

Quality of Drinking Water in the EU

Public Consultation – Questionnaire

Quality of Drinking Water in the EU

Introduction

In its Communication on the European Citizens' Initiative "Right2Water", COM(2014)177 final, the Commission announced its intention to launch an EU-wide public consultation on the Drinking Water Directive, notably in view of improving access to quality drinking water in the EU. It also invited the Member States to step up their efforts to guarantee the provision of clean, safe, and wholesome water for human consumption, in accordance with the recommendations of the World Health Organisation.

The aim of this consultation is to get a better understanding of citizens' views on the need and the possible range of actions which could be undertaken in order to improve the supply with high quality drinking water. The results of the consultation will be used as input to decide if and where the EU Drinking Water Directive 98/83/EC might need improvement.

This questionnaire also takes up other issues raised by the above-mentioned European Citizens' Initiative, for example affordability, which go beyond the scope of the current Drinking Water Directive and may need to be addressed through other EU or national instruments or initiatives.

The consultation runs from 23.06.2014 until 23.09.2014.

In addition to completing the questionnaire all stakeholders (including national authorities, international organisations, non-governmental organisations and other interested parties or individual citizens) can submit their position papers on the issues addressed in this questionnaire to the Commission services to: ENV-DRINKING-WATER@ec.europa.eu

Background

'Drinking water' covers all water intended for human consumption or other domestic purposes. The 'Drinking Water Directive' aims at the protection of human health from the adverse effects of any contamination. It ensures that water at the consumer tap is wholesome and clean. Natural mineral waters are excluded. Bottled water including natural mineral water has to satisfy the requirements of food law.

For more information, the full text of the Drinking Water Directive 98/83/EC directive is available in all official languages on:

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:31998L0083>

Further background information: Commission Report COM(2014)363 final "Synthesis Report on the Quality of Drinking Water in the EU examining the Member States' reports for the period 2008-2010 under Directive 98/83/EC" on:

http://ec.europa.eu/environment/water/water-drink/reporting_en.html

Please note that the first questions are of general nature, whereas replies to question 4 onwards sometimes require prior knowledge of the Drinking Water Directive. Please feel free to answer only those relevant to you.

The estimated time to complete the questionnaire is about 15 minutes.

Thank you very much for taking the time to contribute to this consultation.

Information about you

I am replying as a(n):

- Individual/citizen/consumer
- Stakeholder/expert

Please specify:

- Sectoral representative: Water Utilities / Providers (drinking water and sanitation)
- Non-governmental organisation (NGO)
- Other association
- Academic/scientist
- National authority (responsible for drinking water)
- National authorities (other)
- Local/regional authority (responsible for drinking water)
- Local/regional authorities (other)
- European Institution
- International body
- Other (please specify)

Please specify your sector:

- Only Drinking Water Utilities / Provider
- Only Sanitation Utilities / Provider
- Food Industry and other companies using drinking water
- Other sector (please specify)

Please specify other sector:

Water and waste water service providers in UK

If responding on behalf of a(n) organisation/association/authority/company/body, please provide the name

Water UK

Your country/ies :

- AT - Austria
- BE - Belgium
- BG - Bulgaria
- CY - Cyprus
- CZ - Czech Republic
- DE - Germany
- DK - Denmark
- EE - Estonia
- EL - Greece
- ES - Spain
- FI - Finland
- FR - France
- HR Croatia
- HU - Hungary
- IE - Ireland
- IT - Italy
- LT - Lithuania
- LU - Luxembourg
- LV - Latvia
- MT - Malta
- NL - Netherlands
- PL - Poland
- PT - Portugal
- RO - Romania
- SE - Sweden
- SI - Slovenia
- SK - Slovakia
- UK - United Kingdom
- Other (please specify)

Do you live in an urbanised or a rural area?

- Urbanised
- Rural
- Don't know/Not applicable

Do you know whether your household belongs to a large water supply zone (serving more than 5000 persons) or to a small water supply zone (serving less than 5000 persons)?

- Large
- Small
- Don't know/Not applicable

Multiple-Choice Questions

All following multiple-choice questions or statements are formulated in such a way that you can indicate the level of agreement or disagreement with the question or statement.

Please assess all the questions or statements and indicate your opinion. In most cases, the response options are: "agree", "neither agree nor disagree/neutral", "disagree", or "don't know/not applicable".

1. Your drinking water quality

These statements are designed to get an idea on the knowledge that you have on your drinking water which you are using.

I am well informed about the quality of my drinking water

	agree	neither agree/nor disagree	disagree	don't know/not applicable
I	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

I use drinking water at my home for

	always	most of the time	not or rarely	don't know/not applicable
drinking directly from the tap	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
drinking after filtering it	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
drinking after boiling it	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
cooking directly from the tap	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
cooking after filtering it	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
washing/personal hygiene	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>

2. Access to drinking water

These statements request your opinion on how you judge the situation in the EU on issues raised by the European Citizens Initiative Right2Water (<http://www.right2water.eu/>), in particular in relation to accessibility, affordability, acceptability (in terms of quality) of drinking water.

2.1 Accessibility

	agree	neither agree/nor disagree	disagree	don't know/not applicable
Where I live, access to wholesome and clean drinking water is good	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In the EU overall, the way I see it, access to wholesome and clean drinking water is good	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>

	agree	neither/nor	disagree	don't know
Where I live, the connection to the supply network is good	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In the EU overall, the way I see it, the connection to the supply network is good	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>

2.2 Affordability

	agree	neither/nor	disagree	don't know
Where I live, the price of drinking water (for consumers) is affordable	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In the EU overall, the way I see it, the price of drinking water (for consumers) is affordable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>

	agree	neither/nor	disagree	don't know
Where I live, drinking water services (customer services, security of supply, ...) are good value for money	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In the EU overall, the way I see it, drinking water services (customer services, security of supply, ...) are good value for money	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>

2.3 Acceptability

	agree	neither/nor	disagree	don't know
Where I live, the quality of drinking water is good (wholesome and clean)	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In the EU overall, the way I see it, the quality of drinking water is good (wholesome and clean)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>

	agree	neither/nor	disagree	don't know
Where I live, the sensation (perceived, subjective quality) of drinking water is good (i.e. wholesome as regards taste, odour, turbidity, hardness,...)	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In the EU overall, the way I see it, the sensation of drinking water is good (i.e. wholesome as regards taste, odour, turbidity, hardness,...)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>

3. Threats to drinking water

I consider the following pollution sources a threat to drinking water quality:

	agree	neither/nor	disagree	don't know
Pollution from natural sources (such as minerals)	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Pollution from agriculture (such as pesticides, fertilisers and faecal pollution)	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Pollution from exploration or exploitation of hydrocarbons (such as oil, shale gas, etc)	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Pollution from industrial sources (such as heavy metals, solvents, additives, or other chemicals which may be hazardous)	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Pollution from human consumption and inadequate wastewater treatment (such as ammonium, nitrates, pharmaceuticals, chlorine, detergents, or other products used in the household, ...)	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Substances from materials in direct contact with drinking water (such as contaminants leaching from pipes, ducts, fittings, taps...)	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Threats to drinking water quality due to impacts of climate change (such as those caused by floods, droughts, water scarcity ...)	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other threats or other pollution sources (please specify)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

4. Quality standards in the Drinking Water Directive

The Drinking Water Directive, introduced in 1980 and revised in 1998, regulates 48 individual microbiological, chemical, and indicator parameters with corresponding limit values. When reviewing the list of these parameters, I consider the following actions most appropriate...

	agree	neither/nor	disagree	don't know
No change to current regime is necessary; the current list is kept, and limit values are reflecting the latest scientific evidence (which is required by the Directive)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Restrict the list to a few key parameters most relevant for human health.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Revise and extend the list of parameters, e.g. to consider new and emerging pollutants, if there are possible effects on human health and if this does not lead to a significant increase in the price of water.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Revise and extend the list of parameters, e.g. to consider new and emerging pollutants, if there are possible effects on human health and even if this leads to a significant increase in the price of water.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

5. Monitoring and control of Drinking Water

Competent water authorities have to analyse and monitor drinking water to ensure its quality. The current Drinking Water Directive sets minimum frequencies for sampling and analyses and requires appropriate check and audit monitoring programmes to be established by the competent water authorities. Compliance has to be checked at the point at which drinking water emerges, therefore monitoring goes up to consumer taps.

Currently, possible ways towards a 'risk-based approach' are under exploration in the EU, meaning that monitoring is intensified in case of problems, but stepped down if not really necessary. The 'risk-based approach can be managed through 'water safety plans' see WHO page: <http://www.who.int/wsportal/en/>). In relation to monitoring and control of drinking water, I consider the following action as most appropriate....

	agree	neither/nor	disagree	don't know
No action is necessary because the level of monitoring and control efforts is adequate	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Monitoring and control efforts should be reduced because the costs outweigh the health benefits	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Monitoring should be more frequent, provided this does not lead to a significant increase in the price of water	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Monitoring should be more frequent, even if this leads to a significant increase in the price of water	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Monitoring should be more transparent, and results should be available online	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other (please specify)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

6. Content of consumer information

The current Drinking Water Directive already requires competent authorities to make drinking water-related information available to consumers but is not explicit about the type of information.

Below you find five options reaching from simple to sophisticated levels of information. Please rank the level of importance and tick 'agree' only once, agreeing to the most appropriate level of information you would like to have:

	agree	neither/nor	disagree	don't know
Easily understandable information to all that drinking water quality is compliant (water quality ok)	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Simplified information intelligible to all summarising water quality aspects (a label with colours, a flag, an index, etc.)	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Basic quality aspects (some parameters as for bottled water/mineral water)	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
All detailed information from each analysis and all parameters that are being monitored should be made available	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
All detailed information from each analysis and all parameters should be made available and it should be indicated for each parameter whether it meets the legal requirements	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Others (please specify)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

7. Ways to inform consumers

EU countries have to ensure that up-to-date information of water quality is made available to consumers. Different practices can be found throughout the EU (see inter alia the national web pages: http://ec.europa.eu/environment/water/water-drink/national_info_en.html). I consider that the following action should be taken to inform consumers ...

	agree	neither/nor	disagree	don't know
No action is necessary because the current information provisions are adequate	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
More up-to-date information should be made available online	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
All monitored up-to-date information should be made available online	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
New information tools (e.g. SMS, Apps,...) should be used more actively to disseminate drinking water information where necessary	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
In addition to information on my water supply, dissemination and inter-linkage of information to national or Europe-wide information provisions should be enhanced, up to visualisation tools using spatial data	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
Others (please specify)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

8. Actions in case of problems

In case of failures to meet the quality standards, Member States are required by the current Directive to take remedial action. This action depends on the extent to which the relevant parametric value has been exceeded and the potential danger to human health, and include actions to restore as soon as possible the drinking water quality, to impose restrictions on the use of supplies, or to use alternative supplies. I consider that EU legislation should strive for the following actions ...

	agree	neither/nor	disagree	don't know
No additional actions should be taken because the current provisions are adequate	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The current regime for taking remedial action is too restrictive and overly protective	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Water supplies should be closed whenever failures are found, and free supply of drinking water by bottles, containers, tankers should be granted	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Remedial action should be supplemented by additional preventive action, i.e. by antagonising critical trends, long before a near miss or failure	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
Requirements for prompt notification of consumers in case of failures using modern communication tools should be introduced	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
Others (please specify)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

9. Derogations

The current Directive allowed Member States to grant derogations for individual water supplies for up to 9 years provided such derogation does not constitute a potential danger to human health. For the future, I consider that the possibility of granting derogations should be regulated in the following way...

	agree	neither/nor	disagree	don't know
No action is necessary because the status quo for derogations should be maintained	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Derogations should not be allowed at all, even if this may require alternative supplies which may lead to higher costs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The current derogations should be extended to be allowed for a further transition period	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A new derogations regime should be introduced to a limited extent and under strict conditions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Others (please specify)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

10. Further aspects

The current EU legislation allows for additional actions to be taken at national level. Are there aspects which should be subject to EU rules in relation to drinking water? I consider that other aspects or additional action should be taken at EU level, in particular the following...

	agree	neither/nor	disagree	don't know
Drinking water regulations should cover the entire supply process and not be limited to quality standards at the tap	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Drinking water treatment should be regulated similar to food production installations referring to the hazard analysis and critical control points (HACCP) preventive approach	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
Further provisions as regards extended responsibility and liability of water suppliers or market surveillance/inspection regimes should be taken into account	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
Materials in contact with drinking water (pipes, ducts, valves, fittings, filters, taps...) should be regulated in a more harmonised way	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Aspects of water use and water re-use in households and food industry should be addressed explicitly	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
Additional incentives to save drinking water should be introduced	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
Other aspects should be addressed (please specify)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

If you have any additional comments, please provide them in the box below (max. 1000 characters).

Introduction

The public drinking water supply is the cornerstone of our public health. The health benefits of a wholesome supply of tap water are demonstrable from the promoting proper hydration to addressing the challenges increasingly being caused by obesity in the developing world. The role of water suppliers in public health protection should not be understated. Part of this is by meeting standards set by legislation and regulation but it is also important to maintain consumer confidence in the water that they are provided with. Whilst water suppliers can provide drinking water meeting the highest water quality standards the benefits to public health are only realised if water is consumed by consumers. By striving to improve on existing performance whilst adapting to future challenges the water industry will be able to maintain the confidence of consumers.

Drinking water in the UK

Drinking water in the UK is largely provided to consumers via municipal (or public) supplies. This service is provided by a combination of privately owned companies (England), not-for profit companies (Wales) and the public sector (Scotland and Northern Ireland). The UK also has in the region of 1 million consumers who take their water from privately owned or small supplies run either at a property or community level. Water UK represents the public water suppliers and the answers in this questionnaire reflect opinions from their perspective.

Everyone therefore has access to water and sanitation - domestic customer cannot be disconnected from the water supply, even if they cannot or do not pay their water bills. For the large majority of consumers in the UK drinking water is affordable - water and sewerage services in the UK cost on average just over a pound a day, and water companies provide a range of assistance measures to people who are struggling to pay their water bills.

There are customers in the UK and across Europe who will continue to face cost of living pressures for many years ahead, as the economic recovery across Europe is expected to be slow. It is therefore important that customer affordability and acceptability is taken into account in setting future legislation and standards. We must ensure a measured pace of change towards tighter quality standards with appropriately targeted measures that make full use of the polluter pays principle and source control options ahead of capital and energy intensive treatment solutions.

Compliance with standards

Drinking water quality in the UK is high with compliance with statutory standards exceeding 99.8% and is rated exceptionally by our consumers with between 90 and 95% of a 2013 survey expressing satisfaction with the safety of their drinking water. We are proud of our performance and know our drinking water is amongst the very best in the world.

We recognise that whilst compliance with drinking water quality standards is high, water suppliers cannot be complacent and must be aware of the emergence of new threats to the wholesomeness of drinking water, even if a prescribed standard does not exist, as well as ensuring the investments already made continue to deliver. Water suppliers will need to be innovative in approach, using tried and tested solutions where possible whilst also considering new approaches, such as catchment management or source control that may prove more sustainable long-term options. The UK benefits from robust regulation provided by the drinking water regulators to ensure that standards are maintained and that there is a constant move towards addressing and mitigating risks to drinking water and consequently public health.

To that end we consider that any future changes to drinking water quality standards should be based on robust scientific evidence of risks

to human health. Management of drinking water quality should be undertaken using a risk based approach whereby standards can be met and risks mitigated whilst minimising the need for end-of-pipe, capital intensive solutions and therefore avoid significant increases in the price of water.

Taking a risk based approach

UK legislation fully embraces the risk based approach to protecting drinking water with all public water supplies having water safety plans in place. These are established in regulation and in the 10 years since their instigation (in England and Wales) have evolved to become central to the process of managing water quality and determining investment solutions needed to mitigate residual risks. The approach has supported water suppliers in making decisions based on risk assessments and to adopt innovative solutions.

The frequency of monitoring required for the control of drinking water should not be set by a rigid framework, rather it should be flexible and determined by a risk assessment approach using a full source to tap water safety plan to inform water managers of the risks involved at each stage of the water supply cycle. For example where surveys and sampling can demonstrate the absence of a parameter from a supply source then the water supplier should be able to reduce frequency of monitoring and analysis. The water supplier must however be aware of changing circumstances and be able to respond to the need for potential increases in monitoring.

Information to consumers

The level of information made available should reflect the interests and knowledge level of the audience. In many cases consumers are interested in basic information that provides confidence that drinking water is safe to drink and provides information about actions to take should this not be the case. The more informed consumer may require more detailed information and systems should be designed to allow data to be interrogated in these cases.

The response to any deterioration in water quality should be proportional to the event and to the risks to health involved. Not all quality standards pose health risks when exceeded therefore it would not be appropriate to immediately close supplies. There are benefits from a sanitation perspective to maintaining pressurised network supplies and where appropriate issue "boil" or "do not drink" notices or provide alternative drinking water sources. The response taken should be based on an assessment of the severity and the duration of an incident.

We agree that measures could be taken to improve water efficiency and address quantity issues and particular attention should be focussed on the water re-use (particularly at a domestic level). However quantity and efficiency measures should not be within the scope of the Drinking Water Directive rather additional legislative instruments should be used.

