



PFAS: why should the cities address it?

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Why are PFAS a problem?

PFAS can be found everywhere in our environment

- Main concerns related to PFAS is their extreme persistence in the environment
 - PFAS can magnify in the food chain
 - PFAS can be found in soil, rainwater, biota and human blood



Why are PFAS a problem?

PFAS can have serious health effects

PFAS exposure is associated for example with

- Suppression of the immune response to vaccines
- Harm to the cardiovascular system
- Increased cholesterol levels
- Interference with the development of fetuses and children.



What are the problems in practice?

In numerous cases around the world the PFAS pollution has gone unnoticed for a long time

Some examples close by:

- In Sweden several cases where drinking water pollution has been found randomly and the citizens had been exposed to PFAS for years
- In Finland fisherman eating fish from a polluted river had extremely high levels of PFAS in the blood
- High levels of PFAS were found in eggs due to the use of fishmeal for feeding the chicken



What is being done to the PFAS problem by the regulators?

Some restrictions already have taken place globally and in the EU

- PFOS, PFOA, PFHxS and their derivatives have been entered into Stockholm convention for global restriction
- EU has also banned some long chain fluorocarbons
- EU environmental quality standards for (AA-EQS) PFOS in inland waters 0,65 ng/l and sea water 0,13 ng/l,
- Drinking Water Directive (2020) limit for the sum of 20 different PFAS is 100ng/l (but many experts think this is still too high), the testing must be started latest on 12.1.2026
- In 2023 new EU limits for PFAS in different food stuff, including fish, eggs, meat

What is being done to the PFAS problem by the regulators?

Many new restrictions are being planned or prepared in EU

- Universal PFAS restriction
 - Would cover all possible PFAS, to avoid regrettable substitution
 - 5642 comments on the proposal, e.g. debate on essential uses and polymers
 - Is currently under review by committees that assess the environmental and health risks (RAC) of PFAS use and socioeconomical risks (SEAC) of the proposed restriction
- Ban of use of all PFAS in firefighting foams, has been supported by RAC and SEAC
- Restriction of PFHxA, including its salts and derivatives, has been supported by RAC and SEAC
- Proposal for new groundwater quality standard sum of 24 PFAS 4,4ng/l
- Proposal to add new PFAS to the priority substance list of Water Framework Directive
- Urban Wastewater directive will aim at improving removal of organic micropollutants

What is being done to the PFAS problem by the companies?

Forerunner companies are looking for safer chemicals for substitution

However, other companies are substituting restricted chemicals with other PFAS that have not yet been banned.

There has been court cases against PFAS producing companies to clean the environmental pollution around the factories.

Many companies have given their comments on the total ban of PFAS and they are waiting for the faith of the restriction proposal.



Municipalities are powerful consumers, they can put pressure!



What can the municipality do?

Actions for protecting the citizens and the environment

- Hot spot mapping, risk assessment and remediation if necessary
- Get information on the PFAS levels in drinking water and wastewater – get prepared for the upcoming regulations
- Minimise the use of PFAS in the municipality
 - Rescue services
 - Airports
 - Public procurement

What is the role of the municipality?

It is the local authorities, cities and water utilities that need to turn most regulations into action

- This requires a considerable amount of know-how and expertise
- The resources are scarce – it is important to be able to prioritise and make wise decisions on actions
- Participation in activities organized by EU projects like EMPEREST is a good way to get informed and it is usually free of charge!



Thank you!

