

**Question for written answer E-001162/2011
to the Commission**
Rule 117
Ville Itälä (PPE)

Subject: Finland's national law on effluent

Finland's national legislation includes a law on effluent. Around one million residents of Finland – some 20% of the entire population – are not connected to main drainage systems linked to effluent treatment plants but are dependent on individual treatment of their domestic effluent. This individual treatment is inadequate, especially in old buildings, and the treatment of effluent has not been improved in a manner commensurate with the upgrading of other aspects of the equipment of people's homes. The organic substances and phosphorus in the effluent from a person whose house is not connected to the main drains cause between six and eight times as great a burden on the environment as those from a person whose house is so connected. Finland's national Effluent Law has the aim of reducing the burden on the environment posed by domestic effluent from sparsely populated areas to the same level as that posed by effluent from areas where homes are connected to the main drains.

Pursuant to the Effluent Law, individuals have a free choice between having effluent treated using a combined septic tank and soakaway system, on the one hand, and a mini-treatment plant. The difference, however, is that, by law, mini-treatment plants require a CE mark certifying that the plant attains the statutory purification values. No such mark is required for a septic tank. Are the different techniques (mini-treatment plants and septic tanks) or manufacturers of the relevant equipment being placed by law in positions which are not equivalent, and might this approach infringe European law?