



**International Conference**  
**WATER RESOURCES PROTECTION 2019**  
**17<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> June 2019, Bratislava**

## **CONCLUSIONS OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE**

The conference was attended by 130 participants from 6 countries and the stakeholders from 6 international institutions and programmes. The objectives of the conference were as follows:

- To establish a platform for the exchange of experience and to create enabling conditions for the protection and safeguarding of sufficient high-quality water resources, with the emphasis on drinking water resources.
- To present approaches and achievements in the preparation and implementation of strategic, conceptual and planning documents in order to meet the 2030 Agenda objectives and create the conditions for achieving good water status under the EU Water Framework Directive.
- To discuss important issues on how to adopt and implement climate change adaptation measures with an impact on the availability and quality of water resources.
- To involve a wide range of experts both at internationally and national level, and to engage representatives of the sectors concerned - not only the environment, but also agriculture and health in order to present approaches and views promoting progress and contributing to the provision of water of the required quality and quantity.

**The presentations, panel discussion and the follow up discussion with the participants of the conference, the following conclusions and recommendations are taken:**

1. We all realize that water is an indispensable natural resource of un-quantifiable value that makes life on Earth all over the society, and it therefore requires the universal protection.
2. We are aware of the fact that good water in sufficient quality and quantity is not self-evident and we face challenges related to negative impacts of climate change and other global and local changes.
3. Considering the special nature of water resources, which do not recognize administrative borders, it is essential to continue water protection efforts at both international and national levels. We therefore highlight the presented activities undertaken by UN, OECD, EU, EEA, ICPDR and GWP, as well the cooperation of stakeholders at international and local levels.

4. We emphasise the importance of exchanging experiences and discussions with the involvement of stakeholders not only within the V4 countries and the EU member states, but also other countries within different territorial clusters. An interesting example presented at the conference was the water management in Israel, a country with a shortage of freshwater resources. It showed that strategic planning and measures taken in Israel to tackle drinking water shortage bring good results to the society.
5. We are aware of the new challenges that require strengthening public health protection by strict control of drinking water quality monitoring programs, applying the risk-based assessment principle. We therefore welcome a revised version of the Directive on the quality of water intended for human consumption.
6. At national levels, we are preparing to implement the revised Drinking Water Directive. Although we are at different stages of preparation, the exchange of experience regarding the preparation of monitoring programs, support implementation documents that highlight the importance of risk analysis in the water system – the methodology for risk assessment and guidance, especially for small water suppliers – all this is very important and beneficial.
7. In the process of preparing the next planning cycle and updating river basin management plans, it is necessary to understand the protection of waters in a broad context. The negative impacts of climate change (drought, floods) and synergy between sectoral policies, including biodiversity and landscape policies, should be considered as far as possible.
8. We also understand the sustainable use of water as part of activities supporting the transition to a circular economy that requires a change in production and consumption patterns. In EU-relevant documents with regards to circular economy, we recommend increasing attention to water.
9. It is necessary to take full advantage of suitable mix of financial instruments and financial sources and to look for new and innovative ways of financial mechanisms linked to the challenges we face in ensuring sufficient water of a high quality.
10. In order to ensure the water monitoring in the required scope and quality, it is necessary to ensure skilled and trained personnel, and financial capacity. Especially emerging substances - micropollutants, microplastics, pharmaceuticals whose impact is not well known - require an increased attention. Research and development must also be encouraged in this area.
11. Implementation of the State Environmental Remediation Program in the Slovak Republic is one of the tools to reduce surface and groundwater pollution in Slovakia. It is essential to ensure adequate financial resources for the remediation of environmental burdens in the next programming period.
12. The most significant diffuse source of pollution is agricultural activity associated with the use of fertilizers and plant protection products. Some findings in groundwater quality monitoring regarding the content of dangerous organic substances are alarming. Compliance with the legislation adopted to protect agricultural land from chemical pollution is necessary, having in mind the high percentage of the designated vulnerable areas. It is also important to consistently

apply integrated pest management, the principles of which should be easier to apply in practice and better controlled.

13. It is essential to educate farmers to ensure their responsible approach to land management, the use of fertilizers and plant protection products.
14. Progress towards meeting environmental objectives and securing water of a high quality cannot be achieved without an adequate knowledge base, sufficient staffing, and participation of various groups of the society, including the public. We therefore call for the need to promote science and research, new innovative methods for predicting development (megatrends, forecast studies, new scenarios for climate and hydrosphere development), as well as supporting educational and awareness-raising activities.

### Panel discussion, key messages linking water protection and climate change:

15. The European level is crucial. Water is a key issue for every EU citizen.
16. At the Slovak level, all strategic documents (Slovak Water Plan, Slovak Climate Change Adaptation Strategy, Action Plan to address Drought and Water Scarcity - VALUE IS WATER, Strategy of Environmental Policy of the Slovak Republic until 2030) are prepared and approved and further are being developed (such as update of Slovak Water Plan and the Action Plan for Adaptation to Climate Change). The challenge is to implement adaptation measures effectively.
17. There must be a strong cooperation as it is a cross-cutting theme (climate change, water management, agriculture and other areas).
18. Technical (grey) and green infrastructure measures must complement each other.
19. It will be necessary to focus on the comprehensive revitalization of the country and to improve water retention in the country. Current topics for the near future are as follows: the development of green infrastructure and retention water reservoirs, and the reconstruction of drainage channels and irrigation systems.
20. When construction of water infrastructure, it is necessary to act as soon as possible and not wait for an ideal strategic or other framework, because no-action and delays in infrastructure upgrades are ultimately costly.
21. A major challenge is the degree of uncertainty that climate change brings (for example, to which scenario get prepared). However, this challenge cannot hinder mitigation and adaptation to the adverse effects of climate change; on the contrary. The need to promote science and research and continuous cooperation with the academic sector should also be highlighted.

In Bratislava, June 18, 2019

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