

## Help the Odra river revive and be free-flowing again

### 1 **Draft text of the proposal of the joint Polish-German resolution on Odra river** 2 **disaster**

3 The Odra river is one of the last free-flowing rivers in Europe. As a river left  
4 relatively untouched by major human interventions, the Odra river maintains extensive  
5 flood plains and wetlands that are home to numerous endangered species of  
6 animals and plants.

7 Due to the ecological catastrophe which caused a massive fish and mollusks die-  
8 off in the summer of 2022, the entire ecosystem is now severely damaged. Over  
9 300 tons of dead fish, clams and snails were recovered on the German and Polish  
10 sides. Many more sank to the ground.

11 This disaster was clearly caused by human activities, as the report of the  
12 German Expert Commission on the Odra catastrophe demonstrates. The sources of  
13 contamination are currently under further investigation. What is certain  
14 however, is that highly saline waters were discharged in the upper river in  
15 large quantities. This allowed the *Prymnesium parvum* algae to multiply rapidly,  
16 since it flourishes in brackish waters. The algae produced massive amounts of  
17 blossoms which ~~covered~~produced toxins that affected the ~~breathing organs of~~ fish and mollusks,  
18 causing their  
19 slow and painful death through suffocation. Heat, stagnant water in retention  
20 basins, and low water levels have further aggravated the consequences of this  
21 environmental crime.

22 We call on Poland and Germany to intensify the bilateral cooperation with regards to clarifying the causes of this  
23 disaster. We demand the reasons to be fully explained and the results of investigations to be made fully transparent  
24 and public by German and Polish authorities. We call on the Polish local and national authorities to bring all those  
25 responsible to justice. It will probably take years for the river to recover. We must do everything we can to support its  
26 recovery and protect the river from any further damage.

27 It will probably take years for the river to recover. We must do everything we can to support its recovery, protect the  
28 river from any further damage and prevent such disasters of happening in Odra and other rivers across Europe.

29 Full responsibility should be taken by the Polish authorities who disregarded  
30 the alarm protocol established by the International Commission for the  
31 Protection of the Odra River against Pollution (ICPO) in case of environmental  
32 calamities. Action should have been taken upon alarm signals of upcoming  
33 disaster. There were many. A repetition of these types of accidents should be avoided at all costs by assuring that  
34 responsible authorities do act on existing and -if necessary - improved disaster preparedness/reduction protocols at  
35 basin level.

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42 ~~can to support its recovery and protect the river from any further damage.~~

43 Thus, we demand that all works on the river should be stopped and the plan for  
44 the regulation of the river agreed by Germany and Poland in 2015 be urgently  
45 reviewed. The deepening of the Odra as planned by the Polish 'Odra Vistula Flood  
46 Management Project' threatens the unique river landscape, the "Lower Odra  
47 Valley" national park in Germany and the "Lower Odra Valley Landscape  
48 Conversation Conservation Park" on the Polish river side. The ongoing works aimed at  
49 "modernizing" the river are in fact another ecological disaster. According to a  
50 legal expertise commissioned by the "Greens/EFA" group in the European  
51 Parliament, the works are inconsistent with the FFH Directive, the European  
52 Habitats Directive and the European Water Framework Directive, and violate the  
53 rules of the European Environmental Impact Assessment Directive.

54 Our goal should be the protection of our river ecosystems as stated in European  
55 Law, not their destruction. Therefore, we call upon the European Commission, the  
56 World Bank and the Council of Europe Development Bank not to allocate any funds  
57 for works on the Odra without prior checking and approval from "green sensitive" bodies with the aim to preserve  
58 the river's biodiversity and prevent deterioration of the river's ecosystem and thus ecological status. European  
59 money intended for flood protection is currently  
60 being misused to transform the entire river into a waterway, which will  
61 permanently damage the river's ecosystem. River basin management needs to take on a holistic view of the  
62 entire basin and its peoples and build on existing local knowledge. It needs to take into account and counteract on  
63 current and future challenges of climate change, biodiversity loss and the need to assure that food is produced in a  
64 sustainable way. The Odra river should be excluded as a potential waterway within the current revision of the TEN-T  
65 guidelines regulation and no funding should be granted under the Connecting Europe Facility for any works therein.  
66 In addition to the careful analysis of risks to nature and people of the current planned activities, we call on the  
67 authorities to plan restoration of the basin. The restoration process should be inclusive of all those living and working  
68 in the area. It should minimally take into account adaptation to climate change, potential to restore and where  
69 possible increase biodiversity. If relevant, the restoration process should build on existing experiences with sustainable  
70 food production.

71 We call on Poland and Germany to renegotiate the German-Polish agreement on  
72 water flow management of the Odra river of 2015 in the light of the ongoing  
73 climate crisis, the recent ecological disaster, the European water framework  
74 directive and recent scientific expertise.

75 We call on the responsible authorities in Germany, Poland and the Czech Republic  
76 to install a joint cross-border monitoring system for water quality and  
77 biodiversity along the river; to ensure that data is regularly published online;  
78 and to build up a trilateral warning system, based on experiences made at the  
79 river Rhine after the chemical disaster of 1985.

80 We call on the relevant authorities as well as and the European Commission to  
81 establish a European threshold for chemical pollution and salt concentration of freshwater rivers and to change the  
82 current system of wastewater discharges based on static quotas towards one that  
83 takes into account the pollution levels in the river.

84 We call on the German and Polish authorities to take extensive measures to stabilize and enhance the natural  
85 resilience of Odra's ecosystem that allows adaptation to climate change. Therefore its remaining near-natural habitat  
86 with natural processes for flood protection and water retention in the landscape should be restored.

87 Finally, we call on the Polish national authorities to establish a new national  
88 park covering the entire area of the Lower Odra Valley and, to allow the  
89 establishment of a cross-border national park encompassing this unique natural  
90 environment, to take stock of the lessons learnt from the river Odra disaster, and ensure that there is an effective  
91 knowledge sharing platform in place that authorities across the EU can access easily.

### Background

~~The resolution has been created as the response to the environmental crime that took place in the summer of this year on the Odra river. It caused a massive fish and mollusks die-off and severely damaged the entire ecosystem of the river. Over 300 tons of dead fish, clams and snails were recovered on both German and Polish sides. While many more sank to the ground.~~

~~The ecological catastrophe was caused by human activities, as the report of the German Expert Commission on the Odra catastrophe demonstrates. The sources of contamination are currently under further investigation. What is certain however, is that highly saline waters were discharged in the upper river in large quantities which allowed the *Prymnesium parvum* algae to multiply rapidly and produce massive amounts of blossoms that covered the breathing organs of fish and mollusks, causing their slow and painful death through suffocation. Heat, stagnant water in retention basins, and low water levels have further aggravated the consequences of this disaster.~~

~~**This resolution is to support Polish and German Greens efforts and their bilateral cooperation and pursuit to revive the Odra river as well as to take necessary measures to prevent such situations from occurring in the future.**~~