



Urban Waste Water: Commission decides to refer HUNGARY to the Court of Justice over waste water treatment

Brussels, 9 June 2021

The Commission decided today to refer **Hungary** to the Court of Justice for failure to comply with the requirements of the Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive (Directive [91/271/EEC](#)). The Directive requires Member States to ensure that urban agglomerations (towns, cities, settlements) properly collect and treat their waste waters, thus eliminating or reducing all their undesirable effects.

The [European Green Deal](#) sets for the EU a Zero Pollution ambition. Full implementation of the standards enshrined in EU legislation is important to effectively protect human health and safeguard the natural environment.

In Hungary, 22 agglomerations are still not compliant with the Directive, as these agglomerations do not provide all their residents with a collecting system for urban waste water or an alternative with the same level of environmental protection. As they are not properly collected, the waste waters cannot be treated as required by EU law. In addition, Hungary is in breach of ensuring more stringent treatment for five other agglomerations.

The Commission sent a letter of formal notice to the Hungarian authorities in February 2017, followed by a reasoned opinion in December 2017. Although the Hungarian authorities have closely cooperated with the Commission, the low ratio of connections to collecting systems already built and the high ratio of individual or appropriate systems (IAS) usage led the Commission to conclude, that the authorities have failed to prove compliance for the above-mentioned agglomerations.

Therefore, the Commission is referring Hungary to the Court of Justice.

Background

Untreated waste water can be contaminated with bacteria and viruses and thus presents a risk to human health. It also contains nutrients such as nitrogen and phosphorous which can damage freshwaters and the marine environment, by promoting excessive growth of algae that chokes other life, a process known as eutrophication.

The Commission published in September 2020 the [10th report on the implementation of the Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive](#) that showed an overall improvement in collection and treatment of waste water in Europe's cities and towns, but pointed to different success levels between the Member States.

For More Information

[Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive - Overview](#)

[Infringements database](#)

[EU infringements procedure](#)

[Link to the MEMO](#)

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