

Statement on the hearing of the Commissioner-designate for DG HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY

1. The new Commissioner should be committed

- to a health policy striving for the provision of safe, wholesome and clean drinking water to EU citizens requiring a resolute protection of drinking water resources;
- to take account of emerging pollution arising from pharmaceutical products working hand-in-hand with the Commissioners responsible for Environment and for Internal Market and Industry; and
- to ensure the application of the *polluter pays principle* as formulated in the European environmental policy, in order to protect citizens' health and the environment.

Pollution of water resources originates from different sources and in particular from agricultural pressures. Besides chemical threats to drinking water resources (nitrates, pesticides, medicinal products for veterinary use) there are microbiological risks (bacteria and viruses) stemming from untreated waste water caused by diffuse pollution or by overflowing sewer systems.

Chemical water pollution needs to be tackled by introducing pollution control measures at the source of its generation, in order to avoid hazardous substances entering the water cycle (cleaner production methods, waste minimization etc.). To this end the relevant sectorial legislation (e.g. authorization schemes) on medicinal products for veterinary use, nitrates and pesticides should take into account the risks they cause to water resources, especially those used for the abstraction of drinking water.

End-of-pipe solutions, using smart and advanced treatment technologies, should be considered an option of last resort as they are not sustainable in the long term, due to increased energy consumption, additional use of chemical substances combined with the production of non-wanted transformation products and increased sludge handling.

2. The Commissioner should closely coordinate joint actions with the Commissioners responsible for Environment, and for Internal Market and Industry, in developing a strategic approach towards medicinal products for human use and shall promote preventive measures at different stages of the life cycle of pharmaceuticals to ensure the protection of drinking water resources.

Emerging micro-pollutants such as pharmaceutical products for human use and micro-plastics pose concerns to citizens, water utilities and decision makers. A source control approach, preventing hazardous substances to enter the water cycle, must be adopted and the *polluter pays principle* fully implemented.

