

**Question for written answer E-003256/2014
to the Commission**

Rule 117

Britta Reimers (ALDE)

Subject: Report from the Commission on the implementation of Council Directive of 12 December 1991 concerning the protection of waters against pollution caused by nitrates from agricultural sources (91/676/EEC)

On 4 October 2013, the Commission published a report to the Council and Parliament on the implementation of Council Directive 91/676/EEC concerning the protection of waters against pollution caused by nitrates from agricultural sources. More than half the groundwater samples from Germany were found to have a nitrate concentration in excess of 50 mg/litre. According to the German Federal Environment Agency (Umweltbundesamt), Germany has a network of 723 monitoring stations (2010 figures) that provide representative data for inclusion in regular reports to the European Environment Agency. For the purposes of the Commission report, however, readings were taken only from some 180 monitoring stations. What is more, these are located in regions that have clearly been affected by nitrate pollution. The sampling is therefore not representative of the levels of nitrate pollution in all bodies of groundwater in Germany, and the values determined for Germany in the Commission report are not representative of the situation in Germany as a whole. Figure A in the report in question includes a caption stating that the results originate from all groundwater monitoring stations at different depths.

1. Was Parliament given inaccurate information by the Commission concerning the nitrate pollution of groundwater in Germany?
2. Why, in the case of Germany, were only samples from the approximately 180 measuring stations in the most polluted bodies of water used, instead of the representative samples from the 723 measuring stations used in drawing up reports to the European Environment Agency (EEA)?
3. Does Janez Potočnik, the Commissioner for the Environment, regard the values determined for Germany as representative?
4. Which other Member States apart from Germany have also reported only values from the most polluted areas and not representative values for the entire country?
5. Does the Commission have evidence that the nitrate values were determined in the same way in all the German federal states and that the distances between monitoring stations are representative for Germany as a whole?
6. How does the Commission intend to ensure that Member States supply comparable data?
7. At what depths were the nitrate values measured and at what time of year? Are the same sampling methods used consistently across the whole of the EU?
8. Is the Commission aware of the fact that nitrate values vary depending on the depth at which samples are taken?