

LIFE WATER PLATFORM MEETING
ONE RIVER-MANY INTERESTS
27-28th June 2017, KOBLENZ

Concept Paper

The meeting is hosted by the German Federal Institute of Hydrology (BfG) and the Hessian Ministry of Environment, Climate Protection, Agriculture and Consumer Protection under the auspices of the LIFE 14 Integrated Project LIFE14 IPE/DE/022 - Living River Lahn

Background

In 2012 the European Commission published a strategic document called 'A Blueprint to Safeguard Europe's Water Resources' which aimed to tackle the obstacles which hamper action to safeguard Europe's water resources. The report emphasised key themes which included improving land use, addressing water pollution, increasing water efficiency and resilience, and improving governance by those involved in managing water resources. The Blueprint states that **the most widespread pressure on ecological status in the EU originate from changes to water** bodies due, for example, to dams for hydropower and navigation or draining land for agriculture and it identifies hydromorphological pressures and alleviation of physical barriers as key issues.

LIFE projects support the management of water resources in the EU and the implementation of water policy, notably the EU Water Framework Directive, by addressing a wide range of issues including among others river basin management and river restoration.

River restoration refers to a large variety of ecological, physical, spatial and management measures and practices. These are aimed at restoring the natural state and functioning of the river system in support of biodiversity, recreation, flood management and landscape development. Rivers (*as well as wetlands, lakes*) are of huge importance for the biodiversity they hold, and the ecosystem services they deliver. Water bodies (of rivers, lakes) have been subject to multiple threats over many centuries. Weirs, dams and other barriers have broken the migratory routes of rivers of a number of once common species, and reduced connectivity along the length of several rivers of Europe. The risk of seasonal flooding increased, and various forms of water management have disrupted natural flooding regimes and broken connectivity within floodplain ecosystems. In addition, pollution of various types, from pesticides, herbicides, fertilizers, industrial and household waste and the like, have turned some rivers into sewers, largely devoid of life. Rivers and lakes are also at risk from damaging invasive species. Rivers of Europe have a long history of alteration by humans for navigation, water and food supply, waste disposal, flood defence, settlement and power generation.¹

Overall, one river has several uses and these could be in conflict with each other. The platform event of LIFE projects hosted by a German Integrated water project will examine several aspects and problems of different water uses of rivers, focusing on river restoration and will discuss some of the potential solutions and experiences developed by LIFE projects and by international organizations.

¹Stephen Addy, Susan Cooksley, Nikki Dodd, Kerry Waylen, Jenni Stockan, Anja Byg and Kirsty Holstead (2016) River Restoration and Biodiversity: Nature-based solutions for restoring rivers in the UK and Republic of Ireland. CREW reference: CRW2014/10

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Objectives of the platform meeting

The platform is aiming at to summarize the main benefits of restoration processes via the experiences and lessons learned from closed and ongoing LIFE projects and other international initiatives, programs and organizations.

Main topics to focus on during the platform meeting:

1. Waterways in a changing world – restoring waterways
2. River restoration and ecosystem services
3. Stakeholder involvement in the restoration processes
4. Lessons to be learnt: experiences of river restoration works

Join our meeting to meet other LIFE projects from Belgium, Croatia, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Luxembourg, Slovenia, Spain and the United Kingdom. Discuss about the main aspects of river restoration with EU professionals and international specialists of the field and use the opportunity to introduce your project's main activities, share your experiences, and disseminate your know-how!