



International Commission for the Protection of the Rhine  
Internationale Kommission zum Schutz des Rhines  
Internationale Commissie ter Bescherming van de Rijn

**Relationship between the "Rhine 2040" programme and  
the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the  
UN 2030 Agenda**

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## Relationship between the "Rhine 2040" programme and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the UN 2030 Agenda



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### Introduction

In February 2020, the Rhine Ministerial Conference adopted the "Rhine 2040" programme. The programme builds on its predecessor programme "Rhine 2020", and pursues the goal of a sustainably managed Rhine catchment area that is resilient to the effects of climate change and has valuable lifelines for nature and people.

The "Rhine 2040" programme and its goals are in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations 2030 Agenda. Many measures that the nations in the Rhine catchment area take to achieve the goals of the "Rhine 2040" programme also have a positive effect on the SDGs.

In the following, the principles of the "Rhine 2040" programme are presented in pictograms newly developed by the ICPR. The correlating content of the ICPR topics is then mapped out together with the 17 SDGs of the United Nations 2030 Agenda. Here, it will be demonstrated in particular which ICPR activities comprising the "Rhine 2040" programme will contribute to the goals of the SDGs in 2030, over the next 10 years.

## Principles of the ICPR programme "Rhine 2040"



Nine nations or regions share the Rhine catchment area. With regard to an intact ecosystem, good water quality and sustainable use of the Rhine and its tributaries, the members of the International Commission for the Protection of the Rhine (ICPR) - Switzerland, France, Germany, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and the European Commission - cooperate successfully with Austria, Liechtenstein, the Belgian region of Wallonia and Italy.



The Rhine connects the Alps to the North Sea. In order to make the Rhine and its catchment area more climate-resilient and to manage it sustainably – the main goal of the "Rhine 2040" programme - the following objectives are the core focus:

1. Networked habitats – more biodiversity;
2. Good water quality;
3. Mitigation of flood risks;
4. Managing low water.



Specific goals for 2040 include (among others) restoring passability for migratory fish and habitats typical of the Rhine, and increasing biodiversity in and on the Rhine. With regard to water quality, the aim is in particular is to reduce the influx of nutrients and pollutants, including micropollutants, into the waters from the areas of municipal waste water collection and treatment systems, agriculture, and industry and commerce. The consequences of (long-lasting) low water periods must also be mitigated.



60 million people live in the Rhine catchment area. The Rhine is the most important cultural and commercial axis in Central Europe. The diverse uses of waters, such as drinking water production for 30 million people, industry, agriculture and shipping, as well as protection against flooding, are to be reconciled with the interests of environmental and nature conservation.



Various working and expert groups with a precise mandate address all of the pending specialist questions arising from the implementation of the Convention on the Protection of the Rhine or from the Rhine 2040 programme and from European law. Resolutions are adopted once a year at the ICPR plenary session.



In addition to the nine nations or regions, numerous intergovernmental and non-governmental organisations take part in the work of the ICPR, with expertise, experience and approaches exchanged here. The public is also made aware of water protection issues through public relations.

## Relationship between the "Rhine 2040" programme and SDGs

A special focus of the ICPR programme "Rhine 2040" is on **SDG 6**, with its eight targets. However, the programme also makes significant contributions to other SDGs.



### *Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all*

Regarding targets 6.1 and 6.2: In the Rhine catchment area, 99% of households are connected to the drinking water supply and 96% of all waste water is cleaned in waste water treatment plants. The targets 6.1 and 6.2 of SDG 6, access to drinking water and sanitation, have been the European standard for several decades.

The "Rhine 2040" programme will continue to contribute to the attainment of target 6.3: *By 2030, improve water quality by reducing pollution, eliminating dumping and minimising release of hazardous chemicals and materials, halving the proportion of untreated wastewater and substantially increasing recycling and safe reuse globally.*

Regarding target 6.4: *By 2030, substantially increase water-use efficiency across all sectors and ensure sustainable withdrawals and supply of freshwater to address water scarcity and substantially reduce the number of people suffering from water scarcity* it can be stated that water scarcity for people in the Rhine catchment area has so far only occurred on a local scale. Nevertheless, the efficiency of water use in all sectors plays an important role in view of the emerging effects of climate change and potentially more frequent low water periods. The possibility of water scarcity must therefore be given greater consideration in the future.

Target 6.5: *By 2030, implement integrated water resources management at all levels, including through transboundary cooperation as appropriate* is an important point in the implementation of the "Rhine 2040" programme, which primarily aims at a **climate-friendly and sustainably managed Rhine catchment area**. This can only succeed if integrated thinking, planning and acting takes place across all sectors and at all levels. The nations have been working together across borders in the ICPR for 70 years.

Target 6.6: *Protect and restore water-related ecosystems by 2020, including mountains, forests, wetlands, rivers, aquifers and lakes*, is also an important component of the entire "Rhine 2040" programme, particularly as described in the concept regarding the creation of the biotope network on the Rhine, through which biodiversity is also significantly promoted.

Conclusion: The ICPR programme "Rhine 2040", entailing measures such as those in particular in the areas of ecology and the improvement of water, suspended matter and sediment quality, as well as regarding the reduction of biota contamination, serves the integrated management of water resources through cross-border cooperation and therefore makes important contributions to the attainment of SDG 6.



**Make cities *and* settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.**

Target 11.5: *By 2030, significantly reduce the number of deaths and the number of people affected and substantially decrease the direct economic losses relative to global gross domestic product caused by disasters, including water-related disasters, with a focus on protecting the poor and people in vulnerable situations*

Target 11b: *By 2020, substantially increase the number of cities and human settlements adopting and implementing integrated policies and plans towards inclusion, resource efficiency, mitigation and adaptation to climate change, resilience to disasters, and develop and implement, in line with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, holistic disaster risk management at all levels*

The "Rhine 2040" programme contains objectives and measures to improve flood risk management and thus also refers to disaster risk management. With regard to the effects of low water, goals and measures are also set out, including the development of common approaches to better cope with low water events.



**Take immediate measures to combat climate change and its effects.**

Target 13.1: *Strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity with regard to climate-related hazards and natural disasters in all countries*

The main purpose of the "Rhine 2040" programme is **to develop a climate-friendly, sustainably managed Rhine catchment area**. Climate change has an impact on runoff behaviour and water temperature, with consequences for water quality, ecology and biodiversity as well as for the uses of water. With the climate change adaptation strategy completed in 2015, the ICPR laid the foundations for an internationally coordinated, cross-thematic approach to dealing with climate change and combating its effects. The ICPR's climate change adaptation strategy is to be continued in line with the national climate change adaptation strategies.



**Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.**

Target 14.1: *By 2025, prevent and significantly reduce marine pollution of all kinds, in particular from land-based activities, including marine debris and nutrient pollution*

Target 14.2: *By 2020, sustainably manage and protect marine and coastal ecosystems to avoid significant adverse impacts, including by strengthening their resilience, and take action for their restoration in order to achieve healthy and productive oceans*

The measures for the Rhine catchment area contained in the "Rhine 2040" programme also contribute to protecting the marine environment. For example by reducing the influx of nutrients and pollutants and waste into the sea or by improving passability for fish species migrating between salt and fresh water.

All measures in the ICPR programme "Rhine 2040" that improve the functionality of the Rhine ecosystem, i.e. the passability of the main stream and its tributaries and the (re)networking of fresh waters via the estuaries with the North Sea and the Atlantic, make significant contributions to achieving targets in terms of SDG 14.



***Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss.***

Target 15.1: *By 2020, ensure the conservation, restoration and sustainable use of terrestrial and inland freshwater ecosystems and their services, in particular forests, wetlands, mountains and drylands, in line with obligations under international agreements*

The "Rhine 2040" programme, with its concept for biotope networking and the preservation and expansion of floodplain areas, makes a significant contribution to preserving, protecting, restoring and expanding floodplains and wetlands in order to reduce the deterioration of natural habitats and to bring an end to the loss of biodiversity, protecting endangered species and preventing their extinction by 2020. The implementation of the Master Plan Migratory Fish also contributes to improving biodiversity.

**Furthermore, there are also synergies and interactions with the following SDGs:**



***End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.***

Target 2.4: *By 2030, ensure sustainable food production systems and implement resilient agricultural practices that increase productivity and production, that help maintain ecosystems, that strengthen capacity for adaptation to climate change, extreme weather, drought, flooding and other disasters and that progressively improve land and soil quality*

The "Rhine 2040" programme also sets out provisions to intensify cooperation with agriculture and to promote methods of ecological agriculture as well as an extensification of agriculture close to bodies of water. It also aims to provide climate-resilient management of the Rhine and its catchment area. In this way, the programme also contributes to attaining SDG 2.



**Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.**

Target 3.9: *By 2030, substantially reduce the number of deaths and illnesses from hazardous chemicals and air, water and soil pollution and contamination*

The measures taken by the nations on the Rhine and in its catchment area aim to significantly reduce pollution and the contamination of air, water and soil. In this way, they contribute to attaining SDG 3.



**Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns**

Target 12.2: *By 2030, achieve the sustainable management and efficient use of natural resources.*

Target 12.8: *By 2030, ensure that people everywhere have the relevant information and awareness for sustainable development and lifestyles in harmony with nature.*

The "Rhine 2040" programme aims to achieve climate-resilient and sustainable management in the Rhine catchment area. Experiences regarding international cross-border river basin management and water protection are exchanged and discussed in depth with numerous visitors and visitor groups from all over the world in the ICPR Secretariat, in the nations of the Rhine catchment area, at congresses and conferences. The programme is therefore also conducive to attaining SDG 12.



**Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels**

Target 16.7: *Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels.*

Target 16.10: *Ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements.*

For 70 years, the nations in the Rhine catchment area have been working together transparently, across borders in the ICPR. Important groups of stakeholders are actively involved in the committees of the ICPR. All programmes, technical reports and publications are open to the public and available to the populations of the nations in the Rhine catchment area, in their native languages. This method of working, which is committed to SDG 16, will also be upheld with the "Rhine 2040" programme.

