



Commission welcomes final agreement on water quality and access to drinking water

Brussels, 16 December 2020

The Commission welcomes the adoption of the revised Drinking Water Directive by the European Parliament in its plenary session yesterday evening. The new Directive will guarantee safer access to water for all Europeans. At the same time, it will ensure the highest standards in the world for drinking water, in line with the zero pollution ambition for a toxic-free environment announced in the [European Green Deal](#). It is based on the [proposal presented by the Commission](#) in February 2018, as a direct follow-up to the first-ever successful [Right2Water European Citizens' Initiative](#).

Commissioner for the Environment, Oceans and Fisheries, Virginijus **Sinkevičius**, said: "Access to safer drinking water and sanitation is a fundamental human right. The current health crisis made us even more aware of its vital importance. The approval of the Directive today by the Parliament sends a strong message of commitment for safer tap water for all Europeans".

The agreed text builds upon and goes even beyond the recommendations of the World Health Organisation on safety standards for drinking water. It includes provisions for controlling not only tap water but also drinking water sources and distribution systems in order to minimise the risk of the harmful impact of pollution on human health and our water resources. The recast Directive tackles emerging pollutants, such as microplastics, endocrine disruptors, as well as new types of chemicals.

The Directive introduces the obligation for Member States to improve or maintain access to safe drinking water for all, with focus on vulnerable and marginalised groups. It also foresees better access to information for citizens regarding water suppliers, concerning for example the quality and supply of drinking water in their living area. The Directive will improve consumers' confidence in drinking water from the tap, cutting waste from the use of plastic bottled water.

In addition, the new law envisages the inclusion of detailed hygiene requirements for materials in contact with drinking water and gives the European Chemicals Agency (ECHA) a key role to ensure that only safe substances may be used in products - such as pipes and taps - that are in contact with water.

Next Steps

Following today's approval by the European Parliament the revised Drinking Water Directive is now adopted. As soon as the act is signed jointly by the President of the European Parliament and the President of the Council of the European Union, it will be published in the Official Journal of the European Union and enter into force 20 days later. After the date of entry into force of this Directive, Member States have two years to comply with the revised Drinking Water Directive.

Background

Most people living in the EU already enjoy very good access to high quality drinking water, thanks in part to over 30 years of EU legislation on drinking water quality. The Commission [proposed in 2018 a revision](#) of the [Drinking Water Directive \(98/83/EC\)](#) in response to the [Right2Water European Citizens' Initiative](#). The proposal follows the [REFIT Evaluation of the Drinking Water Directive](#), it was accompanied by an [Impact Assessment](#) and is in line with [World Health Organisation recommendations](#).

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