Quality of water intended for human consumption. Drinking Water Directive

1995/0010(SYN) - 03/11/1998 - Final act

PURPOSE: the protection of human health from adverse effects of any contamination of water intended for human consumption by ensuring that it is wholesome and clean.

COMMUNITY MEASURE: Council Directive 98/83/EC on the quality of water intended for human consumption.

CONTENT: The Directive seeks to simplify, consolidate and update Directive 80/778/EEC in the light of scientific and technical progress and with account being taken of the subsidiarity principle. Experience gained from implementing Directive 80/778/EEC has shown that it is necessary to create an appropriately flexible and transparent legal framework for Member States to address failures to meet standards relating to the production and distribution of water. The Directive also takes into consideration the new scientific findings of the WHO concerning the quality of drinking water and the opinion of the Commission's Scientific Advisory Committee to examine the toxicity and ecotoxicity of chemical compounds. In comparison with the existing Directive, the number of quality parameters has been reduced so that the only ones retained at Community level are those which are essential to guarantee a high level of health protection.

Member States are required to take the necessary measures to ensure that water intended for human consumption is wholesome and clean and, thus, free from any micro-organisms and parasites and any substances which, in numbers or in concentrations, constitute a potential danger to human health. Member States are also required to take all necessary measures to ensure that regular monitoring of the quality of water intended for human consumption is carried out in order to check that the water available to consumers meets the requirements of this Directive and, in particular, the parametric values set in accordance with Art. 5. Samples should be taken so that they are representative of the quality of the water consumed throughout the year. Member States are obliged to ensure that any failure to meet the parametric values set in accordance with Art. 5 is immediately investigated in order to identify the cause. The Member States have to take the necessary remedial action as soon as possible to restore its quality. Whether or not any failure to meet the parametric values has occurred, Member States shall ensure that any supply of water intended for human consumption which constitutes a potential danger to human health is prohibited or its use restricted or such other action is taken as is necessary to protect human health. In such cases, consumers shall be promptly informed thereof and given the necessary advice. Member States may provide for derogations from the parametric values set out in Annex I, Part B, or set in accordance with Art. 5(3), up to a maximum value to be determined by them, provided no derogation constitutes a potential danger to human health and provided that the supply of water intended for human consumption in the area concerned cannot otherwise be maintained by any other reasonable means. Derogations shall be limited to as short a time as possible and shall not exceed three years. The most important change from the existing Directive is the reduction from 50 to 10 micrograms/litre (g/l) of the maximum lead concentration in drinking water. The value applies to a sample of water intended for human consumption obtained by anadequate sampling method at the tap and taken so as to be representative of a weekly average value ingested by consumers. Member States must take account of the occurrence of peak levels that may cause adverse affects on human health. The parametric value for lead from five years after the entry into force of this Directive until 15 years after its entry into force is 25g/l.

ENTRY INTO FORCE: 25/12/1998.

DEADLINE FIXED FOR TRANSPOSITION: 25/12/2000.