



Surface waters: new chemicals added to EU risk list

Committees: Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety

Three pharmaceutical substances were added to the EU surface water risk list for the first time by an Environment Committee vote on Wednesday. MEPs also endorsed a proposed "watch list" of 25 other chemicals that could pose a threat to surface waters. EU member states would have to monitor them for a year.

The three pharmaceuticals - 17alphaethinyloestradiol, 17beta-estradiol and Diclofenac - were among 15 chemicals that MEPs added to the priority risk list of those to be monitored and controlled in EU surface waters.

However, Environmental Quality Standards (EQS), which lay down chemical concentration limits in water, will only be set for the pharmaceuticals during the next review by the Commission, when the extent of the problem is better known.

Watch list

The legislation, approved with 43 votes in favour, 7 against and 8 abstentions, would also establish a "watch list" of no more than 25 substances to be monitored for at least 12 months by the Member States. They would have to use several monitoring stations, depending on their surface area and population, and report their results periodically. The watch list's validity is limited to 4 years.

"The watch list mechanism is an effective way to break the existing conundrum between the necessity of monitoring substances in order to regulate them, and of regulating substances in order to monitor them", said rapporteur Richard Seeber (EPP, AT).

Legislative coherence and transparency

MEPs inserted a new article to ensure the mutual consistency of various EU laws on chemicals (Water Framework Directive, REACH, pesticides, biocides, etc). They also included an amendment requiring member states to make public the measures that they take to prevent surface water pollution, in particular via a single website.

Next steps

The plenary vote is scheduled for April 2013.

Background

The Water Framework Directive is the EU's main water policy instrument for setting anti-pollution strategies and ensuring that water supplies are sustainable. Measures based on it aim progressively to reduce or phase out emissions of chemicals on the priority substances risk list. The list is updated every four years.

*In the Chair: Matthias Grootte (S&D, DE)
28.11.2012*

Contact :

Press release

Baptiste CHATAIN

BXL: (+32) 2 28 40992

STR: (+33) 3 881 74151

PORT: (+32) 498 98 13 37

EMAIL: envi-press@europarl.europa.eu