Quality of water intended for human consumption. Drinking Water Directive

1995/0010(SYN) - 10/08/1994

PREVIOUS COMMUNITY LEGISLATION:

- Directive 75/440/EEC (OJ No. L 194, 25.07.1975, p. 26) concerning the quality required of surface water intended for the abstraction of drinking water in the Member States; covers surface water intended for human consumption and supplied by distribution networks for public use. National differences in respect of these quality requirements can lead to distortion of competition, thereby having an adverse effect on the Common Market.
- Directive 79/869/EEC of 9 October 1979 (OJ No. L 271, 29.10.1979, p. 44) concerning the methods of measurement and frequencies of sampling and analysis of surface water intended for the abstraction of drinking water in the Member States; contains common reference methods for determining the parameters of analyses carried out by the Member States.
- Directive 80/778/EEC of 15 July 1980 (OJ No. L 2290, 30.08.1980, p. 11) relating to the quality of water intended for human consumption. This is defined as water supplied for consumption or used in food processing for the manufacture, processing or preserving of foodstuffs or which affects the wholesomeness of the finished product. The maximum value for nitrate concentrations, for example, is set at 50 mg/l. If this value is exceeded, the water must be treated or mixed with clean water until the maximum is reached. The main causes of nitrate pollution are farms and domestic waste water.
- Directive 91/676/EEC of 12 December 1991 (OJ No. L 375, 31.12.1991, p. 1) concerning the protection of waters against pollution caused by nitrates from agricultural sources. Although the use of fertilizers and dung containing nitrates is essential in farming, excess concentrations are an environmental risk. Agricultural policy should therefore take greater account of such risks. Member States must identify waters at risk, and establish action programmes to reduce pollution of waters from nitrogen compounds, and to submit regular reports to the Commission on implementation of their programmes.
- Directive 91/692/EEC (OJ No. L 377, 31.12.1991, p. 48): new test methods and the obligation to submit annual reports to the Commission (see also the Commission Decision concerning questionnaires relating to directives in the water sector: 92/446/EEC (OJ No. L 247, 27.08.1992, p. 10)).

PREVIOUS POSITION OF EP:

- own-initiative report on lead in drinking water (Doc. A-206/87, OJ No. C 94, 11.04.1988, p. 158),
- opinion on the Commission proposal (COM(88) 752) on methods of measurement and frequency of analysis of surface water (OJ No. C 158, 26.06.1989, p.489) which led to the amended Commission proposal (COM(89) 478; OJ No. C 300, 29.11.1989, p. 13),
- resolution on plant protection products pursuant to Rule 61 of the Rules of Procedure, B3-1736/93 (OJ No. C 20, 24.01.1994, p. 30) in which Parliament called for existing standards for the quality of drinking water to be upheld and for withdrawal of Com (93) 117 (which has since been withdrawn).

SITUATION IN THE MEMBER STATES: In accordance with the Commission's Eleventh Annual Report on Monitoring the Application of Community Law (1993) (COM(94) 500, p. 90) the quality of drinking water has improved in Luxembourg and Germany. There are still problems in Italy and the Netherlands. Following a judgement by the Court (Case 337/89, 1992 ECR, p. I-6103), the British authorities have announced measures to improve the situation, although the process will not be complete

until 1995. Despite the efforts of the national authorities, the quality of drinking water in the new Länder has not reached the desired standard. France has been sent a reasoned opinion since two administrative circulars have permitted very high concentrations of pesticides in drinking water.