

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-003390/21
to the Commission
Esther de Lange (PPE), Cindy Franssen (PPE)
(30 June 2021)**

Subject: PFAS pollution

On 11 June 2021, NRC Handelsblad ⁽¹⁾ reported on the damage caused by PFAS (per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances) pollution and the problems it creates in river deltas. The Netherlands National Institute for Public Health and the Environment (RIVM) has released a new opinion on the limit values for PFAS which departs from the European Food Safety Authority's position. Large, densely populated parts of Europe are in a similar situation to the Netherlands, where PFAS and PFOA (perfluorooctanoic acid) pollution is posing a significant risk to health. Dutch toxicologists are calling for an EU policy to address PFAS pollution at source.

1. Can the Commission outline the current measures the EU is taking to tackle PFAS pollution at source, and will it state where the problem is most serious?
2. Will the Commission engage with the companies responsible in an effort to reduce groundwater pollution, and will an EU approach designed to tackle PFAS pollution at source be an explicit part of the Zero Pollution Action Plan?
3. What does the Commission make of calls by toxicologists for a new EU policy to tackle PFAS pollution at source? Does it intend to ask the EFSA to carry out new research into PFAS and PFOA limit values, in the light of the RIVM's findings?

**Answer given by Mr Sinkevičius on behalf of the European Commission
(6 September 2021)**

The Chemicals Strategy for Sustainability ⁽²⁾ (CSS) proposes a set of actions to address the use of and contamination with per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS). The actions aim to address PFAS with a group approach, under legislation on water, sustainable products, food, industrial emissions, and waste.

The CSS provides a restriction under the regulation on Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals ⁽³⁾ on all uses of PFAS except where they are essential for society. The restriction will address PFAS pollution at the source as it will prevent emissions from production, use and final disposal. The Commission indicates as reasons for concern the contamination of soil and water, including drinking water.

In the Zero Pollution Action Plan ⁽⁴⁾ the Commission has clearly set out that 'environmental damage should, as a priority, be rectified at source'.

In application of the actions on PFAS set out in the CSS, the impact assessments for the revision of the Water Framework Directive ⁽⁵⁾, the Groundwater Directive ⁽⁶⁾ and the Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive ⁽⁷⁾ explore whether PFAS should be regulated through these instruments. This could complement the provisions on PFAS already included in the new Drinking Water Directive ⁽⁸⁾.

The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) did not apply Relative Potency Factors (RPFs) to different PFASs, as done by the Netherlands National Institute for Public Health and the Environment (RIVM) ⁽⁹⁾.

EFSA concluded that it would not be adequate to apply RPFs based on data on hepatic effects to a Tolerable Weekly Intake based on effects in the immune system, a limitation also recognised by RIVM. EFSA has planned to sponsor a scientific project to identify RPFs relevant to the immune system for different PFAS.

⁽¹⁾ https://www.nrc.nl/nieuws/2021/06/11/pfas-schadelijk-en-niet-kapot-te-krijgen-a4046960?utm_source=SIM&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=nrcduurzaam&utm_content=&utm_term=20210615

⁽²⁾ COM(2020) 667 final, https://ec.europa.eu/environment/strategy/chemicals-strategy_en

⁽³⁾ Regulation (EC) No 1907/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 concerning the Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals (REACH), establishing a European Chemicals Agency, amending Directive 1999/45/EC and repealing Council Regulation (EEC) No 793/93 and Commission Regulation (EC) No 1488/94 as well as Council Directive 76/769/EEC and Commission Directives 91/155/EEC, 93/67/EEC, 93/105/EC and 2000/21/EC, OJ L 396, 30.12.2006.

⁽⁴⁾ COM(2021) 400 final, https://ec.europa.eu/environment/strategy/zero-pollution-action-plan_en

⁽⁵⁾ Directive 2000/60/EC of 23 October 2000 establishing a framework for Community action in the field of water policy, OJ L 327, 22.12.2000, p.1-73.

⁽⁶⁾ Directive 2006/118/EC of 12 December 2006 on the protection of groundwater against pollution and deterioration, OJ L 372, 27.12.2006, p. 19-31.

⁽⁷⁾ Council Directive 91/271/EEC of 21 May 1991 concerning urban waste-water treatment, OJ L 135, 30.5.1991, p. 40-52.

⁽⁸⁾ Directive (EU) 2020/2184 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 December 2020 on the quality of water intended for human consumption (recast), OJ L 435, 23.12.2020, p. 1-62.

⁽⁹⁾ Memorandum on the implementation of the EFSA sum Tolerable Weekly Intake of PFASs <https://www.rivm.nl/documenten/memorandum-on-implementation-of-efsa-sum-twi-of-pfass>.