



Report of the President of the ICPR to the Plenary Assembly

(Progress report,
July 2022 – June 2023)

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On 1 January 2023, Germany took over the presidency of the ICPR from the European Union and appointed Miriam Haritz as Veronica Manfredi's successor. The present progress report refers to the period from 8 July 2022 to 30 June 2023, which therefore included both the EU Presidency and the German Presidency.

Overview

1. A climate-resilient Rhine – adapting to climate change
2. A healthy Rhine – ecological continuity and biodiversity
3. A clean Rhine – good water quality
4. A well-prepared society – dealing with floods and low water
5. A future-proof commission - public relations and digitalisation

1. A climate-resilient Rhine – adapting to climate change

Adaptation to climate change was identified as a key field of action of international Rhine protection policy in the "Rhine 2040" programme adopted in 2020. In the second half of 2022, the works on **updating the strategy** for climate change adaptation in the International River Basin District Rhine have begun. This task will form a focus of the German ICPR presidency. The revised strategy is to be available by 2025 and will be reviewed and further developed every ten years from now on.

In autumn 2022, the two expert groups "**Discharge Projections**" and "**Water Temperatures**" therefore commenced their activities. An overview of the forecasted runoff projections at selected gauges of the Rhine and its tributaries for the "near future" (2050) and "distant future" (2100), based on the reports of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change as well as on national models, is expected to be available by the end of 2023.

Since autumn 2022, working group "Ecology" and expert group "Fish fauna" have been dealing with new findings on the possible effects of climate change on the **flora and fauna** of the Rhine, including the arrival of invasive species. To also take anthropogenic effects into account, expert group "Low Water" is working on a projection of **water availability** including water consumption.

All results as well as ideas for adaptation measures are to be discussed in a **workshop** in 2024 with the participation of important user groups. Subsequently, it is planned that an editorial group will update the strategy considering the new findings.

Another interdisciplinary project is the development of **sediment management**, including improving knowledge and defining requirements. The chairpersons of the three working groups have developed a roadmap, which was approved by the states in May 2023. After an inventory by means of a questionnaire and discussion in the working groups, a joint workshop is planned for 2024. The ICPR is cooperating closely with the International Commission for the Hydrology of the Rhine Basin (CHR).

2. A healthy Rhine – ecological continuity and biodiversity

The states have exchanged on the progress made at implementing measures to restore **ecological continuity in the southern Upper Rhine** in 2023. Construction works for the fish pass at the Rhinau dam in France started in autumn 2022; in Marckolsheim, the ground-breaking ceremony is scheduled for June 2023. Progress is also being made at restoring the ecological continuity in the Gerstheim and Rhinau loops. Making the Rhinau loop passable is planned as part of a joint French-German project for which the funding application is currently being prepared. The Netherlands continue to work on optimising the operation of the sluices at the Haringvliet Dam. The construction works for the fish migration river in the Afsluitdijk dam between the North Sea and lake IJsselmeer are progressing according to plan.

The delegations agreed on a new presentation format of the [salmon return statistics](#) that is better suited for external communication. The adjustments were made in March 2023. In 2022, which was characterised by low water levels, the number of returning salmon in the Rhine catchment did not increase to the extent expected in view of the measures implemented and the stocking effort. Therefore, the states in the Rhine catchment commissioned a **new study** in April 2023 to monitor the success and optimise the strategy for reintroduction.

The expert group "Fish fauna" continues to work on the formulation of **recommendations for downstream fish migration and fish protection** at hydropower plants. An editorial group has been formed. Publication is scheduled for 2024.

Work on enhancing biodiversity has also made further progress. The [technical report](#) on the extensive monitoring of the **success of the biotope network** and the new digital [biotope atlas](#) were published in summer 2022. The expert group "Biotope Network" is currently working on the preparation of roundtable discussions on the biotope network, ideas for promoting the biotope atlas and current developments in **remote sensing** for the further development of the methodology.

The expert group "Biological Monitoring" has submitted the **Rhine monitoring programme 2024/2025**. The results will be integrated into the 4th management plan (management cycle 2028 - 2034) for the International River Basin District Rhine. In this context, the collection of water samples for subsequent **eDNA analyses** is planned on a voluntary basis. For this purpose, two meetings for technical exchange took place in 2023.

3. A clean Rhine – good water quality

Micropollutants remained a thematic focus of the ICPR in the year of session 2022/2023. In December 2022, the [evaluation system](#) commissioned by the Conference of Rhine Ministers to review the 30 % reduction target was published. The monitoring of 58 representative substances is carried out at 12 measuring stations on the Rhine and 36 measuring stations in smaller catchment areas dominated by agriculture. In addition, there is a monitoring programme for suspended matter by the Federal Institute of Hydrology (BfG). Data evaluation is carried out annually; a technical report is planned every 3 years.

In May 2023, the states decided to create a new, temporary small group starting in autumn 2023. This group will deal with measures for the reduction of micropollutants and their assessment in the emission area "**industry**" and, among other things, revise the [ICPR recommendations on the reduction of micropollutants](#) for the emission area "industry" published at the beginning of 2019.

Progress is also being made in the EU-funded **project on non-target screening** on the Rhine. The works to provide the visualisation tool are running according to plan and will be completed by the end of 2023. By means of the round robin tests that have been

completed in the meantime, the data evaluation was further standardised. At the end of 2022, the EU Commission approved the interim report submitted by the ICPR.

In May 2023, the ICPR decided in favour of a self-funded **follow-up project**, as some additional needs (e. g. strategy for dealing with measurement results, connection to other databases) were identified that cannot be realised within the EU project which will end in February 2024. The countries expect that this will lead to cost savings in special measurement programmes, amongst other things. The institutions involved in the project as well as other interested parties from Switzerland, Austria, Germany, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands will examine the financing possibilities by summer 2023 based on a project outline.

The expert group "Warning and Alarm Plan Rhine" is currently working on the **requirements for a new Rhine alarm model** to be delivered by 2027. As every two years, the **international alarm rehearsal** of the "International Warning and Alarm Plan Rhine" (IWAP Rhine) will take place in June 2023. The additional **monthly functional tests** introduced in March 2022 have proven effective.

Further activities regarding water quality in the year of session 2022/2023:

- The Expert Group "Chemical Monitoring" has completed the **Rhine Water Quality Report 2019/2020** and developed proposals for the format of future reports.
- The expert group "Contamination of Biota" was reactivated in 2022 and has defined the framework for the statistical evaluation of measurements on the **contamination with pollutants of biota (fish/shellfish) in the Rhine catchment from 2015-2022**.
- There was a coordination meeting with the Central Commission for Navigation on the Rhine (CCNR) to optimise the methodology for the next **emissions inventory** for emissions from shipping.

4. A well-prepared society – dealing with floods and low water

After the catastrophic flooding in July 2021 in Western Europe, the summer of 2022 was characterised by **low water**, which was comparable to the events of 2003 and 2018 in terms of its dimensions. A first exchange took place in the expert group "Low Water" in autumn 2022; a more detailed discussion is to take place in autumn 2023 to be able to evaluate the drought in winter 2022/2023 as well. The summer of 2022 also offered the opportunity to test the ICPR [low water monitoring](#) under real conditions. The monitoring has basically proved effective; some further improvements concerning methodology and presentation were agreed.

To be able to regularly review the risk reduction target of 15 % by 2040 defined in the "Rhine 2040" programme (for the first time in 2027), some calculations must be carried out, among others with the instrument "FloRiAn" (Flood Risk Analysis) developed by the ICPR. In preparation for this task, the expert group "**Validation of Water Level Lowering Measures**" was reactivated. The ICPR has carried out a data survey among the states on the planned completion of the measures. With this list, an updated information and data basis is now available.

Furthermore, the Working Group "Flood and Low Water" has organised an exchange on *good practice examples* of **non-structural flood risk management** (keeping flood-prone areas free from buildings, protection of property and risk communication). On 4 October 2023, an international **workshop on torrential rain and flash floods** will take place in Bonn, which has been prepared by working group "flood and low water" and the Secretariat since the end of 2022.

5. A future-proof commission - public relations and digitalisation

On 23 May 2023, the annual **exchange of information between the NGOs and the ICPR President** took place in Koblenz.

In the year of session 2022/2023, there were four [press releases](#) - on the occasion of the plenary session 2022, the low water in summer 2022, the publication of the assessment system for the reduction of micropollutants and the change of presidency. There were also numerous press enquiries during the low water in summer 2022. Particularly noteworthy is a contribution in the Tagesschau - Germany's best-known news programme - in which the ICPR was mentioned.

The secretariat represented the ICPR at numerous events and gave presentations there. Compared to previous years, the number of on-site events (in comparison to videoconferences) has increased, again.

Alongside press releases and the website www.iksr.org, the ICPR has set itself the goal of further developing its **public relations** activities. For this purpose, the ICPR is active on **social media**:

- *ICPRrhine* on Twitter, since November 2020, hashtag: #OurRhine
- *International Commission for the Protection of the Rhine* on LinkedIn, since May 2022

At the beginning of 2023, the **ICPRMemberWeek** campaign was launched, inspired by the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River. The ICPR was able to gain additional followers as a result.

At the request of the states in the Rhine catchment area, the Secretariat has established the prerequisites within the framework of a special project so that simultaneously interpreted meetings can be offered in **hybrid format** from the year of session 2023/2024. English-language meetings (concerning the expert groups "Discharge Projections" and "Analytics") can already be offered in hybrid format today.