

Urban wastewater treatment. Recast

2022/0345(COD) - 05/10/2023 - Text adopted by Parliament, 1st reading/single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 420 votes to 62, with 84 abstentions, amendments to the proposal for a directive of the European Parliament and of the Council concerning urban wastewater treatment (recast).

The matter was referred back to the committee responsible for inter-institutional negotiations.

Subject matter

This Directive should:

- lay down rules on the collection, treatment, and discharge of urban wastewater, to protect the environment and health, in accordance with the One Health approach, while progressively reducing greenhouse gas emissions and improving the energy balance of urban wastewater collection and treatment activities while contributing to the transition towards a circular economy;

- lay down rules on access to sanitation for all, on transparency of the urban wastewater sector and on the regular surveillance of public health relevant parameters in urban wastewaters, and through integrated wastewater management planning it aims to increase synergies with climate change adaptation and urban ecosystem restoration action.

Collections systems

By 31 December 2032, Member States should ensure that all agglomerations with a population equivalent (p.e.) of between **750 and 2 000** are equipped with collection systems. In addition, Member States should take steps to ensure that the competent authorities assess the levels of waste water leakage and associated emissions on their territory and of the potential to reduce such leakage.

Member States should establish minimum requirements based on guidance provided by the Commission within 24 months of the entry into force of this Directive on the design, operation, and maintenance of **individual systems** across the Union and should establish the requirements for the regular inspections.

Integrated urban wastewater management plans

Integrated urban wastewater management plans, including the specification of parts completed and elements yet to be put in place, should be made available to the Commission on request within three months of their publication. The Commission should take appropriate action regarding the integrated urban wastewater management plans established by Member States, in the event that such plans do not include at least the elements set out in Annex V.

Member States should: (i) aim at increasing green space in urban areas in order to reduce storm water overflows based on natural solutions; (ii) ensure that integrated urban wastewater management plans are reviewed every five years after their establishment and updated where necessary.

Tertiary treatment

By 31 December 2038, Member States should ensure that all urban wastewater treatment plants treating a load of 100 000 p.e. and above are subject to tertiary treatment.

By way of derogation, Member States may decide that an individual urban waste water treatment plant situated in an area included in the list of areas in their territory which are subject to eutrophication should not be subject to the requirements laid down in the Directive if it can be shown that the minimum percentage reduction in the overall load entering all urban waste water treatment plants in that area reaches:

- **90%** for total phosphorus and **75%** for total nitrogen by 31 December 2035;
- **93%** for total phosphorus and **80%** for total nitrogen by 31 December 2040. Days during which the effluent temperature falls below **12 °C** are not relevant for the calculation of nitrogen removal.

Quaternary treatment

All urban wastewater treatment plants of **150 000 p.e. and above** should provide quaternary treatment, as those facilities represent a significant share of micro-pollutant discharges in the environment. For agglomerations of between 35 000 p.e. and 150 000 p.e., Member States should be required to apply quaternary treatment to areas identified as sensitive to pollution with micro-pollutants based on clear criteria.

Extended producer responsibility

Members considered that extended producer responsibility should be complemented by national financing set up for the upgrade of urban wastewater treatment plants in order to ensure there are no unintended consequences for the availability, affordability and accessibility of vital products, in particular medicines, and to ensure sufficient funds are available to operators. The national funding should not amount to more than 20% and should not undermine the polluter pays principle.

The Commission should assess the possible need to extend the scope of Extended Producer Responsibility, in particular to products containing **microplastics and Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances** (PFAS) placed on the market and taking into account any restrictions on PFAS.

Energy neutrality of urban wastewater treatment plants

Energy audits of urban wastewater treatment plants and collection systems should include identification of the potential for cost-effective use, reduction of energy consumption, recovery and use of waste heat either onsite or via a district system or production of renewable energy.

Member States should ensure that the total annual energy from renewable sources, generated at national level **on- or off-site** by urban wastewater treatment plants treating a load of 10 000 p.e. and above and independently if it is used on- or off-site the urban wastewater treatment plant by their owners or operators, is equivalent to at least: (i) **50 %** of the total annual energy used by such plants by 31 December 2033; (ii) **75 %** of the total annual energy used by such plants by 31 December 2036.

Water reuse and discharges of urban wastewater

Member States should systematically promote the reuse of treated wastewater from all urban wastewater treatment plants, especially in water-stressed areas and for industrial purposes, if there is no adverse effect for the environment and health risk management measures have been implemented. Where treated wastewater is reused for agricultural irrigation, it should comply with certain requirements.

Microplastics

Micro- and nanoplastic pollution is often caused by dyeing and washing processes of synthetic textiles as synthetic microfibres are released into wastewater. The Commission should submit a **legislative proposal**, accompanied by an impact assessment, in line with its initiative on 'Microplastics pollution – measures to reduce its impact on the environment' to oblige the fitting of microfibre filters for new washing machines at EU level by 31 December 2027.