The revision of the UWWTD: Views from Europe’s public water operators
31 May 2023
About Aqua Publica Europea

67 MEMBERS
Public water and sanitation operators

80 MILLION
Citizens served every day

2 MAIN OBJECTIVES
• Promoting public water management
• Providing a platform for mutual learning
UWWTD recast

Key proposals:

- Make industry responsible for the treatment of toxic micropollutants (‘polluter pays’ principle)
- Enlarge the scope of the current Directive to agglomerations with a p.e. of 1,000 and above
- Require that Member States establish integrated water management plans with a 1% indicative target on SWOs
- Make the wastewater sector energy-neutral
UWWTD recast

Welcome the Commission’s proposal but draws attention to the significant investment needs for the sector:

- New legislation with stricter requirements
- New expectations for water utilities
- Climate change → higher risks and pressures
1. Ensuring a fair distribution of costs

Additional treatment to urban wastewater to eliminate a broad spectrum of micro-pollutants

YET in the EU costs are covered by a mix of water tariffs (70%) and public budgets (30%)

✓ Need for a fair distribution of costs to strike a balance: sustainability ↔ social equity

➔ EPR scheme = necessary condition to maintain water affordability and ensure a level playing field in the EU + boost innovation
2. Prioritising investments where they are most needed

New or strengthened requirements:

- Broaden obligation to connect to collecting systems
- Removal of micropollutants
- Stricter reduction levels for P & N
- Energy neutrality

Increased investments

BUT potential low environmental benefits in some cases (e.g., water reuse, rivers without eutrophication problem)
2. Prioritising investments where they are most needed

- Stronger emphasis on the need to adopt a preventive approach favouring actions to reduce pollution at source

- Context-based flexibility mechanisms and possibility of trade-offs to prioritise interventions where they are most useful

- Stronger link with the Water Framework Directive to ensure interventions are adapted to local ecological and chemical contexts of recipient water bodies
2. Prioritising investments where they are most needed

The example of stormwater overflow

- Indicative 1% target for SWOs
- BUT doesn’t take into consideration local contexts
  - Environmental objectives based on the Water Framework Directive
  - Extended deadlines to favour nature-based solutions (NBS)
3. Preventing territorial cleavage

New or strengthened requirements:

- Broadened requirement to connect to collecting systems and carry out secondary treatment
- Energy neutrality

Stronger economic impact on rural areas

- Need to unlock EU structural and investment funds
- Facilitate integrated water resources management at river basin level
4. Adopting a realistic approach to energy neutrality

Energy neutrality by 2040 at national level for all wastewater treatment plants above 10 000 p.e.

BUT spatial and technical constraints & increased energy needs for treatment

- Green energy produced off site
- Green energy sold to other industries
- Green energy from the electrical grid