

**Pan-European Regional Preparatory Meeting
for the United Nations 2023 Water Conference**

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Session 2. Tackle water pollution, conserve ecosystems and biodiversity and apply circular economy policies

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Most of the attention in water management is on direct water use, but the impact of our indirect water is at least as great and equally threatening to the sustainability of our water resources. Join For Water is an NGO that advocates for the protection and conservation of freshwater resources. In the countries of the Global South, we implement projects that improve access and management of water-related ecosystem services. In Belgium, we work on reducing our water footprint. The water footprint of the average Belgian is very high, namely 7,400 litres per day and per person. Compared to our tap water consumption, which is about 120 litres a day, that water footprint is immense. As 75% of the footprint lays abroad, our consumption has a very high impact on water resources in countries where our imported fodder, cotton, avocados, flowers... are grown. In these countries, our indirect water use affect both water quantity and water quality, and could threaten entire water-related ecosystems.

In Belgium, we raise awareness among governments, companies and citizens on the impact of their water footprint. To this end, we develop several methods, such as the [waterchallenge@home](#), where we challenge citizens to reduce their water footprint. We also advocate for agriculture to use water more rationally, as it is the largest consumer of water and an important polluter.

If we want to contribute to the realisation of SDG6, we should not only focus on the use and protection of our domestic water resources, but we should also aim at reducing our indirect – this is: global - water footprint. In this way, we contribute especially to target 6.4 of SDG6 on increasing water efficiency in order to reduce the number of people suffering from water scarcity, now and for future generations.