Making space for nature in a developed river basin

Ben van de Wetering
General Secretary
3rd biggest European river

9 countries, 58 million inhabitants

Drinking water supply for 30 million people
Changes over the centuries

Over the years: 85% loss of alluvial flood areas
The ICPR

ICPR
Established 1950, amended in 1963 and 1999

Members
Switzerland, France, Germany, Luxemburg, Netherlands, European Union

Cooperation with Austria, Liechtenstein, Wallonia (Belgium)

Observers
Intergovernmental Organizations (IGO's)
Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's)
Landmarks of the ICPR

- 1950 - Foundation
- 1963 - Convention of Berne
- 1986 - Accident at Sandoz
- 1987 - Rhine Action Program
- 1993 and 1995 – Flooding
- 2000 - Programme Rhine 2020
- 2000 - EU Water Framework Directive
- 2007 - EU Floods Directive
Some achievements
• Restore stepwise continuity for salmon as key species
  – in the Rhine main stream up to Basel
  – and in specified tributaries

• Identify spawning- and juvenile habitats, revitalize them and make them accessible

• Build up self sustaining salmon stocks
Starting Point ...
Based on results of an extensive background study, this plan:

- defines priorities for a phased implementation of measures
- lists orders of magnitude for costs
- indicates the need for further investigations
Solidarity turned “upside down”

From
Upstream => downstream
Water quality, flood prevention

to also
Downstream => upstream
Migratory fish from the North Sea to their spawning places the Rhine tributaries
between 2000 and 2013 a total of 481 barrage and weirs were altered
Also downstream migration requires attention – not only for eel -
Biotopes along the Rhine need to be re-connected in order to maintain ecological continuity. This activity, one of the targets set by “Rhine 2020” has, inter alia, the following key points:

- restore river dynamics
- reconnect old alluvial areas and increase their seize
- reconnect old river branches and torrents
Network of habitat patches (2)
Biotope types, focus areas
122 km² floodplain on the Rhine main stream have been reactivated between 2000 and 2012.
Thank you!