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## Project AKWA: The Ritterbach stream as an early warning system for environmental pollution



*Ebersbach (ots) -*

**The Ritterbach stream babbles quietly through the landscape, but there is much more hidden in its waters: the German-Czech AKWA project uses the small stream as an early warning system for environmental pollution and climate change. Using state-of-the-art technology and cross-border co-operation, samples are regularly taken to monitor the water quality and gain important insights for environmental protection.**

The Ritterbach babbles leisurely through its bed. Insects buzz just above the surface and the constant gurgling has an almost soporific effect on this sunny day. The Ritterbach will later flow into the Spree and at the end of the journey the water will flow into the North Sea via the Havel and Elbe rivers.

The area around the municipality of Ebersbach is characterised by the landscape, the Czech Republic is right next door and within walking distance. The small stream also has its source there and after just a few kilometres, the water has collected so much information that it is worth observing closely.

The team stands out in the area. Cars with licence plates from Dresden and Prague. In addition, employees unpacking probes and equipment and walking across a wide meadow towards the stream.

They are all wearing wellies and at a bend, one of them climbs down the steep embankment into the water.

'He has a data logger with him,' explains Lucie Jasíková. She has come from the Czech capital and works for the government there. Together with her German colleague Claudia Lindner from the Saxon State Office for Environment, Agriculture and Geology, she is in charge of the AKWA project. 'We can use the data from the logger to measure the pH value, for example.'

Streams and rivers are early warning systems. If there are pollutants in the soil, they often get into the water and are then transported over hundreds of kilometres or more. In order to regularly document such pollution, teams from both countries take samples every month in the joint AKWA project and analyse them. "The project is funded by the EU. This makes it much easier for us because the funds can be planned and utilised across borders," explains Claudia Lindner. This would not have been possible with state funding. They end with responsibility at the border.

The data collected not only allows conclusions to be drawn about the current situation. The knowledge also helps to understand how climate change affects water bodies and how the consequences can possibly be mitigated.

When talking about the resilience of nature in relation to climate change, it is also always about sensitising people. This is also where AKWA comes in. The population is brought on board with project events in both countries. School classes use a sample box to playfully learn how water bodies can be chemically analysed. 'The response is always great and the pupils really enjoy it,' says Claudia Lindner happily.

The AKWA project will run until the end of 2026, but the small Ritterbach stream has already become a valuable data stream.

You can find more information about the AKWA project here: <https://ots.de/THl8Di>

**Description of the project:** Cohesion policy has defined clear objectives for the 2021-2027 funding period: A smart Europe through innovation, a greener, low-carbon Europe, a more connected Europe, a more social Europe and a Europe that is closer to its citizens. Sustainable challenges are becoming the focus of society, particularly in Germany and its neighbouring countries. The "EU4regions" project will produce high-quality multimedia and journalistic information on cohesion policy and then disseminate it widely. Within 12 months, Interreg projects from western and eastern Germany and neighbouring countries/regions will be presented to highlight local challenges. The countries concerned are Poland, the Czech Republic, Austria, Switzerland, France, the Netherlands and Denmark. Our thematic focus is on sustainability, whereby we understand sustainability as a whole. Although climate issues are at the centre of attention, they are complemented by economic and social aspects. The aim is to show how EU cohesion policy affects regions and people.

EU4regions receives funding from the EU Commission.

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## Medieninhalte



Markus Harzdorf (State Operating Company for Environment and Agriculture) stands in the Ritterbach stream with a data logger. photographer: EU4Regions / More information via ots and [www.presseportal.de/en/nr/177283](http://www.presseportal.de/en/nr/177283) / The use of this image for editorial purposes is permitted and free of charge provided that all conditions of use are complied with. Publication must include image credits.



A van is packed with instruments with which an employee of the AKWA project analyzes the collected data. photographer: EU4Regions / More information via ots and [www.presseportal.de/en/nr/177283](http://www.presseportal.de/en/nr/177283) / The use of this image for editorial purposes is permitted and free of charge provided that all conditions of use are complied with. Publication must include image credits.



Claudia Lindner (Saxon State Office for the Environment, Agriculture and Geology) walks across the meadow at the edge of the Ritterbach stream with a colleague. photographer: EU4Regions / More information via ots and [www.presseportal.de/en/nr/177283](http://www.presseportal.de/en/nr/177283) / The use of this image for editorial purposes is permitted and free of charge provided that all conditions of use are complied with. Publication must include image credits.



A chemical analysis kit for fieldwork is designed to teach schoolchildren about the chemical analysis of water in a fun way. Photographer: EU4Regions / More information via ots and [www.presseportal.de/en/nr/177283](http://www.presseportal.de/en/nr/177283) / The use of this image for editorial purposes is permitted and free of charge provided that all conditions of use are complied with. Publication must include image credits.



*Project AKWA: Vain sunshine? Nature reveals more than meets the eye. photographer: EU4Regions / More information via ots and [www.presseportal.de/en/nr/177283](http://www.presseportal.de/en/nr/177283) / The use of this image for editorial purposes is permitted and free of charge provided that all conditions of use are complied with. Publication must include image credits.*

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