



Case study #04: Room for the Rhine branches

Case study cluster: large transboundary rivers

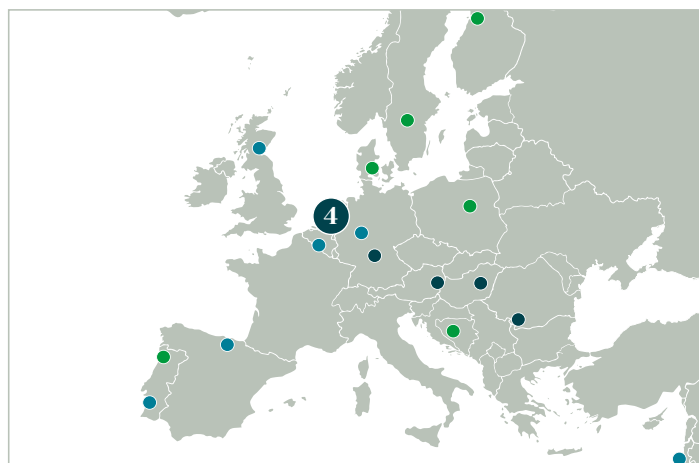
Country: The Netherlands

Scientific partner: Deltares

Implementation partner: Rijkswaterstaat (RWS)

Twinning case study: Po river (Italy)

Website: www.rijkswaterstaat.nl/en/water/water-safety/room-for-the-rivers



Demonstration

- **Type of restoration:** Floodplain reconnection
- **Size:** total length 300 km of large floodplain rivers; 50,000 ha
- **Location(s):** Rhine branches starting at the Dutch/German border
- **Value of the case:** flood resilience, river–floodplain connectivity, biodiversity enhancement, multi-functional landscapes, nature-based climate adaptation
- **Stakeholders involved:** NGOs, State Forest Management, Municipalities, Sand and gravel mining companies, Farmers, Recreational Fisheries, Provincial landscape foundations, and numerous local stakeholders
- **Sectors involved:** nature protection, flood protection, navigation
- **Innovations being applied:** integrated flood and nature protection, longitudinal main channel dams benefitting both shipping and nature

Implemented within MERLIN

- **Restoration measures:** reconnection of floodplain to be re-wetted and land-use change in the floodplain
- **Size:** 611 ha restored land
- **Scope:** regional
- **Vicinity:** rural to urban
- **Stakeholders involved:** State forestry agency, Agriculture, Water boards, Local municipalities, NGOs, Rijkswaterstaat (RWS)
- **Estimated costs:** 540,000€ (including planning, monitoring and construction costs) + ca. 5,000€ annual maintenance costs

Lessons learnt

- Field experience builds trust.
- Floodplains offer widespread restoration potential.
- Strong policy drivers are essential

Additional information

Pilot projects demonstrated that temporary floodplain inundation enhances aquatic food webs and biodiversity.



Strengths

- Long-term restoration experience
- Multiple societal benefits
- Trust-based stakeholder engagement
- Strong scientific foundation

Weaknesses

- Limited restoration scope
- No programme-wide monitoring
- Costs assessed, benefits not

Opportunities

- Broader restoration policy
- Growing public appreciation of nature
- Integrated cost-benefit assessment
- Wider uptake of NbS

Threats

- Growing recreational pressure
- Climate change impacts
- Overly complex project design

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