

Coordinated strategy for the transnational control and management of trace contaminants in surface water bodies in the Danube River Basin under changing pressures, challenges and targets

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The European water quality sector is undergoing a significant wave of regulatory and policy changes, with ambitious objectives. At the same time, it is facing major pressures and challenges, including those arising from climate change, geopolitical insecurity, and rising costs. In this context, the transfer of trace contaminant pollution across borders in a transnational river basin obtains environmental, societal, political and legal dimensions even broader and more complex than before.

In two Interreg Danube projects (Danube Hazard m³c and Tethys), several tools, procedures, and workflows have been developed, tested, and demonstrated in order to improve the entire process from monitoring to emission modelling and risk assessment, with the goal of establishing robust, long-term emission inventories and prioritising measures to reduce water pollution. Alongside the development of technical solutions and to extensive capacity-building and harmonisation efforts, the main bottlenecks and obstacles to the effective control and management of trace contaminants in the Danube River Basin (DRB) were investigated, such as national differences in data availability and in the implementation of EU legislation.

Based on the outcomes and lessons learned from these two projects, as well as from other ongoing international projects and initiatives, a joint transnational strategy for the DRB is being jointly developed. Given the complexity of the new water quality targets and objectives, and the heterogeneity of the DRB's conditions, constraints, capacities and possibilities, the strategy will set out specific priorities, coordinated actions and measures for the DRB, considering the three pillars of monitoring, modelling and management.

This presentation will briefly outline the draft strategy, which is expected to be finalised by the end of June 2026 and be subsequently integrated by the ICPDR into the Danube River Basin Management Plan 2027.