

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-001342/26
to the Commission
Maria Grapini (S&D)
(1 April 2026)**

Subject: Request for an assessment of the impact on the pharmaceutical sector of the EPR mechanism under the Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive (UWWTD)

The revised Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive (UWWTD), adopted in 2024, introduces an Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) scheme, under which the pharmaceutical and cosmetics industries are required to contribute to the costs of the quaternary treatment of wastewater to remove micropollutants.

However, representatives of the pharmaceutical industry and of the business world have raised serious concerns over the economic impact of this measure. According to tests carried out in some Member States, the costs associated with the EPR mechanism could be significantly higher than the initial estimates, which is liable to affect the availability of medicinal products, and in particular low-cost generics.

In light of the above, can the Commission please forward:

1. An up-to-date assessment of the economic impact of the Extended Producer Responsibility scheme under the UWWTD on the accessibility and availability of medicinal products, and in particular generics;
2. An analysis, based on up-to-date and independent statistics, of the impact of the implementation of this scheme on the competitiveness of the European pharmaceutical industry and on the security of supply of medicinal products in the European Union;
3. Clarification as to whether it is considering measures to revise or adjust the EPR mechanism, including in the context of the recent initiatives on the simplification of EU legislation and on bolstering the competitiveness of EU industry.

Submitted: 1.4.2026

**Answer given by Ms Roswall on behalf of the European Commission
(6 July 2026)**

The EU is confronted with growing pressures on water quality and availability, including the increasing presence of micropollutants in waters.

Addressing these pressures is essential to protecting public health and ecosystems and is a key component of the European Water Resilience Strategy ⁽¹⁾.

Quaternary treatment is designed to remove micropollutants from treated wastewater. To address the costs of this treatment, the recast Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive ⁽²⁾ sets up an Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) for micropollutants in line with the Polluter Pays Principle ⁽³⁾.

The Commission is aware of the concerns raised by the Honourable Member. It therefore tasked the Joint Research Centre to update the estimation of the costs of quaternary wastewater treatment.

This study was published on 10 December 2025. It confirms that the cost estimates of the Commission's impact assessment ⁽⁴⁾ remain valid.

The Commission continues to engage closely with industry stakeholders and Member States to ensure the effective and proportionate implementation of the new rules.

It will evaluate the directive by 2033, at a stage when only a limited proportion of investments will have been made, allowing the co-legislators to assess the real-world impacts and adjust the directive if and as appropriate.

⁽¹⁾ https://commission.europa.eu/topics/environment/water-resilience-strategy_en.

⁽²⁾ 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.

⁽³⁾ https://environment.ec.europa.eu/economy-and-finance/ensuring-polluters-pay_en.

⁽⁴⁾ Impact assessment accompanying the Commission proposal for a directive of the European Parliament and of the Council concerning urban wastewater treatment (recast) SWD(2022) 541 final: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52022PC0541>.