

PRESS RELEASE

European coalition of drinking water suppliers calls for preservation of the Water Framework Directive and intensification of drinking water protection measures

Karlsruhe, 02.12.2019: More than 170 European water suppliers have joined forces in the ERM Coalition to represent the need for clean drinking water of 188 million inhabitants in the catchment areas of Rhine, Danube, Elbe, Meuse and Scheldt. They demand the unrestricted continuation of the European Water Framework Directive (WFD) and a concretisation of the Directive with regard to criteria for the protection of European drinking water resources.

In their letter to the new European Commission, the suppliers refer to the increasing threat to drinking water resources posed by various trace substances and to inadequate measures for their preventive and sustainable protection. The aim must be to preserve the water quality by preventive water protection in such a way that drinking water can continued to be produced with near-natural and sustainable treatment methods.

Existing European regulations such as for setting the environmental quality standards for surface water quality are not sufficiently geared to the protection of drinking water resources and are not coherent with EU directives and regulations that regulate the marketing and use of substances relevant to drinking water in other domains. Here the drinking water suppliers demand a stronger orientation of the instruments of the REACH Regulation and the Common Agricultural Policy towards the objectives of drinking water protection according to the WFD. A European discharge register for the transboundary recording of trace substance emissions in rivers must be established as an accompanying measure.

The members of the ERM coalition refer to the special importance of the precautionary principle for water management. In view of the large number of anthropogenic substances for which there is no sufficient scientific evaluation with regard to their health relevance, the approval must be strictly controlled, or a precautionary value defined which guarantees comprehensive preventive water and drinking water protection.

The water suppliers call for effective compliance with the prohibition of deterioration in the WFD and the introduction and enforcement of sanction mechanisms towards the polluter should this prohibition be violated.

Wolfgang Deinlein, Managing Director of the International Association of Waterworks in the Rhine Catchment Area (IAWR) and ERM coalition member: "Against the background of climate change, our drinking water resources are of the highest value. Their protection must be given particular priority, so that water resources are not polluted in the long term, and clean drinking water is also available to the next generation".

The text of the position paper can be found in the appendix to this press release.

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