

Minimum requirements for water reuse

2018/0169(COD) - 12/02/2019 - Text adopted by Parliament, 1st reading/single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 588 votes to 23 with 66 abstentions a legislative resolution on the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on minimum requirements for water reuse.

The position of the European Parliament adopted at first reading under the ordinary legislative procedure amended the Commission proposal as follows:

Purpose

The proposed regulation lays down minimum requirements for reclaimed water quality and monitoring, and the obligation to carry out specified key risk management tasks, for the safe reuse of treated urban waste water in the context of integrated water management.

Its aim is to guarantee that reclaimed water is safe for its intended use in such a way as to protect human and animal health and the environment while reducing the adverse effects of water resource use and responding in a coordinated manner at EU level to water scarcity and climate change problems.

Member States should ensure that water resources intended for drinking are not contaminated by reused water.

Obligations of reclamation facility operators as regards water quality

Members specified that reclamation facility operators should also ensure that at least the risk management measures set out in the Water Reuse Risk Management Plan are fully implemented within the reclamation facility.

After the point of compliance (i.e. the point where a reclamation facility operator delivers the reclaimed water to the next actor in the chain), water quality would no longer be the responsibility of the operator of the recovery facility and becomes the responsibility of the next actor in the chain.

Obligations of reclaimed water distribution operators, reclaimed water storage operators and end-users

Operators would be required to maintain the level of quality of reclaimed water within the reclaimed water distribution infrastructure at least at the same level of quality as that laid down Annex I to the regulation.

When granting a permit, the competent authority may require further risk management measures to be taken as regards tasks to be carried out by the operators and specify the additional requirements and necessary preventive measures.

Where the end-user suspects that the stored water does not meet the minimum requirements laid down in the regulation, he would be required: (i) to immediately inform the health authority concerned, providing, where appropriate, all available evidence; (ii) to cooperate with the competent authority concerned in order to verify and determine the grounds for the suspicion and the possible presence of unauthorised substances or values.

Reclaimed water (i.e. treated waste water which results from further treatment in a reclamation facility) would be used for irrigation of food crops, processed food crops and non-food crops. Member States could allow reclaimed water for other uses such as industrial water reuse and for recreational and environmental purposes, provided that a high level of protection of human health, animals and the environment is ensured.

No later than one year after the date of entry into force of the regulation, the Commission should adopt delegated acts by introducing a method for measuring the presence of microplastics in reused waters that may be subject to additional requirements.

Compliance check

In the event of non-compliance, the competent authority shall require the reclamation facility operator, the reclaimed water distribution operator, or the reclaimed water storage operator, as applicable, to take any necessary measures to promptly restore compliance and immediately inform the end-users affected.

Information awareness-raising campaigns

Member States shall set up information and awareness raising campaigns targeting potential end-users, including citizens, and concerning the safety of water reuse and the savings of water resources resulting from water reuse. Information campaigns shall be set up for farmers to ensure that they use reclaimed water on crops in an optimal manner, and thereby avoid any adverse health or environmental effects from such use.

Evaluation

The Commission shall, by five years after the date of entry into force of this regulation, carry out an evaluation of this regulation. It shall assess the feasibility of:

- extending the scope of this regulation to reclaimed water intended for further specific uses, including reuse for industrial purposes;
- expanding the requirements of this regulation to cover the indirect use of treated waste water;
- laying down minimum requirements applicable to the quality of treated waste water for the purpose of aquifer recharge.