



Commission critical of the state of implementation of the Nitrates Directive

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The European Commission has adopted a report concerning the implementation of the Nitrates Directive, which dates from 1991 and aims to protect waters against pollution caused by nitrates from agricultural sources.

The report highlights the significant lack of progress made by several Member States in their implementation of the Directive. The Commission is extremely critical of the current situation, which represents a failure to deal with serious environmental and human health problems. Among others, Belgium, Finland, Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain have failed even to complete their designations of vulnerable zones. Only Austria, Denmark, Germany, Luxembourg and Sweden have established action programmes. The Commission, however, considers that none of these comply with the requirements of the Directive.

Commissioner Ritt Bjerregaard, responsible for the environment expressed her "deep dissatisfaction with the state of play" and "deplored the implementation record of Member States". The Commission has now opened infringement proceedings against 13 of the 15 Member States relating to their failure to implement the Directive. The Commissioner is particularly concerned since the report illustrates that nitrate pollution continues to be an extremely serious problem in the EU.

Last update: 3 October 1997

Permalink: <https://cordis.europa.eu/article/id/9122-commission-critical-of-the-state-of-implementation-of-the-nitrates-directive>

European Union, 2025

