Communicating the benefits of transboundary cooperation and strengthening cooperation over time in the Rhine River basin

Martine Rohn-Brossard
President
International Commission for the Protection of the Rhine

Deputy Head of International Affairs Division, FOEN, Switzerland
River Rhine: A European River

200,000 km²
River Rhine - Impressions
The Rhine - Data

Rhine River Basin
200'000 km²
9 countries
60 Mio. inhabitants

Drinking water
For 30 million people

Main stream
1233 km (length)

Navigable
825 km Basel – Rotterdam
RIVER RHINE - SEWER OF EUROPE
1950ies - 1970ies
ICPR : History (1950 - 1985)


- End of 1950ies: Chemical monitoring network

- No measures to reduce discharges

- **ICPR approach**
  - Trust building among the countries / Data sharing
  - Enhance mutual transboundary understanding
  - Awareness raising of the public concerning the danger of increasing water pollution
  - Starting construction of urban wastewater treatment plants
The wake-up call (1986)  
Fire at Sandoz, Basel (CH)

- Highly toxic pesticides: 10-30 tons
- Death of all aquatic life -> 400 km
- Stop of drinking water production

„1st Rhine action program“ (1987-2000)

„Salmon 2000“

3 ministerial meetings in 11 months


- Improved **monitoring** network (CH -> NL)
- Reduction of **discharges** of toxic substances by 50% - 70% (85-95) *(by improving wastewater treatment plants in municipalities and industries or change of production procedures)*
- Reduction of contamination -> **drinking water**
- **Salmon** as symbol for a **healthy river**

**European Provisions, e.g.**
- European Nitrates Directive (91/676/EEC)
Updated Rhine Convention 1999

- Pollution prevention and control is still an issue, but not the only one
- Sustainable development of the Rhine ecosystem by integrated water management - surface water and groundwater quality and quantity issues
- Integration of floods and droughts
- Strong participation of stakeholders (NGOs)
- Precautionary principle
- Polluter pays principle
- Not increasing damage principle

2nd Rhine Action Programme - Rhine 2020

European Provisions, e.g.

Main achievement and new challenges in the main workstreams

- Water quality
- Ecology
- Water quantity
Restoration of water quality

> 80 billions EURO invested in municipal wastewater treatment
Strategy micropollutants

First general results

- Several **substance groups** are detected
- Often no European environmental **quality standards**
- For most groups: wastewater most important pathway
- **Diffusive sources**: emission pathways more complicated

- **Measures** depending on substance: e.g. further treatment procedures in wastewater treatment plants, at the source
Ecology: Why salmon?

- Reintroduction of an extinct species
- Symbol for clean water, natural river beds and habitat connectivity!
- Since 1990: 9000 salmons have returned to the Rhine Bassin!
Ecology: river continuity!

> 500 mio. EURO invested so far for fish continuity
Water quantity: Warning and alert plan Rhine (WAP)
Action Plan on Floods

**Extreme floods in 93/95:**

- **December 1993**
  - Cities flooded: Germany, The Netherlands

- **Jan./Feb. 1995**
  - Cities flooded: Germany, The Netherlands,
  - 200'000 evacuated people

**4th February 1995**

*Informal Ministerial Meeting (EU level)*

*Declaration of Arles:*

*Mandate: FLOOD ACTION PLAN (1998)*
Action Plan on Floods

Costs of the Action Plan: 12.3 billion €

Potential damage along the River Rhine: ~ 200 billion €

Action => an economic imperative!
Climate Change Adaptation Strategy

Identification of:

- **Direct effects** of CC on flow regime and water temperature

- **Indirect effect** thereof on
  - ecology
  - chemistry

- **Impact on different uses**
ICPR : Next steps ?

3rd Rhine Action Programme
(2020 – 2040)
including climate change

in preparation
ICPR: Working structure 2016-2021

Plenary assembly (PLEN)
Coordination Committee (CC)

Heads of Delegations (DEL)

Strategy Group (SG)
Subordinate Strategy Group (SG-K)

Working group
Flood and Low water (H)
Expert Groups
EG Low water
EG HVAL
EG HIRI

Working group
Water quality/ Emissions (S)
Expert Groups
EG SANA
EG SAPA
EG SCON
EG SDIF
EG SMON
EG GW

Working Group
Ecology (B)
Expert Groups
EG BIOTOP
EG BMON
EG FISH

Project Group
ORS
Upper Rhine

Secretariat

Data management

EG GIS
ICPR: Co-operation rules

- Independent intergovernmental organization

- Delegations
  - work with a political mandate
  - do have the technical know how
  - provide the common budget (1,200,000 €/a year for operational costs of the Secretariat only)

- Integration of stakeholders, public consultation

- Small neutral Secretariat

- Political framework, no sanctions, peer pressure
- All agreements by consensus. Measures as recommendations to countries

- Obligation to report on implementation of measures

- Further strengthening by EU Directives (WFD and FD) and national legislation
ICPR: lessons learnt

- A step by step approach!
- Governmental agreements <-> Shared political will
- Long-term calendar with clear milestones

- Joint efforts of
  - Governments, administrations
  - Industry
  - Municipalities
  - Public

- Heavy national investments in wastewater treatment plants: € 80 bn. since 1975
- Heavy national investments in flood mitigation: more than € 12 bn. since 1995

- Good governance and coordination
Transboundary cooperation: requisites

Ways to achieve the goals:

- Build trust and mutuel understanding
- Analyze and communicate clearly the common interest, starting with building common denominators, not with identifying disagreements
- Develop agreements bottom-up and involve all stakeholders. This increases ownership and acceptance.
- Patience!
More information – www.iksr.org
Upper Middle Rhine Valley

UNESCO World Heritage
Annexes:

Fiches en réserve
Dispute solving?

- Disputes or diverging interests mainly with regard to water quality and ecological issues
- Climate change impacts will change the flow patterns of the Rhine – more floods and droughts are expected
- There is a clause for arbitration – but until now not used
- Talking, talking and talking, peer pressure and pressure by NGOs
- Some problems need time and patience to get solved
Example: Masterplan Migratory Fish - Dispute

Rhine Basin

Masterplan Migratory Fish

Dispute with the Netherlands – Haringvliet Sluices
Example – Dispute solving

• Masterplan Migratory Fish of the ICPR
  – Jointly developed
  – Politically agreed in 2009
  – Objective: Reintroduction of vanished fish species
    • Atlantic salmon, sea trout etc.
    • Re-opening the migration routes back to their natural habitats for reproduction
    • Fishpasses at migration barriers like dams
• Partly opening of the Haringvliet sluices has been a Dutch measure for the implementation of the masterplan
• Measure as mentioned in the management plan according to the WFD, 2009
Masterplan Migratory Fish - Dispute

Haringvliet sluices – 2018 partly opening for improving upstream fish migration

Costs: € 75 million (NL)
Masterplan Migratory Fish

• New Dutch Government decided in 2010 not to realize this measure due to political and technical reasons
  – Entrance into the Rhine basin for fish would have been blocked by this downstream country
  – All investments (done and planned) of upstream countries for the Masterplan Migratory Fish would have been much less effective
• Broad protest against this decision on national and international basis in 2010/2011
  – Environment ministers in the Rhine basin wrote letters to their Dutch colleague
  – NGOs got active
  – Dutch Parliament discussed this issue in detail and asked urgent questions to the government
• A group of experts from ICPR countries discussed possible alternative measures with Dutch experts
  – No equivalent alternatives to the opening of the sluices could be found
• Dutch Government changed its decision in 2011
  – Sluices will partly be opened in 2018
Masterplan Migratory Fish – Ongoing discussions

FREE MIGRATION
Upper Rhine:
10 hydropower plants

Fish passages:
Iffezheim (2000)
Gambgsheim (2006)
Straßburg (2016)
Gerstheim (2018)
Kembs (2016)

PG ORS:
(Rhinau, Marckolsheim, Vogelgrün)