

The main ecological objective is to restore the habitat patch connectivity along the Rhine, to establish a network of habitats and to re-establish the continuity of the main stream and of tributaries covered by the migratory fish programme.

The Action Plan on Floods aims at improving the protection of man and goods against floods and at the same time at improving the floodplains of the Rhine. Within the implementation of this action plan and taking into account the effects of climate change all realistic measures will be examined with a view to further reducing extreme flood peaks and flood related damage.

57 water quality monitoring stations monitor the state of the Rhine from Switzerland down to the Netherlands and along its most important tributaries (Neckar, Main, Moselle). Thus, more than 100 water quality constituents are regularly identified and assessed in water and suspended matter. Incidence, diversity and distribution of fish, invertebrates and plankton are also studied and/or assessed.

Currently, work primarily concentrates on pollutant inputs and nitrogen compounds above all of diffuse agricultural origin and of micropollutants originating from urban wastewater.

Eight international main warning centres form the backbone of the Warning and Alarm Plan. These centres warn downstream users if, e.g. further to an incident, large amounts of noxious substances pollute the Rhine or they objectively and reliably inform downstream users about regional water pollution incidents.



Photo: Martin Baumgärtner



Photo: Ronald van Dokkum

Organisation

Working groups and expert groups with defined tasks work on all technical questions arising from the implementation of the convention on the protection of the Rhine and from European legislation. Decisions are taken in annual plenary sessions. The conference of Rhine Ministers takes decisions related to important political questions and provides the basis for coherent, complementary programmes of measures.

The secretariat and its international staff located in Koblenz support this work. The secretariat is in charge of organising and preparing the contents of meetings as well as of linguistic support in the working languages German, French and Dutch. At the same time, the secretariat is in charge of public relations and serves as a contact for experts and interested citizens.

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International Commission for the Protection of the Rhine



Internationale
Kommission zum
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Commission
Internationale
pour la Protection
du Rhin

Internationale
Commissie ter
Bescherming
van de Rijn

International
Commission
for the Protection
of the Rhine



Nine states – one river basin

For the benefit of the Rhine and of all of its tributaries the members of the **International Commission for the Protection of the Rhine (ICPR)** Switzerland, France, Germany, Luxemburg, Netherlands and the European Commission successfully co-operate with Austria, Liechtenstein, the Belgian region of Wallonia and Italy. Focal points of this co-operation are the sustainable development of the Rhine, its floodplains and the good state of all waters in its watershed.

Objectives and Tasks

Within the ICPR, representatives of the governments of the states concerned jointly draft recommendations for programmes of measures which are implemented and financed by the individual countries. The ICPR coordinates this work and discusses its results. Currently, work is focussing on the following objectives and tasks:

- » Improvement of the chemical and ecological state of the Rhine by sustainably developing uses and taking into account the relief of the North Sea.
- » Comprehensive flood prevention and protection taking into account ecological requirements;
- » Support of the co-ordinated implementation of European regulations, such as the Water Framework Directive and the Floods directive in the watershed of the Rhine.

Intensive use of waters

The Rhine catchment:

- » all in all, some 58 million people live and work in this watershed, 20 million of them receive their drinking water from the Rhine system;
- » about 8 % of the total surface of 200.000 km² are used for settlements, trade and industry and 50 % of the surface are used by agriculture;
- » here, Europe's most important industrial and chemical companies annually make some 550 billion Euro;
- » in the main stream between Lake Constance and the mouth of the river, there are 21 big hydro power plants with a turbine performance of about 7 billion kilowatt hours: power supply for some 2.5 million households;
- » more than 800 km of the river Rhine as well as the rivers Neckar, Main, Moselle and Sarre are navigable.

In the 1970ies, due to massive inputs of untreated wastewater, the Rhine was considered to be the sewer of Europe. Additionally, the construction of dikes and straightening the water course resulted in the loss of more than 85 % of former overbank areas. Regional flood protection and land reclamation restricted floodplains and shortened the river course (by more than 90 km). These measures have resulted in distinctly higher flood waves rising in shorter time. In the immediate vicinity of the R. Rhine, 11 million people are at risk of extreme flood events.

Success

Today, 96 % of the population are connected to wastewater treatment plants. Many of the major industrial plants have their own wastewater treatment facilities. Thus, water quality and the biological state of the Rhine and of many of its tributaries have distinctly improved. The number of animal and plant species has increased. Since

2006, salmon and other migratory fish are again able to reach Strasbourg. Considerable efforts have been made to reduce the negative impacts of floods. Among others, additional flood retention areas have been created.

A great success for the co-operation of all member states under the umbrella of the ICPR. However, much remains to be done!

Rhine 2020

The programme **Rhine 2020** determines general policy objectives for Rhine protection and the measures required for implementing the programme by 2020. Focal aspects are the restoration of the **habitat patch connectivity along the Rhine**, the improvement of flood prevention by implementing and further developing the **Action Plan on Floods**, the indispensable further **improvement of water quality** as well as **groundwater protection**. Additionally, the implementation of the water framework directive (drafting the international part of the management plan for the international Rhine river basin district), of the Floods directive and possibly of further EU related obligations are or will be co-ordinated.

