

## 0. Introduction

Industrial plants handling hazardous substances can pose considerable hazards to people and the environment in the event of a major accident. Due to the fast flow of the contaminated water along waterways, contaminations of large rivers, in particular, very quickly assume international dimensions. These hazards can be dealt with only by assuming joint responsibility for the river catchment area and through international cooperation in the prevention of major accidents. The Federal Republic of Germany supports the development of international cooperation in the field of accident prevention in the EESCCA states. With expert support from the Federal Environmental Agency, the present project is part of the consultancy assistance programme of the German Federal Ministry of the Environment. The International Warning and Alarm Plan is designed to provide early warning to countries along the River Neman (BLR/RUS) / Nemunas (LTU) in the event of industrial accidents that could impact these countries.

After the rivers Neva and the Vistula, the Neman/Nemunas is the third-largest river catchment area emptying into the Baltic. With a length of 937 km, the average outflow of the Neman/Nemunas is 632 m<sup>3</sup>/s [24, 25]. The catchment area is 98,200 sq. km, of which Belarus and Lithuania account for approx. 45% each, the Kaliningrad Region (Russian Federation) 4% and Poland and Latvia for a smaller share.

The Industrial Accident Convention and the Water Convention of the UNECE, the SEVESO Guideline and their national legislative implementation (Accident Directive) make up the project's statutory framework. Moreover, the experience gathered by the International Commissions for the Protection of the Rhine, Elbe and Danube Rivers (IKSR, IKSE and IKSD, respectively) has been incorporated. These Commissions have already developed recommendations and with their aid technical and organisational requirements for securing industrial installations that are hazardous to water can be identified.

The project comprises the following component tasks:

1. Working out an International Warning and Alarm Plan for the Neman/Nemunas catchment area,
2. Implementation of the Main International Warning Centres for transboundary communication,
3. Identifying potentially hazardous industrial activities in the Neman/Nemunas catchment area, and
4. Transfer of know-how in the implementation of international experience, directives and laws (SEVESO II, UNECE, HELCOM, EU regulations)