



## Press Release

### **ICPR publishes ground-breaking monitoring and evaluation system for micropollutants – this will allow to verify the 30 % reduction target in the Rhine River basin**

Micropollutants are pollutants dissolved in water that can only be removed with major effort and, even in low concentrations, may have negative effects on drinking water production and aquatic ecosystems. They stem from different applications such as pharmaceuticals, industrial chemicals, or pesticides.

On European level, the Zero Pollution Package now aims to reduce pollution caused by these micropollutants. This effort is concretised by the proposals to update the substance lists for the Water Framework Directive, the Urban Wastewater Directive, and the Industrial Emissions Directive. The European Commission has published the [Zero Pollution Monitoring and Outlook Approach](#) in December. The states in the Rhine River basin are also already making considerable efforts at different levels to reduce micropollutants.

The International Commission for the Protection of the Rhine (ICPR) has been dealing intensely with micropollutants for more than ten years and has published the [ICPR technical report no. 253](#) with recommended measures for their reduction in 2019. At the 16<sup>th</sup> Conference of Rhine Ministers on 13 February 2020 in Amsterdam, the [programme "Rhine 2040"](#) was adopted, which defines as a target for the Rhine catchment a reduction of micropollutant inputs by at least 30 % by 2040.

To be able to regularly review the reduction target, a monitoring and evaluation system was developed. This Europe-wide pioneering system is now being published as [ICPR technical report no. 287](#) in German, French and Dutch. An English version will also be available soon.

#### **58 substances, 48 measuring stations**

For the three emission areas for micropollutants ("wastewater treatment plants", "industry and commerce" and "agriculture"), 58 substances are monitored. These substances are representative and may have negative effects on the protected goods "drinking water" and "aquatic ecosystems". Examples are the painkiller diclofenac, melamine, which is used among others in the wood industry, or the herbicide nicosulfuron. The monitored substances also include perfluorinated and polyfluorinated alkyl compounds (PFAS) originating from various sources. The substance lists are reviewed every three years so that new indicator substances can be included or substances that are no longer relevant can be deleted.

Monitoring for the emission areas wastewater treatment plants and industry is carried out by monthly measurements at the 12 monitoring stations from Weil am Rhein near

Basel to Maassluis near Rotterdam, four of which are located at the major tributaries Aare, Main, Neckar and Moselle. For micropollutants from agriculture, 36 monitoring stations were defined at smaller water bodies in agricultural areas in the Rhine catchment.

The measurements in the Rhine water are completed by a suspended matter measurement programme by the German Federal Institute of Hydrology (BfG), which will examine the suspended matter for 50 substances at three measuring stations monthly. Suspended solids are organic or mineral solids transported by the river in the form of fine particles. They are a good indicator of the long-term trend in pollution.

### **Reporting every three years**

The reduction target is assessed per substance and measuring station. The period 2016-2018 serves as a reference. To achieve the reduction target of 30 % by 2040, the load must be reduced by an average of 1.5 % per year for each substance. Due to the highly fluctuating concentrations, a separate assessment approach was chosen for agriculture, which is based on the number of times in which a defined value is exceeded.

In the future, the reporting will indicate in tabular form for each substance and each measuring station whether the reduction measured so far is sufficient (target will be achieved), just sufficient (target will be achieved if efforts remain on the same level) or insufficient (target will only be achieved if efforts are intensified). The three-stage overall evaluation is visualised using the traffic light colours.

An overall evaluation with reporting in the form of an ICPR technical report will be carried out every three years, for the first time in 2024. During this regular evaluation, it will also be reviewed whether it is necessary to sharpen the reduction target.

### **Contact for queries**

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### **Background information on the ICPR**

*In the International Commission for the Protection of the Rhine (ICPR), Switzerland, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Luxembourg and the European Union have been working together for 70 years on the basis of a convention under international law to reconcile the diverse uses and protection of water bodies. With a view to implementing European directives, the cross-border cooperation was extended to Austria, Liechtenstein, Italy and the Belgian region Wallonia.*

*At present, Veronica Manfredi of the European Commission holds the ICPR presidency. She and the different ICPR fora are supported by the international staff of the permanent secretariat in Koblenz (Germany).*

See also [www.iksr.org/en/](http://www.iksr.org/en/) and <https://twitter.com/ICPRrhine>.