

OUR FUNDAMENTAL VALUES

ERN's actions are based on the consideration of river basins in their entirety, including when they cross borders, and the capacity of streams to regenerate when they are free. ERN tries to steer stakeholders towards approaches which are more respectful of rivers, and towards alternatives to building to foster a different river culture, something that global warming makes even more indispensable. 4 main priority axes guide its actions :

Protecting

➔ The preservation of rivers as ecosystems, with all the biodiversity that goes with them, allows first and foremost to maintain their dynamics and resilience... A healthy river does indeed possess tremendous potential for evolution, a strong capacity for regeneration and provides 'ecosystemic services' to humans, for free.

Freeing Restoring

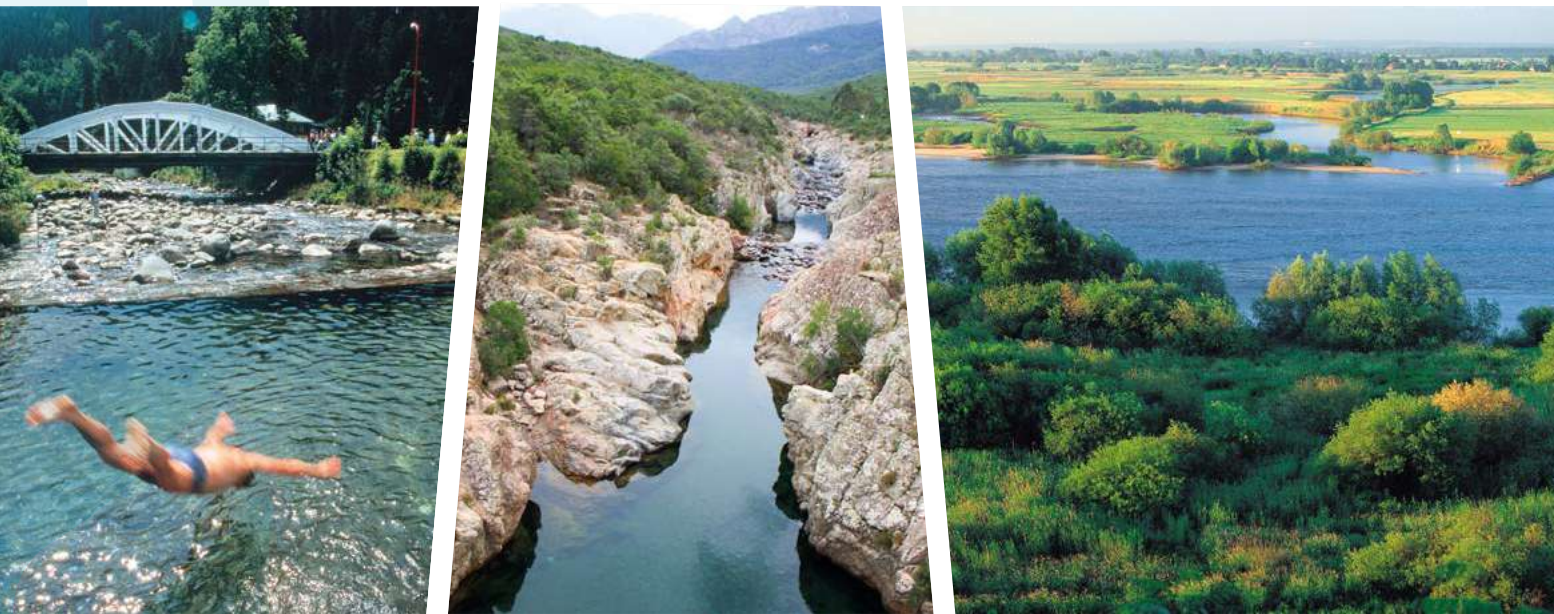
➔ Getting rid of obstacles, be they dams or weirs, which hinder streams is the most efficient way to restore them, by re-establishing their natural dynamics and reconnecting them with wetlands, water tables, old channels... Rivers are, by definition, flowing, mobility corridors for water, sediments, for animal and plant life... and for Men!

Connecting

➔ It is essential to create networks and work with those who, all over the world, advocate for rivers and streams, whether locally or globally... Pooling together our energies as well as spreading information allows us to make the most of and to link together stakeholders and experiences, beyond administrative, political, linguistic or cultural barriers! Acting together takes us further!

Relearning

➔ Currently in our lives, the room devoted to natural elements is shrinking... Though many of us are still aware that rivers are beautiful, how many know that they are also fickle and impetuous, and that their beauty also stems from these characteristics? Relearning rivers and the way they work, making room for them again in our everyday lives... We must go back to a true river culture!



*Men's lives have always been closely linked to rivers.
Protecting water and rivers also means protecting men.*

FROM LOIRE VIVANTE TO ERN

- **End of the 70's.** Most European rivers are at death's door, overexploited. Contamination is generalized, swimming is forbidden... Salmon are even gone from the Rhine and the Elbe.
- **1984.** Large citizen protest movements are set up and prevent great dams from being built on the Danube.
- **1985.** France decides to exploit the Loire, its last river still somewhat wild. The WWF and France Nature Environment launch the Loire Vivante Committee to organize the opposition.
- **1989.** In the Upper Loire watershed, the association SOS Loire Vivante is created and fiercely fights against the first of a series of dams planned on the Loire and its tributaries.
- **1992.** The Loire Vivante Committee is awarded the prestigious Goldman Environmental Prize, through Christine Jean, French coordinator for the network. This shows global recognition of the actions led in favour of the Loire!
- **1994.** France abandons its Loire exploitation projects and initiates the Loire Grandeur Nature Plan, the 1st major European project to protect a river!



1994 (end). Creation of European Rivers Network (ERN) in France by Roberto Epple with the support of Dr Phil Williams (International Rivers Network (USA)) and of the WWF: the SOS Loire Vivante Association becomes ERN France - SOS Loire Vivante.

- **1997.** Development of the first European Public policies to protect and restore rivers.
- **2000.** Europe votes the Water Framework Directive which demands the rehabilitation of surface waters (objective currently postponed from 2015 to 2021 due to lack of satisfactory results).

To define its strategy and main areas of work, ERN organizes a 'thinkcamp' and invites representatives for environmental protection associations from twenty or so European countries, as well as observers from other continents.

- **Since 2000...** ERN has developed numerous partnerships concerning the 50 main river basins in Europe and strives to bring this strategy to life through the various actions outlined in this flyer. In 2019, ERN celebrated its 30th birthday!



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European Rivers Network, created in 1994, is the national and international branch of SOS Loire Vivante, a nonprofit organisation. It is approved by the French Ministry for Environmental Affairs and it is also a member of the National Water Committee, the National Biodiversity Committee and the Flooding Joint Committee, all national institutions which shape water policies. The association is also a member of various European federations and organizations.

Main partners: Dam Removal Europe / Deutsche Umwelthilfe / EPTB Seine Grands Lacs / Etablissement Public Loire / Euronatur / European Anglers Alliance / European Environmental Bureau / Fédération Nationale de la Pêche en France / International Rivers / Les Agences de l'Eau / Ministère de la transition écologique et solidaire / Office Français de la Biodiversité / Patagonia / The Rivers Trust / Wetlands International / World Fish Migration Foundation / WWF (World Wide Found)



*Originally springing from local actions on the Loire,
ERN now acts globally
for living rivers in France and in Europe*



**OUR PASSION:
LIVING RIVERS
BEYOND ALL BORDERS!**

Protecting / Loire, Allier and Ardèche

> TOWARDS AN MAB UNESCO LOIRE ALLIER ARDECHE RESERVE



Protecting France's water tower

At the heart of a preserved environment, in an authentic land of springs, canyons and plateaux, 3 of the most beautiful rivers in France are born : the Loire, the Allier and the Ardèche rivers. ERN wants to preserve this 'water tower' by connecting people and initiatives from each watershed in the area and actively works towards the creation of a UNESCO "Man and Biosphere" project which would facilitate shared development and cover both economic and ecological concerns and bring international recognition to the area.

www.mabloireallierardeche.org

Relearning / Seine, Loire

> REDISCOVERING FLOOD-RISK CULTURE



Improving life with our rivers

Just like the Loire, the Seine river is exposed to a very significant and dangerous flood risk. A repeat of the 1910 swell, gone from our collective memory, could have dramatic consequences on the inhabitants and the country's economy. Based on its past experience with the Loire, ERN has since 2016 been in charge of coordinating awareness-raising and educational actions on the topic of "river culture" in partnership with Seine Grand Lacs on the Ile-de-France Seine and Marne rivers.

<https://www.ern.org/en/living-with-floods-in-europe>

Connecting / Loire

> LOIRE VIVANTE NETWORK ANIMATION

Working at the level of the Loire catchment area

ERN stems from the innovative action of SOS Loire Vivante and the "Loire Vivante" network. To this day, ERN supports the Loire Grandeur Nature Plan which was born of those fights, promotes a vision of basins in their entirety and makes sure that citizens and civil society can be a part of the governance. The organisation of inter-associative conventions is one way to amplify the voice of the associations, forgotten in the various Loire Plans, even though they were their very instigators! ERN is dedicated to keeping the Loire Vivante spirit alive, connecting upstream and downstream areas and bringing together all stakeholders.

www.sosloirevivante.org



Relearning / Loire, Elbe, Rhin, etc.

> RIVERS OF PICTURES AND FLOW OF WORDS

Arts as a means to access knowledge!

RPFW (alias RIFM in French) is an ERN-led educational project on the discovery of rivers which brings together environmental education and the arts. It covers all the schools of the entire watershed of a given river, from kindergarten to middle-school. ERN initiated this project on the Elbe, in Germany, then expanded it to the Loire in 1998. Recently a special edition on 'Wild Rivers' was created. Over the past two decades, nearly 30,000 children (over 60 classes / year) were given the opportunity to learn more about the lives of rivers and eco-citizenship.

www.ern.org/en/rivers-of-pictures/



Relearning / Europe

> "BIG JUMP" FESTIVAL

Swimming to bridge the gap between men and rivers

20th-century citizens were dispossessed of their rivers, sacrificed to industrial uses. To recreate strong links between citizens and rivers, ERN created a river festival as soon as 2002: the 'Big Jump'. Every second Sunday in July, at 3pm, citizens from all over Europe take to the water and organize friendly events, debates... Objective: campaigning for the restoration of our freshwater ecosystems as well as the enforcement of the Water Framework Directive (WFD). Since 2002, approximately 220,000 people have taken part in over 2,400 events in 38 countries.

www.bigjump.org



Protecting / Europe

> A LABEL FOR RIVERS

Protecting and promoting the high quality rivers

When an EDF dam destroyed the Rizzanese, of the most beautiful coastal rivers in Corsica, ERN decided to co-create a french label for wild rivers. Following this success, ERN is now working on the international development of other labels for rivers that have remained alive, natural or wild, in the Alpine Crescent countries and the Balkans, two regions which are particularly threatened by the unchecked growth of hydroelectricity, in partnership with WWF and EuroNatur.

<https://www.ern.org/en/rivers-labels>



Freeing - Restoring / Europe

> HYDROELECTRICITY: LESS AND BETTER

Making it greener, not only renewable!

French and European hydroelectric facilities are aging and no longer meet environmental nor safety current standards. The most impactful dams must be removed, others reconfigured and their management revisited. ERN leads various campaigns to remove large dams on the Sélune in Normandy or for the partial removal of the Poutès dam in Haut-Allier. ERN is working to develop standards for low environmental impact hydropower, encouraging operators to improve their equipment. ERN is opposed to the creation of small power stations due to their insignificant energy contribution and the significant nuisance they entail.

www.ern.org/en/hydropower
www.ern.org/en/selune-libre
www.ern.org/en/poutes-barrage



Connecting / Europe

> INFORMATION WITHOUT BORDERS FOR EUROPEAN RIVERS



When solidarity promotes and activates the circulation of ideas

By editing newsletters and creating content for websites in several languages, for various countries or water catchment areas, ERN has brought to light and given visibility to not only its own campaigns but also the actions of men and women in Europe who fight and work for living rivers, and this for over 25 years. Among the campaigns we followed and / or supported : Iisu Hasankeyf (Turkey), Rios Vivos et Save the Ebro (Spain) et Blue Heart of Europe (Balkans)...

www.ern.org

Connecting / Europe

> CONNECTING EUROPEAN NGOS AND CITIZENS FOR LIVING RIVERS

Promoting a strong message at the European level

ERN is a founding member of two European platforms which each gather several NGOs and a whole community of European citizens. The first one, Dam Removal Europe (DRE), was created in 2006, and supplies tools and solid arguments in favour of removing dams to all those who want to give rivers more freedom. The second platform, Living Rivers Europe (LRE) was created in 2017 and aims better implementation and enforcement of the Water Framework Directive, effective integration of water policies into sectoral policies, and maintaining the high standards in the WFD for the protection of water resources and ecosystems.

www.ern.org/en/living-rivers-europe
www.ern.org/en/dam-removal-europe



Freeing - Restoring / Europe

> FREE PASSAGE FOR FISH AND SEDIMENTS

Obstacles removal and lateral connectivity restoration

More than one million obstacles fragment Europe's rivers. Their removal or bypassing is a very effective measure in the restoration of rivers and is a priority for ERN. In addition to its action to 'reopen' the Loire-Allier route in favour of the last large wild European salmon, ERN is the coordinator for "Salmoncomeback", an international coalition of NGOs, on the Franco-German Rhine, in cooperation with the WWF. Their mission is to make sure that all stakeholders abide by their commitments in favour of the return of salmon all the way to Switzerland, for example by modifying or by-passing EDF facilities on the Rhine which remain impassable for fish and by reconnecting former river channels for a project aiming to create "100 km of new Rhine between Strasbourg and Basel".

www.ern.org/en/dam-removal/
www.ern.org/en/fragmentation
www.salmoncomeback.org



OUR ACTIONS TO PROTECT, FREE, RESTORE AND RELEARN RIVERS IN FRANCE AND IN EUROPE



RIVER CATCHMENT AREAS IN EUROPE

