



Brussels, 17 April 2026

Extended Producer Responsibility under the Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive remains a necessity!

Dear Member of the European Parliament,

In light of the oral question and resolution on Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) under the Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive (2024/3019, UWWTD), as proposed by MEPs of the EPP on 25 March 2026 and which is due for a vote in plenary, we would like to express our concerns regarding a (partial) withdrawal of the Directive or a 'stop-the-clock' procedure concerning Article 9 (EPR).

EPR is a central component of a fair financing solution. It ensures that the costs of removing micropollutants are not borne solely by wastewater fee payers or municipal wastewater treatment operators. Furthermore, **EPR provides important incentives** to address potential pollution at the product design stage. In this spirit, the umbrella organisations and state associations of Bavaria and Baden-Württemberg, through their respective European offices in Brussels, contributed constructively to the legislative process by submitting their own statements during the debate on the UWWTD. The **EPR already represents a political compromise** that was achieved with broad support in the European Parliament. At the same time, we recognise the existing challenges in the supply of medicinal goods. However, a weakening or withdrawal of the EPR cannot be the solution to fundamental structural problems in the pharmaceutical industry – it would be neither technically nor financially viable and would do nothing to address the longstanding causes of medicine supply shortages.

Against this backdrop, the following arguments particularly support retaining the EPR in its current form from a local perspective:

- **Without the EPR, there is no funding or planning security for the fourth treatment stage**

According to a study commissioned by the German Association of Local Public Utilities (VKU), the fourth treatment stage will incur [costs](#) of around €9 billion for expansion and operation in Germany by 2045. A repeal of the EPR would shift this burden entirely onto the local authorities or their wastewater treatment facilities, and thus onto citizens via wastewater charges. As the directive has been in force since 1 January 2025, the groundwork for concrete implementation at the local level must be laid now. Reopening the political debate or initiating 'stop-the-clock' procedures would delay planning processes that are already underway and block investments. Without the EPR, the public sector will not be able to finance the mandatory upgrade to the fourth treatment stage.

- **The pharmaceutical industry is not financially overburdened by EPR**

The cost figures cited by the pharmaceutical and cosmetics industries cannot be verified and appear to be significantly overstated. Furthermore, the industry's cost contribution will increase only gradually and will affect all companies marketing products in the EU internal market – regardless of location, which rules out competitive disadvantages and renders arguments for relocating to third countries invalid. **The Directive thus already ensures a level playing field**, as manufacturers outside the EU are also covered. In the specific design of the EPR systems, this will also be ensured in further national implementation, for example, through mandatory registration of companies from third countries as a prerequisite for access to the EU market, as well as through clearly assigned responsibilities of the importer. In this context, we can draw on experience from existing EPR schemes, including those for packaging and batteries. Furthermore, the application of EPR schemes will be simplified further through the digital harmonisation provided for in the Circular Economy Act. The European Commission is expected to present a proposal by the end of 2026. It is also argued that additional costs arising from EPR cannot be passed on under the existing price regulation for medicines. However, this overlooks the fact that the inclusion of additional costs in product prices resulting from EPR has not yet been discussed at all. Furthermore, an updated [study](#) published by the European Commission in December 2025 on the impact of EPR on the relevant sectors confirms the findings of the original impact assessment from 2022. These findings indicate that the financial burdens on manufacturers are, overall, manageable. By contrast, the counter-studies cited by the pharmaceutical industry are, to the best of our knowledge, not fully publicly available. Moreover, they remain largely unsubstantiated by independent review.

- **Incentive and steering effects required in line with the polluter-pays principle**

The polluter pays principle, as a cornerstone of EU environmental policy under Article 191(2) TFEU, was already established as a central pillar in 2007. The EPR implements this principle in practice by creating incentives for innovations aimed at reducing environmentally harmful substances, thereby making an important contribution to the European zero-pollution target. A weakening or shifting of the costs onto wastewater fee payers, on the other hand, would undermine both the environmental effectiveness and the social acceptance of the scheme, as the necessary steering effect would be lost. Wastewater fee payers already bear the bulk of the costs for treatment stages 1 to 3 and cannot achieve the necessary steering effect; this must be targeted specifically at manufacturers.

On 18 February 2026, the General Court of the European Union (GCEU) dismissed the pharmaceutical and cosmetics industries' actions against the EPR as [inadmissible](#). Furthermore, a call for a 'stop-the-clock' procedure regarding Article 9 failed to secure a majority in the [Bundesrat](#) on 27 March 2026. **The EPR is financially necessary, based on the polluter-pays principle, and will be regularly reviewed in the coming years.** It ensures the reliable implementation of the fourth treatment stage, **without placing an excessive financial burden on local authorities and citizens.** Any watering down of the scheme would jeopardise environmental targets, place an undue burden on local authorities and the municipal sector, and unnecessarily destabilise legally established processes.

Yours sincerely,



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