



## Press Release

### **75 years of successful cooperation to protect waters in the Rhine river basin**

***On 3 July 2025, experts in water management from numerous countries celebrated the 75th anniversary of the International Commission for the Protection of the Rhine in Düsseldorf. They looked back on the successes of decades of cooperation and ahead to current and future challenges.***

On 11 July 1950 – five years after the end of the World War II – the International Commission for the Protection of the Rhine (ICPR) was founded in Basel to tackle the problem of water pollution in the Rhine on a cross-border basis for the first time.

*"Rivers know no national borders. They must be protected by all countries that share these important ecosystems. What is taken for granted today was visionary 75 years ago. The ICPR is one of the oldest water protection commissions and served as a model for the establishment of similar bodies worldwide. In times of increasing geopolitical tensions, we can consider ourselves fortunate to have international cooperation on the Rhine that is characterised by the exchange of experience, trust and solidarity."*, said Miriam Haritz, President of the ICPR, praising the role of the commission.

Thanks to the joint efforts of the countries in the Rhine river basin, the Rhine has been transformed from a post-war sewer into the valuable lifeline for humans and nature that it is today.

- Water quality has improved significantly.
- Many animal and plant species typical of the Rhine, such as Atlantic salmon and longleaf pondweed, have returned, and numerous obstacles to ecological continuity have been removed.
- The risk of flooding has been reduced by restoring natural floodplains and creating flood retention areas that can be used in a targeted manner.

At the same time, climate change poses new challenges for people and nature along the Rhine and its tributaries. Studies predict major changes in the river's discharge regime, which is becoming increasingly dependent on precipitation as it is fed less and less by meltwater from Alpine glaciers, whose volume is declining. There is an increasing threat of dry summers, reduced water availability, rising water temperatures and regional flash floods. Climate change also threatens biodiversity. This leads to changes in habitats and favours invasive alien species at the expense of local species, which are more sensitive to changes in their living conditions.

Furthermore, improving water quality remains a long-standing objective of the ICPR. Although significant progress has been made, particularly through the introduction of wastewater treatment systems and the reduction of emissions of certain chemicals, new substances are being identified that pose problems for water quality. These include, for example, micropollutants originating from pesticides used in agriculture, pharmaceutical

residues and industrial applications. The first interim report as part of the strategy for reducing micropollutants is to be published by the end of 2025.

The states in the Rhine river basin are addressing these challenges through the 'Rhine 2040' programme adopted at the 2020 Rhine Ministerial Conference, in which they set important targets for 2040 that they intend to achieve through concrete measures. In addition, the ICPR will update its strategy for climate change adaptation by the end of the year, incorporating its latest work on the future development of discharges and temperatures in the Rhine.

The Rhine connects millions of people, ecosystems and economies across borders. The challenges we face require ongoing intense cooperation, exchange of experience and solidarity. The ICPR remains a symbol of trust and international cooperation – an example of how joint commitment can overcome borders and enable sustainable solutions.

Further information can be found in the ['Rhine 2040' leaflet and programme](#).

### **Contact for queries**

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### **Background information on the ICPR**

*In the International Commission for the Protection of the Rhine (ICPR), Switzerland, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Luxembourg and the European Union have been working together for more than 70 years on the basis of a convention under international law to reconcile the diverse uses and protection of water bodies. With a view to implementing European directives, the cross-border cooperation was extended to Austria, Liechtenstein, Italy and the Belgian region Wallonia.*

*At present (2023-2025), Miriam Haritz from Germany holds the ICPR presidency. She and the different ICPR groups are supported by the international staff of the permanent secretariat in Koblenz (Germany).*

See also [www.iksr.org/en](http://www.iksr.org/en) and [LinkedIn](#)