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News

Trade groups seek green targets in new drinking water rules

Robert Hodgson, 31 May 2018

The EU Drinking Water Directive should be broadened to focus more on resource and energy efficiency, setting out fixed deadlines for increasing transparency and reducing water leakage, a new alliance of environmental technology firms has said as MEPs prepare to discuss proposed reforms next week.

The European Commission proposed in February [a revision of the 1998 Drinking Water Directive](#), that it hopes will boost public confidence in the quality of tap water through mandatory disclosure of quality data. It also aims to encourage infrastructure improvements by requiring “very large water suppliers” to disclose data on leakage rates and energy performance.

Trade associations from the Netherlands, Sweden and Denmark argue in a position paper published this week that the legislation should go further, and require “full transparency on water leakage and energy performance in 2020 and application of reduction schemes by 2025, where appropriate”.

The groups say the EU executive was on the right track with provisions on energy use and water losses. “But as a proposal under the umbrella of the overall EU strategy for circular economy it needs focus on resource-efficiency, clear targets and fixed timelines for implementation,” they said.

However, the European Parliament's environment committee appears to be heading in the other direction. MEPs are due to discuss on 7 June a draft report on the DWD proposal. The report's author, Michel Dantin, argues that mandating the disclosure of energy efficiency data related to water production is beyond the scope of the legislation.

The level of leakage in water delivery systems varies widely across Europe, with as much as [60% of purified water lost](#) between the treatment plant and the final tap. The International Energy Agency estimates an average leakage rate of 24% in Europe, with the water sector consuming 3.5% of the EU's electricity.

Speaking for the Danish Environmental Technology Association, Jonas Fredsted Villadsen argued the reforms would be needed to bring the Drinking Water Directive in line with the UN sustainable development goals of access to clean water. “It should be clear that securing the drinking water resource base is a prerequisite to obtain better access to affordable drinking water,” Villadsen said.

The trade groups are hoping that peers from other EU countries will join their alliance before 13 June, which is the deadline by which MEPs can table amendments to the Commission's DWD reform proposal.

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Follow-up:

New Green Tech Business Alliance [statement](#), European Commission [proposal](#), Dantin [draft report](#)

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Close