



Source: VMM

Improvements in the water quality are noticeable, but additional efforts are needed

Sufficient dissolved oxygen in the water is essential for a healthy and diverse ecosystem. The average oxygen concentration has increased slowly since the beginning of the 1990s. In recent years there has rather been more of a stagnation. Nitrates mostly get into the watercourses via agricultural soils. The degree of washing out is not only dependant on the fertilisation practices, but also on the weather conditions. Fluctuations in the amount and intensity of precipitation are to a major degree responsible for the capricious nature of the nitrate curve. Since 2002 the average nitrate concentration has clearly been lower than before, but a further improvement has not yet appeared. Phosphates in surface water originate from effluent discharges and washing out and erosion of agricultural soils. Too much phosphate plays a major role in the eutrophication of the watercourses. The average phosphate concentrations have decreased drastically since the start of the 1990s. The average ammonia concentrations show a very similar pattern. Ammonia is a typical decomposition product of organic, nitrogenous substances in waste water. It is a good indicator of the level of water pollution from domestic waste water and from industrial waste water originating from a large number of sectors.

The expansion and improvement of the public waste water treatment and the efforts of companies to reduce their discharges have not failed to have an impact, the evidence of this is the greatly improved ammonia and phosphate concentrations. However, the standards are still too often not reached and oxygen concentration seems to have stagnated in recent years. In the years to come additional efforts are therefore needed. Particular attention must be paid to the nitrate and phosphate concentrations. To that end, a reduction of the diffuse losses from agriculture and further expansion and improvement of the public waste water treatment is needed.