

This country profile was compiled by the OECD Secretariat and reflects information available as of March 2015. Further information and analysis can be found in the publication: OECD (2015) [Water Resources Allocation: Sharing Risks and Opportunities](#), OECD Studies on Water, OECD Publishing. Country profiles for all of the 37 allocation regimes in 27 OECD and key partner countries surveyed for this project are available for download at: <http://www.oecd.org/fr/publications/water-resources-allocation-9789264229631-en.htm>.

ESTONIA

Overview and highlights

In Estonia, water resource allocation is managed by a few national institutions. Surface water is either privately or publicly owned. Ground water is publicly owned as a common good of the nation. Lands and wells can be privately owned.

Key characteristics of the prevailing allocation regime in Estonia include:

- Water resources are considered neither over-allocated nor over-used;
- Energy production (predominately oil shale) is the major water user in Estonia, consuming 90% of water resources, with industrial users consuming 5%, domestic users and agriculture consuming 3% and 2%, respectively.
- Water entitlements are unbundled from property titles and granted to individuals;
- If the entitlement is not used in a given period, it will be lost;
- No requirement to obtain a new entitlement or to increase the size of an existing entitlement;
- Abstraction is charged in agriculture (except for irrigation purposes), domestic, industrial and energy production. Charges do not reflect water scarcity.

Legal and institutional setting for water allocation

Institution	Scale	Main Responsibilities
Ministry of the Environment	National	Policy
Environmental Board	National	Issuing entitlements; monitoring and enforcement.

Legal context for water allocation: Roman/ Statutory Law.

Legal definition of ownership of water resources: Surface water is either privately or publicly owned. Ground water is publicly owned.

Tracking water scarcity

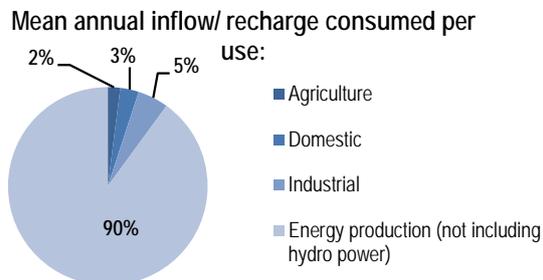
A mapping exercise has been undertaken to identify areas where scarcity of either ground or surface water is becoming a problem: The assessment of water status in the 2010 ["River Basin Management Plans"](#).

Allocation Regime Example: Estonia (national scale)

Physical features of the water resource

The water allocation regime covers all natural waters in Estonia.

The **flow rate is managed or controlled** to some extent, as water systems are partially regulated.



Defining the available resource pool

Are limits defined on consumptive use? Yes.

- The volume of water that can be abstracted is defined but not linked to any public document (e.g. ground water bodies have limits defined that allow water to be abstracted. However, when these limits are reached then all abstractions are banned).

Are environmental-flows clearly defined? Yes.

- There are regulations specifying general conditions for ecological flows in rivers.
- Determined by an ice-free period (May to October), using a monthly mean flow with 95% exceedance probability. The current methodology, however, is being revised¹.

Which factors are taken into account in the definition of the available resource pool? None.

- Factors not considered include non-consumptive uses (e.g. navigation, hydroelectricity), base flow requirements, return flows (how much water should be returned to the resource pool, after use), inter-annual and inter-seasonal variability, connectivity with other water bodies and climate change.

What is the status of resource pool? Neither over-allocated nor over-used.

Are there arrangements to deal with impacts of climate change? No.

- Although ongoing planning to address this issue. Recent arrangements include the starting of the 2nd River Basin Management Plans (RBMP), which seeks to include the information on adaptation to climate change and mitigation measures in these plans.

¹ For further information on this, please access the following report (in Estonian): <http://www.envir.ee/1198673>.

Entitlements to use water

Definition of entitlements	Characteristics of entitlements
<p>Are entitlements legally defined? Yes, in most cases.</p> <p>Are private entitlements defined? Yes, as an individual entitlement (to an individual person).</p> <p>Nature of entitlement: Water entitlements unbundled from property titles. Defined as the purpose that water may be used for and the maximum volume that may be taken in a given period.</p> <p>Period granted for: A term of a given number of years with the expectation of periodic renewal.</p> <p>Return flow obligations: Not specified.</p>	<p>If the entitlement is not used in a given period, it will be lost (e.g. "use it or lose it").</p> <p>Are entitlements differentiated based on the level of security of supply (or risk of shortage)? No.</p> <p>Is there a possibility to trade, lease or transfer entitlements? No.</p> <p>Are allocations (the amount that can be taken at any point in time) managed separately from entitlements? Yes.</p> <p>Is allocation trading allowed? No.</p> <p>Can entitlements function as a financial instrument? No.</p>
<p>Type of users not required to hold a water entitlement to abstract water: private small scale users. Total water uses related to these groups of users account for 1% of total water uses. The adverse impact arising from any increase in these uses is controlled through national monitoring and environmental surveillance.</p> <p>Requirements to obtain a new entitlement or to increase the size of an existing entitlement: none. No restrictions apply to new entrants or entitlement holders.</p>	

Abstraction charges

User category	Abstraction charge?	Basis for charge	Reflects water scarcity?
Agriculture	✓ (except for irrigation purposes)		No
Domestic	✓		No
Industrial	✓		No
Energy production (not including hydro power)	✓	--	No
Hydro power			No
Other. Specify:			No

There are fees for water abstraction and according to Estonian water act threshold limits that require permit are: for ground water abstraction more than 5 m³/24 h (mineral water from 0 m³/24h) and surface water usage more than 30 m³/24 h.

Dealing with exceptional circumstances

Distinction between the allocation regimes used in “normal” and extreme/ severe water shortage times? No.

How is the amount of water made available for allocation adjusted: not specified, but mostly considering inter-annual variation.

Pre-defined priority classes



Monitoring and enforcement

Responsible authority: Environmental Board.

Types of withdrawals monitored: Agriculture, domestic, industrial and energy production.

Monitoring mechanisms:

- In agriculture: metering and calculation;
- In domestic, industrial and energy production: metering.

Sanctions: Non-compliance fees.

Conflict resolution mechanisms? Yes. Priorities are listed in legislation, describing which users should be preferred in case of water shortages.