



Drinking water: Commission decides to refer ITALY to the Court of Justice over unsafe drinking water

Brussels, 9 June 2021

The European Commission has decided today to refer **Italy** to the Court of Justice for failure to comply with the requirements of the Drinking Water Directive ([Directive 98/83/EC](#)). The Directive requires Member States to ensure that water intended for human consumption is wholesome and clean. It requires that drinking water is free from micro-organisms and parasites, and from substances which could pose a potential danger to human health.

The [European Green Deal](#) sets for the EU a Zero Pollution ambition. Full implementation of the standards enshrined in EU legislation is important to effectively protect human health and safeguard the natural environment.

The Commission is referring Italy to the Court of Justice as in some areas of Lazio Region, Viterbo County, levels of arsenic and fluoride in drinking water have since long exceeded the parametric values established in the Drinking Water Directive. This exceedance can harm human health, in particular the health of children. Six areas continue to exceed safe levels of arsenic in drinking water: Bagnoregio, Civitella d'Agliano, Fabrica di Roma, Farnese, Ronciglione, and Tuscania. The areas of Bagnoregio and Fabrica di Roma have also exceeded safe levels of fluoride.

The Commission sent a letter of formal notice to the Italian authorities in 2014, followed by a reasoned opinion in January 2019. The reasoned opinion concerned 16 water supply zones in Lazio region, Viterbo County. Since the reasoned opinion, full compliance with the Directive has been achieved by only 10 of these zones.

Whilst the Commission welcomes the fact that Italy has adopted measures to prohibit or restrict water supply in the areas concerned and has informed consumers of the situation, six water supply zones still do not fully comply with the Directive. It is therefore referring Italy to the Court of Justice.

Background

The Drinking Water Directive (Council Directive 98/83/EC of 3 November 1998 on the quality of water intended for human consumption) laid down essential quality standards for drinking water at EU level. A total of 48 microbiological, chemical and indicator parameters must be monitored and tested regularly.

Meanwhile, a [revision of the Drinking Water Directive](#) was adopted by the co-legislators in December 2020. After the entry into force of the revised Directive, Member States have two years to comply with it.

Most people living in the EU already enjoy very good access to high quality drinking water thanks in part to over 30 years of EU legislation on drinking water quality.

For More Information

[EU rules on drinking water](#)

[Infringements database](#)

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