

International Conference “Europe-Asia Transboundary Water Cooperation”

Panel Discussion "Disaster risk reduction and prevention, preparedness and response to accidental water pollution":

Panellist:

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Questions to the panellists/Answers

Heide Jekel will cover the experiences in the international Rhine and Elbe basins

1. How did the cooperation on disaster risk reduction and prevention, preparedness and response to accidental water pollution develop in your basin/region?

Rhine Basin:

- Over 60 years old convention, International Commission on the Protection of the Rhine (ICPR)
- Countries along the Rhine work together
- Sandoz accident 1986, polluted fire extinguishing water has been discharged into the Rhine near Basel, killed a lot of fish, drinking water production from Rhine water had to be interrupted accident was a wake up call
- Follow up of the accident: Warning and Alarm plan, Recommendations on prevention of accidents and security of industrial plants.
- Rhine alarm model (flow time model)
- Warning and Alarm plan: Warning and information, special format, responsible authorities to forward the warning/information, yearly reports
- Rhine is the blue print in this sector for other international commissions in Europe

Elbe Basin:

- Over 20 years old convention, International Commission on the Protection of the Elbe (ICPE)
- countries in the basin work together, Germany and Czech Republic mainly
- Warning and Alarm plan
- ALAMO, flow time model, will be extended to tributaries, tracer tests are planned in the near future
- several recommendations e.g. on fire extinguishing water, on storage facilities for harmful substances

2. In which areas and how do you cooperate with other riparian countries on disaster risk reduction and prevention, preparedness and response to accidental water pollution in your basin? (Comment Jekel: Questions 1 and 2 overlap from my point of view.)

- permanent expert groups in the commissions in both basins, which verifies the warning and alarm plan, updates it etc.

- regular testing of the warning and alarm plans, does it function, where are weak points and improvement possibilities?
- exchange among the commissions takes place (e.g. new warning and alarm plan of the International Meuse Commission, working electronically, with maps, plan is presented in other commissions to exchange experience)
- exchange with the association of drinking water providers along the Rhine
- several bilateral treaties on mutual help and assistance in case of catastrophes and accidents (not only water)

3. What works well, what still needs to be improved?

- warning and alarm plans in both basins work well and are continuously improved
- regular testing from time to time proves that not everything works well, the agreed procedures in the plan are not always followed 100 %, but only minor deficits sometimes, but very seldom, accidents are detected too late, so that the warning and alarm plans can not fulfil their objective, or they are detected, but the relevant authorities on the local or regional level, forget to start the warning and alarm procedure
- Warning or information comes sometimes too late, because the relevant authority starts the procedure too late, often a problem for the drinking water providers
- To start the flow time models it is important to know where and how many of a substance has been discharged, polluters have to cooperate, works well with the big companies along the Rhine