

## ANNEX 2: NOTE ABOUT WATER RESILIENCE PRIZE

The 6th edition of the NEB Prizes will contribute to the EU's efforts to improve water resilience by awarding 1 Water Resilience' special prize.

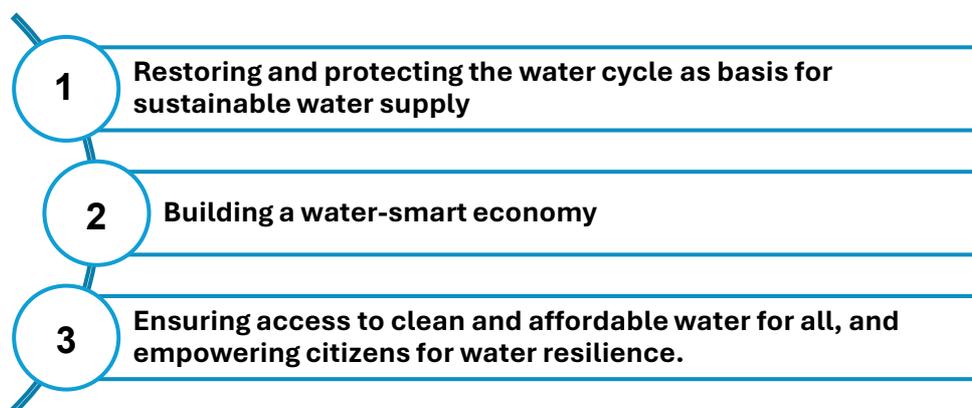
This note aims to establish a shared definition of water resilience from a NEB perspective, building on the EU's Water Resilience Strategy. It is intended to ensure alignment in messaging, information, and communications on this topic across the NEB Prizes 2026.

### EU Water Resilience Strategy

#### *How is water resilience defined in the EU's Water Resilience Strategy?*

*"To make Europe water resilient [means] providing water security for all. This entails the protection and restoration of aquatic ecosystems, and a fair balance between water supply and water demand responding to current needs, including the realization of the human right to safe drinking water and sanitation, without compromising the rights of future generations."<sup>1</sup>*

There exist 3 core objectives under the Strategy:



From a NEB perspective, water resilience is therefore expressed through initiatives that integrate water management into everyday spaces, buildings, and products in ways that are sustainable, inclusive, and enhance quality of life. Below are examples of types of initiatives that would fall under the 3 core objectives of the Water Resilience Strategy.

| Sustainability   | Aesthetics and quality of experience  | Inclusion  |
|--|---|--|
| Water resilience directly contributes to the sustainability principle by protecting and restoring natural systems and improving resource efficiency. | Water-resilient design can enhance the beauty, comfort, and liveability of places.<br><br>By integrating water and nature into buildings and public spaces (through green areas, open water | Water resilience also has a strong social dimension, ensuring that the benefits of water management are shared equitably.<br><br>This includes guaranteeing access to safe and affordable drinking water and |

<sup>1</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52025DC0280&qid=1750857768458>

In the built environment, this includes using water as a design-companion (i.e. hydrophilic design) and nature (biophilic design) to store, filter, and regulate water through green infrastructure and nature-based solutions such as green roofs, permeable surfaces, wetlands, and urban landscapes designed for infiltration and retention.

It can also be through using seaweed as a biobased construction material.

These measures help restore the water cycle, reduce flood and drought risks, prevent pollution, and enhance biodiversity.

It also involves reducing water consumption and promoting circular use, for example through rainwater harvesting, greywater reuse, water-efficient technologies, and construction methods that minimise water use. Together, these approaches support a water-smart and circular economy.

The water resilience theme can also explore deployment of water and biophilic design in the synergy between built environment and other industries such as fishing, farming, aquaculture, irrigation, the maritime industry.

features, shaded landscapes, and climate-adaptive design) projects not only manage water sustainably but also create healthier, more attractive, and more enjoyable environments for everyday life.

Water becomes a visible and valued element of design rather than hidden infrastructure, improving well-being and strengthening people's connection to nature.

Projects in line with the water resilience theme can also focus on water's therapeutical effects and applications (thalassotherapy, natural thermal locations), health, recreation, movement and sickness prevention – in contexts such as healthcare institutions, nursery homes.

sanitation, particularly for vulnerable groups, and designing public spaces and services that meet diverse needs. It also encompasses education, awareness-raising, and citizen engagement, enabling communities to participate actively in water-sensitive planning and stewardship.

In territories which are characterised by water (rivers, oceans) or whose economy depend on water (fishing, watermills, harbours, outdoor tourism), the water resilience theme is an opportunity:

- to rediscover unique territorial traditions related to water and water ecosystems e.g. bathing traditions, fishing, fishermen markets – and restore water ecosystems (e.g. marine flora and fauna) that will rejuvenate the local economy providing new sources of food (sea weed, fish) as well as local employment opportunity for local communities.

- to drive innovation within the building and construction industry with water inspired by local traditions from the past examples: Floating cities, Floating Island, Stilt houses

In this light, we can provide a 'water resilience' definition in the context of NEB as the following:

#### **NEB Definition of water resilience**

*Water resilience refers to the design and transformation of the built environment to protect and restore the water cycle, use water efficiently and circularly, and ensure inclusive access to clean and affordable water, while creating beautiful, liveable, and socially inclusive places.*

#### **Examples of projects**

- Swimmable cities (pan-European) - <https://www.swimmablecities.org>
- AQUAGREEN Acquiring Urban Resilience Against Floods and Droughts (Faenza, Italy) - <https://www.urban-initiative.eu/ia-cities/faenza/about-projects>
- Sponge Garden (Rotterdam, The Netherlands) - <https://www.urbanisten.nl/work/sponge-garden-dhkxw>