

Point sources



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Point sources

Point sources, such as discharges from the treatment of urban wastewater, industry and fish farms are defined as stationary locations or fixed facilities from which pollutants are discharged.

Point source pollution

Discharges from wastewater treatment plants and industry cause pollution by oxygen consuming substances, nutrients and hazardous substances. The adverse impacts depend very strongly upon the degree to which (if at all) such discharges are treated before reaching waterways.



In 2002, 90 % of the EU-25 population were connected to sewage networks. However, some of this wastewater is discharged either without or with only limited treatment. Regional differences in sewage treatment exist. For example, in the central European and Nordic countries more than 90 % of the population is connected to wastewater treatment plants, while the percentage in southern Europe and new Member States varies between 50-80 %. Some large cities discharge their wastewater nearly untreated such as Cork, Barcelona, Brighton and Milan (COM, 2004).

Over the last twenty years, marked increases have occurred both in the proportion of the population connected to wastewater treatment as well as in wastewater treatment technology. In the central Europe and the Nordic countries most wastewater now receives tertiary treatment (i.e. removal of nutrients), while in the southern and new Member States countries most wastewater receives secondary treatment, primarily by the removal of organic matter.

In general, discharges of pollutants from point sources have decreased significantly over the past 30 years. The changes are mainly due to improved purification of urban wastewater and reduced industrial discharges. In western European countries, purification is now very effective and eastern European countries are now following a similar development.

On the following pages you will find:

- The European pollutant release and transfer register
- The Urban wastewater treatment directive data viewer

Links

- CEC/ DG environment: Urban waste water treatment

Related content

See also

European pollutant release and transfer register (E-PRTR)

[<https://www.eea.europa.eu/themes/water/water-pollution/point-sources/eper>]

Temporal coverage

Dynamic

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