

WEBINAR

NOW IT'S CLEAR: CHANGES AND CHANCES IN THE REVISED EU DRINKING WATER DIRECTIVE

On 18 February, an international audience gathered for the first Danube Water Program KnowNow webinar, receiving firsthand information on the recently adopted revised EU Drinking Water Directive.

Encouraged by the success of last year's COVID crisis response webinars, the Danube Water Program has introduced the KnowNow series, a compact webinar program with focus on relevant topics for the water sector in the Danube region.

The first edition covered the revised EU Drinking Water Directive 2020/2184. In force since January 2021, the Directive is the EU's response to the demands of the over 1.8 million Europeans who signed the first-ever successful European Citizens' Initiative, "Right2Water", in support of improving access to safe drinking water for all Europeans.

Bert Leemans, European Commission's DG Environment, gave a comprehensive presentation on the changes, challenges, impacts and implications the Directive will bring for the water sector of the Danube region.

Generally speaking, the document updates existing safety standards, introduces a "watch list" mechanism and promotes a "risk-based approach" covering the whole water supply chain from catchment to tap. It obliges member states to improve or maintain access to safe drinking water for all, particularly for vulnerable and marginalized groups, brings increased transparency for consumers regarding the quality and efficiency of water services, and also a harmonization of the quality standards for materials and products in contact with water.

The revised Drinking Water Directive comes with a January 2023 deadline for legal implementation in the member states.

Host Walter Kling, President of the IAWD, then invited a first round of comments from the other panelists.

Anna Pomassl representing the Austrian Association for Gas and Water welcomed the risk-based approach covering the supply chain from catchment to tap, but stressed the probable impact of the directive on suppliers in terms of costs and necessary manpower to meet the monitoring and reporting requirements, especially the demand for efficiency statistics.

Mihaela Vasilescu of SC Aquatim SA Romania expects a positive impact of the directive on public health, mentioning water quality-related health problems in several countries of the region. She is also aware that success in this respect will require sound communication and cooperation of all stakeholders:

“We will have to get everybody on board from day one of the implementation”,

she says, calling for increased training and know how transfer efforts.

In a contribution that was sadly plagued by audio problems, Filip Wanner, Project Manager at Vodovody a Kanalizace Beroun focused on the challenges awaiting especially small-sized water providers, which are quite numerous in the Czech Republic: Lacking for instance a dedicated leaking index in their benchmarking system, many small water networks will be confronted with an increase in operational costs.

These statements kicked off a very lively discussion that covered everything from questions of implementation on the national level to the duration of transition periods. At the end of very compact 75 minutes, IAWD's Walter Kling wrapped the theme up noting that implementation of the Directive will be a process with shared responsibilities, that a certain amount of flexibility will be necessary to adapt to different conditions in different countries, and that IAWD and DWP feel a strong backing by the Directive in their capacity building efforts.

Further information, including the presentation and recording of the webinar, can be found on our [website](#)!

The second KnowNow webinar will take place on **18 March, 13:30 – 14:45 CET**, and deal with sanitation services and the ongoing review of the EU Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive.
Please save the date!