Quality of water intended for human consumption. Drinking Water Directive

1995/0010(SYN) - 19/12/1997 - Council position

In its common position, the Council has adopted a large number of amendments (39 in total) proposed by the European Parliament. The discussions centred on parameters regarding lead and provisions concerning it. The main changes or renovations introduced by the Council relate to the following points: 1) Notion of 'wholesome and clean': because of the broadening of the qualification for water intended for human consumption (wholesome and clean), the Council defined the concept by adding that the water must be free from any substances constituting a potential danger to human health; 2) Definition of 'domestic distribution system': this definition has been modified so as to apply to private premises only while excluding premises and establishments where water is supplied to the public such as schools, hospitals and restaurants. Appropriate measures must be taken to reduce or eliminate the risk of non-compliance with parametric values and ensure that consumers are informed or advised on any possible additional remedial action they should take; 3) The lead parameter: the Council must manage to reach agreement on the following aspects of this controversial issue: - a parametric value and timetable are accepted as in the Commission proposal; - an adequate sampling method at the tap which is representative of a weekly average value ingested by consumers needs to be elaborated and added to the directive; Member States must take account of the occurrence of peak levels that may cause adverse affects on human health; 4) Derogations and exceptional circumstances: the common position limits in time with derogations envisaged under the general scheme and the prolongation of the timescale in exceptional circumstances, which must not exceed three years; 5) Transparency: the Council has systematically adopted provisions seeking to ensure that consumers or populations concerned are properly informed and advised; 6) Quality standards and parametric values: the Council has: - changed some of the names of the parameters to render them more precise (e.g. enterococci, clostridium perfringens) and added certain parameters; - set tighter values, e.g. for acrylamide, epichlorohydrine, tri- and tetrachloroethane; - changed the standard for antinomy, boron, nitrite at the tap and PAH; - added the WHO guideline as an interim guideline for bromate; - replaced bromodichloromethane and chloroform by the sum of 4 THMs. Finally, to ensure that monitoring results are reliable and accurate, the Council made the minimum sampling frequencies more proportional to the volume of water supply and entered a provision on quality control for laboratories. As far as analytical methods are concerned and where at all possible, the Council introduced internationally-accepted ISO/CEN standards.