



## Press release

### Effective reduction of micropollutants in the Rhine and its tributaries

#### ICPR recommendations

**Koblenz, 06 February 2019**

***The International Commission for the Protection of the Rhine (ICPR) has published recommendations on how states in the Rhine catchment can further reduce micropollutant inputs into waters. They particularly concern the areas of wastewater collection and wastewater treatment systems, agriculture, industry and trade.***

The ICPR has been keeping an eye on the relevance of different micropollutants and existing approaches to reducing their polluting waters for more than 10 years. The exposure situation has been published (ICPR Technical Report No. 246) and different possibilities of reducing pollution exist.

Within the ICPR, the existing approaches have been evaluated at a national level. The result: Joint recommendations to reduce micropollutants in the waters of the Rhine catchment. They focus on municipal systems collecting and treating wastewater containing pharmaceutical residues, radiocontrast agents and other groups of substances, on agriculture, in particular pesticides and on industry and trade, as far as different industrial chemicals are concerned.

Above all and to the extent possible, measures at source are to be preferred. However, they will not be able to completely solve the problem. Often, a combination of measures at source and including wastewater treatment are required, in order to avoid inputs into water bodies.

For municipal systems collecting and treating wastewater and based on priority criteria and experience, the ICPR recommends to choose relevant wastewater treatment plants which should be equipped with an additional purification stage (e.g. ozonation, active carbon, etc.).

With respect to handling radiocontrast agents, the ICPR recommends to check, whether and how it is possible to separately collect wastewater from hospitals and x-ray practices or to extend existing collection together with accompanying information campaigns.

As far as agriculture is concerned, not only individual agents are to be taken into account, but also their decomposition products and metabolites. Additionally, measures of the action plans concerning plant protection agents must be consequently and

constructively implemented together with actors in agriculture, retail and consumer organisations. The promotion of environmentally friendly and water-friendly agriculture (in particular organic farming) is also recommended.

For industry and trade, the ICPR recommends discussing and regulating the pre-treatment of wastewater sub-streams at national level. For persistent or persistent and mobile substances, it is recommended to consider a reduction requirement for precautionary reasons. Particular attention should be paid to substances of very high concern<sup>1</sup>. A stronger dialogue with industry and trade is recommended. Also, in addition to the sum parameters COD and/or TOC, specific or, where applicable, effect-based requirements for individual substances must also be taken into consideration.

The ICPR will also continue to regularly exchange information on new developments and experiences with regard to micropollutants in the Rhine catchment.

The ICPR recommendations form a basis for further discussions on a new "Rhine 2040" programme to be adopted at the next Conference of Rhine Ministers in Amsterdam on 13 February 2020.

The ICPR recommendations have been published on [www.iksr.org](http://www.iksr.org) as ICPR Technical Report No. 253.

### **Further information**

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### **Short information**

*As Rhine bordering countries, Switzerland, France, Germany and the Netherlands as well as Luxemburg and the European Community co-operate within the International Commission for the Protection of the Rhine (ICPR) on the basis of a treaty under international law. The President (at the time being Mrs. Martine Rohn-Brossard from Switzerland) and the different ICPR fora are supported by the international staff of the permanent secretariat in Koblenz (Germany). Furthermore, the secretariat gives support to the countries in the Rhine watershed when implementing the European Water Framework Directive (Directive 2000/60/EC) and the European Directive on the Assessment and Management of Flood Risks (Directive 2007/60/EC). To this end, cross-border co-operation was extended to Austria, Liechtenstein, Italy and the Belgian region Wallonia. The working languages of the ICPR are German, French and Dutch. For detailed information on the ICPR please browse to the ICPR website [www.iksr.org](http://www.iksr.org).*

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<sup>1</sup> REACH Regulation (EC) No. 1907/2006