Quality of water intended for human consumption. Drinking Water Directive

1995/0010(SYN) - 04/01/1995 - Legislative proposal

The proposal seeks to completely revise the "drinking water" directive (80/778/EEC) with a view to updating it in the light of technical progress. The revised directive defines the general parameters considered essential in order to guarantee the quality of drinking water and the consumer's health, while giving Member States the possibility of adding secondary parameters if they so wish. - The Commission proposes to reduce the number of compulsory parameters from 67 to 48. 13 new parameters have been added in order to take account of progress in scientific knowledge. - The revised parametric values apply to lead, nitrates and pesticides: . for pesticides and nitrates, the parametric values will be maintained at current levels as a precautionary measure (0.1 microgramme per litre for each pesticide); . the lead content will be reduced from 50 to 10 microgrammes per litre, an 80% reduction which corresponds to the quality recommendations of the WHO. A period of 15 years should be allowed for complying with the new parameter, in order to enable Member States to gradually make the investments needed in order to replace lead pipes and fittings. The Member States will also be able to decide on the speed at which pipes are replaced in private buildings and may postpone financial implementation if they so wish. - The proposal gives the Member States a flexible framework which will allow them to intervene if the values set in the directive are unexpectedly exceeded. It also guarantees suitable public information in such cases. The Member States are required to give preference where possible to preventive action. - The Commission proposes to make restrictions or a ban by Member States on the free movement of water for human consumption which complies with the minimum values prescribed in the directive illegal. - As far as systems for monitoring water are concerned, the Commission proposes a new series of minimum requirements which will allow Member States to adapt the extent and nature of controls to local conditions.