

Frequently Asked Questions Concerning Experience in River Basin Management

ICPR (1950-2015)

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Executive Secretary



Internationale
Kommission zum
Schutz des Rheins

Commission
Internationale
pour la Protection
du Rhin

Internationale
Commissie ter
Bescherming
van de Rijn

International
Commission
for the Protection
of the Rhine

River Rhine - impressions



River Rhine - impressions



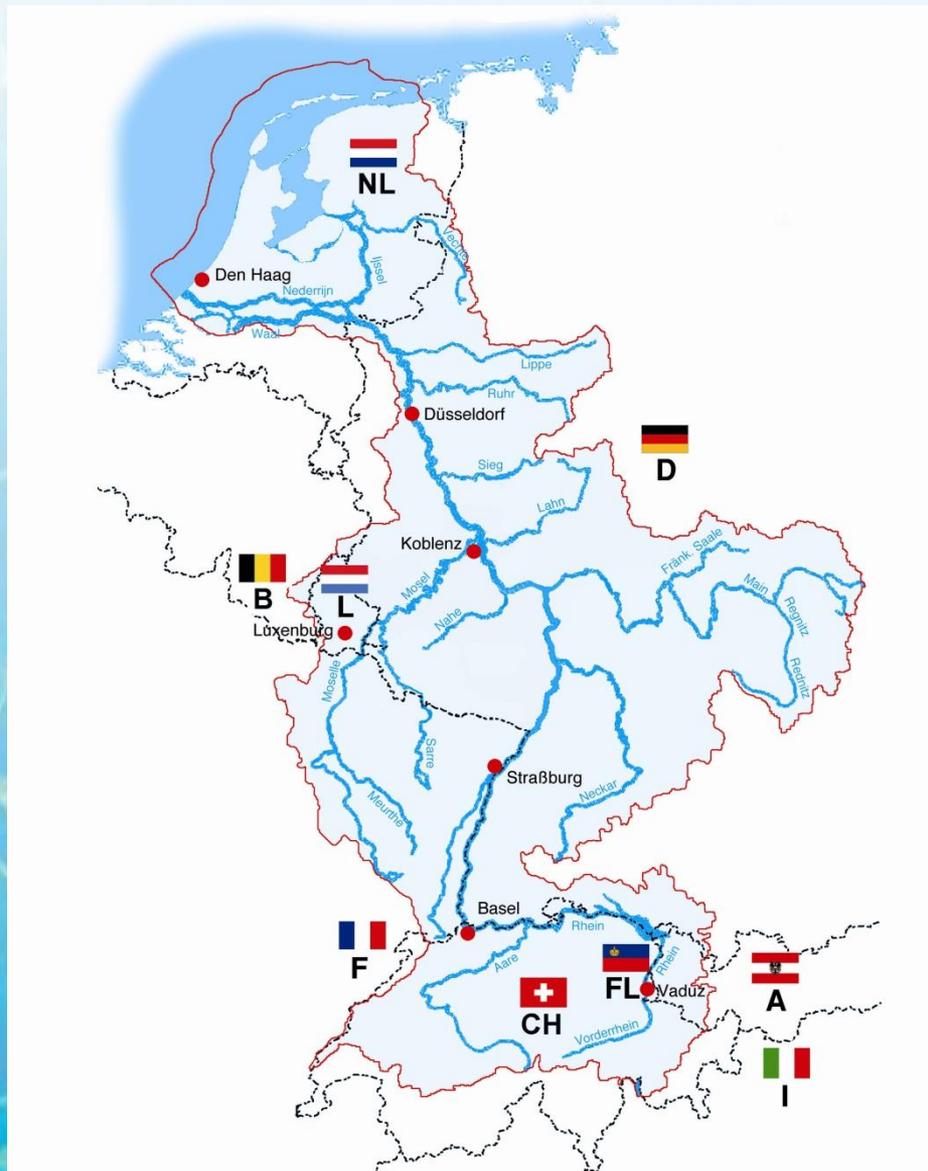
River Rhine - impressions



River Rhine - impressions



The Rhine - Catchment area

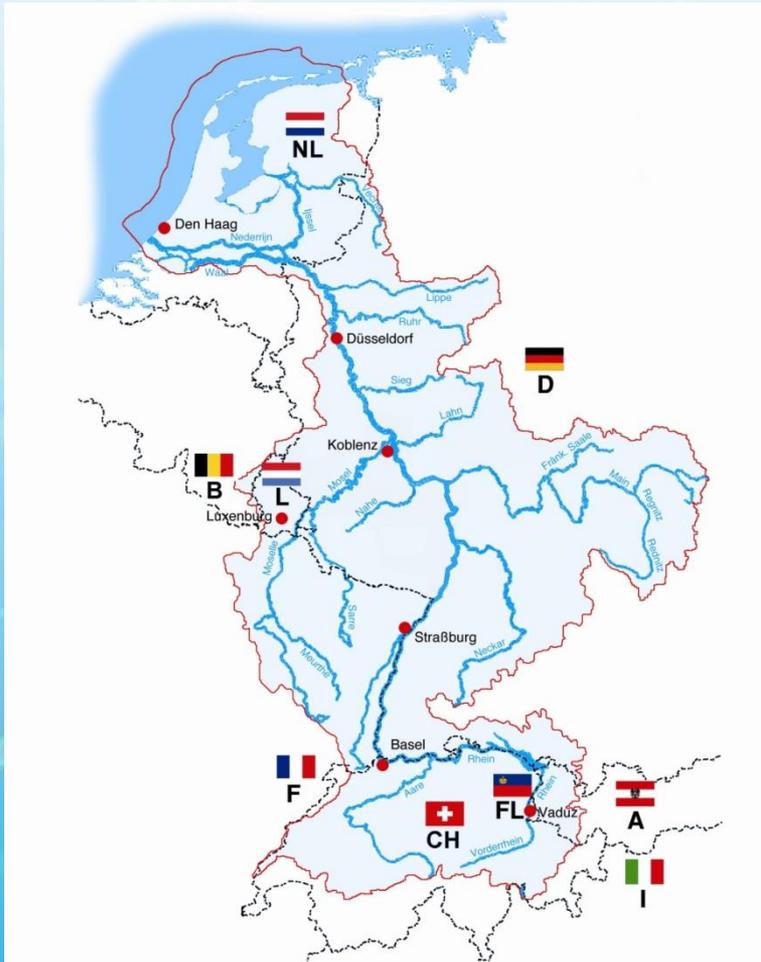


**3rd biggest
European river**

**9 countries,
60 million
inhabitants**

**Drinking water
supply for 30
million people**

ICPR - Landmarks



➤ **1950**

1st meeting in Basel

➤ **1963**

Convention of Berne

➤ **1999**

2nd Convention of Berne

Members:

CH, F, D, L, NL & EU

Since 2001 –

Cooperation with A, FL, B

50ties - 70ties of the 20th Century



First activities

- The first meeting resulted in agreements related to the
 - analysis water pollution
 - harmonisation of monitoring programmes and methods
 - exchange of monitoring data
 - development of water protection measures
- This was followed by a period with
 - building trust and mutual understanding
 - detailed technical discussion on monitoring programmes and best available technologies, agreed upon in the form of legal instruments (2 conventions, signed in 1976) and recommendations to the Contracting Parties
- But water quality did not really improve

A major disaster was a turning point

01 November 1986



10-30 tons of highly toxic pesticides flowed into the river near Basel (CH)

causing the death of all aquatic life downstream (e.g. eel for 400 km)

Political Courage and Ambition



The Sandoz Disaster resulted in a recognition that

- there was a joint problem to be solved
- that there was more than chemical quality to improve
- there was a need for a shift from short term detailed technical discussion to long term ambitious goal setting

This happened in a period in which environment received strong public support.

Within 11 months the **Rhine Action Programme** was agreed upon with **the return of the Salmon** as a flagship combined with **a substantial reduction of inputs of substances** as political ambition

The Rhine Action Programme



- Its target was to improve water quality to such an extent that formerly indigenous species, such as salmon, would be able to return to the river.
- At the same time, the entire ecosystem had to be improved and flora and fauna were to be strengthened
- A consequence, requirements concerning municipal and industrial wastewater treatment plants became distinctly more strict and a third treatment stage was introduced to eliminate phosphorous and nitrates
- In addition, industry accepted joint in the efforts, thereby accepting its responsibility

The first survey in 1992 already gave evidence of a considerable reduction of pollutants

The Flood Action Plan



- During Christmas 1993 and in January/February 1995, disastrous flood events occurred
- As a reaction, the ICPR adopted a Flood Action Plan in 1998
- Following that, a comprehensive international water management programme – **Rhine 2020** - was developed, integrating qualitative and quantitative aspects of surface waters and groundwater
- All new and additional targets were integrated into the new **1999 Rhine Convention**

The 1999 Rhine Convention



Contracting Parties:

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

Cooperation within the river basin with:

Austria, Liechtenstein, Wallonia (Belgium)

Observers:

Intergovernmental Organizations (IGO's)

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's)

The 1999 Rhine Convention



Since 1999

Stakeholder Legalized as part of the Berne Convention

1995 - 2015: 18 NGOs with observer status

- Association of drinking water plants
- Chemical industries
- Flood protection
- Nature protection/conservation



The 1999 Rhine Convention



Aims

Sustainable development of the Rhine ecosystem, in particular through, *inter alia*:

- maintaining and improving **water quality**
- protecting **populations of organisms and species diversity**
- maintaining, improving and restoring the **natural function** of the waters
- ensuring **environmentally sound and rational management** of water resources

Securing the **production of drinking** water from the waters of the Rhine

General **flood prevention and protection**, taking account of ecological requirements

To help restore **the North Sea** in conjunction with the other actions taken to protect it

The 1999 Rhine Convention



Main tasks of Contracting Parties

- to step up their cooperation and to report on actions taken
- to carry out monitoring programmes and specific studies agreed upon by the Commission
- to identify causes of and parties responsible for pollution
- to initiate autonomous actions deemed necessary to protect the Rhine
- to take action in the event of incidents or accidents in accordance with the warning and alert plans coordinated by the Commission

The 1999 Rhine Convention



Mains tasks of the Commission

- prepare international monitoring programmes and studies and make use of their results
- make proposals for individual measures and programmes of measures
- coordinate the Contracting States' warning and alert plans for the Rhine
- evaluate the effectiveness of agreed actions
- inform the public as to the state of the Rhine and the results of its work



Cooperation

- **Independent intergovernmental organization**
- **Delegations**
 - work with a political mandate
 - do have the technical know how
 - provide the common budget (1.200.000 €/a for operational costs of the Secretariat only)
- **Small neutral Secretariat with technical & scientific knowledge, 3 working languages & English**
- **Political framework, no sanctions**
- **Legal framework provided by EU Directives (WFD and FD) and national legislation**
- **All agreements by consensus. Measures as recommendations to countries**
- **Obligation to report on implementation of measures**

The 1999 Rhine Convention



Conclusions

- The Convention does not provide the ICPR with any power to adopt binding agreements nor to enforce implementation thereof
- these powers are in fact provided for in national and EU legislation

However, work in the ICPR started already in 1950 and developed into a very successful cooperation without such powerful instruments

In addition, the work of the ICPR was one of the cornerstones of today's EU – water legislation

Overview



First Phase (50ties - 70ties twentieth-century)

- Building trust and mutual understanding
- Developing harmonised monitoring and data exchange
- Convincing society of the danger of continuous increasing water pollution

Turning Point: Sandoz Accident

- From short term detailed technical discussion to long term ambitious goal setting for water quality issues
- Second turning point: Floods in 1993 & 1995
- From pollution control to an integration of all relevant policy fields

Challenges for the future

- How correct the impact of missing environmental management of the past
- How to take account of uncertainties regarding the socioeconomic evolution and the impact of climate change

Lessons learned



Both the Sandoz fire in 1986 and the floods of 1993 and 1995 were triggers for fundamental changes in policy

- a positive approach should be the core of all activities, even when catastrophic events have occurred
- focus on building common denominators, not on identifying disagreements

To increase ownership, agreements should be developed

- bottom-up with involvement of all stakeholders
- in line with top-down (political) objectives

For more information...



Ministerial Meeting 2013, Basel

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