



Berliner Wassertisch
<http://berliner-wassertisch.net>
sprecherteam@berliner-wassertisch.net

Berlin Water Charter

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Preface

Remunicipalisation of Berliner Wasserbetriebe (BWB) is just around the corner. In the first instance, this means return of the company, which has been part-privatised for well over a decade, to the ownership of the State of Berlin. We wish to take this further and democratise both Berliner Wasserbetriebe and water policy as a whole, and so achieve transparent, socially just and environmentally sustainable domestic water management in Berlin. To this end, the Berliner Wassertisch has drawn up a draft water charter for Berlin with reference to a number of international role models. Our intention 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. Finally, the Berlin water charter is intended to be a basis for statutory regulations and to act as a guide for Berliner Wasserbetriebe.

Preamble

All the people of the City of Berlin bear shared responsibility for the democratic and transparent, socially just and environmentally sustainable use of water. A high quality drinking water supply and sewerage system for the City is equally important, along with the protection of nature and natural resources and appropriate groundwater management. The following principles form the framework for this.

1. General and political principles

- a) Berliner Wasserbetriebe serves the common good. Access to clean water and basic sanitation must be guaranteed to all citizens of Berlin as a human right.
- b) Water must be affordable for all citizens of Berlin. Berlin's population has a right to obtain high quality water subject to socially appropriate charges and conditions.
- c) The provision of water, which is essential to life, and its disposal rank among the highest priority tasks of the State. 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.
- d) Berlin's domestic water management must be democratically organised, i.e. with the democratic participation of the citizens of Berlin. Water management must be transparent. Direct democratic participation in Berliner Wasserbetriebe by the citizens of Berlin is guaranteed.

2. Economic principles

- a) Berliner Wasserbetriebe is not run for profit. It may levy charges that cover the costs of facilities and to make provision for economic and technical development.
- b) No companies that are not associated with water may be integrated into Berliner Wasserbetriebe.
- c) Berliner Wasserbetriebe supplies the City entirely with drinking water from its own groundwater resources and the bank filtrate drawn off to the groundwater from the Spree and Havel rivers. 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. Alternative water management, such as the use of service water, must be increasingly incorporated into the planning. The investment in Berliner Wasserbetriebe must be sufficient to meet these requirements.
- d) Berliner Wasserbetriebe remains expressly open to cooperation across river basins, municipalities, Federal States and to international cooperation in the context of publically-run domestic water management. Berliner Wasserbetriebe actively participates in the model of public-public cooperation, with the common good as its guiding principle. A profit-oriented approach to inter-regional cooperation will be rejected on principle.
- e) The working conditions and wages for employees subject to the terms of collective agreements and staff members of Berliner Wasserbetriebe must not fall below existing levels after the remunicipalisation. All employees are paid according to the principle of "Equivalent pay for equivalent work". The existing right to codetermination of workers and staff members of Berliner

Wasserbetriebe will be further extended, and not simply guaranteed.

- f) The State of Berlin provides, to a reasonable extent, resources to allow democratic participation in, for example, citizens' councils, employee councils, and for water-related research.

3. Environmental principles

- a) Berliner Wasserbetriebe and the State of Berlin work together to ensure a high quality of water, as essential to life, in order to preclude any risk to the sustainable quality of Berlin's water.
- b) The work of Berliner Wasserbetriebe and the orientation of Berlin's policy is characterised by the desire to protect resources. Berlin's environmental balance must not deteriorate, and should be constantly improved.
- c) The State and Berliner Wasserbetriebe implement the standards of the EU Water Framework Directive (WFD) of 2000.
- d) Water protection areas are to be maintained. They may not be redesignated as speculative building land.
- e) Water extraction is limited to the extent that is environmentally compatible. No effort shall be made to export water.
- f) Groundwater management is incumbent upon the State of Berlin.
- g) Healthy mixed forests are the guarantor of healthy woodland and a sustainable water supply. The Berlin Senate promotes close-to-nature development of green spaces aimed at protecting the soil and thus the groundwater. Such green spaces include native mixed woodland. Berliner Wasserbetriebe assumes overall responsibility for the urban water supply, and so must also champion the retention of Berlin's green spaces of all types (uncultivated ground, parks, street greening, allotments, urban gardens, etc.)
- h) The priority is given to soil conservation. The soil management is oriented towards protecting the ground and surface water and running water. Further "sealing" of the soil should therefore be avoided; the quantity, quality and structure of unsealed soils are to be retained.
- i) Organic agriculture is to be encouraged in order to protect water resources and reduce contamination of the groundwater.
- j) Hydraulic fracturing to obtain crude oil and natural gas (known as "fracking") is to be ruled out for all time. The State also advocates a Germany-wide ban.
- k) The underground storage of separated CO₂ is banned in Berlin. The State also advocates a Germany-wide ban.
- l) Berliner Wasserbetriebe and the Berlin Senate shall work across Federal State boundaries - with Brandenburg and Saxony - to limit, reduce and quickly end contamination of the Spree from the Lausitz brown coal mining region (SO₄ contamination). The State of Berlin shall work to quickly and permanently ban the exploitation of fossil fuels (brown coal, crude oil, etc) in order to prevent contamination of the water by such fuels.
- m) Berliner Wasserbetriebe does everything that is necessary to keep substances that are harmful to people and nature out of the water or to clean such substances from the water. A high quality effluent treatment process must be guaranteed at all times.

4. Legal principles

- a) Berliner Wasserbetriebe is required fulfill the standards of the EU Water Framework Directive (WFD) of 2000. This Directive aims to improve the aquatic environment in the European Community. Since today's effluent is our drinking water of tomorrow, priority must be given to compliance with the WFD standards.
- b) The principles of this Berlin water charter are to be taken into account when framing existing laws, statutory regulations and other rules that are applicable to the operational structure and actions of Berliner Wasserbetriebe and to the measures by the State of Berlin of relevance to water policy. New laws, statutory regulations or other rules that concern Berliner Wasserbetriebe or Berlin's water policy should accord with this Berlin water charter.

International contact: dorotheahaerlin@gmx.de
 sprecherteam@berliner-wassertisch.net