

KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE PROGRAMME

HOW RELEVANT ARE THE EUROPEAN RIVER REJUVENATION EXPERIENCES FOR NGP AND INDIAN RIVERS?



DRAFT FOR DISCUSSION

KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE IDEAS

Introduction

The Transboundary Rivers, Ecologies and Development Studies (TREADS) Initiative at the Centre for Policy Research (CPR), New Delhi, India pursues wide ranging research interests in the field of water policy and governance with a focus on transboundary river water governance. The Initiative is anchored by the Ministry of Jal Shakti (MoJS) Research Chair – Water Conflicts and Governance at CPR.

TREADS@CPR signed an MoU with the National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG), under the MoJS, India in December 2021 to pursue a collaborative research programme for improving the outcomes of the Namami Gange Programme (NGP) and informing policy thinking about rejuvenating India's rivers. A key theme of this ongoing collaborative effort is to critically engage with the European experiences of rejuvenating the Rhine and their broader transboundary water governance such as EU Water Framework Directive (EU WFD) experiences and design a knowledge exchange programme between NMCG and relevant European institutions and authorities.

The Rhine Programme has a distinct context with collective mobilization built on navigation and trade interdependencies. The International Commission for the Protection of the Rhine (ICPR) could build on this history of interdependencies. The European integration/unification – from European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) to the present-day European Union (EU) - and the accompanying institutional structures and processes for consensus building have helped the rejuvenation efforts.

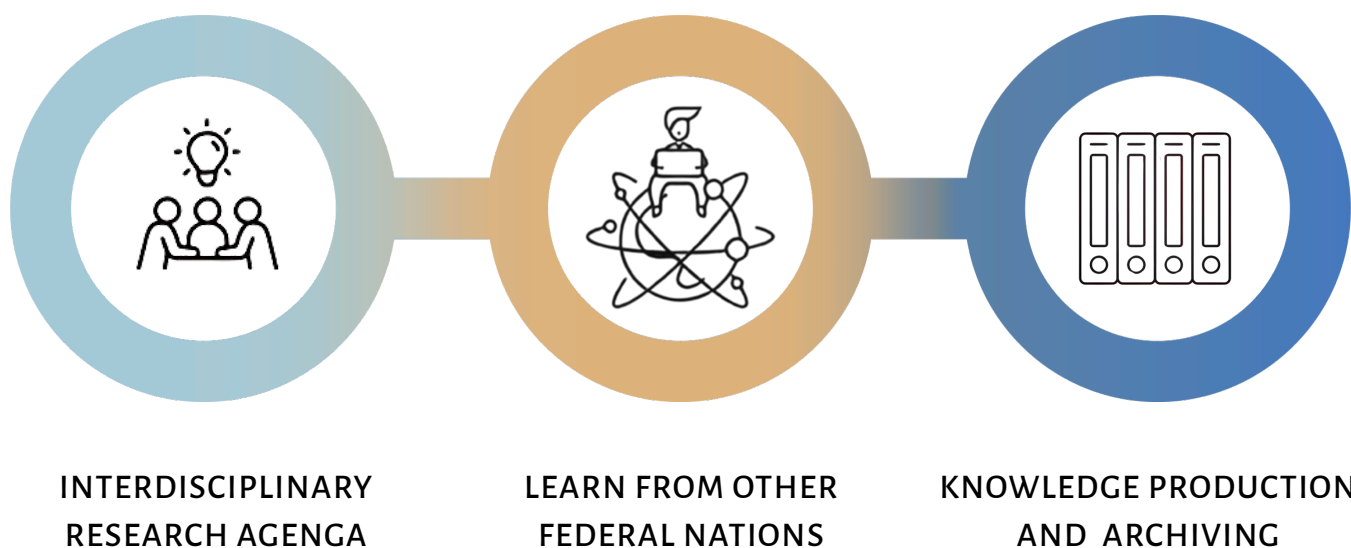
In contrast, NGP is still in a relatively nascent stage and primarily funded and driven by the Centre. Ensuring that the NGP produces enduring outcomes and scaling up of NGP's experiences to India's other major rivers requires similar processes of consensus building and institutionalization of river rejuvenation.

The Knowledge Exchange Programme, with NMCG as an anchoring body, can serve as a great opportunity for India to learn from the European experiences. The objective of the programme is to engage critically with the European experiences to distil insights across the spectrum of strategic, political, policy and institutional domains applicable to the Indian context. The exchange programme will be implemented in the next phase of this project.

Scope of the Knowledge Exchange Programme

The broad scope of activities, but not limited to them, are as follows. These are indicative and illustrative.

- Pursue an inter-disciplinary research agenda to address critical and vexing water management issues from the point of view of river restoration for Ganges and India's river system.
- Explore opportunities to learn from other federated countries like Germany with particular focus on river rejuvenation (can also be pursued in the Indo-German Ministerial Dialogue).
- Knowledge Production Documentation and Archiving: Promoting comparative and collaborative research between Indian and Rhine Member states/institutions—Ministries, federal agencies, research institutions, universities, and other stakeholder groups.



S. No.	Type of Knowledge Exchange/Format	Duration	Brief Overview
1	Technical Working Group	Biannual	Constituting a TWG to serve as a cohort of experts to advise, provide feedback and guidance to the different areas of research undertaken pertaining to the EU Project.
2	Thematic Inter-Governmental Policy Consultations	Bimonthly	Policy consultations on key thematic areas relevant to rejuvenating India's rivers starting with the Ganges. This policy consultation should be at the secretarial and ministerial level. The thematic areas could be decided following deliberation with TWG.
3	Exchange Programme	NA	Designing and facilitating exchange programme between Indian and EU universities that are actively engaged in providing technical support on matters related to river rejuvenation.
4	Capacity Building Workshop	Annually	Providing capacity- building and hands-on knowledge based on European experience.
5	Exposure Visit/Dispatch of Policy Advisor	Based on interest and availability	Dispatching Indian expert(s) to a Rhine basin state for in-depth & practical policy consultations.
6	Subnational Level Consultation	Biannually	Consultation between experts/officials at the subnational level and their counterparts in selected Rhine Basin States.
7	TREADTalk	Monthly	Instituting a CPR-NMCG Dialogue Forum to host experts on the theme of river rejuvenation, transboundary water governance, etc.
8	Knowledge Exchange Documentation	NA	Periodically archive, organise and document the various information and inputs gathered from the knowledge exchange for creating knowledge products for wider dissemination.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE FORMATS

1. Technical Working Group

A Technical Working Group (TWG) comprising members from academia, policy, government, legal and technical fields both from Europe and India which can serve as experts to advise, provide feedback and guidance to the different areas of research undertaken by TREADS pertaining to the EU Project. The tasks to be undertaken in the setting up of TWG are briefly outlined below:

- Prepare a long list of members with inputs from NMCG and the TREADS team.
- Prepare a concept note and ToR for the TWG.
- Propose a biannual commitment and the option to consult members one-on-one on their areas of expertise.
- NMCG can serve as a facilitator for the TWG, and maybe the IEWP can serve as a starting point to take this conversation forward since it is already an established network involving Indian and European partners.

Terms of Reference for the TWG:

The objective of this expert working group is to deliberate on the various aspects of river rejuvenation and transboundary water governance in Europe and in India. The expert group would provide guidance to identify the following:

- Inputs for a consultation process with relevant European institutions which will include key institutional actors and resource persons focusing on Rhine River basin states.
- Potential institutional collaborators for the knowledge exchange programme.
- Outline broad strategies for specific programme design by identifying the challenges and opportunities at the national and the subnational level.
- It is expected that TWG will convene twice a year.
- The opportunity to consult the TWG, both as a group and as individuals in their areas of expertise.
- A detailed minutes of the meeting shall be prepared and circulated among the members of the TWG after each of its convening.

Note: As the research progresses, the mandate for the TWG shall also evolve as per the ToR

2. Thematic Inter-Governmental Policy Consultations

Inter-Governmental Policy consultations, at the secretarial and ministerial level, on key thematic areas relevant to rejuvenating India's rivers starting with the Ganges. The thematic areas could be decided following deliberations with the TWG. We propose the following as part of policy consultations:

- NMCG-ICPR Strategy Group. In consultation with the NMCG, relevant departments within NMCG could be identified for thematic policy consultations.
- NMCG/MoJS/MoEFCC and Competent Authority of selected Rhine Basin States responsible for implementation of EU WFD. The list of Competent Authorities of the selected Rhine Basin States can be accessed in Annexure I.
- MoJS-Rijkswaterstaat (Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management), The Netherlands.

3. Exchange Programme

Designing and facilitating exchange programme between Indian and EU universities that are actively engaged in providing technical support on matters related to river rejuvenation. The objectives of the exchange programme are as follows:

- Developing and nurturing epistemic communities spanning across India and Rhine Basin States.
- Create and nurture an interdisciplinary research forum on water governance to assist Indian policy thinking and public discourse.
- Knowledge sharing & science-policy dialogue anchored by NMCG with inputs from TREADS.

Some tentative proposals for the knowledge exchange are as follows:

- IITs and NITs, currently engaged in preparing management plans for the restoration of six major river basins in India, to establish cooperation with academic institutions in the Rhine Basin States for knowledge exchange. This knowledge exchange should be designed to gain useful inputs on how the latter's contribution helped in providing knowledge support to state actors in EU.

- Piloting a programme wherein NMCG hosts a cohort of researchers, policymakers and media professionals engaged in the domain of river rejuvenation. The selected cohort from India and Rhine Basin states can participate in a curated knowledge exchange programme with a clearly defined mandate to learn from each other's experience. This programme can be designed along the lines of Young Water Diplomat Programme hosted by IHE Delft.
- The Netherlands has launched an international project called “The Rhine Connects” in October 2023 bringing together 10 German and Dutch organisations. It would be useful to establish a knowledge exchange programme with this project as it also has an educational component with plans to organise exhibitions focusing on the Rhine. We can reach out to them in an official capacity via NMCG as it is under the Dutch ministry.

4. Capacity Building Workshop

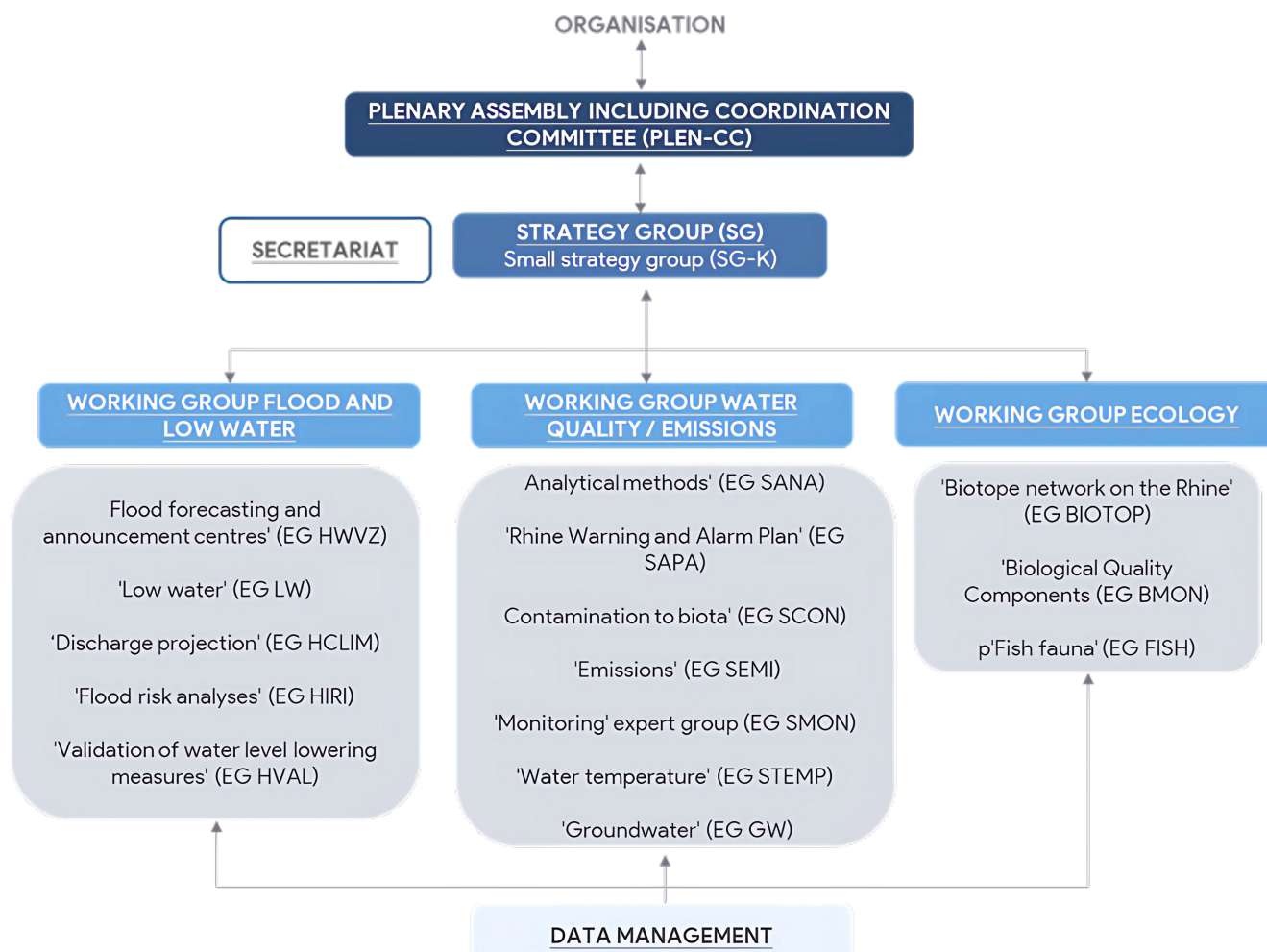
- Organising capacity building workshops co-hosted by NMCG and TREADS. Each workshop can focus on a specific aspect of river rejuvenation such as administrative and legal matters, institutional structure for inter-state coordination on data monitoring and any other relevant policy and institutional matters. The TWG can be consulted for the design of the workshop.
- A knowledge product summarising the key insights from each workshop can be produced and widely disseminated.

5. Exposure Visits

Dispatching Indian expert(s) to a Rhine basin state for exposure visits and in-depth & practical policy consultations as and when required. Possible avenues for visits include:

ICPR’s Strategy Group (SG): The SG coordinates the implementation of EU Directives and undertakes discussions on technical, political, and legal matters. They are responsible for knowledge transfer as well. The SG generally meets twice a year. There is a small strategy group (SG-K) responsible for preparing the thematic and organisational work and resolutions made by the SG. The SG-K is part of the SG and may convene more frequently than the SG if necessary. The SG can establish drafting groups, e.g., to draft the river basin management plan (SG-PLAN) or the first interim report on the “Rhine 2040” programme. If necessary, it can also set up new expert groups or expand/modify the mandates of existing groups. SG meetings can also be held via videoconference with simultaneous interpretation, enabling delegations to meet in a more sustainable and climate-friendly format, i.e., without having to travel.

- A senior representative from NMCG could have an exposure visit to the ICPR's Strategy Group as its core functions are “derived from the “Rhine 2040” programme and the permanent tasks of the ICPR arising from the Convention for the Protection of the Rhine, and are necessary to ensuring the coordinated implementation of European water law and, in particular, the Water Framework Directive (WFD) and the Floods Directive (FD).



Source: ICPR

Civic Society: In 1970, the International Association of Water Works along the Rhine (IAWR) was formed as an umbrella organization for sustainable protection of drinking water quality. IAWR is the association of about 120 waterworks from the six riparian states of Switzerland, Liechtenstein, Austria, Germany, France, and The Netherlands. It is engaged in the reduction and prevention of various types of pollutants emerging from households, industry, and agriculture, including complex pollutants like pesticides, a non-point source of pollution. The IAWR participates as a “Non-Governmental Organization” (NGO) in the ICPR. The members of IAWR played a key role in influencing water policies in the Rhine basin states. The organization structure and IAWR can be found in Annexure III.

We propose:

- Selected representatives from NMCG, SMCG, and parastatals such as the Delhi Jal Board (DJB), Uttar Pradesh Jal Nigam (UPJN), and the Public Health Engineering Department (PHED), West Bengal, will undertake an exposure visit to the IAWR and its member organizations to get in-depth insights into their role in spurring the rejuvenation of the Rhine.
- NMCG and representatives from Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) can visit the IAWR Platform Analytics and IAWR Working Group that work on the exchange of information on new measurement methods and new or not yet identified substances in water bodies.

6. Subnational Level Consultation

Consultation between experts/officials at the subnational level and their counterparts in selected Rhine Basin States. For instance, in 2007, Bavaria and Karnataka signed an MoU for State-to-State Cooperation, in the fields of commerce, industry, technology, research, infrastructure, tourism and other related areas. The cooperation has sustained for more than a decade amidst changing political regime. It serves as a useful starting point for Ganges Basin States to have similar arrangement with their EU counterparts.

We propose the following:

- Ganges Basin State-Länder in Germany — state-to-state cooperation on various aspects of water management. In particular, the broad objective is to conduct dialogue regarding how Länder implemented the EU WFD and other conservation measures required for Rhine restoration.
- State to State Cooperation can also extend to selected Rhine Basin Countries. Such cooperation can facilitate SMCG /State Level Water and Environmental Water Authorities with their counterparts in the EU — regional water authorities and water agencies of France and The Netherlands. An exhaustive list of competent authorities can be found in Annexure I.
- MoJS, in collaboration with NMCG and State Governments, to organise policy consultation or policy dialogue with LAWA— the German Working Group on water issues of the Federal States and the Federal Government— to identify prospects of designing similar inter-state coordination and cooperation mechanism to address river pollution for inter-state river basins in India.

State Government representatives in close coordination with NMCG at the secretary level to exchange notes and experiences and discuss various aspects of water legislation, hydrology, inland waters and sea conservation, ecology, flood prevention, coastal protection, groundwater, water supply, municipal and industrial sewage, handling with water polluting substances and climate change related issues in detail. SMCG/State Government can form smaller working groups for exposure visit in LAWA for specific/key thematic areas as discussed above.

Research Collaboration between India-Germany on the intersection between urban planning, municipal governance, and river-centric master planning. We propose a research collaboration between NMCG- NIUA and German Institute of Urban Affairs (Difu) as partner institution in informing policy and knowledge transfer with regards to urban river management plans in urban areas. Difu is a non-profit limited company under German law and provides research support to German municipalities. Under the aegis of River Cities Alliance (RCA) such collaboration can be pursued.

7. TREADTalks with Experts (CPR-NMCG Dialogue Forum)

We can invite experts to deliver talks and engage in a discussion with the team. These can be in a hybrid mode to expand the pool of experts we can invite. We can host experts engaged in different aspects of Rhine rejuvenation and EU WFD and the discussant/moderator can be an Indian expert on the same (pertaining to Ganges). This sort of a discussion can enrich our research and highlight the similarities and differences between the European and the Indian context. It can also shed light on the practical challenges in implementing policies and projects geared towards the rejuvenation of the Rhine and the Ganges.

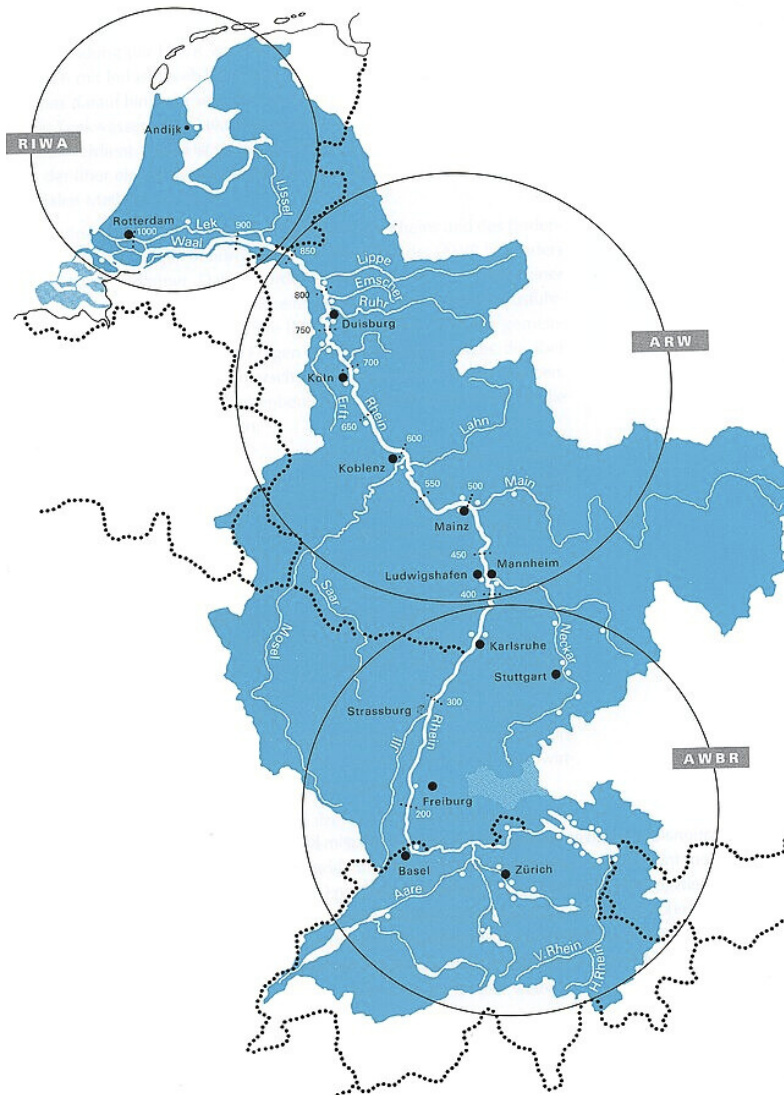
8. Knowledge Exchange Documentation

Periodically archive, organise and document the various information and inputs gathered from the knowledge exchange for creating knowledge products for wider dissemination. We propose the following:

- NMCG can develop a partnership with a selected media portal in India, in collaboration with TREADS to document, develop, visualise, and disseminate various learnings from the knowledge exchange to the general public. For example, IHE Delft developed a Science Communication for Water Diplomacy in the Brahmaputra.

Annexure I

Members and Organizational Structure of IAWR



Source: IAWR

The general meeting and the IAWR executive committee comprises the presidents and managing directors of the member associations.

- The Scientific Coordination Committee (IAWR Advisory Board) supports the Executive Board and the management. It is made up of representatives from the scientific advisory boards of the member associations.
- The IAWR Advisory Board can form ad hoc working groups on individual issues in the areas of analytics, biology or technical questions of water policy.

- With the IAWR Analytics Platform, the IAWR has a working group for the exchange of new measurement methods and new or unidentified substances in water.
- The way the IAWR works is set out in statutes and rules of procedure.

"The committees and working groups are made up of experts sent from the member associations AWBR, ARW and RIWA-Rhein."