



Draft

Title: **Help the Odra river revive and be free-flowing again**

Tabled by: Partia Zieloni

Draft text

1 **Help the Odra river revive and be free-flowing again**

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

4 **EGP Copenhagen 2022**

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

9 Due to the ecological catastrophe which caused a massive fish and mollusks die-
10 off in the summer of 2022, the entire ecosystem is now severely damaged. Over
11 300 tons of dead fish, clams and snails were recovered on the German and Polish
12 sides. Many more sank to the ground.

13 This disaster was clearly caused by human activities, as the report of the
14 German Expert Commission on the Odra catastrophe demonstrates. The sources of
15 contamination are currently under further investigation. What is certain
16 however, is that highly saline waters were discharged in the upper river in
17 large quantities. This allowed the *Prymnesium parvum* algae to multiply rapidly,
18 since it flourishes in brackish waters. The algae produced massive amounts of

19 blossoms which covered the breathing organs of fish and mollusks, causing their
20 slow and painful death through suffocation. Heat, stagnant water in retention
21 basins, and low water levels have further aggravated the consequences of this
22 environmental crime.

23 Full responsibility should be taken by the Polish authorities who disregarded
24 the alarm protocol established by the International Commission for the
25 Protection of the Odra River against Pollution (ICPO) in case of environmental
26 calamities. Action should have been taken upon alarm signals of upcoming
27 disaster. There were many.

28 We call on Poland and Germany to intensify the bilateral cooperation with
29 regards to clarifying the causes of this disaster. We demand the reasons to be
30 fully explained and the results of investigations to be made fully transparent
31 and public by German and Polish authorities. We call on the Polish local and
32 national authorities to bring all those responsible to justice.

33 It will probably take years for the river to recover. We must do everything we
34 can to support its recovery and protect the river from any further damage.

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

46 Our goal should be the protection of our river ecosystems as stated in European
47 Law, not their destruction. Therefore, we call upon the European Commission, the
48 World Bank and the Council of Europe Development Bank not to allocate any funds
49 for works on the Odra. European money intended for flood protection is currently
50 being misused to transform the entire river into a waterway, which will
51 permanently damage the river's ecosystem.

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

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

61 We call on relevant authorities as well as the European Commission to change the
62 current system of wastewater discharges based on static quotas towards one that
63 takes into account the pollution levels in the river.

64 Finally, we call on the Polish national authorities to establish a new national
65 park covering the entire area of the Lower Odra Valley and to allow the
66 establishment of a cross-border national park encompassing this unique natural
67 environment.

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.