

The Rhine Net for public involvement is developing

The Rhine Network of RhineNet, created with the help of the European INTERREG Program, aims to identify, develop and enhance good practices in public involvement in water issues in the Rhine basin over a 5-year period up to the end of 2006.

The Rhine river basin, located at the core of one of the most populated and industrialized regions of Europe, has a rich and varied local knowledge of water management, together with many initiatives from citizens, associations, private sector, public sector, municipalities and transboundary organizations.

These local practices/approaches are especially significant with the view of implementing the European Water Framework Directive that gives impulse to a renewed involvement of the public in water management as soon as possible, with a true citizens' participation in particular.

The Rhine Network has the following objectives:

- To identify and develop local practices of participatory management of water resources;
- To strengthen European neighborhood cooperation on the scale of the river basin;
- To widely disseminate the acquired local knowledge.

THE PROJECT PARTNERS:

- Naturlandstiftung Saar (D), main contractor
- Solidarité Eau Europe (F), coordinator
- Ministry of Culture of the Saar Lander (D),
- Ministry of the Environment of the Baden-Wurtemberg Lander (D),
- Ecologic (D),
- Bundesverband der Bürgerinitiativen Umweltschutz – AK Wasser (D),
- Regiowasser (D),
- Office of the Environment of Karlsruhe city (D),
- Hellef Foundation for Nature (L),
- Stichting Reinwater (NL),
- European Rivers Network (F),
- Saarguemines agglomeration (F),
- International Office for Water (F).

The total budget of the project amounts to 3,584,139 Euros, half financed by the European INTERREG IIIb North West European (NEW) program

THE PROJECT ACTIVITIES TO PROMOTE PARTICIPATORY MANAGEMENT:

The activities carried out in this project will include **6 real case studies** and the same number of groups of local stakeholders along the Rhine. Participatory practices will be evaluated and compared for each case and then disseminated to promote the best ones:

- revitalization of the upper Rhine (F, D, CH),
- development of the Dreisam in Feiburg (D),
- protection of springs in Luxembourg (L),
- classification of the delta wetlands (NL),
- renaturalization of banks in Karlsruhe (D),
- protection against floods in the Moselle / Saar basin (F, D).

In addition to these case studies, **public information and awareness activities** will be organized on the basin scale:

- organization of local information workshops on the active participation of the civil society in water management (Main, upper Rhine, Moselle / Saar, Rhine delta);
- organization of a poetry contest "Rivers of pictures, rivers of words" in the schools of the Upper Rhine and Moselle / Saar, including the presentation of results with a mobile exhibition;
- organization of a "Bathing Day" (Big Jump) in the Rhine to entice the population back to the river;
- organization of the "Neckar festival", gathering about a hundred events in the entire Neckar basin.

The knowledge gained about the different participation and awareness techniques has been discussed since the beginning of 2005. The obtained results will be widely disseminated.

The website, allowing exchanges, may be accessed on www.rhinenet.net.

THE ROLE OF THE INTERNATIONAL OFFICE FOR WATER:

In this Rhine project, IOWater mainly deals with the evaluation of participatory management practices used in the project-supported activities. Using this study, "**operational guidelines on participation**" will be drafted for the developers of water management projects. This summary document will enable the gathering of the best participation and awareness practices and the drafting of recommendations, before their wide dissemination to water stakeholders (the way of disseminating them has not been decided yet).

Up to now, a bibliographical synthesis and a detailed plan of the guidelines have been completed and approved. At the beginning of June, interviews of the project managers of the Rhine river basin will be carried out regarding the participation approaches they used. The results of these interviews will enable the evaluation and comparison of the case studies and the making of a synthesis of the good participation practices during summer. The drafting of the guidelines should be completed and presented to the project partners at the end of September.