

Urban wastewater treatment. Recast

2022/0345(COD) - 10/04/2024 - Text adopted by Parliament, 1st reading/single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 481 votes to 79, with 26 abstentions, a legislative resolution on the proposal for a directive of the European Parliament and of the Council concerning urban wastewater treatment (recast).

The European Parliament's position adopted at first reading under the ordinary legislative procedure amends the proposal as follows:

Subject matter

This proposed Directive:

- lays down rules on the **collection, treatment, and discharge of urban wastewater**, to protect the environment and human health, in line with the One Health approach, while progressively reducing greenhouse gas emissions to sustainable levels, improving the energy balance of urban wastewater collection and treatment activities and contributing to the transition towards a circular economy;
- lays down rules on access to sanitation for all, on transparency of the urban wastewater sector, on the regular surveillance of public health relevant parameters in urban wastewaters and on the implementation of the polluter-pay principle.

Collecting systems

Member States should ensure that all agglomerations of 2 000 p.e. and above are provided with collecting systems. Agglomerations between 1 000 and 2 000 p.e. should comply with the requirements of paragraph 1 by 31 December 2035.

Member States with a large number of small agglomerations affected by the Directive's new urban wastewater collection and treatment requirements for agglomerations between 1 000 and 2 000 p.e. should be allowed to set longer deadlines for compliance with these new requirements in their first national implementation plan. Due to their specific situation, Romania, Bulgaria and Croatia should set longer deadlines for compliance with the new requirements.

Individual systems

Where it can be demonstrated that the establishment of a centralised urban waste water collection system or connection to a collecting system would not be in the interest of the environment or human health, would not be technically feasible or would entail excessive costs, and only in such cases, Member States should be authorised to use individual systems for the collection, storage and/or treatment of urban waste water, provided that such systems achieve the same level of environmental and health protection as secondary and tertiary treatment.

Integrated urban wastewater management plans

By **31 December 2033**, Member States should ensure that an integrated urban wastewater management plan is established for drainage areas of agglomerations of **100 000 p.e. and above**.

Integrated urban wastewater management plans should be reviewed at least every six years after their establishment and updated where necessary.

Secondary treatment

Member States should ensure that discharges from urban wastewater treatment plants in agglomerations of between **1 000 and 2 000 p.e.** comply with the requirements for secondary treatment by **31 December 2035** at the latest. Discharges of urban waste water may be subject to less stringent treatment when they are discharged into: (i) waters located in high mountain regions (at an altitude of more than 1 500 metres); (ii) deep marine waters in the case of discharges of waste water from agglomerations with a p.e. of less than 150 000 located in sparsely populated outermost regions; (iii) water from small agglomerations of between 1 000 and 2 000 p.e. located in cold climate regions.

Tertiary treatment

Tertiary treatment (i.e. elimination of nitrogen and phosphorus) should be applied in 30 % of treatment plants of 150 000 p.e. or more by 31 December 2033 and in 70% of treatment plants by 31 December 2036. By 31 December 2039, tertiary treatment should be applied in all treatment plants of 150 000 p.e. or more. All treatment plants of 10 000 p.e. or more should be covered from 2045.

By derogation, Member States may decide that an individual urban wastewater treatment plant situated in an area included in the list of areas in their territory which are subject to eutrophication should not be subject to the requirements laid down in the Directive if it can be shown that the minimum percentage reduction in the overall load entering all urban waste water treatment plants in that area reaches:

- at least **75 %** for total phosphorus and at least **75 %** for total nitrogen from the date of entry into force of this Directive;
- **82.5 %** for total phosphorus and **80 %** for total nitrogen by 31 December 2039;
- **87.5 %** for total phosphorus and **82.5 %** for total nitrogen by 31 December 2045.

Quaternary treatment

Member States should ensure that discharges from urban wastewater treatment plants treating a load of 150 000 p.e. and above meet the relevant requirements for quaternary treatment of urban wastewater before discharge into receiving waters by: (a) 31 December 2033 for discharges from 20 % of these urban wastewater treatment plants; (b) 31 December 2039 for discharges from 60 % of these urban wastewater treatment plants; (c) **31 December 2045** for all discharges from these urban wastewater treatment plants.

Quaternary treatment should first focus on organic micropollutants, which represent a significant part of the pollution.

Extended producer responsibility

The directive introduces extended responsibility for producers of medicinal products for human use and cosmetic products, to cover the costs of quaternary treatment (the elimination of micropollutants from urban wastewater). They should cover at least 80% of the costs, which will be supplemented by national funding.

Member States should promote the **reuse** of treated wastewater from urban wastewater treatment plants, particularly in areas subject to water stress.

Lastly, Member States should take preventive measures to limit the possibility of intentionally or unintentionally discharged **microplastics** ending up in urban wastewater and sludge.