

Preface

The preparation of a European regional document, destined as Europe's input for the Fourth World Water Forum was a challenging and energising process. Much as water is a binding force within Europe and worldwide, the very process of finding and defining key issues emphasises the importance of exchange and collaboration when addressing water issues.

With the aim to reach a broad network, geographically as well as in types of stakeholders a European regional committee and an operational committee were formed and a writers group was constituted during the Stockholm Water Week 2005. Annex @@@ describes in short the preparation process and Annex @@@ shows the complete list of actors in the European preparation process. During the whole process efforts have been made to make the content of this document as representative of Europe as possible, both geographically and stakeholder wise.

This document however does not constitute a broad European consensus on the issues described. In general terms the authors, contributors and their organisations part of their networks agree on the content but not everyone agrees on every point. Rather than seeking consensus on detailed subjects with associated risks of loosing or diluting the focus, our committee addressed priorities and strategic developments in Europe, acknowledging in the process:

- that the value of water is largely underestimated;
- that the challenges we face are enormous, for instance in the field of climate change effects, Millennium Development Goals, Emerging threats, Legislation, Aging infrastructures, etc. etc.,

but that the knowledge on water currently rather scattered in a fragmented sector does represent an immense, currently unexploited potential for development of efficient, competitive new solutions.

We would like to express our deep gratitude to all the contributors to this document and to all actors in the European preparation for their dedication and enthusiasm. We are convinced that with this group we have laid a foundation for future cooperation on water in Europe and in the World.

The European Regional Committee