

## **Urban water questions under European water law**

In the European Union urban water supply and waste water treatment are subject to EU-level legislation. The EU's first drinking water legislation goes back to 1980 that was replaced by the existing EU directive adopted in 1998. Waste water collection and treatment has been regulated at EU level since 1991. The extensive infrastructure development programmes defined by the two legislation represent the single biggest bloc of public expenditure EU countries have ever incurred. Yet, despite the generous timeframes for implementation and massive EU funding for the upgrading of water infrastructure, compliance with the drinking water and waste water requirements remain incomplete not only in those member states that joined the EU relatively recently, but also in some "older" member countries. Importantly, both the drinking water and the waste water directives are based on a regulatory concept that pays very little attention to changing climatic conditions and integrated resource management. Instead, the current legal framework locks countries into an old infrastructure model whose financial and environmental sustainability comes under question more and more frequently. The presentation provides an overview of the EU's legal framework concerning urban water issues with a special focus on some of the critical shortcomings of the existing regime.