**Dimitris Avramopoulos,** *Member of the Commission***.** – Madam President, I would like to warmly thank the rapporteur, Mr Dantin, and the shadow rapporteurs for the hard work done on the proposal for a revised Drinking Water Directive. The Commission welcomes the efforts and the fact that Parliament’s amendments are aligned with the main elements of our proposal. At the same time, I regret that due to the slow progress in Council, it was not possible to reach an interinstitutional agreement before the European elections.

I would like to recall that the main objective of our proposal is to ensure the safety of drinking water in the European Union for the 21st Century. We should be proud that today most people living in the European Union enjoy drinking water of the highest standard worldwide. With our proposal we will be able to maintain, and even improve, the situation with stricter and more appropriate limit values.

Last week, on 22 March, we commemorated World Water Day with the theme ‘leaving no one behind’. Our vision of Europe is that of an inclusive society, which leaves no one behind. The obligation in the revised Drinking Water Directive to provide the most vulnerable amongst us with access to clean water pursues this vision. It is the result of the first ever successful European citizens’ initiative – the right to water initiative – supported by over 1.8 million people and as such a tangible example of how the Commission does listen to European Union citizens’ concerns.

The proposal would improve the situation of about two million people in the European Union. The Commission proposal on access to water is also an important step towards achieving Sustainable Development Goal 6. I warmly welcome the strong support from Parliament to ensure access for all. This support is important in view of the future discussions between the two co-legislators. As you are aware, the Environment Council agreed on a general approach on 5 March. In their compromise text, a fragile equilibrium was found, with very limited requirements on access to water. Some Member States indeed were opposed to access to water being regulated at European level. On the contrary, I know that the majority of the European Parliament, which is the House of the European citizens, wants it to be regulated. Furthermore, the Council proposal for an Article 10A, on materials in contact with water, raises several concerns for the Commission.

Therefore, while reserving its position for the interinstitutional negotiations, the Commission states that it intends to further analyse and assess the concerns on this article and will make the results known to the co-legislators in due time.

I can assure you that the Commission is committed and will do its utmost to support the next European Parliament as well as the incoming Finnish and Croatian Presidencies, so that they can start negotiations as soon as possible.

Let me also underline that, as an honest broker in the negotiations, the Commission will uphold the important objectives of this proposal, which I believe we all share.

Finally let me recall that safe drinking water is crucial for European citizens. The solutions we propose will bring positive change to their daily lives. I therefore call on Parliament to support the Commission’s ambition to protect even better the health of our citizens, by proposing strict health standards and by ensuring that they have better access to water.