



PRESS RELEASE

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The Rhine bordering countries have decided on a comprehensive strategy to address the problem of micro-pollutants from municipal and industrial wastewater. The decision was taken by the International Commission for the Protection of the Rhine (ICPR) and the Coordinating Committee Rhine in their recent joint Plenary Assembly in Mainz. This is an important step towards securing good water quality in the Rhine, its tributaries and groundwater on the long term. It is another landmark of ICPR work 60 years after the first meeting of the „Wastewater Commission“ founded on 11 July 1950 in Basel and following the extremely successful cleaning up of the Rhine.

Today, wastewater contains most varied micro-pollutants, e.g. remnants of household chemicals, body care products and pharmaceuticals such as antibiotics and hormone-like substances which are not eliminated in the wastewater treatment plants. Very low quantities of these pollutants are detectable in waters which may detrimentally affect life in the Rhine and drinking water production.

This **strategy** aims at reducing **micro-pollutant inputs from municipal and industrial wastewater** (see www.iksr.org, Technical Report no. 181) into waters. Within this strategy, problems will be comprehensively described and existing gaps of knowledge concerning the eco-toxicological assessment of micro-pollutants will be filled. 10 groups of substances were chosen among the great variety of chemical substances for which, with the help of indicator substances, the quantities consumed and applied, pathways of input into waters, monitoring data from surface waters, groundwater and drinking water as well as quality criteria and potential measures will be analysed and summarized in evaluation reports. Based on these data, the most efficient measures will be presented for each substance group. This comprises a broad range of important measures at source (e.g. licensing of substances, restrictions of use) as well as technical measures in key wastewater treatment plants.

The evaluation reports for **medicinal products for human use** (see Technical Report no. 182) and for **biocidal products and anti-corrosive agents** (see Technical Report no. 183) have been accomplished and are available on the ICPR website, www.iksr.org. Municipal wastewater treatment plants have been identified as main input pathway of medicinal products for human use into surface waters. This also applies to many biocidal products and anti-corrosive agents. The highest concentrations of these substances are found in those Rhine tributaries with a high share of (biologically) treated municipal wastewater and in the lower section of the Rhine. The evaluation reports include proposals for measures aimed at reducing residues of these groups of substances in waters.

Plant protection agents partly discharged with wastewater and partly flowing into waters following other pathways belong to the micro-pollutants. A similar strategy aimed at avoiding and reducing micro-pollutants originating from so called diffuse sources will be drafted during the year to come.

Further information

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Short description of the ICPR

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 and the different ICPR fora are supported by the international staff of the permanent secretariat in Koblenz (Germany). Furthermore, the secretariat is supporting the implementation of the European Water Framework Directive (directive 2000/60/EC) and of the Flood Management Directive (directive 2007/60/EC). To this end, cross-border co-operation was extended to Austria, Liechtenstein 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.ksr.org.