

An EU Blue Deal

BACKGROUND

The European Union's commitment to addressing environmental challenges is enshrined in the EU Green Deal. While the Green Deal primarily focuses on climate change mitigation and adaptation on land, another crucial aspect of environmental sustainability has been gaining prominence - the protection and sustainable management of our natural water sources and manmade water infrastructure. With sea levels rising in some parts of the world and extreme droughts in others, there is an urgent need for more effective water management.

The Blue Deal started out as 17 partnerships between the Dutch Water Authorities and national and regional authorities in 15 countries all over the globe in 2019 and was mainly focused on sharing expertise about water management systems.

In recent years, the importance of a Blue Deal has been acknowledged by the United Nations and the European Commission, which wants to propose an EU Blue Deal to the European Parliament.

The EESC (European Economic and Social Committee) is highlighting the urgency of an EU Blue Deal, stressing that access to water is a basic human right and a public commodity. The EIB has already ringfenced €500M for a new equity fund for a blue economy.

RELEVANCE FOR CONSULTING ENGINEERS

EFCA is closely monitoring the latest developments concerning an EU Blue Deal and a draft position has already been circulated for consultation with members. It is expected that this will be finalised early in 2024. Consulting engineers are crucial for the success of this deal, as they will be needed to design, innovate and adapt nature's own water systems as well as design and improve water infrastructure, according to changing climate conditions. Water expertise is needed in the fields of groundwater management, wastewater purification and infrastructure, flood management, agricultural irrigation systems, hydro energy, drinking water infrastructure, etc.

KEY DATES

22/03/2018	Dutch Blue Deal signed
27/02/2023	High level hearing "Time for a Blue Deal"
12/07/2023	6 EESC opinions adopted by the Commission
26/10/2023	High level conference "Call for an EU Blue Deal"

On 26 October 2023, the EESC presented its proposal to the European Parliament and relevant stakeholders in the "Call for an EU Blue Deal" conference.