Press release in English

12th November, 2024

**Switzerland contributes more than €12 million to remediate the historically polluted site in Aizkraukle**

**On Tuesday, 12 November, Laurence Mortier, Head of Swiss Contribution to EU Member States at the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs, and Armands Eberhards, Deputy State Secretary for European Union (EU) Funds at the Ministry of Finance, signed the agreement of the programme "****Remediation of Historical Pollution". With this important event, we officially start the implementation of the programme to start the improvement works of the territory in Aizkraukle. This is one of the four programme agreements signed under the Swiss-Latvia Cooperation Programme.**

Historical pollution in Aizkraukle, 10 Dzelzceļa Street, originates from the site of a reinforced concrete factory built in the mid-20th century for the construction of the Pļaviņas HPP. The area is approximately 10.6 ha and the detailed investigation of the site revealed contamination with petroleum products. This area exceeds the soil and ground quality thresholds set in national regulations.

**Laurence Mortier, Head of Swiss Contribution to EU Member States:** “Today, we are writing a new page in the bilateral relations between Latvia and Switzerland, whilst at the same time following a tradition of working together on environmental topics. I am conscious that this/Aizkraukle site is just one out of many historically polluted plots in Latvia that still need attention. However, cleaning up this site will make a big difference now and for future generations. Only by working together we can make this difference to nature, humans, drinking water supply and energy security.”

**Armands Eberhards, Deputy State Secretary for EU Funds at the Ministry of Finance:** “This programme is an excellent example of how bilateral cooperation with Swiss environmental experts continues. During the previous Swiss support period, the Sarkandaugava area (~8 ha near the centre of Old Riga) was remediated, preventing pollution from entering the Daugava and the Baltic Sea, and avoiding health risks for the inhabitants of Riga. The new Swiss - Latvian cooperation programme will allow further environmental remediation work to be carried out in Aizkraukle. This shows a clear path for continuing similar strategically and socio economically justified high priority investments in remediation of historically polluted sites.”

"Together with our Swiss colleagues, we have worked intensively for several months to start the implementation of this programme in life. For us, as a small country, whose needs for the development of various projects are greater than the country's short-term financial capabilities, we need to invest more effort and energy in attracting cooperation partners to receive investment benefits. We are pleased and grateful for Switzerland's significant contribution to improving the quality of the environment," **emphasizes Zane Grīva, Deputy State Secretary for Finance at the Ministry of Climate and Energy.**

“Thanks to the Swiss - Latvian cooperation programme, future emissions from the pollution source in the soil and groundwater will be significantly reduced and limited. After the completion of the planned works, a post-remediation monitoring system will be established, with the aim of monitoring the compliance of the environmental processes taking place in the territory with environmental quality requirements” **says Andris Ķēniņš, Director General of the State Environmental Service.**

The “Remediation of Historical Pollution” programme will be implemented with a budget of 14.35 million Swiss francs or €15.07 million (€12.81 million from Switzerland and €2.26 million from the Latvian state budget) and will remediate a historically contaminated site of national importance in Aizkraukle, removing the source of contamination and preventing the further spread of contamination into groundwater and the Daugava River.

Latvia will receive a total of €42.4 million in Swiss funding, which will support four programmes - "Partnership in applied research: innovative materials, information and communication technologies and smart energy", "Stronger work-based learning to improve vocational education and training in Latvia", "Advancement of pediatric cancer care in Latvia" and "Remediation of historical pollution". The programmes will run in Latvia until 3 December 2029.