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NOTE

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Delegations
Subject:	AOB for the meeting of the Council (Environment) on 12 October 2026 Request for Uniform European Health-Based Standards for Metabolites in Drinking Water - Information from Belgium

The protection of drinking water resources is receiving increasing attention on the European agenda. The adoption of the revised Drinking Water Directive has led to a stronger focus on a risk-based approach from source to tap, whereby potential risks to drinking water supplies are identified and managed at an early stage.

Belgium fully supports the objective of clean and safe drinking water as laid down in the Directive on the quality of water intended for human consumption. Belgium likewise endorses the need for a risk-based approach from source to tap, aimed, inter alia, at the identification and management of source-specific risks.

While the Drinking Water Directive provides a clear framework for drinking water quality, there are no uniform European health-based standards for metabolites, including PFAS.

Growing scientific knowledge, the economic impact and the societal demand for high-quality drinking water are bringing this issue to the forefront as a matter of urgency.

The current framework for pesticides as laid down in the Directive is a generic framework that applies to all substances that may occur in, or originate from, pesticides and relevant metabolites and does not take into account the substance-specific health risks.

The absence of a uniform framework means that no level playing field exists for important metabolites. This may undermine legal certainty and predictability for the stakeholders involved.

The issue of metabolites is particularly challenging given that, in certain cases, existing and commonly used treatment technologies do not provide an effective barrier. The absence of uniform health-based standards may have far-reaching consequences both for public water suppliers and for stakeholders operating in source protection areas. For public water suppliers, substantial investments in additional treatment technologies, or even the abandonment of abstraction sites, may become necessary.

For this reason, Belgium calls for a uniform European health-based and risk-based regulatory framework within the Drinking Water Directive that prioritises the protection of drinking water quality. The complexity of the metabolites issue requires a substance-specific, health-based and risk-based approach.

The Directive, adopted in 2020, provides for the Commission to review the regulatory framework at least every five years in light of scientific and technical progress, as well as the implementation of the risk-based approach by the Member States. Belgium invites the Commission to carry out this review at an earlier stage and to give priority attention to this issue.

Belgium calls on the Commission, in the context of this review, to:

- Give specific attention to the absence of a uniform European framework for metabolites and to the economic and health-related consequences arising from this situation.
- Explore options to better align the regulatory framework with the health risks associated with certain metabolites, including PFAS, and to further develop it on the basis of a risk-based approach.