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Position Paper

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FIEC reaction on the taxonomy chapter on “Water collection, treatment and supply”

Key message

- ✦ The taxonomy chapter on water collection, treatment and supply should further stress aspects related to the lack of maintenance of water infrastructure, due to its impact on CO₂ emissions.

1) Drinking water networks

The leakage rate observed in the pipes leads water utility managers to operate their production, booster and chlorination facilities in the network at a higher level than what is necessary to meet the demand. This **overproduction leads to additional greenhouse gas emissions** from the water industry. In addition, the overproduction of drinking water plants to compensate for leaks on the network, leads to an increased consumption of reagents used in the process as well as additional road transport to deliver these products.

Moreover, the additional raw water abstraction needed to compensate for leaks is to the detriment of the ecological balance of the watercourses (reduced flows, greater sensitivity to pollution, damage to biodiversity, etc.), or to the detriment of other users of the water table (farmers).

The renewal of pipelines would allow to reduce losses very significantly and, consequently, save water resources, energy, and greenhouse gas emissions.

2) Wastewater networks

When water treatment systems are leaking, two situations arise: either groundwater enters the system or effluent escapes into the subsoil and contaminates the environment.

In the first case, **leaks in the sewerage pipes**, when they are in permanent or momentary contact with the water table, lead the water table to enter the sewerage network. This increases the volume of effluent to be pumped into lifting stations then to be treated in wastewater treatment plants, and consequently **increases the volume of induced greenhouse gases**. The performance of the treatment plant is affected and the quality of discharges into the environment will deteriorate.

In the second case, the effluent will contaminate the subsoil and possibly the water table. Being demanding in terms of plant discharges, the EU cannot ignore this diffuse pollution.

In both cases the environmental damage is significant, and **an accelerated renewal of sewerage pipes would help to remedy this.**

FIEC therefore recommends that in the "metric & threshold" section, "closing the gap between the actual leakage of the water supply network and a given target value of low leakage by at least 20%" is not presented as an option but as a prerequisite for addressing greenhouse gas emissions.