

Revision of the ‘Drinking Water Directive’

16 May 2018

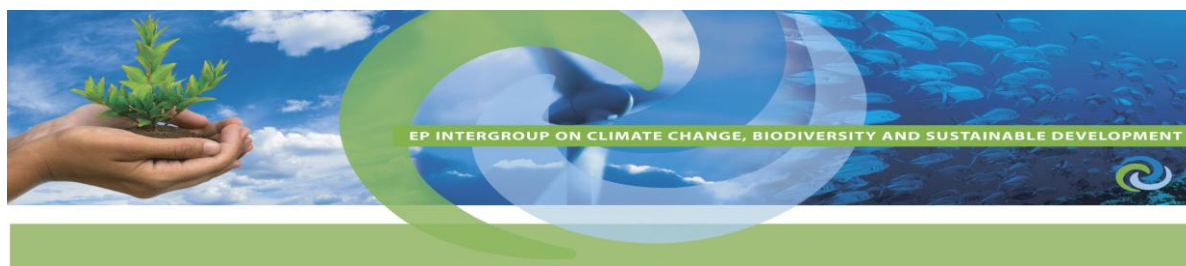
Committee of the Regions, Brussels

This event was hosted by **MEP Michel Dantin**, Vice-Chair of the EP Intergroup on “*Climate Change, Biodiversity, and Sustainable Development*”, and brought together key stakeholders in the revision of the Drinking Water Directive.

The panel included:

- **Daniel Calleja Crespo**, DG Environment Director General, European Commission
- **Matjaž Malgaj**, DG Environment Head of Marine Environment and Water Industry Unit, European Commission
- **Mark Weinmeister**, Committee of the Regions (CoR) Rapporteur for the revision of the Drinking Water Directive, Hessian State Secretary for European Affairs
- **Kalin Iliev**, Bulgarian Presidency, Head of Sector, Environment and Waters, Waste management, Biodiversity, Air quality
- **Dr. Claudia Castell-Exner**, EurEau Vice-President
- **Helena Norin**, EUROCITIES, Chair of the Climate and Environment Board of Gothenburg
- **Dr. Franz Fiala**, The European Consumer Voice in Standardisation (ANEC), Chair of the Group on Sustainability





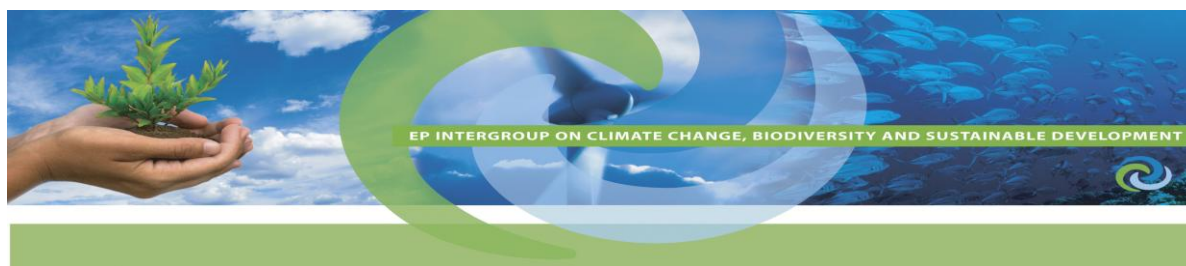
On 1 February 2018 the European Commission adopted a proposal for a revised Drinking Water Directive to improve the quality of drinking water and provide greater access and information to citizens. The proposal for modernizing the 20-year old Drinking Water Directive (98/83/EC) comes as a result of the REFIT evaluation, the implementation of the Commission's response to the European Citizens' Initiative 'Right2Water' and as a contribution to meeting the targets of the Sustainable Development Goals.

As a result, the event aimed at highlighting the essential importance of high quality, safe and sufficient drinking water for our daily life. This meeting therefore gathered policy-makers and stakeholders to discuss its revision. The key partners provided input on how their organisations are involved in the revision of the Drinking Water Directive and what is needed to further enhance the European Commission proposal.

MEP Michel Dantin, Rapporteur for the European Parliament on the revision of the Drinking Water Directive, opened the conference welcoming a full-house at the Committee of the Regions (CoR). During his welcome remarks, Mr. Dantin stressed that high quality, safe drinking water is essential for public health and well-being, informing the public about the significant importance of the revision of this Directive. In addition, Mr. Dantin mentioned that his first draft report had been published on 15 May, while at the moment the work with the shadow MEPs is ongoing.

Daniel Calleja Crespo from DG Environment presented the European Commission proposal, welcoming also MEP Mr. Dantin's work on the file. "Tap water in the EU is clean" and that is a key result of successful EU policies, according to Mr. Calleja-Crespo, who also stressed the need for the Drinking Water Directive revision to strategically adapt to current risks (i.e. shortage of water) and updated parameters. All in all, the Commission's proposal covers the complete supply chain and aims at safeguarding citizens' protection, EU water industry's leadership role, transparency, simplification of procedures, contribution to circular economy, plastic waste reduction, alongside contributing to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (in particular SDG6).

After that, **Mark Weinmeister**, Committee of the Regions Rapporteur for this file, presented his views on the revision of the Drinking Water Directive. Moreover, his opinion on "the quality of water intended for human consumption" was adopted in the CoR Plenary later the same day. According to Mr. Weinmeister, "the right to water is a basic right for all Europeans", while the "respected expertise of WHO should be applied" to the Commission proposal. Transparency is an essential element that needs to be stressed as well, while more information needs to be provided to the people. Last but not least, Mr. Weinmeister stated that the issue of microplastics needs to be further addressed, as microplastics need to be measured and limited within the revision of the Drinking Water Directive.



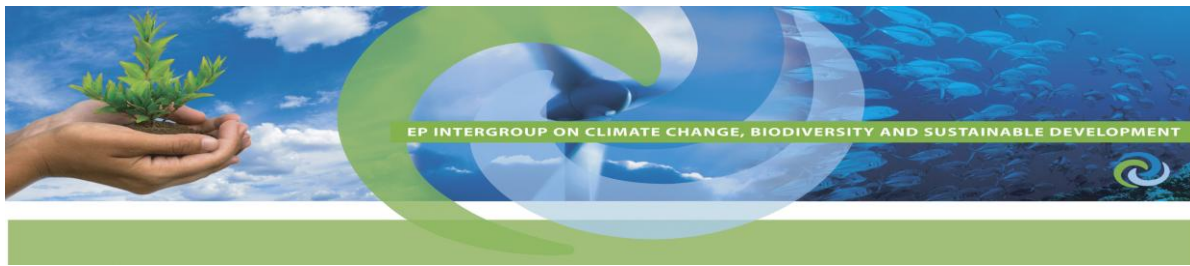
Kalin Iliev, Head of Environment and Waters, Waste management, Biodiversity and Air quality represented the Bulgarian Presidency of the Council of the EU, while welcoming the developments on the file. Mr. Iliev emphasized that the current system regarding materials in contact with water needs to be further discussed. Towards this direction, it was also mentioned that the Council will debate water contact materials on 25 June.

After that, **EurEau Vice-President Dr. Claudia Castell-Exner** took the floor noting that “various elements of the Commission’s proposal need improvement, in order to make the Drinking Water Directive legally sound and implementable in an efficient and effective way”. Furthermore, it is important to follow the WHO recommendations more closely, re-include the indicator parameters and maintain the monitoring frequencies for drinking water, according to Dr. Castell-Exner. While this Directive is of great importance for European water services to provide healthy and affordable drinking water to consumers, Dr. Castell-Exner finally highlighted that “access, affordability and availability are all dimensions of the human right to water”.

Representing Eurocities, **Helena Norin, Chair of the Climate and Environment Board of Gothenburg**, stressed the need to support the use of tap water, alongside access to basic water services. From Ms. Norin’s point of view, citizens’ health and safety need to be prioritized within the revision of the Drinking Water Directive. Besides, the directive should contain clearer guiding provisions, while exchange of knowledge should be further reinforced. Towards this direction, Ms. Norin highlighted that Gothenburg became the 20th city to sign the Porto Declaration on the Urban Water Agenda 2030, committing to the promotion of sustainable urban water management.

Dr. Franz Fiala from the European Consumer Voice in Standardisation (ANEC) made a strong statement, mentioning that with this proposal “the Commission has ignored 25 years of discussions and expertise”, regarding materials in contact with drinking water. In his view, standardisation is not the right instrument to establish or to harmonise existing performance requirements. Instead, Dr. Fiala suggested that the Commission goes either for an incorporation of regulatory requirements for these materials in the DWD making use of Delegated Acts, or develops a separate piece of regulation, following the example of materials in contact with food. In addition, Dr. Fiala voiced the issue of emerging pollutants seriously affecting drinking water quality. Finally, during his intervention, the need for significant changes was stressed, including monitoring obligations with respect to emerging pollutants, as well as the addition of quality aspects not related to health and safety.

The presentations were then followed by a lively debate with the audience, which indicated the need to continue to work on enhancing this dialogue and calling for further partnerships. During the debate session, **Mr. Matjaž Malgaj**, DG Environment Head of Marine Environment and Water Industry Unit, was the first to take the floor, highlighting the



advantages of the Commission's proposal, as well as underlining the need for predictable framework to ensure investments needed for sustainable water supply over the decades to come. In the context of discussion on materials in contact with water, Mr. Malgaj underlined that the proposal provides a stable basis and that an environment legal basis by its nature means that EU Member States can establish stricter regulations. **Mr. Calleja Crespo** mentioned that the revision of the Drinking Water Directive will have positive impacts on energy issues and climate change, as its focus area is cross-cutting. In addition, DG Environment Director General underlined that the Commission is collaborating closely with WHO, ensuring water quality and consumers' health. Regarding the latter, **Dr. Castell-Exner** mentioned that the protection of human health should be prioritized, therefore EU-wide hygienic requirements should be developed for materials in contact with drinking water, within the scope of the Drinking Water Directive.

In his closing remarks, **MEP Mr. Dantin** reiterated the importance of this topic. He welcomed the proposal of the European Commission and stressed that the Directive text has to be more pragmatic in its implementation and clear in terms of responsibility-sharing between all the stakeholders, especially between national & local authorities and the water suppliers. From Mr. Dantin's point of view, the expertise of WHO is a robust basis, that cannot be questioned. The role of Member States is also crucial in implementing correctly and efficiently the upcoming revised text, in particular when it comes to monitoring the parameters of quality of the drinking water at national level. Access to water for all, at an affordable price, is also a priority for Mr. Dantin, who considers that increased access to drinking water should be guaranteed in Europe, in accordance to the subsidiarity and proportionality principles. Mr. Dantin finally stressed the importance of access to understandable, relevant and up to date information on drinking water for consumers. Regarding the following steps of the revision of the Drinking Water Directive, Mr. Dantin informed the audience that the file will be debated in ENVI Committee on 7 June, following a deadline for amendments for the members of the Committee on 13 June. The report will then be voted on 10 September in the ENVI Committee, while the Plenary vote is expected for October 2018.

[The presentations and meeting documents are available here.](#)