

A History of Drought in Europe

Droughts in Europe are not rare. Whilst a severe water shortage at specific location is expected once every 50 years, scarcely 5 years go by without a shortage across at least some part of Europe and some of these events can last for several years. The table below details the location and major impacts of recent events.

Year	Region	Impacts
1973	Austria, Germany + former Czechoslovakia	Very dry winter / spring resulting in low snow melt and subsequent water shortages
1976	Northern Europe (Scandinavia to France)	Unprecedented 16 month duration in UK led to massive subsidence claims as building foundations failed. French milk yields were reduced by 25%. Over 20,000 pigs slaughtered as watering requirements could not be maintained.
1984	North and west UK	Very dry spring and summer led to the imposition of hosepipe bans.
1988-92	Most of Europe	Anomalous circulation pattern caused rainfall deficits over a large area interspersed with short wet periods. Insured losses due to subsidence estimated at £600 m for UK alone
1992	Germany, Hungary, Bulgaria and much of western Russia	German crop production reduced by 22%. Irrigation suspended in Bulgaria Worst Russian Drought in 10 years.
1990-95	Spain, Portugal	Prolonged drought across the entire Iberian peninsular. Water supplies in Seville were cut for up to 12 hours per day during 92-93. Hydroelectric power suspended 94-95.
1995	Ireland, UK, Norway and Sweden	Agricultural losses in the UK were valued at £180 m. Reductions in Norwegian hydropower capacity led to 600% increase in mean weekly prices
1999	Finland	Hot dry summer resulted in very low water levels in rivers and groundwater
2003	Much of continental Europe	Many deaths from unusually prolonged high temperatures. Forest fires, subsidence, power cuts and agricultural losses.

Source: Ben Lloyd-Hughes, Benfield Hazard Research Centre, UCL