

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-001655/24
to the Commission
Per Clausen (The Left)
(9 September 2024)**

Subject: Denmark's failure to comply with the Water Framework Directive

Denmark has undertaken to realise the EU Water Framework Directive (WFD) objective of achieving good ecological status in all rivers, lakes, fjords and coastal areas, and in groundwater, by 2027 ⁽¹⁾. However, NGOs are warning that Danish aquatic environments are characterised by oxygen depletion, fish die-back and nitrogen discharges and that good ecological status is unlikely to be achieved for Denmark's water bodies by 2027 ⁽²⁾.

In June 2024, the Danish Government nevertheless presented an Agreement on a Green Denmark in which it only voices an ambition to comply with the WFD objective in two thirds of Danish waters, thus deferring implementation of the WFD in a third of Denmark's coastal waters until 2030 ⁽³⁾.

1. How does the Commission think that the WFD objectives will be affected if Member States such as Denmark can repeatedly postpone achieving them?
2. How does the Commission view Denmark's chances of once again obtaining authorisation to defer realisation of the WFD objectives?

Submitted: 9.9.2024

**Answer given by Executive Vice-President Šefčovič on behalf of the European Commission
(25 October 2024)**

The Water Framework Directive (WFD) ⁽¹⁾ obliges Member States to achieve good water status by 22 December 2015, with a possibility to apply time related exemptions until 22 December 2027.

After that date, the potential for applying exemptions will be very limited, and would require evidence that all measures are in place to reach the best possible status and that further measures to achieve good status are not feasible or they are disproportionately costly, or that natural constraints impeded the achievement of the objectives in the given timelines. Where justifications are lacking or not appropriate or detailed enough, Member States may be considered in breach of the WFD.

The Commission will report its assessment on the implementation of the Water Framework Directive before the end of 2024, in accordance with Article 18 WFD.

Denmark has indicated it will report new measures in the course of 2024 following from the recent Green Denmark agreement. Considering the current cycle is the last cycle during which time related exemptions can still be invoked, the Commission will pay particular attention to the extent to which all measures that are required to achieve good status are put in place during the period 2022-2027.

However, it already seems clear that Denmark has not yet established the state of many water bodies which are reported to be in 'unknown status'.

This seriously hampers the possibility to devise appropriate measures for reaching good status hence also to justify exemptions in accordance with the strict criteria set out in the WFD.

Further to its assessment, the Commission will engage with the Danish authorities and, in case of breach of the WFD, take the necessary steps to ensure compliance with EU law.

¹ <https://mim.dk/vores-opgaver/vandmiljoe/vandomraadeplanerne>

² <https://www.dn.dk/nyheder/gronne-ngo-er-klager-til-eu-danmark-svigter-havmiljoet/>

³ <https://www.ft.dk/samling/20231/almdel/MOF/bilag/560/2886050/index.htm>

⁽¹⁾ Directive 2000/60/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2000 establishing a framework for Community action in the field of water policy, OJ L 327, 22.12.2000, p. 1-73, as amended by Commission Directive 2014/101/EU of 30 October 2014, OJ L 311, 31.10.2014, p. 32-35.