



Press release

70 years ICPR Implementation of the "Rhine 2040" programme begins

In July 2020, the International Commission for the Protection of the Rhine (ICPR) will celebrate its 70th anniversary. It is one of the most successful international river basin commissions. This is shown, among other things, by the results of the "[Rhine 2020](#)" programme. With the "Rhine 2040" programme adopted at the Conference of Rhine Ministers in Amsterdam in February 2020, the ICPR is facing up to future challenges. The states in the Rhine catchment area are now taking the first steps towards implementing this programme.



First plenary assembly by videoconference

The plenary assembly of the ICPR took place on 3 July. ICPR President Veronica Manfredi and Olivier Thibault, Water Director of the host country France, welcomed the approximately 50 participants in the trilingual video conference room instead of Strasbourg.

States in the Rhine basin and the EU rely on healthy and resilient waters

70 years after the founding of the ICPR on 11 July 1950, environmental protection and nature conservation are more topical than ever. Veronica Manfredi explains: "A holistic approach is essential in today's world. This is a major difference to the situation 70 years ago. Natural habitats with intact functions not only have a high species diversity. They are also more resistant to negative influences such as climate change, have a positive effect on human health and, thus, make an important contribution to our society".

It is no coincidence that the European Union is providing substantial funding under the "[European Green Deal](#)" and the new biodiversity strategy, where – amongst other things – the restoration and management of free-flowing waters and aquatic habitats will benefit from.

The "[Rhine 2040](#)" programme adopted by the 16th Conference of Rhine Ministers in Amsterdam on 13 February 2020, with concrete objectives including the restoration of floodplains, the improvement of fish passability and the reduction of micropollutants in water bodies, is fully in line with the EU approaches and has, therefore, come at the right moment.

First steps towards implementing "Rhine 2040"

In the states in the Rhine basin and in the ICPR, the first steps are now being taken to initiate the implementation of "Rhine 2040".

One of the pioneering objectives of the programme, for example, is to reduce the input of micropollutants in the form of pharmaceuticals, X-ray contrast agents and pesticides into the Rhine and its tributaries by at least 30%, by 2040. In order to review the reduction in inputs, the Conference of Rhine Ministers has commissioned the ICPR to develop a joint assessment system by 2021. The new group of experts set up for this purpose started work in June 2020.

Another important goal that has been pursued for a long time concerns the fish passability along the Rhine and in its tributaries. After considerable investments have already been made to enable fish to again migrate over hundreds of kilometres of the Rhine, the states in the Rhine basin are now working together to make the last remaining obstacles to fish migration passable, soon.

A group of experts is currently evaluating the development of biotopes along the Rhine using the innovative method of satellite image analysis. In the past 20 years, about 140 km² of lost floodplains have been restored; another 200 km² should be reactivated by 2040.

In the next 20 years the risk of flooding on the Rhine should be reduced by a further 15% despite population growth and the associated settlement developments. The ICPR provides the states with the risk assessment instrument "FloRiAn" which is applicable to the whole river basin.

Contact person for queries

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Background information on the ICPR

For 70 years, Switzerland, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Luxemburg and the European Union have been working together in the International Commission for the Protection of the Rhine (ICPR) on the basis of a treaty under international law in order to reconcile the many different uses of the river and its protection. In order to fully implement European directives, this trans-boundary cooperation was extended to Austria, Liechtenstein, Italy and the Belgian region Wallonia.

The current President is Veronica Manfredi, Director at the European Commission. The President and the different ICPR fora are supported by the international staff of the permanent secretariat in Koblenz (Germany).

For its successful work since 1950, the ICPR was awarded the European RiverPrize and in 2013 and the International Thiess RiverPrize in 2014. For detailed information on the ICPR please see to www.iksr.org.