

International Hydrological Programme

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INITIATIVE “MORE ROOM FOR WATER” – MORWATER

SUMMARY

The Initiative “More Room for Water” is proposed by the Slovenian National Committee for IHP, to create the knowledge base to build, facilitate and harvest hydrological, ecological and spatial planning science synergies, by exchanging expertise and good practices.



United Nations
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Programme

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Initiative »More Room for Water« – MORWater

Since ancient times, and more intensively from the mid-19th century, inundated areas and wetlands have been lost as the space belonging to water has been reduced. The surfaces 'taken' from rivers were intended primarily for agriculture and urban development. The middle of the 19th century saw the emergence of such regulation works on the Rhine River and, in the first half of the 20th century, in the United States (de Bruin, 2005 and Cassidy, 1962). Similar developments occurred worldwide. At the end of the 20th century, many rivers flowed in highly confined channels. This resulted in the changes reducing water resources of appropriate quality, affecting natural habitats, causing major flood damage, decreasing groundwater stock, and deteriorating water quality. The water regime integrates all events across space and is manifested in a close connection between surface water and groundwater regimes. Reduction of groundwater storage is directly linked with low flows of surface waters and, vice versa, river training works reduce groundwater storage.

This problem is partially covered by many UN and UNESCO documents and reports, such as: The United Nations World Water Development Report 2015 and Managing Water under Uncertainty and Risk. Proper actions are also suggested in the Ministerial Declaration from the 7th World Water Forum. The Ministerial Declaration first mentioned the significance of appropriate land management in relation to sustainable water management and planning. Contemporary societal development around the world is oriented at developing urban centres, and it is expected that by 2030, more than 60% of the world population will live in urban areas. Regardless of the level of development, this development is uncontrollable everywhere, without adequately taking account of the water regime, causing problems even if we set the issue of climate change aside. Such development causes extraordinary problems in water supply due to the lack of areas for recharging and protecting groundwater and other local water resources, too narrow corridors for waste water discharge and provisional retention of rainwater and snow, and protection against floods and droughts. Furthermore, we have to make room for water infrastructure with storage and waste water treatment facilities. Water attracts the attention of city authorities when problems occur, rather than during the planning of urban development. As it is, suitable land is urbanised and already occupied due to the various needs of the city, while solutions are complex and expensive. The release and creation of space for water needs is subject to strong personal and other public interests; even though these areas can also be used for other urban purposes, their primary role of supporting the water regime must be ensured. In any event, releasing more room for water pays out economically in

the long-term, for which, nevertheless, long-term strategic decisions for landscape planning and real-estate policy are required.

Aims of the MORWI

The collaborative and interdisciplinary More Room for Water Initiative (MORWI) aims to create the knowledge base required for a holistic scientific assessment of the state of MORWIs and to promote their integrated and sustainable water and space management.

The specific objectives are:

To analyse the current state and the future development of MORWIs, documented good and bad practice.

To establish a platform to build, facilitate and harvest hydrological, ecological and spatial planning science synergies between countries and to provide education and training at technical and tertiary level.

To develop innovative strategies for the sustainable management of MORWIs for the benefit of both humans and nature.

To assess the future trends of water regime development in order to develop and test adaptation and mitigation strategies.

To develop a good practices catalogue in integrated MORWIs.

Deliverables and outcomes of MORWIs.

Global overview of water–space relations.

Closed knowledge gaps, ongoing knowledge transfer (experts trained), and an existence of a Global Observatory of MORWIs.

Collaborative International Action Plan to focus on MORWI research.

Incorporation of MORWIs in other IHP initiatives.

Conferences and workshops on MORWIs.