

## Revision of the Drinking Water Directive

In February 2018, the European Commission adopted a proposal to recast the Drinking Water Directive. The proposal updates water quality standards and aims to improve access to drinking water for all. During the October II plenary session, the Parliament is due to vote on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI) committee's report and on the opening of interinstitutional (trilogue) negotiations.

### Background

The 1998 Drinking Water Directive sets quality standards for water intended for human consumption, in order to protect human health from water contamination. In general, the directive has been relatively well implemented by Member States. A 2016 [report](#) by the European Environment Agency notes that over 98.5 % of tests and analysis carried out on drinking water samples met EU standards. The Commission proposal responds to the first ever successful European Citizens' Initiative '[Right2Water](#)', which collected over 1.8 million signatures, and builds on a fitness check that concluded that the 20-year old directive is fit for purpose, but needs updating.

### European Commission proposal

The [proposal](#) aims to align drinking water quality standards with up-to-date scientific data and to adapt the legislative framework to meet new challenges, such as transitioning to a circular economy. The main elements of the proposal consist of updating the water quality standards; adding new and emerging substances to the list of criteria determining water safety; introducing a risk-based approach to the monitoring of water; and harmonising the standards for products in contact with drinking water. By improving information to citizens about the quality of drinking water in their local area, the directive would encourage households and restaurants to use tap water instead of bottled water, thus reducing plastic waste. Member States would be required to improve access for all people, especially for vulnerable and marginalised groups who currently have difficulty in accessing drinking water. This includes installing equipment for access to drinking water in public spaces.

### European Parliament position

The ENVI committee adopted its [report](#) on 10 September 2018 by 30 votes in favour, 13 against, and 19 abstentions. The committee agrees that the directive should promote universal access to clean water for all in the European Union. The requirements set out in the directive should, however, reflect the national situation and conditions of the water suppliers in the Member States. According to the committee, Member States should encourage provision of tap water in restaurants either free of charge, as proposed by the Commission, or for a low service fee. The committee, in general, maintained most of the parameters set by the Commission, which are stricter in some cases than those recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO). Instead of setting values, on the basis of the precautionary principle, for new parameters such as endocrine disruptors and microplastics, the committee proposes placing them on a 'watch list' until there are clearer scientific data. The report favours establishing minimum European hygiene standards for all materials in contact with drinking water. By the end of 2022, Member States would be required to adopt national targets for water suppliers to reduce their water leakage levels.

A vote in view of opening interinstitutional negotiations is planned for the October II plenary session.

First-reading report: [2017/0332\(COD\)](#); Committee responsible: ENVI; Rapporteur: Michel Dantin, (EPP, France). See also our '[EU Legislation in Progress briefing](#)'.

