

# BERLIN WATER CHARTER

## Preface

The private shareholdings in the Berliner Wasserbetriebe (BWB) were bought back by the City-State of Berlin in late 2013. We wish to take this further and democratize both the Berliner Wasserbetriebe and water policy as a whole, and so achieve transparent, socially just and environmentally sustainable water management in Berlin.

This demands a complete return of the formerly partly privatised company to ownership of the City-State of Berlin. To this end, the Berliner Wassertisch has drawn up a draft Water Charter for Berlin. Our intention is to develop this draft further by means of a broadly-based debate within society. We wish to bring together all the different areas of expertise on the subject of water in our city, and to invite Berlin's population to actively participate. We regard the Berlin Water Charter as the basis for statutory regulations and as a guide for Berliner Wasserbetriebe.

## Preamble

1. This Charter is based on the UN Resolution on the human right to water and basic sanitation of 28.07.2010 and on the initial petition of the European Citizen's Initiative, right2water, which was successfully concluded in September 2013.
2. These fundamental rights are inalienable and may not be restricted by national or transnational treaties.
3. All the people of Berlin should be able to participate democratically in the implementation of a socially, economically and environmentally sustainable water policy. This requires transparency at every level.
4. A high quality drinking water supply and waste water treatment system is inextricably linked to the protection of nature and our natural resources.
5. The business management of the Berliner Wasserbetriebe should be oriented towards the common good. This precludes the option of a profit-oriented approach. The population's water revenue must be used solely to ensure a sustainable drinking water supply and waste water treatment. "Water pays for water".

The following principles form the framework for this.

### **1. General and political principles**

1.1 The Berliner Wasserbetriebe serve the public good. Access to clean water and basic sanitation must be permanently guaranteed to all Berliners as a human right.

1.2 Water must be affordable for all Berliners. They have a right to obtain high quality water subject to socially appropriate charges.

1.3 The Berliner Wasserbetriebe shall permanently remain a public service that is entirely owned by the City-State of Berlin and managed according to municipal law. There must be no privatisation or part-privatisation of the drinking water supply and sewerage system, not even in the context of so-called public-private partnerships or similar models. The provisioning of clean, safe water, which is essential to life, and its disposal, rank among the highest priority and indivisible tasks of the City-State of Berlin.

1.4 Berlin's domestic water management must be sustainably developed in a process of coordination that involves all stakeholders, particularly with the participation of the citizens of Berlin. This requires a high level of transparency.

## **2. Social and economic principles**

2.1 The Berliner Wasserbetriebe is not run for profit. It may levy charges that cover the costs of facilities and to make provision for investment in sustainable economic and technical development.

2.2 The pricing model of Berliner Wasserbetriebe takes the burden away from small consumers and places it on large consumers.

2.3 No companies that are not associated with water may be integrated into Berliner Wasserbetriebe.

2.4 Water from Berlin's groundwater and bank filtrate should be available in at least the same high quality to the current and all subsequent generations. To this end, the technical equipment associated with the drinking water supply and sewerage system must meet the latest scientific and technical standards and incorporate an alternative water management system.

2.5 Berliner Wasserbetriebe is open to cross-body cooperation in the context of publically-run domestic water management, with the common good as its guiding principle. A profit-oriented approach to inter-regional cooperation will be rejected on principle.

2.6 The working conditions and remuneration of Berliner Wasserbetriebe personnel must satisfy the requirements of freedom, justice, safety and human dignity defined in the guiding principles of the International Labour Organisation ILO. The salaries for all employees shall be based on the principle of "Equivalent pay for equivalent work".

The existing right to codetermination of employees of Berliner Wasserbetriebe will be guaranteed and further extended.

2.7 The City-State of Berlin provides, to a reasonable extent, resources to allow for democratic participation and water-related research.

## **3. Environmental principles**

3.1 Berliner Wasserbetriebe supplies Berlin with drinking water from its own groundwater resources and the bank filtrate obtained from the Spree and Havel rivers.

3.2 The work of Berliner Wasserbetriebe and the orientation of Berlin's policy are characterised by the desire to protect resources. Berlin's environmental balance sheet must not deteriorate, and should be constantly improved.

3.3 The State implements the environmental standards of the EU Water Framework Directive (WFD) of 2000 and enshrines these provisions in statutory standards.

3.4 Organic agriculture is to be encouraged in order to protect water resources and reduce contamination of the groundwater. Berlin is in favour of a reform of European and German agriculture and biomass cultivation policy with the aim of greatly reducing the pollution of our waterways through fertilisers and pesticides.

3.5 Berlin's surface waters are to be developed in greater harmony with nature as regards riverside landscaping and environmental consistency. The City-State should not pursue any development of bodies of water that impacts negatively on nature.

3.6 Water protection areas are to be maintained and cared for. They may not be redesignated as speculative building land.

3.7 To protect groundwater resources, water extraction shall be limited to a defined, environmentally compatible extent.

3.8 The City-State of Berlin shall develop an overall concept for groundwater management in cooperation with BWB and with the agreement of the population.

3.9 The groundwater extraction charge shall be defined as a ring-fenced levy and used for the protection of the groundwater and Berlin's bodies of water.

3.10 The City-State of Berlin promotes the development of its green spaces in harmony with nature with the aim of ensuring soil conservation and thus preventing water pollution. The Berliner Wasserbetriebe is jointly responsible for the urban water supply; championing the retention of Berlin's green spaces of all types thus also falls within its remit.

3.11 Soil management is oriented towards protecting the ground and surface water and watercourses. Further soil sealing is to be avoided and reversed wherever possible. The quantity, quality and structure of unsealed soils are to be retained. Wherever possible, rainwater will be allowed to seep into the ground locally to reduce the load on the sewerage system.

3.12 Fracking and other methods of obtaining crude oil and natural gas in and around Berlin are to be ruled out for all time. The underground storage of separated CO<sub>2</sub> shall also remain banned in Berlin in the future. The City-State ought to advocate for a Germany-wide ban.

3.13 The City-State of Berlin is working with the other Federal States towards the early ending of pollutant discharges into the rivers and ensuring a stable water supply for all.

#### **4. Legal principles**

4.1 The Berlin Water Charter is the basis for interpretation of existing and new laws, statutory provisions and other regulations.