Pollution, public health: quality of bathing water (repeal. Directive 76/160/EEC)

2002/0254(COD) - 04/01/2005 - Commission communication on Council's position

This proposal has been discussed under three Presidencies and the major impediment to achieving agreement has always been the stringency of the water quality standards. A significant number of Member States were concerned that the Commission's original proposal was unrealistic and that benefits in terms of improvements to public health would have been disproportionate to the costs.

The Commission would clearly have preferred to maintain the quality standards set out in its original proposal. However, the Commission is also anxious to ensure that the original Directive from 1976 is updated to: bring in more effective approaches to the management of bathing issues; better provisions for providing information to the public and improve monitoring regimes focused on the real health risks.

The Commission considers that the common position represents a significant improvement on the arrangements under the existing directive and can therefore support it. The Commission recognizes that there are outstanding concerns relating to the level of protection afforded by the new standards, particularly in freshwaters and is committed to address these concerns as part of a shared cost action under the 6thFramework Programme.