

Verbund

# ICPDR - Stakeholder Consultation Workshop "Our Opinion – Our Danube"

## Statement on behalf of VGB

Gerd Frik, June 29<sup>th</sup>, 2021

### General

- Electricity generation coming from climate friendly, renewable hydropower contributes in a relevant matter to the reduction of CO2 emissions and basically supports climate protection.
- Close to 100% of the electricity generation of VERBUND, Austria's leading electricity company and one of the largest producers of electricity from hydropower in Europe is based on this renewable hydropower.
- In recent years, Hydro Power already has been involved both in the implementation of measures regarding the ecological goals of the WFD (fish passability, river restoration), as well as in research projects regarding WFD relevant research questions (e.g. sediment management, hydropeaking).

**Our statement to the RBMP is based on these two cornerstones,**

- **to support the EC climate policy goal to cover the energy demand from renewable sources of at least 32 % by 2030**
- **to continue to ensure efficient and sustainable implementation of the objectives of the WFD**

With this statement **we would like to focus on the hydromorphological alterations** of surface waters



### General

Regarding these two cornerstones and built on our implementation experience to date as well as on research projects, workshops and discussions with various stakeholders, we have identified the following approaches which have proven to be promising in the implementation of the WFD:

- Involving all stakeholders in the responsibility
- Definition of scientifically sound, comprehensible and achievable objectives
- Implementation of efficient measures with a high ecological benefit based on proven knowledge
- Clear differentiation between natural and heavily modified (HMWB) waters
- Targeted, uncomplicated funding mechanisms

**We appreciate that many of these approaches are also explicitly mentioned in the RBMP.**



## Integration & Synergies (Involving all stakeholders in the responsibility)

- A central feature of success in the ongoing implementation of measures is the **constructive and objective cooperation between the energy sector, ministries, research institutions and other stakeholders**. This common path must be significantly strengthened in the future.
- **The changes in our water bodies follow the demands of society as a whole** and are by no means caused solely by the use of energy to generate renewable energy.
- Well-known examples of the many other interests of use are:
  - Straightening of river sections, e.g. for land reclamation for settlements, and to secure agricultural and forestry land use claims,
  - interventions to stabilise riverbeds,
  - improvement of flood protection,
  - interventions to make the river navigable, especially for tourism purposes,
  - demands of fishery use
  - the preservation of groundwater levels for drinking water production,
  - the discharge of waste water.
- The hydropower sector has taken comprehensive steps in its own area of responsibility in recent years, often of a pilot nature, to improve water ecology deficits.
- **In the sense of joint responsibility for our waters, it is urged that other stakeholders also participate more strongly than before in the elimination of deficits.**

## Scientific basis of measures, monitoring, best practice

The importance of a scientific based development of a measures, monitoring measures effectiveness with regard to the biological quality elements, and analyzing synergies between flood protection measures and hydromorphological measures is also from our point of view of overwhelming importance.

- There are still considerable knowledge deficits in many areas (e.g. sediment management, residual water, migratory behaviour of fish).
- In addition, there are strategic deficits in connection with multiple pressures or uses (multiple stressors) with resulting conflicts of objectives.
- Sound knowledge must first be created in order to identify sustainable measures that are compatible with the interests of the energy industry and the climate goals.
- **We appreciate the approach to implement measures only on the basis of scientifically sound principles.**

## Heavily modified waters (HMWB)

- **The approach taken so far shows that economy and ecology are not mutually exclusive in water bodies, but in many places the two are interdependent** in a way that cannot be resolved.
- With the instrument of designating water bodies as "**heavily modified water bodies**" (HMWB), the WFD offers the possibility of allowing uses to continue under the **realistic goal of a Good Ecological Potential** and of evaluating implementation measures on the basis of significant adverse effects on use.
- An essential basis for this is a clear differentiation of the different environmental objectives in natural and heavily modified water bodies (good ecological status in natural water bodies, ecological potential in HMWB).

## Public funding

Rapid and efficient target fulfilment also requires public funding, since **the implementation of the WFD involves both cost-intensive and production-reducing measures for hydropower.**