

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-002166/24
to the Commission
Kathleen Funchion (The Left)
(18 October 2024)**

Subject: Water treatment

Thus far in 2024, the Irish Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has conducted 67 audits of drinking water plants in Ireland. The reported analysis of these audits found that 97% of plants required action to be taken and just 19% of plants were operating satisfactorily.

The 2023 EPA report entitled 'Urban Wastewater Treatment' stated that water treatment at 10 large towns and cities failed to meet EU standards. The same report stated that 16 towns and villages were discharging raw sewage on a daily basis. This annual report is one of many that highlight the inefficiencies of water treatment in Ireland.

1. Is the Commission aware of successive EPA reports highlighting the real concerns over water treatment in Ireland?
2. Can the Commission comment on the 10 large towns and cities that failed to meet EU standards and the 16 towns and villages that were discharging raw sewage?
3. What actions will the Commission take to ensure the Irish authority responsible, Uisce Éireann, takes the urgent and necessary steps to remedy the situation?

Submitted: 18.10.2024

Answer given by Ms Roswall on behalf of the European Commission
(9 January 2025)

1. The Commission has not been informed regarding the Irish Environmental Protection Agency reports on drinking water plants. Member States are not required to report on operational performance aspects of drinking water plants under the former ⁽¹⁾ and recast ⁽²⁾ Drinking Water Directive (DWD). Non-compliance areas under the Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive ⁽³⁾ (UWWTD) are followed by the Commission in two infringement cases: on 14 November 2024 ⁽⁴⁾, the Commission sent a letter of formal notice under Article 260 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union to Ireland ⁽⁵⁾ for failing to comply with the judgment of the Court of Justice of the European Union of 28 March 2019 ⁽⁶⁾ in relation to over 20 agglomerations ⁽⁷⁾. In another case ⁽⁸⁾, on 7 February 2024 ⁽⁹⁾, the Commission issued a letter of formal notice to Ireland for failing to fully comply with the UWWTD in eight agglomerations ⁽¹⁰⁾. A further three agglomerations ⁽¹¹⁾ with a population of more than 10,000 were considered to be discharging wastewater in sensitive areas without the more stringent treatment required by the UWWTD.
2. Based on data reported by Ireland, the Commission has no indication of general problems with drinking water quality associated with large water supplies. In specific water supply zones, however, the Court of Justice ruled in January 2024 in favour of the Commission in the case ⁽¹²⁾ opened against Ireland regarding exceedances of trihalomethanes (THM). The Commission cannot comment on the compliance of the agglomerations listed in the above mentioned UWWTD infringement cases.
3. The Commission will continue to follow-up the Irish data reported under the recast DWD ⁽¹³⁾ and the UWWTD. The most recent report on the implementation of the UWWTD in Ireland is public ⁽¹⁴⁾.

⁽¹⁾ Council Directive 98/83/EC of 3 November 1998 on the quality of water intended for human consumption, OJ L 330, 5.12.1998, p. 32-54.

⁽²⁾ Directive (EU) 2020/2184 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 December 2020 on the quality of water intended for human consumption (recast), OJ L 435, 23.12.2020, p. 1-62.

⁽³⁾ Council Directive 91/271/EEC of 21 May 1991 concerning urban waste-water treatment, OJ L 135, 30.5.1991, p. 40-52.

⁽⁴⁾ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/inf_24_5223

⁽⁵⁾ [https://ec.europa.eu/atwork/applying-eu-law/infringements-proceedings/infringement_decisions/?langCode=EN&version=v1&typeOfSearch=byCase&refId=INFR\(2013\)2056&activeCase=true&page=1&size=10&order=desc&sortColumns=refId](https://ec.europa.eu/atwork/applying-eu-law/infringements-proceedings/infringement_decisions/?langCode=EN&version=v1&typeOfSearch=byCase&refId=INFR(2013)2056&activeCase=true&page=1&size=10&order=desc&sortColumns=refId)

⁽⁶⁾ C-427/17, <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/753775e2-8608-11e9-9f05-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>

⁽⁷⁾ Arklow, Athlone, Cork City, Enniscorthy, Ballybofey/Stranorlar, Cobh, Enfield, Fermoy, Killybegs, Mallow, Middleton, Passage/Monkstown, Rathcormac, Ringaskiddy, Ringsend, Roscommon Town, Shannon Town, Tubbercurry, Youghal, Dundalk and Castlebridge.

⁽⁸⁾ [https://ec.europa.eu/atwork/applying-eu-law/infringements-proceedings/infringement_decisions/?langCode=EN&version=v1&typeOfSearch=byCase&activeCase=true&page=1&size=10&order=desc&sortColumns=refId&refId=INFR\(2023\)2178](https://ec.europa.eu/atwork/applying-eu-law/infringements-proceedings/infringement_decisions/?langCode=EN&version=v1&typeOfSearch=byCase&activeCase=true&page=1&size=10&order=desc&sortColumns=refId&refId=INFR(2023)2178)

⁽⁹⁾ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/inf_24_301

⁽¹⁰⁾ Kilmore Quay, Kilrush, Kilkee, Whitegate-Aghada, Moville, Mitchelstown, Clareabbey and Lahinch.

⁽¹¹⁾ Ringaskiddy, Malahide and Cobh. In relation to Ringaskiddy and Cobh the letter of formal notice of 7 February 2024 covers new issues compared to those already covered by the judgment in case C — 427/17, *Commission v. Ireland*.

⁽¹²⁾ C481/22, <https://curia.europa.eu/juris/document/document.jsf?text=&docid=282070&pageIndex=0&doclang=EN&mode=req&dir=&occ=first&part=1&cid=5160941>

⁽¹³⁾ Measures taken in specific zones in relation to THM exceedances as well as risk assessment and risk management carried out by Member States of their water supply systems due by January 2029.

⁽¹⁴⁾ https://environment.ec.europa.eu/topics/water/urban-wastewater/implementation-reports_en