



Position of the
International Association of Waterworks in the Rhine Basin (IAWR)
concerning the Public Consultation to inform the Fitness Check of the EU Water Framework
Directive and its associated Directives

IAWR acts as an umbrella organisation for the following organisations and their members:

- ARW - *Arbeitsgemeinschaft Rhein-Wasserwerke e.V.*, (Association of Rhine Waterworks),
- AWBR – *Arbeitsgemeinschaft Wasserwerke Bodensee – Rhein* (Association of Waterworks – Lake Constance/Rhine) and
- RIWA - *Vereniging van Rivierwaterbedrijven* (Dutch Association of River Waterworks)

These organisations represent 120 water utilities in the six countries along the Rhine River: Austria, Switzerland, Liechtenstein, France, Germany and the Netherlands. Roughly 30 million people living in this area depend on the river Rhine, its tributaries, the lakes and the groundwater in its catchment area for the provision of drinking water. IAWR takes responsibility for the sustainable management of these water resources. The aim of the IAWR is to protect the river Rhine, its tributaries the lakes and the groundwater along the Rhine valley against pollution in order to allow drinking water supply using natural treatment methods only.

In this position paper IAWR reflects on the Public Consultation in the context of the Fitness Check of the EU Water Framework Directive (WFD) and its associated directives. The drinking water resources are of highest value for consumers today and particularly for future generations, which indicates that their effective protection is of priority importance. The current protection of drinking water resources is not sufficient and has to be considerably improved if drinking water resources are to continue to provide good quality water for future generations, in line with recital 1 which states that water is a heritage which must be protected, defended and treated as such.

To achieve this goal, the WFD as the central instrument needs to be continued after 2027 and the use of water resources for drinking water supply needs to have priority. Furthermore, IAWR would like to address two main points:

1. higher prioritisation for protection of drinking water resources, and
2. more focus on substances which are relevant for drinking water production

Higher prioritisation for protection of drinking water resources

IAWR regrets that the Environmental Quality Standards Directive (EQSD) and the Groundwater Directive do hardly list any drinking water relevant substances and do not provide any water quality standards related to the use of surface and groundwater as resource for drinking water supply. Substances which are (very) mobile and (very) persistent can pass purification steps in both waste water treatments and within the process of the production of drinking water. If those substances also have toxicological effects/impact, they can have an impact directly or indirectly on human health and the environment. IAWR would like to point out that article 191 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union¹ and recital 11 of the Water Framework Directive (WFD), the common environmental policy should "*(...) be based on the precautionary principle and on the principles that preventive action should be taken, environmental damage should, as a priority, be rectified at source and that the polluter should pay (...)*". Therefore, IAWR advocates:

- to follow the priority steps targeting the protection of the drinking water resources, in the following order
 1. prevent that pollution and risks are generated,
 2. prevent that pollution is introduced in the environment,
 3. prevent that pollution can reach drinking water resources, and
 4. install extra purification steps, mix polluted and unpolluted resources and/or reallocate drinking water resources.
- more coherence between the EQSD, the WFD, the Groundwater Directive (GWD) and the Drinking Water Directive (DWD);
- to make the Strategic approach to pharmaceuticals in the environment a priority;

¹ [Official Journal of the European Union, C 83/47, 30 March 2010](#)

- an approach for preventing water pollution by Persistent, Mobile and Toxic (PMT) and very Persistent, very Mobile (vPvM) substances which are registered under EU legislation and to introduce EQS and Groundwater Quality Standards for PMT and vPvM;
- implementation of the water protection objectives in Common Agricultural Practice and finance water protection measures using agricultural funding;
- systematic review of Common Agricultural Policy, REACH and EU regulations for placing pesticides, biocides and pharmaceuticals on the market in regard to their contribution to objectives of WFD;
- the legal obligation to implement measures specifically for the protection of drinking water resources according to article 7 of the WFD in the River Basin Management Plans and Programs of Measures.

More focus on substances which are relevant for drinking water production

IAWR recognises that the implementation of the WFD and EQSD have helped to end water quality issues for some drinking water relevant substances in the past such as alachlor, atrazine, cadmium, chlorpyrifos, diuron, isoproturon and simazine. However, currently there is a considerable number of other substances emerging which can exhibit a great risk for the production of drinking water. Therefore, IAWR welcomes the proposal by UBA titled '*Protecting the sources of our drinking water - A revised proposal for implementing criteria and an assessment procedure to identify Persistent, Mobile and Toxic (PMT) and very Persistent, very Mobile (vPvM) substances registered under REACH*². The use of PMT/vPvM-criteria within REACH shall contribute towards better protection of surface and groundwater used as resource for drinking water. IAWR, just like UBA, supports the approach of prevention and precaution to minimise and eventually stop emissions of drinking water relevant substances into the environment. In the light of reaching the goals of article 7 of the WFD we would like to strengthen:

- to give more attention to substances of emerging concern; information is often limited for these substances yet necessary to assess possible risks for drinking water. For precautionary reasons it is therefore advised to set a guideline value, signalling value or trigger value for anthropogenic substances which do not yet have an EQS;
- to keep the ban on deterioration and to set effective enforcement on this ban as well as to implement sanction mechanisms to ensure non-deterioration;
- to meet the expectations of the European Parliament which "calls on the Commission and the Member States to ensure that the 'polluter pays' principle is fully implemented and effectively enforced as regards the protection of water resources" from pesticides on 12 February 2019³.

All EU legislation for placing substances on the market should consider drinking water relevance as a criterion, such as:

- Regulation (EU) 1107/2009 concerning the placing of plant protection products on the market;
- The Biocidal Products Regulation (BPR, Regulation (EU) 528/2012).

If there are any questions or further discussions necessary, do not hesitate to contact the IAWR. We would be very interested in supporting the development of the WFD by our contribution at any time.

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² <https://www.umweltbundesamt.de/publikationen/protecting-the-sources-of-our-drinking-water-from>

³ [P8_TA\(2019\)0082](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32019R0082)/European Parliament resolution on the implementation of Directive 2009/128/EC on the sustainable use of pesticides