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Rhinaissance: A European vision for reviving the Rhine



Taubergießen, Île de Rhinau (ots) -

The Franco-German restoration project “Rhinaissance 2.0” is setting new standards in the ecological rehabilitation of the Rhine. Supported by the EU’s Interreg program, the initiative strengthens the cross-border green and blue infrastructure network, improving habitats for both people and wildlife.

The Rhine is one of Europe’s most significant rivers – a lifeline for nature, culture, and the economy alike. But decades of intensive use and regulation have left their mark. As part of the Franco-German project “Rhinaissance 2.0”, a section of the Upper Rhine between Taubergießen (Germany) and the Île de Rhinau (France) is being ecologically redesigned – with the goal of boosting biodiversity and restoring the river as a natural habitat.

A Structurally Rich River for Greater Biodiversity

Today, the Rhine is no longer a wild river, according to Dr. Bettina Saier, Director of the Taubergießen Ecological Station. The river has been severely impacted ecologically – with serious consequences for plants and animals. Her motivation to join the project: To bring the Rhine back to life with new species.

Specifically, the straightened riverbanks will be opened and reconnected to the natural floodplains. This will create new alluvial habitats that not only provide more structure in the water body, but also offer shade and refuge for fish on hot summer days.

A Response to Climate Change

From the French perspective, the restoration is also a major step forward. Christian Blum, the project’s lead partner from the Grand Est region, emphasises: “For me, the Rhine is a very important part of life and vital for ecological systems. The ecological restoration project we are pursuing here is of fundamental importance in the context of climate change.”

New Habitats for Fish

Another key aspect is the restoration of fish migration routes. Old weirs from the 1960s are being modified, and new fish ladders are being installed. “This will allow more fish species to return to their original habitats in the Rhine,” explains Françoise Erb-Marchal from the French environmental agency DREAL (*Direction Régionale de l’Environnement de l’Aménagement et du Logement*).

Scientific Support: Sediment and Flooding

The project is also accompanied by geological studies. Dr. Jochen Klinger from the Institute of Applied Geology is investigating the sediment layers in the protected area – a critical factor for the functionality of the alluvial forest

ecosystem. "Flooding in the nature reserve serves to preserve the floodplain forest ecosystem," says Klinger. If needed, additional measures may be implemented to re-establish natural flooding dynamics.

A Model for the Entire Upper Rhine?

Dr. Bettina Saier is already looking beyond the current project: "A major success for me would be if we could use the experiences and measures from this project as a model for the other three Rhine meanders that border this area."

EU Funding and Strong Partnerships

"Rhinaissance 2.0" is a multi-year initiative funded by the European Union's Interreg program. Numerous partners from both sides of the Rhine are involved – including the University of Strasbourg, several municipalities, the Freiburg Regional Council, and a range of environmental and technical authorities.

Description of the project:

Cohesion policy has defined clear objectives for the 2021-2027 funding period: A smart Europe through innovation, a greener, low-carbon Europe, a more connected Europe, a more social Europe and a Europe that is closer to its citizens. Sustainable challenges are becoming the focus of society, particularly in Germany and its neighbouring countries. The "EU4regions" project will produce high-quality multimedia and journalistic information on cohesion policy and then disseminate it widely. Within 12 months, Interreg projects from western and eastern Germany and neighbouring countries/regions will be presented to highlight local challenges. The countries concerned are Poland, the Czech Republic, Austria, Switzerland, France, the Netherlands and Denmark. Our thematic focus is on sustainability, whereby we understand sustainability as a whole. Although climate issues are at the centre of attention, they are complemented by economic and social aspects. The aim is to show how EU cohesion policy affects regions and people.

EU4regions receives funding from the EU Commission.

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Medieninhalte



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The project team (l-r): Françoise Erb-Marchal (Head of the environmental authority DREAL), Christian Blum (Lead partner of the project from the Grand Est region), Dr. Bettina Saier (Director of the Taubergießen Ecological Station). Photo: Christophe Gateau / Texte complémentaire par ots et sur www.presseportal.de/en/nr/177283 / L'utilisation de cette image à des fins éditoriales est autorisée et gratuite, pourvu que toutes les conditions d'utilisation soient respectées. La publication doit inclure le crédit de l'image.



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The project team collecting samples. Photo: Christophe Gateau / Texte complémentaire par ots et sur www.presseportal.de/en/nr/177283 / L'utilisation de cette image à des fins éditoriales est autorisée et gratuite, pourvu que toutes les conditions d'utilisation soient respectées. La publication doit inclure le crédit de l'image.



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