



Public Consultation (Questionnaire): Quality of Drinking Water in the EU

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Introduction

In its Communication on the European Citizens' Initiative "Right2Water", COM(2014)177 final, the Commission announced its intention to launch an EU-wide public consultation on the Drinking Water Directive, notably in view of improving access to quality drinking water in the EU. It also invited the Member States to step up their efforts to guarantee the provision of clean, safe, and wholesome water for human consumption, in accordance with the recommendations of the World Health Organisation.

The aim of this consultation is to get a better understanding of citizens' views on the need and the possible range of actions which could be undertaken in order to improve the supply with high quality drinking water. The results of the consultation will be used as input to decide if and where the EU Drinking Water Directive 98/83/EC might need improvement.

This questionnaire also takes up other issues raised by the above-mentioned European Citizens' Initiative, for example affordability, which go beyond the scope of the current Drinking Water Directive and may need to be addressed through other EU or national instruments or initiatives.

The consultation runs from 23.06.2014 until 23.09.2014.

In addition to completing the questionnaire all stakeholders (including national authorities, international organisations, non-governmental organisations and other interested parties or individual citizens) can submit their position papers on the issues addressed in this questionnaire to the Commission services to: ENV-DRINKING-WATER@ec.europa.eu

Background

'Drinking water' covers all water intended for human consumption or other domestic purposes. The 'Drinking Water Directive' aims at the protection of human health from the adverse effects of any contamination. It ensures that water at the consumer tap is wholesome and clean. Natural mineral waters are excluded. Bottled water including natural mineral water has to satisfy the requirements of food law.

For more information, the full text of the Drinking Water Directive 98/83/EC directive is available in all official languages on:

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:31998L0083>

Further background information: Commission Report COM(2014)363 final "Synthesis Report on the Quality of Drinking Water in the EU examining the Member States' reports for the period 2008-2010 under Directive 98/83/EC" on: http://ec.europa.eu/environment/water/water-drink/reporting_en.html

Please note that the first questions are of general nature, whereas replies to question 4 onwards sometimes require prior knowledge of the Drinking Water Directive. Please feel free to answer only those relevant to you.

The estimated time to complete the questionnaire is about 15 minutes. Thank you very much for taking the time to contribute to this consultation.

Information about you

Q: I am replying as a(n):

- Individual/citizen/consumer
- Stakeholder/expert

Q: Please specify:

- Sectoral representative: Water Utilities/Providers (drinking water and sanitation)
- Non-governmental organisation (NGO)
- Other Association
- Academic/scientist
- National authority (responsible for drinking water)
- National authorities (other)
- Local/regional authority (responsible for drinking water)
- Local/regional authorities (other)
- European Institution
- International body
- Other (please specify)

Q: Please specify your sector:

- Only Drinking Water Utilities/Provider
- Only Sanitation Utilities/Provider
- Food Industry and other companies using drinking water
- Other sector (please specify) – Environmental research: science - policy advice (Scotland/UK)

Q: If responding on behalf of a(n) organisation/association/authority/company/body, please provide the name:

The James Hutton Institute

Q: Please specify your country/countries:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="radio"/> AT – Austria | <input type="radio"/> IT – Italy |
| <input type="radio"/> BE – Belgium | <input type="radio"/> LT – Lithuania |
| <input type="radio"/> BG – Bulgaria | <input type="radio"/> LU – Luxembourg |
| <input type="radio"/> CY – Cyprus | <input type="radio"/> LV – Latvia |
| <input type="radio"/> CZ – Czech Republic | <input type="radio"/> MT – Malta |
| <input type="radio"/> DE – Germany | <input type="radio"/> NL – Netherlands |
| <input type="radio"/> DK – Denmark | <input type="radio"/> PL – Poland |
| <input type="radio"/> EE – Estonia | <input type="radio"/> PT – Portugal |
| <input type="radio"/> EL – Greece | <input type="radio"/> RO – Romania |
| <input type="radio"/> ES – Spain | <input type="radio"/> SW – Sweden |
| <input type="radio"/> FI – Finland | <input type="radio"/> SI – Slovenia |
| <input type="radio"/> FR – France | <input type="radio"/> SK – Slovakia |
| <input type="radio"/> HR – Croatia | <input checked="" type="radio"/> UK – United Kingdom |
| <input type="radio"/> HU – Hungary | <input type="radio"/> Other (please specify) |
| <input type="radio"/> IE – Ireland | <input type="radio"/> UK – United |

Q: Do you live in an urbanised or a rural area?

- Urbanised
- Rural
- Don't know/Not applicable**

Q: Do you know whether your household belongs to a large water supply zone (serving more than 5000 persons) or to a small water supply zone (serving less than 5000 persons)?

- Large
- Small
- Don't know/Not applicable**

1. Your drinking water quality

These statements are designed to get an idea on the knowledge that you have on your drinking water which you are using.

Q: I am well informed about the quality of my drinking water:

- Agree**
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Don't know/not applicable

Q: I use drinking water at my home for:

| | Always | Most of the time | Rarely or Never | Don't know/ Not applicable |
|--------------------------------|--------|------------------|-----------------|-------------------------------|
| Drinking directly from the tap | ✓ | | | |
| Drinking after filtering it | | | ✓ | |
| Drinking after boiling it | ✓ | | | |
| Cooking directly from the tap | ✓ | | | |
| Cooking after filtering it | | | ✓ | |
| Washing/Personal Hygiene | ✓ | | | |

2. Access to drinking water

These statements request your opinion on how you judge the situation in the EU on issues raised by the European Citizens Initiative [Right2Water](#), in particular in relation to accessibility, affordability, acceptability (in terms of quality) of drinking water.

2.1 Accessibility

Q: Where I live, access to wholesome and clean drinking water is good:

- Agree**
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Don't know/not applicable

Q: In the EU overall, the way I see it, access to wholesome and clean drinking water is good:

- Agree**
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Don't know/not applicable

Q: Where I live, the connection to the supply network is good:

- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree**
- Disagree
- Don't know/not applicable

Q: In the EU overall, the way I see it, the connection to the supply network is good:

- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Don't know/not applicable**

Q: If you ticked disagree, please explain your reply:

Our situation in Scotland is one of a mixture of public access to supply from Scottish Water (the single national supplier) but with a substantial number of private water supplies. The prevalence and nature/security of these private supplies varies by region. In some areas bore holes are used and others surface waters with situations of single owner and domestic user, multiple domestic users with supply on their land or a third parties land, or different types of private supply used for guest houses, hotels, campsites etc.

At present the Directive (98/83/EC/1998) seems not to cover supplies <50 persons unless the supply is associated with economic activity.

2.2 Affordability

Q: Where I live, the price of drinking water (for consumers) is affordable:

- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Don't know/not applicable

Q: In the EU overall, the way I see it, the price of drinking water (for consumers) is affordable:

- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Don't Know

Q: Where I live, drinking water services (customer services, security of supply...) are good value for money:

- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Don't know

Q: In the EU overall, the way I see it, drinking water services (customer services, security of supply...) are good value for money:

- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Don't know

Q: If you ticked disagree, please explain your reply:

Not applicable

2.3 Acceptability

Q: Where I live, the quality of drinking water is good (wholesome and clean):

- Agree**
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Don't know/not applicable

Q: In the EU overall, the way I see it, the quality of drinking water is good (wholesome and clean):

- Agree**
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Don't know/not applicable

Q: Where I live, the sensation (perceived, subjective quality) of drinking water is good (i.e. wholesome as regards taste, odour, turbidity, hardness...):

- Agree**
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Don't know

Q: In the EU overall, the way I see it, the sensation (perceived, subjective quality) of drinking water is good (i.e. wholesome as regards taste, odour, turbidity, hardness...):

- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Don't know**

Q: If you ticked disagree, please explain your reply:

Not applicable

3. Threats to drinking water

Q: I consider the following pollution sources a threat to drinking water quality:

| | Agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Disagree | Don't know |
|---|-------|----------------------------|----------|------------|
| Pollution from natural sources (such as minerals) | ✓ | | | |
| Pollution from agriculture (such as pesticides, fertilisers and faecal pollution) | ✓ | | | |
| Pollution from exploration or exploitation of hydrocarbons (such as oil, shale gas etc) | | | | ✓ |
| Pollution from industrial sources (such as heavy metals, solvents, additives or other chemicals which may be hazardous) | ✓ | | | |
| Pollution from human consumption and inadequate wastewater treatment (such as ammonium, nitrates, pharmaceuticals, chlorine, detergents, or other products used in the household) | ✓ | | | |
| Substances from materials in direct contact with drinking water (such as contaminants leaching from pipes, ducts, fittings, taps...) | ✓ | | | |
| Threats to drinking water quality due to impacts of climate change (such as those caused by floods, droughts, water scarcity) | ✓ | | | |
| Other threats or other pollution sources (please specify in the following question) | | | | |

Q: Please specify other threats or sources:

Not applicable

4. Quality standards in the Drinking Water Directive

The Drinking Water Directive, introduced in 1980 and revised in 1998, regulates 48 individual microbiological, chemical, and indicator parameters with corresponding limit values.

Q: When reviewing the list of these parameters, I consider the following actions most appropriate:

| | Agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Disagree | Don't know |
|---|-------|----------------------------|----------|------------|
| No change to current regime is necessary; the current list is kept, and limit values are reflecting the latest scientific evidence (which is required by the Directive) | | ✓ | | |
| Restrict the list to a few key parameters most relevant for human health | | | ✓ | |
| Revise and extend the list of parameters, e.g. to consider new and emerging pollutants, if there are possible effects on human health and if this does not lead to a significant increase in the price of water | | | | ✓ |
| Revise and extend the list of parameters, e.g. to consider new and emerging pollutants, if there are possible effects on human health and even if this leads to a significant increase in the price of water | ✓ | | | |

Q: Please indicate other new parameters to be considered:

| | Agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Disagree | Don't know |
|---|-------|----------------------------|----------|------------|
| Faecal matter, pathogenic germs, parasites, viruses etc. which are not yet covered | ✓ | | | |
| Naturally produced toxic substances (e.g. by algae) | ✓ | | | |
| Substances used in consumer products (e.g. plasticisers, persistent organic pollutants) | ✓ | | | |
| Pharmaceutical substances including birth control substances, etc. | ✓ | | | |
| Endocrine disrupting substances | ✓ | | | |
| Other parameters (please specify in the following question) | | | | |

Q: Please specify other parameters:

Considerations should be given in a risk based approach of the likelihood of future issues for public health (and treatment infrastructure) of the wider contaminant list indicated above. My concern for whether or not these are able to be incorporated in the water pricing is around the ability of all consumers to pay or whether there would be social risks of price increases (e.g. people turning to even worse alternative supplies).

5. Monitoring and control of drinking water

Competent water authorities have to analyse and monitor drinking water to ensure its quality. The current Drinking Water Directive sets minimum frequencies for sampling and analyses and requires appropriate check and audit monitoring programmes to be established by the competent water authorities. Compliance has to be checked at the point at which drinking water emerges, therefore monitoring goes up to consumer taps. Currently, possible ways towards a 'risk-based approach' are under exploration in the EU, meaning that monitoring is intensified in case of problems, but stepped down if not really necessary. The 'risk-based approach can be managed through 'water safety plans' see WHO page: <http://www.who.int/wsportal/en/>.

Q: In relation to monitoring and control of drinking water, I consider the following action as most appropriate:

| | Agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Disagree | Don't know |
|---|-------|----------------------------|----------|------------|
| No action is necessary because the level of monitoring and control efforts is adequate | | | ✓ | |
| Monitoring and control efforts should be reduced because the costs outweigh the health benefits | | | | ✓ |
| Monitoring should be more frequent, provided this does not lead to a significant increase in the price of water | | ✓ | | |
| Monitoring should be more frequent, even if this leads to a significant increase in the price of water | | ✓ | | |
| Monitoring should be more transparent, and results should be available online | ✓ | | | |
| Others (please specify in the following question) | | | | |

Q: Please specify others:

The answers above consider the regulations need to monitor at the consumers tap. I'm not aware this is routinely carried out and only occurs when problems are reported presently. Necessarily

problems are associated with obvious issues like colouration or odour whereas more consumer risk is associated with things noticed later like microbiology or pesticides.

6. Content of consumer information

The current Drinking Water Directive already requires competent authorities to make drinking water-related information available to consumers but is not explicit about the type of information.

Q: Below you find five options reaching from simple to sophisticated levels of information. Please rank the level of importance and tick 'agree' only once, agreeing to the most appropriate level of information you would like to have:

| | Agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Disagree | Don't know |
|---|-------|----------------------------|----------|------------|
| Easily understandable information to all that drinking water quality is compliant (water quality ok) | | | | ✓ |
| Simplified information intelligible to all summarising water quality aspects (e.g. a label with colours, a flag, an index, etc) | ✓ | | | |
| Basic quality aspects (some parameters as for bottled water/mineral water) | | | ✓ | |
| All detailed information from each analysis and all parameters that are being monitored should be made available | | | ✓ | |
| All detailed information from each analysis and all parameters should be made available and it should be indicated for each parameter whether it meets the legal requirements | | | ✓ | |
| Others (please specify in the following question) | | | | |

Q: Please specify other aspects the consumer should be informed of:

Not applicable

7. Ways to inform consumers

EU countries have to ensure that up-to-date information of water quality is made available to consumers. Different practices can be found throughout the EU (see inter alia the national web pages: http://ec.europa.eu/environment/water/water-drink/national_info_en.html).

Q: I consider that the following action should be taken to inform consumers:

| | Agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Disagree | Don't know |
|--|-------|----------------------------|----------|------------|
| No action is necessary because the current information provisions are adequate | | | | ✓ |
| More up-to-date information should be made available online | ✓ | | | |
| All monitored up-to-date information should be made available online | ✓ | | | |
| New information tools (e.g. SMS, Apps, etc) should be used more actively to disseminate drinking water information where necessary | | ✓ | | |
| In addition to information on my water supply, dissemination and inter-linkage of information to national or Europe-wide information provisions should be enhanced, up to visualisation tools using spatial data | | | | ✓ |
| Others (please specify in the following question) | | | | |

Q: Please specify other information ways:

Not applicable

8. Actions in case of problems

In case of failures to meet the quality standards, Member States are required by the current Directive to take remedial action. This action depends on the extent to which the relevant parametric value has been exceeded and the potential danger to human health, and include actions to restore as soon as possible the drinking water quality, to impose restrictions on the use of supplies, or to use alternative supplies.

Q: I consider that EU legislation should strive for the following actions:

| | Agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Disagree | Don't know |
|--|-------|----------------------------|----------|------------|
| No additional actions should be taken because the current provisions are adequate | | | | ✓ |
| The current regime for taking remedial action is too restrictive and overly protective | | | | ✓ |
| Water supplies should be closed whenever failures are found, and free supply of drinking water by bottles, containers, tankers should be granted | ✓ | | | |
| Remedial action should be supplemented by additional preventive action, i.e. by antagonising critical trends, long before a near miss or failure | ✓ | | | |
| Requirements for prompt notification of consumers in case of failures using modern communication tools should be introduced | ✓ | | | |
| Others (please specify in the following question) | | | | |

Q: Please specify other information ways:

In terms of the answers noting agreement above:

- I would believe that closure of affected supplies takes place presently on a risk basis and that this is acceptable.
- Catchment management should be part of remedial action (as part of a treatment train approach backed up with engineering infrastructure where appropriate).

9. Derogations

The current Directive allowed Member States to grant derogations for individual water supplies for up to nine years provided such derogation does not constitute a potential danger to human health.

Q: For the future, I consider that the possibility of granting derogations should be regulated in the following way:

| | Agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Disagree | Don't know |
|--|-------|----------------------------|----------|------------|
| No action is necessary because the status quo for derogations should be maintained | ✓ | | | |
| Derogations should not be allowed at all, even if this may require alternative supplies which may lead to higher costs | | | ✓ | |
| The current derogations should be extended to be allowed for a further transition period | | | ✓ | |
| A new derogations regime should be introduced to a limited extent and under strict conditions | | | | ✓ |
| Others (please specify in the following question) | | | | |

Q: Please specify others:

Not applicable

10. Further aspects

The current EU legislation allows for additional actions to be taken at national level. Are there aspects which should be subject to EU rules in relation to drinking water?

Q: For the future, I consider that other aspects or additional action should be taken at EU level, in particular the following:

| | Agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Disagree | Don't know |
|--|-------|----------------------------|----------|------------|
| Drinking water regulations should cover the entire supply process and not be limited to quality standards at the tap | ✓ | | | |
| Drinking water treatment should be regulated similar to food production installations referring to the hazard analysis and critical control points (HACCP) preventive approach | | | | ✓ |
| Further provisions as regards extended responsibility and liability of water suppliers or market surveillance/inspection regimes should be taken into account | | | | ✓ |
| Materials in contact with drinking water (pipes, ducts, valves, fittings, filters, taps...) should be regulated in a more harmonised way | ✓ | | | |
| Aspects of water use and water re-use in households and food industry should be addressed explicitly | ✓ | | | |
| Additional incentives to save drinking water should be introduced | ✓ | | | |
| Other aspects should be addressed (please specify in the following question) | ✓ | | | |

Q: Please specify other aspects:

Further evaluation of private water supplies should be made to address if the drinking water directive should bring these under its control in part/full.

I am not advocating that failed private supplies are made mandatory to be brought under the control of water companies as people feel a pride and protective about their private supply, but recognise that a system of evaluation may be necessary once evidence for risk and realised health risks associated with private supplies are understood.

Q: If you have any additional comments, please provide them below (max 1000 characters):

Not applicable