

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-002920/25
to the Commission
Rasmus Nordqvist (Verts/ALE)
(16 July 2025)**

Subject: Industry interests in environmental legislation and consequences of non-compliance

The state of EU surface waters remains critical, with fewer than 40% achieving good ecological status and less than 30% reaching good chemical status. In Denmark, only 29.9% of surface waters are in good ecological status, and just 1.7% are in good chemical status.

This lack of progress is closely tied to the widespread non-implementation of EU environmental law. The Commission's fourth Environmental Implementation Review estimates the annual cost of non-compliance at EUR 180 billion — about 1% of EU gross domestic product. The report finds EU water directives broadly fit for purpose but poorly implemented.

In Denmark, the Ministry of Environment has long failed to set binding limits for several harmful substances, hindering proper water quality assessments. These include heavy metals and chemicals such as nickel, arsenic and polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs). Internal ministry documents suggest economic concerns for industry have influenced decisions on whether, and to what extent, to comply with EU law.

1. How does the failure of Member States such as Denmark to set limit values affect enforcement and the overall effectiveness of the EU water directives?
2. What steps will the Commission take to ensure Member States uphold environmental law over industrial interests?

Submitted: 16.7.2025

**Answer given by Ms Roswall on behalf of the European Commission
(27 August 2025)**

The current water legislation requires Member State authorities to assess surface water pollution against environmental quality standards (EQS) set for 'priority substances' at EU level, or equivalently protective EQS set for them at national level in another matrix, and against nationally set EQS for pollutants of national, regional or local concern, i.e. river-basin specific pollutants.

In addition, for certain priority substances that tend to accumulate in biota and sediment, a trend assessment in those matrices is required, whether or not a EU-wide (or equivalent) EQS applies in them. Gaps in these assessments may lead to an overly optimistic view of water quality.

In 2021, in the context of the Commission's assessment of the 2nd River Basin Management Plans (RBMPs), Denmark confirmed gaps in its waterbody status classifications and indicated that some quality standards would not be established in time for the 3rd RBMPs.

Therefore, the Commission's assessment of the 3rd RBMPs has again resulted in a recommendation ⁽¹⁾ to 'step up the efforts to meet the requirements set out in the Water Framework Directive (WFD) ⁽²⁾ as regards monitoring, assessment, data management and reporting'.

As set out in the Water Resilience Strategy ⁽³⁾, the Commission intends to hold structured dialogues on the implementation of the WFD and Floods Directive ⁽⁴⁾, to take place in 2025 and 2026, during which the necessary measures to comply with the Commission's recommendations will be discussed. This is without prejudice to further enforcement action at EU or national level.

⁽¹⁾ SWD(2025) 34, 4 February 2025, recommendation 6 on page 40.

⁽²⁾ 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.

⁽³⁾ https://commission.europa.eu/topics/environment/water-resilience-strategy_en.

⁽⁴⁾ Directive 2007/60/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2007 on the assessment and management of flood, OJ L 288, 6.11.2007, p. 27-34.