

**Question for oral answer O-000001/2020
to the Commission**

Rule 136

Tanja Fajon (S&D), Ádám Kósa (PPE), Janusz Lewandowski (PPE), Dimitrios Papadimoulis (GUE/NGL), Stelios Kouloglou (GUE/NGL), Helmut Scholz (GUE/NGL), Romana Tomc (PPE), Ernest Urtasun (Verts/ALE), Martina Michels (GUE/NGL), Annie Schreijer-Pierik (PPE), Kateřina Konečná (GUE/NGL), Milan Zver (PPE), Monika Beňová (S&D), Viktor Uspaskich (Renew), Clare Daly (GUE/NGL), Loucas Furlas (PPE), Ljudmila Novak (PPE), Miroslav Číž (S&D), Marie Toussaint (Verts/ALE), Jackie Jones (S&D), Peter Pollák (PPE), Robert Hajšel (S&D), Tudor Ciuhodaru (S&D), Radan Kanev (PPE), Mircea-Gheorghe Hava (PPE), Petros Kokkalis (GUE/NGL), Stanislav Polčák (PPE), Michal Wiezik (PPE), Franc Bogovič (PPE), Vladimír Bilčík (PPE), José Ramón Bauzá Díaz (Renew), Dennis Radtke (PPE), Róza Thun und Hohenstein (PPE), Martin Hojsík (Renew), Traian Băsescu (PPE), Maria Walsh (PPE), Luke Ming Flanagan (GUE/NGL), Mick Wallace (GUE/NGL), Martina Anderson (GUE/NGL), Marc Botenga (GUE/NGL), Seán Kelly (PPE)

Subject: Water crisis in Bulgaria

Hundreds of millions of euros, including a considerable amount from European funds, have been invested in recent years in Bulgaria's water infrastructure. In 2019, nearly 130 000 Bulgarian citizens had no access to drinking water during the Christmas holidays, with a water regime that is becoming ever stricter and with no prospect of a solution to the crisis. They are facing immediate health dangers and long-term economic threats.

This is not the aftermath of a natural disaster, but is the result of the long-standing draining of drinking water for industrial needs in one of the biggest cities in Bulgaria – Pernik. This draining has been going on for months, in spite of the constantly decreasing levels of the city's only water source – the Studena dam.

Nevertheless, the problem of Pernik is not an isolated one. The citizens of the 10th biggest city in the country – Shumen – have been living for decades without access to drinking water. In practical terms, the same is true of Varna, the third biggest city and the centre of the tourist industry. Unfortunately, listing the cities and the villages without access to drinking water would take up too many pages.

Access to drinking water is a right enjoyed by EU citizens. It is the subject of a European Citizens' Initiative and is explicitly recognised through UN General Assembly Resolution 64/292 of 28 July 2010. Infringing this right and spending European funds in an ineffective manner are not problems exclusive to Pernik or to Bulgaria. This is a European problem.

In this context, we would like to ask the following questions:

1. Is the Commission ready to undertake a full review of the reasons for the water crisis?
2. Is the Commission prepared to provide assistance to the relevant Bulgarian institutions in order to guarantee Bulgarian citizens' right of access to drinking water?
3. Can the Commission guarantee that in the next programming period those water projects, which are still in the planning and design stages, will be strictly monitored to ensure the delivery of tangible results?
4. In case of infringement, will the Commission notify the European Public Prosecutor about the irresponsible spending of funds on water projects?

Submitted: 06/01/2020

Lapses: 07/04/2020