**Vinkeveen declaration 2021:**

**Climate Adaption in Local and Regional Water Management.**

1. **Climate change and impact on local water management**

EUWMA members experience great impact of climate change on local water management. Climate change causes a detrimental risk for the future of all citizens of the European Union. Although the effects and impacts of climate change differ throughout Europe, the weather patterns and temperatures definitely changed significantly. Urgent climate action is needed to stop the accelerating change of weather patterns., Droughts and heatwaves have become more and more frequent and the global temperature rise caused increased extreme rainfall. With as an important result that, all too often, too little or too much water, sometimes in a short amount of time, causes great challenges for good water management.

Water management practices and infrastructure that were effective in the past will not always be effective and resilient under future climate conditions. Climate adaptation measures are therefore also essential for water boards, all over the EU. EUWMA members, and their local water boards, possess valuable knowledge and expertise in order to enhance climate resilience. The [EU Adaptation Strategy](https://ec.europa.eu/clima/eu-action/adaptation-climate-change/eu-adaptation-strategy_nl) is a promising instrument and vision document to increase climate adaption in the EU. EUWMA is fully committed to contribute to the realisation of the it’s goals. The real measures need to be taken in local environments. By doing so , they will wherever possible, certainly also search for a connection between adaptation and mitigation. EUWMA and its members are key strategic partners for the transition to a climate resilient Europe.

1. **Water safety**

EUWMA also stresses the link between climate adaptation and water safety. Climate change will continue to increase the risk for floods and therefore also negatively impacts the water safety of all EU citizens. In the summer of 2021, because of floods, lives were lost in the Meuse catchment area. The risk of floods also increases in smaller water bodies; as the summer of 2021 showed. It needs to be stated that floods also have a negative impact on water quality and the goals of the Water Frame Work Directive. In order to mitigate these risks to minimum, climate adaption measures are key. Increased precipitation and cluster rains cause an enormous extra pressure on the water system and governance. The flooding events of last summer in the north-western part of the EU, are unfortunately enough very exemplary.

1. **Drought**

The summer of 2018, 2019 and 2020 were very dry for many EU-countries. But the southern part of Europe have experienced already increasing droughts and rising temperatures. This climatic change especially causes severe problems for farmers, industry, nature and for drinking water operators. Streams fell dry, fish died and lands got affected. Also water management infrastructure got seriously damaged to the lack of water. The drought made clear that water has to be retained where it falls and we should really work on saving water. The community has to ask itself the question if functions should be replaced on the longer term. We need tools, regulation and funding to accelerate the change to a drought resilient surrounding. EUWMA members can help to share examples that work.

1. **Climate adaptation solutions**

EUWMA agrees that local water boards play a very important role in mitigating the impacts of climate change. We are convinced that climate adaption is a very urgent need and requires local measures and chances in the management of the water system, in both urban and rural areas. Water boards can for example focus on better water retention and work on water efficiency measures. They should also implement flexible water management practices, depending on water availability. We also see substantial benefits of “building with nature”, such as for improving flood defences, the creation of water retention zones and re-meandering of rivers and streams. However, technical measures taken by local water managers alone will not be enough to create a resilient water system. In order to better cope with the effects of climate change in relation to water management, we need a systemic societal transformation. Al societal actors need to take climate adaptation serious. Farmers could for example aim for changing their crops and agricultural practices and improve water efficiency. Also industry and businesses should adapt their production processes and business concepts to the changing climate. Citizens can take measures in their own neighbourhoods to increase the resilience. Water can be retained in a city park that functions as a 'wadi’ and in the urban area nature or low laying grassland can be deployed as water retention as well: the aim is to retain the water where it falls. All measures and actions in the physical environment should be examined with a ‘climate adaptation paradigm’.

1. **Resilient governance structure**

EUWMA believes that a good resilient water governance structure is key for a climate resilient water system. All actors in the water cycle should be in good contact with each other and aim to work together. Data sharing on all governance layers, including the European Union, is key in order to have a good understanding and prioritisation of all risks.. Water boards receive their public water management tasks by law. They should therefore be closely consulted by political decision and policy making in relation to climate adaptation and spatial planning, which has impact on water. This requires more political support and recognition for the important role water boards play. Although water management an climate adaption are intrinsically intertwined, it needs to be stated that true adaption depends on an integral approach for all policies and sectors. Climate adaptation needs to mainstreamed in all decisions, legislation and business operations. Water management is very much depending on all mentioned actors and actions.

1. **Investments for climate adaptation.**

EUWMA believes that climate adaptation measures requires significant additional funding and investments, as well as substantial changes in the physical environment. Times of crisis and recovery ask for a reorientation of public investments. It is now the moment to do so and chose for into our natural capital and natural resources, such as water, soil, habitat and biodiversity Water boards must be able to rely on political commitment and prioritisation for climate adaption measures and projects. The costs for all these extra measures cannot be carried by water boards alone. Extra room for investments and public financial support is key for the transition of water system management .

1. **Better cross-coordination.**

EUWMA would like to stress that water is cross-border common good. The impacts of climate change are therefore also cross-border, between countries and between and beyond administrative borders. Better coordination between local, regional and national governments is crucial when it comes to climate adaption. For instance; water retention measures upstream will greatly flatten high water peaks downstream. EUWMA welcomes the increased focus on climate adaptation strategies throughout Europe and the work of the European Commission in this regard. Water boards should however become more consulted in the uptake of these strategies and taken seriously as strategic key partners for the transition in a climate resilient Europe.