



Press Release

ICPR publishes third river basin management plan Rhine – Good overview of the state of the water bodies and the need for action

For the third time since 2009, the International Commission for the Protection of the Rhine (ICPR) has published a river basin management plan for the International River Basin District Rhine. The report provides an overview of the state of the Rhine and its largest tributaries and the associated groundwater and summarises which measures the states will take in the period 2022-2027 in order to achieve the good status of the water bodies. Compared to the period 2016-2021, there is a slight improvement. Considerable efforts will still be necessary to make further progress.

According to the EU Water Framework Directive (Directive 2000/60/EC), every six years, the catchment of the river Rhine prepare a river basin management plan for the International River Basin District Rhine, which comprises the Rhine and all tributaries with a catchment area of more than 2,500 square kilometres. The non-EU states of Switzerland and Liechtenstein also participated in the elaboration process.

After a six-month public participation from April to October 2021, the river basin management plan 2022-2027 was published on 22 March 2022 under the following link:

<https://www.iksr.org/en/eu-directives/european-water-framework-directive/river-basin-management-plan-2021-1>

10 % of surface waters in good ecological status

According to the European Water Framework Directive, the good status should be achieved for all water bodies by 2027 at the latest. For this purpose, the Rhine and its tributaries are divided into sections, the so-called surface water bodies and for these an assessment is made. The latest results show that in the International River Basin District Rhine, 10 % of the larger water bodies are currently in good ecological status. This is an improvement of 7 percentage points compared to 2016.

The ecological status is primarily determined by various bio-indicators. For example, there were improvements in the fish fauna in the Middle Rhine and in the invertebrate microorganisms in the Lower Rhine, the so-called macrozoobenthos. It has to be taken into account that the overall assessment of the status is not based on the mean value, but on the so-called "one-out-all-out principle" according to the water framework directive. The status is determined by the worst indicator in each case. Improvements in individual biological quality elements are therefore not reflected in the overall assessment if the assessment. Therefore, the bio-indicators are also shown individually in the maps in the management plan.

For 2027, it is predicted that one third of the surface water bodies shall achieve the good ecological status.

Better picture for groundwater

A better picture is seen in the assessment of the status of the groundwater, although groundwater, partly due to very long retention times, reacts slowly to changes and it thus takes longer for measures already implemented to have a positive effect. The assessment of the status is based on the quantity and quality of the groundwater.

Today, 97% of groundwater bodies are already in good quantitative status. 75% are classified as good in terms of their quality; this is an increase of 8 percentage points compared to 2016. By 2027, the proportion of groundwater bodies in a good qualitative chemical status is expected to increase to just under 80%.

Numerous measures have been taken by the states in the Rhine catchment over the last 6 years to improve the status of the water bodies. Examples are the opening of several large fish passes, the partial opening of the locks in the Haringvliet dam in 2018, the renaturation of rivers and streams in the catchment, the restoration of floodplains and the reduction of water pollution.

Water bodies have been altered and polluted by humans for centuries. Therefore, further measures are required, which are explained in the river basin management plan of the ICPR and can be found in detail in the national river basin management plans.

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 <https://www.iksr.org/en/> and <https://twitter.com/ICPRrhine>.