

**Contribution by Austria**

Q1: What conflicts exist in your country between different types of water uses (e.g. agriculture, industry, tourism, among others)? What are the main challenges in your country concerning water resources and wastewater management that impact on the realisation of human rights?

According to Article 13 Water Framework Directive 2000/60/EC member states of the EC have to ensure that a river basin management plan is drawn up. It is a plan based on river basin districts.

The national river basin management plan for Austria (NGP 2009, cf. *Nationale Gewässerbewirtschaftungsplanverordnung 2009, Federal Law Gazette II Nr. 103/2010*) illustrates the different economic types of water uses in Austria (agriculture, production and services, electricity generation, water supply and waste water treatment).

Water supply and appropriate sanitation services (sewer systems, wastewater treatment facilities) are provided on community level. The communities provide their own rules based on Regional Law<sup>1</sup> as far as water supply (*Wasserversorgungsgesetze*) and waste water treatment (*Kanalisationsgesetze*) are concerned. For adequate wastewater discharge, based on Regional Laws there is the obligation to be connected to public sewer systems within specific distances (distances vary among the regions). As a result, about 93% of the population are connected to public sewer systems with adequate wastewater treatment. The remaining 7% are connected to individual wastewater treatment facilities which have to meet legal requirements in terms of water tightness and treatment performance.

Thus, the Austrian water supply and waste water treatment is organised locally and is characterised by small structures.

In terms of wastewater management, Austria is fully in line with provisions of the EU-Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive (91/271/EEC) in terms of coverage of agglomerations with sewer systems as well as in terms of treatment performance of wastewater treatment plants. 93% of the population are connected to public sewer systems with adequate wastewater treatment. In terms of water supply, about 90% of the population are served by public water supply, the remaining 10% are served by individual supply systems, but all are served with drinking water of best quality due to traditional and consequent resource protection policy.

In general, there is no conflict between different types of water uses due to water availability.

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<sup>1</sup> i.e. Law of the nine federal regions (*Bundesländer*) of Austria.

Q2: How are different water uses prioritized in national legislation and policies? How are these priorities implemented in practice? Are there any implementation challenges? If yes, please elaborate on them and on measures taken to overcome them.

The national river basin management plan provides a synopsis of strategies of different fields related to water uses in order to reduce pressures on the water bodies by defining programmes of measures.

Possible measures related to the protection of groundwater are:

- Bans of direct discharge of pollutants into the groundwater, § 32a Austrian Water Act (*WRG 1959*)
- Limitation of discharges of pollutants into the groundwater: permissions according to § 32 Austrian Water Act (*WRG 1959*) and provisions in the context of the Nitrates Action Program according to EU Nitrates Directive 91/676/EEC
- Inspections regarding the compliance with the provisions of the Austrian Water Act

Permissions are granted if the intended water use does not interfere with public interests and does not violate existing water rights (existing permissions for water use). In this sense, public interests as defined by § 105 Austrian Water Act are inter alia, the good quality of water resources, the common use of public waters, security of water supply for drinking water. They have highest priority among other water uses.

Q3: What strategies, approaches and mechanisms guide water resources and wastewater management? How do these ensure that the basic needs of the entire population are met?

Water resources and wastewater management is guided primarily by principles set out in the Austrian Water Act and its associated regulations, inter alia the regulation on defining environmental quality standards for surface waters (QZV Chemie OG, QZV Ökologie OG) and groundwater (QZV Chemie GW), regulation on general limitation of wastewater emissions to surface waters and public sewer systems (AAEV), regulation on quality of groundwater, regulation on river basin management plans, drinking water regulations.

Generally, groundwater and spring waters need to be kept clean at a level it can be used as drinking water.

Examples of possible measures related to the protection of groundwater are given above (see question 2).

Another instrument is the formation of water sanctuaries: water supply facilities can be protected by water sanctuaries that are put up by permission. Public water supply can also be protected by water sanctuaries. These are mainly established by Regional law regarding specific river basin districts and can involve various measures (e.g. bans and restrictions).

Another strategy is the provision of adequate incentives for users to use water resources efficiently (keyword: water pricing): the current water tariff policy is based on the Austrian Water Act (*WRG 1959*) as well as on the “*Finanzverfassungsgesetz*” (Fiscal constitutional law) and the “*Finanzausgleichsgesetz*” (Act on redistribution of income between the Federal State, the Länder and the municipalities of Austria) and should promote the sustainable use of water by consumers, suppliers and users in general. Water supply and wastewater treatment services are subject to water prices levied by communities. The average water tariff for water supply was about € 1.15/m<sup>3</sup> and € 1.9/m<sup>3</sup> for wastewater discharge in 2006 with regional differences (KPC 2009). Cost recovery level in water supply and waste water treatment was 99,8% respectively 89,9% in 2006.

Altogether, the above mentioned actions have successfully led to nationwide coverage of population with services to meet their basic needs.

Q4: How does your organisation or Government ensure transparency, access to information and participation on decision-making regarding water resources and wastewater management?

Austria has a long tradition in providing free access to data on water quantity and water quality to everyone.

Public information and consultation is now done on the basis of the National River Basin Management Plan (NGP 2009, cf. *Nationale Gewässerbewirtschaftungsplanverordnung 2009, Federal Law Gazette II Nr. 103/2010*) in line with EU water legislation. During the planning process for the National River Basin Management Plan and also during each update process, Austria allows six months to comment in writing on those documents in order to allow active involvement and consultation. There are public presentations and information given via internet by WISA (Water Information System Austria - <http://wisa.lebensministerium.at/>).

The main portal for access is WISA (Water Information System Austria – <http://wisa.lebensministerium.at/>, according to the Austrian Water Act (§59 *WRG 1959*) – an online platform for the provision of relevant information for water resources management in Austrian River Basins and for public participation. WISA provides public access to

- data from national water quality monitoring of groundwater and surface waters (<http://wisa.lebensministerium.at/article/archive/13193>)
- data warehouse with statistically processed data from national water quality monitoring of groundwater and surface waters (<http://wisa.lebensministerium.at/article/archive/13193>)
- WebGIS systems for presentation of water-related GIS data
  - [http://gis.lebensministerium.at/wisa/frames/index.php?PHPSESSID=92c2edf6e3481e14d0dd4faf4e2d6ca0&146=true&gui\\_id=WisaStandard](http://gis.lebensministerium.at/wisa/frames/index.php?PHPSESSID=92c2edf6e3481e14d0dd4faf4e2d6ca0&146=true&gui_id=WisaStandard)
  - <http://gis.umweltbundesamt.at/austria/wasser/Default.faces>

Further Information about results of water-related environmental monitoring programmes as well as information about the state of wastewater treatment which informs about the status of water resources can be found at :

- <http://www.lebensministerium.at/wasser/wasserqualitaet.html>

Information related to flood risk and natural hazards is accessible for the public under:

- <http://www.hora.gv.at/> (awareness raising initiative)

The water sector is mainly steered by EU water legislation. Reporting to the European Commission on a regular basis is part of the obligations to member states. Data and facts reported to the European Commission are often published at the national level:

- Reporting obligations for different water-related EU-Directives (e.g. WFD -2000/60/EC; Nitrates Directive -91/676/EC; Urban waste water treatment directive -91/271/EC; Floods Directive -2007/60/EC, Bathing Waters Directive -2006/7/EC...)
- Regular reporting of WISE - State of the Environment on river quality, lakes quality and groundwater quality to EIONET/EEA (<http://cdr.eionet.europa.eu/at>)
- Reporting on national level by annual publication of data on water quality in surface waters and groundwater as well as on water quantity (<http://www.lebensministerium.at/wasser/wasserqualitaet.html>)

Further instruments to inform the (general) public:

- publications e.g.
  - [http://www.lebensministerium.at/publikationen/wasser/archiv/eine\\_leitlinie\\_fuer\\_unser\\_wasser.html](http://www.lebensministerium.at/publikationen/wasser/archiv/eine_leitlinie_fuer_unser_wasser.html)
  - [http://www.lebensministerium.at/publikationen/wasser/archiv/guter\\_zustand\\_fuer\\_unsere\\_gewaesser.html](http://www.lebensministerium.at/publikationen/wasser/archiv/guter_zustand_fuer_unsere_gewaesser.html)
  - [http://www.lebensministerium.at/publikationen/wasser/wasserwirtschaft\\_wasserpolitik/aktiv\\_fuer\\_unser\\_wasser.html](http://www.lebensministerium.at/publikationen/wasser/wasserwirtschaft_wasserpolitik/aktiv_fuer_unser_wasser.html)

**Q5: In your view, should water resources and wastewater management be reflected in the Sustainable Development Goals /Post-2015 development framework?**

The discussions on a common EU position in the process of defining a Post-2015 development framework are still on-going and Austria takes actively part in these discussions. At this point there are no priorities on specific focus areas in the discussions but water resources and wastewater management are a longstanding priority of the Austrian development cooperation.