water programme entity;
- further planning of the Ethiopia water programme entity;
- further planning of the Kenya water programme entity;
- increasing financing for the UNECE Water Convention;
- organising international water events in Finland and their financing (WCEF, INBO 2019);
- planning the Central Asia water programme entity.