

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

2004



2009

Committee on Petitions

17.04.2008

NOTICE TO MEMBERS

Subject: Petition 0250/2007 by Ms Janet Crawford (Irish) on water supply problems in South Tipperary County (Ireland)

1. Summary of petition

The petitioner complains about the frequent water outages in South Tipperary County during summer or drier months blaming it on inadequate management of water by the local authorities. According to the petitioner, water supply problems are due to the deterioration of the existing pipelines, leaks and inadequate reservoirs. The petitioner maintains that water is sometimes diverted from the rural area towards the nearby towns and that there is no emergency number where residents can report water failures. The petitioner accuses the local council of diverting funds from the rural water system and of not taking measures to secure the water supply in the area. The petitioner asks the European Parliament to investigate the situation.

2. Admissibility

Declared admissible on 23 July 2007. Information requested from Commission under Rule 192(4).

3. Commission reply, received on 17 April 2008.

In Kilross, a borehole has been sunk in order to increase the water supply. The ground water pumped up is filled with lime and has an unpleasant appearance.

The petition concerns mainly the security of the drinking water supply in South Tipperary. The quality of drinking water in the EU is regulated by the Drinking Water Directive¹, which aims at supplying clean and wholesome water to water supply zones serving more than 50

¹ Council Directive 98/83/EC of 5.12.1998 OJ L330.p32

persons. Quality standards are defined by a set of chemical, microbiological and organoleptic parameters. However, no EU legislation covers the quantitative aspects of the drinking water supply. Therefore, the Commission has no legal grounds to act upon this point.

If water meant for human consumption contains high doses of lime, it may not be compliant with the Drinking Water Directive. The directive stipulates that the turbidity, colour and taste of the drinking water should be acceptable to consumers. Even though this can be difficult to quantify, Member States are obliged to monitor water supply zones and make adequate and up to date information available to consumers.

The petitioner does not specify which types of funds are being diverted from the rural water system: Irish national funds, European Regional Development Funds or European Agricultural Funds for Rural Development.

The Commission has no legal basis for an intervention on the inadequate water supply, since no EU legislation covers the security of the drinking water supply. Concerning water quality, the petitioner is recommended to contact his local authorities in order to obtain more information on the quality of drinking water distributed from the Kilross borehole, in particular, as concerns the organoleptic aspects (turbidity, colour and taste). The Commission may decide to integrate this information into an ongoing infringement case against Ireland concerning the quality of drinking water in rural areas.

The Commission has no authority concerning the use of Irish national funds and looks forward to receiving more information from the petitioner, in order to determine if EU funds are involved.