



EurEau

Rue du Luxembourg 47-51,
B-1050 Brussels, Belgium
Tel: +32 (0)2 706 40 80
Fax: +32 (0) 2 706 40 81
secretariat@eureau.org
www.eureau.org

Protection of surface water resources used for drinking water abstraction

Protect our vulnerable drinking water sources now and for future generations

Summary

Protecting surface water sources from contamination is vital for ensuring a supply of clean and safe drinking water for us now and for our future generations. Water operators strive to provide this, but need robust EU legislation to preserve drinking water resources and ensure the effective implementation of the WFD. We advocate preventative protection over treatment.

Introduction

Surface water is a key part of the water cycle. It is in an open environment which is subject to many different uses and several threats.

On average, 40% of Europe's drinking water is abstracted from surface water sources, but this can differ very widely (in the range of 0 to 100%) within and between Members States.

It is vital that consumers have access to clean drinking water. Water suppliers need adequate and reliable sources to provide this.

Protecting against contamination and other threats affecting surface water quality is vital for the supply of safe, wholesome and clean drinking water that complies with the requirements set by the Drinking Water Directive (DWD), now and for future generations.

Member States are responsible for protecting water resources.

Legislative Framework

The Water Framework Directive (WFD) states in the preamble: "*Water is not a commercial product like any other but, rather, a heritage which must be protected, defended and treated as such*".



Article 7 of the WFD states that Member States shall ensure the necessary protection for the bodies of water identified as for use in the abstraction of water for human consumption or intended for such future use, with the aim of avoiding deterioration in their quality in order to reduce the level of purification treatment required in the production of drinking water.

Protection of surface water

EurEau members treat raw water in order to comply with the regulatory framework, ensuring that drinking water is safe, wholesome and clean. The required treatment depends on the quality of raw water and may involve high costs and environmental impact (eg: energy use).

Therefore EurEau calls on the European Commission and Member States to better protect the quality of surface water resources for drinking water abstraction against adverse impacts and ensure an effective implementation of the WFD.

Surface water quality monitoring programmes should be adjusted to reflect new information and knowledge in order to identify new threats.

Preventative protection rather than treatment

Our goal is to protect surface water resources that are used for drinking water abstraction against the adverse impacts and to exclude potential hazards and minimise contamination.

The 'precautionary principle' should be used more regularly:

A precautionary protection of surface water resources must be based on contamination prevention.

Adequate measures in this are:

1. keeping anthropogenic (harmful and persistent) substances away from surface water bodies
2. preventing emissions at the origin (source control approach)
3. classifying emissions according to possible dangerous effects in line with the state of knowledge and technology
4. that no contamination of water (both diffuse pollution and industrial discharges) should be tolerated that could endanger the use or suitable use for drinking water abstraction
5. managing spatial developments.



Surface water protection and planning

Keeping pollutants out of the water cycle is a challenging task. Further EU action can be taken in the approval, use and disposal of substances with the aim of keeping hazardous substances out of the water cycle at the source and/or replacing them with alternative non-hazardous substances, e.g. substances that can be degraded more easily and completely. End of pipe treatment is not sustainable.

Potential hazardous impacts on drinking water quality of harmful and persistent substances and their degradation and transformation products (such as metabolites) should be taken into account as a criterion in the tests carried out for the approval, authorisation and registration of chemical substances.

In the interests of sustainability, strategies for the protection of water bodies should include:

- ~ improving the EU approval, authorisation and registration of chemical substances by adding adequate drinking water related criteria
- ~ monitoring for pollution and identifying the pathways by which pollutants enter the water bodies
- ~ measures to prevent the use of particular substances
- ~ measures to reduce pollution at the source.

Action plans with concrete measures should be established by Member States in order to prevent the further deterioration of water sources and to remediate existing surface water pollution, limiting future threats.



About EurEau

EurEau is the voice of Europe's water sector. We represent drinking and waste water service providers from 29 countries in Europe, from both the private and the public sectors.

Our members are the national associations of water services in Europe. At EurEau, we bring national water professionals together to agree European water industry positions regarding the management of water quality, resource efficiency and access to water for Europe's citizens and businesses. The EurEau secretariat is based in Brussels, from where we coordinate the work of around 150 experts from member organisations and utilities and advocate common positions with EU decision makers.

Our members are fully committed to the continuous supply of clean water and its safe return into the water cycle. We have a role in raising awareness of threats to the water environment. With a direct employment of around 500,000 people, the European water sector makes a significant contribution to the European economy.