# Abstract

The Rhine River is a major waterway that originates from Switzerland, and flows through France, Germany and the Netherlands to reach the North Sea; the basin itself includes 9 European countries. International cooperation on the Rhine River Basin has been ongoing since 1815 and continues today to resolve trans-boundary conflicts and manage water problems, including shipping, navigation, salt intrusion, water pollution, and flooding issues[[1]](#footnote-1).

This case study focuses on the international cooperation required to prevent pollution to the Rhine River. Water quality declined during the 1850s as a result of wastes discharged into the river because of industrialization and urbanization. Although international commissions were formed to address the pollution problem, plans to improve water quality were not implemented until the 1980s. Sparked by the Sandoz Accident of 1986, the Rhine Action Program was developed to restore ecological habitats and ensure drinking water quality for over 20 million people in the Basin[[2]](#footnote-2). The Rhine Action Program has been successful in reducing phosphorus concentrations and reviving the salmon population[[3]](#footnote-3). After the Program ended in 2000, “Rhine 2020" and the EU Water Framework Directive were adopted to continue water quality control and ecological rehabilitation[[4]](#footnote-4). The success of the program is attributed to the immense collaboration and stakeholder engagement throughout the process, and can be analyzed through the lens of the Water Diplomacy Framework.

1. http://www.researchgate.net/publication/30019497\_The\_Rhine\_River\_Basin/file/d912f50fa8eb874f80.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. http://webworld.unesco.org/water/wwap/pccp/cd/pdf/case\_studies/rhine2.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. http://www.iksr.org/index.php?id=30&L=3&ignoreMobile=1\ [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. http://www.iksr.org/index.php?id=30&L=3&ignoreMobile=1\ [↑](#footnote-ref-4)