

Revision of the Drinking Water Directive

Vice President Claudia Castell-Exner's speech

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Dear honourable members of the European Parliament and dear representative of the Committee of the Regions and dear colleagues, good afternoon!

First of all I would like to thank Mr Dantin for inviting us and for organising this very timely meeting on a file that is of utmost importance for water services.

My name is Claudia Castell-Exner and I am Vice-President of EurEau. Who are we?

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EurEau is the European federation of water services and has been the voice of Europe's water sector since 1975.

Our members are 32 national associations of water services from 29 European countries.

We represent drinking water and waste water operators – from the public and private sector.

With about 500,000 jobs we make a significant contribution to the European economy.

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As you are aware the European Commission adopted a new legislative proposal on the Drinking water directive responding to the Right2Water initiative and paving the way to the implementation of the SDG6 in the EU.

The proposal is designed around five policy options:

- First: Art.5 + I Annex I – the review of quality parameters
- Second: Art.7 and Annex II: the introduction of the Water Safety Plan approach
- Third: Materials and products in contact with drinking water
- Fourth: Art.13: Access to drinking water for all
- Fifth: Art.14: more information to consumers



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EurEau strongly supports the intention of the European Commission to ensure that the directive continues protecting public health and at the same time European citizens increase their confidence in tap water across the EU.

We find that the Directive has many positive aspects such as the introduction of a risk management from source to tap to secure drinking water quality.

In this context the hazard analysis of the Member States carried out within the Water Framework Directive creates the missing link towards the Drinking Water Directive!

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However we see potential for improvement in order to make the directive legally sound and implementable in an efficient and effective way.

Therefore EurEau is in favour of following the WHO recommendations more closely than it has been done by the Commission in its proposal when it comes to the selection of quality parameters and parametric values. The new drinking water directive should ensure wholesome and safe drinking water at the tap 24/7 and at the same time preserving affordability of water bills.

EurEau is also very attached to the re-inclusion of the Indicator parameters that should be maintained as in the current directive due to their importance to control the proper performance of water treatment processes

EurEau doesn't agree with the new scheme for monitoring frequencies for drinking water quality. To measure especially each and every day chemical parameters means to increase costs for operators and consumers without an added value for drinking water safety.

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If we are very happy for the introduction of synergies between the Water Framework Directive and the Drinking Water Directive, we must also ensure that roles and responsibilities are clearly allocated between Member States, water operators and property owners.

In fact only Member States have the legal means to enforce preventive measures in the catchment areas and take actions to protect water resources.

We are also supportive of the idea of putting more focus on the domestic distribution systems, but we regret the deletion of art.10 of the current directive. We believe that in order to protect public health, EU-wide hygienic requirements should be developed for materials in contact with drinking water within the scope of the DWD without affecting the legislation for construction products.



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EurEau cannot support the concept that any exceedance of values should be considered “automatically as potential danger to human health”.

Especially with regards to parameters where values have been set based on the precautionary principle an exceedance does not cause automatically such a potential danger. This approach would undermine consumers’ trust.

We strongly believe that competent health authorities are best placed to assess the situation and take the appropriate follow-up measures, including the decision to inform public.

Likewise we do not agree with the deletion of the current provisions on derogations: flexibility mechanisms are needed to allow for a smooth implementation according to realistic timelines.

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Water operators are working to make the human right on (?) water and sanitation a reality in Europe.

We need to have in mind the UN definition that encompasses the three dimension of access, affordability and availability of water.

We are also in favour of transparency and we second the European Commission’s intention to make consumers aware of the good quality of tap water in Europe to increase consumers’ confidence.

If we do not want to lose the focus on water quality aspects, we would like also to point at the fact that additional definitions at national level are needed to implement art.14 and Annex IV.

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All in all, EurEau is very supportive of the Commission’s intention behind the proposal, but in order for the directive to be legally sound and be implementable in an effective and efficient way, Parliament and Council need to improve it.

We wish the honourable members of the Parliament and the environment attachés in the Council success in their work so that drinking water continues to be safe and water services affordable to all Europeans.

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Thank you for your attention!

