Safe and clean drinking water: Council adopts strict minimum quality standards

The EU is ensuring that tap water across the EU is safe to drink. Today, the Council formally adopted its position at first reading to revise the drinking water directive, based on the compromise reached in the negotiations between the Council and the European Parliament.

Under the new rules, the quality standards for drinking water are brought up to date, and a cost-effective risk-based approach to monitoring water quality is introduced. The Council also introduced hygienic requirements for materials in contact with drinking water, such as pipes. The aim is to improve the quality of such materials to ensure that human health is protected and no contamination takes place.

"Safe and clean drinking water is essential. I am pleased that we were able to propose an update of water quality standards, introduce a risk-based approach to the monitoring of water, improve water quality information that is provided to consumers and improve the access to water for EU citizens."
Svenja Schulze, Federal Minister for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety of Germany

The Council's position also addresses growing concern about the effects of endocrine disruptors, pharmaceuticals and microplastics on human health by introducing a watch list mechanism. The watch list will allow the EU to follow up, in a dynamic and flexible way, on new knowledge about these substances and their relevance for human health.

Background and next steps

The revision is a direct result of the first-ever successful European citizens' initiative 'Right2Water'. The Commission adopted its recast proposal for the drinking water directive on 1 February 2018. The Council adopted its position on the proposal on 5 March 2019.
Negotiations between the co-legislators followed. On 18 December 2019, a provisional agreement was reached between the Council and the European Parliament, which was confirmed by the EU ambassadors of the member states on 5 February 2020.

The Council position at first reading on the drinking water directive adopted today reflects the compromise reached in the negotiations between the Council and the European Parliament, facilitated by the Commission. Once adopted, the modifications to the current drinking water directive will address all the shortcomings identified in its REFIT evaluation and considerably increase the level of protection of the environment and of human health from the adverse effects of contaminated drinking water.

This position will now be transmitted to the European Parliament for announcement at the EP Plenary, vote at the Environment Committee and then, as a final step, vote by the EP Plenary. In accordance with the letter of 18 February 2020 sent by the Chair of the European Parliament's Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety to the Chair of the Committee of Permanent Representatives, the European Parliament should, at second reading, approve the Council's position at first reading without amendment.

This directive will enter into force 20 days after its publication in the Official Journal of the European Union.


**Draft Statement of the Council's reasons**

**Adoption of the Council's position at first reading and of the statement of the Council's reasons**

**Statements**

**Safe and clean drinking water: Council approves provisional deal which updates quality standards (press release, 05/02/2020)**

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