European Commission
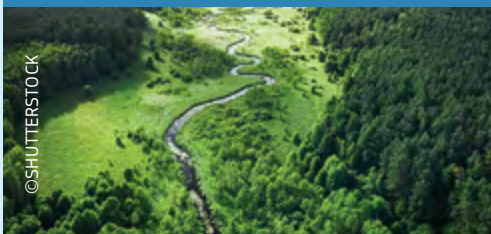
# Zero pollution: New rules on water pollution

26 October 2022
#EUGreenDeal

The EU's around **100,000 surface water bodies** (streams, rivers, lakes, wetlands, and reservoirs) and around **12,000 groundwater bodies** (water below the surface of the ground) are:

- A vital source of drinking water, healthy ecosystems and biodiversity
- An essential resource to farmers and industry
- A means of transportation
- Indispensable for electricity and heat production.

## The new EU rules concerning water pollutants will:

- Help **reduce or remove several substances** damaging health and the environment, such as PFAS, a range of pesticides, and antibiotics **from ground waters and surface waters**
- **Tighten standards** for already regulated polluting chemicals
- Make **laws easier to understand** and to apply
- Make sure that more **up-to-date and complete information** on water status is available
- Prepare the ground for **controlling new pollutants, such as microplastics** and antimicrobial genes
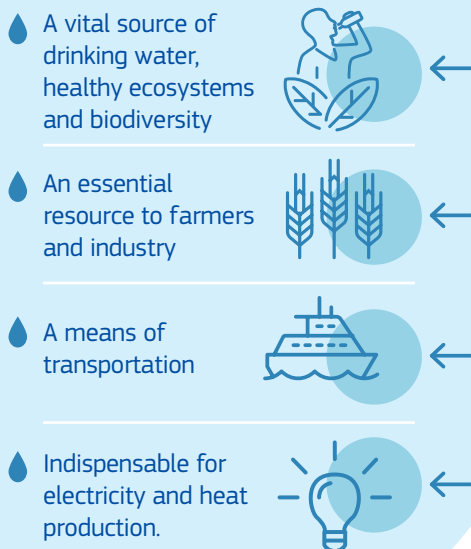
## Adding new substances to the lists of pollutants that need to be controlled:
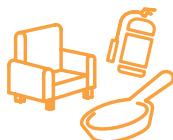
✓ **PFAS**, a large group of "forever chemicals" used in cookware, clothing and furniture, fire-fighting foam and personal care products

✓ **Glyphosate**, a herbicide used in agriculture and horticulture

✓ **Pesticides**

✓ **Bisphenol A**, a plasticiser and a component of plastic packaging

✓ Some **pharma-ceuticals** used as painkillers and anti-inflammatory drugs, as well as antibiotics

Environment

# Key measures

**➔ Improving protection of human health and ecosystems by:**

▸ Controlling 25 new pollutants – pesticides, pharmaceuticals and industrial chemicals including a group of PFAS, the "forever chemicals"

▸ Reducing the maximum concentration values for several pollutants in surface and groundwater in line with recent science

▸ Developing a common methodology to measure and monitor microplastics and antimicrobial resistance genes in water

**➔ Making application of rules easier by:**

▸ Improving and simplifying data collection on existing and emerging pollutants

▸ Faster updates of pollutants lists to keep pace with scientific developments

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# Benefits:

▸ **Improved human health**

▸ Cleaner water for **irrigation, fisheries and aquaculture**

▸ **More ecosystem services** thanks to healthier wild plants and animals, pollinators and agriculture

▸ **Reduction of costs to water consumers** – for example drink and food industries – as less water will have to be treated

▸ **Make water reuse easier** – for example in agriculture, due to higher sludge quality