

EN

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Answer given by Ms Roswall
on behalf of the European Commission
(26.6.2025)

To reduce water pollution, the Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive¹ requires the removal of micropollutants from urban wastewaters through quaternary treatment. In line with the Polluter-Pays Principle² enshrined in Article 191 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU, the Directive provides for an extended producer responsibility system whereby the pharmaceutical and cosmetics sectors, which represent the main source of micropollutants in urban wastewater³, finance at least 80 % of the quaternary treatment costs. The Directive was adopted with a large majority in the European Parliament and the Council.

The impact assessment accompanying the Commission's proposal assessed the cost of such extended producer responsibility system and its impact⁴ on the pharmaceutical sector at EU level. In addition, as announced in the Water Resilience Strategy of 4 June 2025⁵, in the context of the implementation of the extended producer responsibility system, the Commission will conduct an updated study of costs and its potential impacts on concerned sectors. In addition, the Commission will continue to support Member States in the pragmatic design of national systems with a view to avoiding unexpected or unintended consequences, in particular for the availability and affordability of medicines.

¹ Directive (EU) 2024/3019 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 November 2024 concerning urban wastewater treatment (recast), OJ L, 2024/3019, 12.12.2024.

² https://environment.ec.europa.eu/economy-and-finance/ensuring-polluters-pay_en.

³ Impact assessment accompanying the proposal for a Directive concerning urban wastewater treatment (recast): https://environment.ec.europa.eu/publications/proposal-revised-urban-wastewater-treatment-directive_en.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ https://environment.ec.europa.eu/publications/european-water-resilience-strategy_en.