French World Wetlands Day celebrations kicked off at the Transboundary Ramsar Site shared between France and Germany

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France

This year France registered an impressive number of 600 World Wetlands Day events across the country. Each time celebrations in France start with a “national launch”.

This year launch event took place in the small city of Rhinau, situated in the floodplain of the Upper Rhine, a Transboundary Ramsar Site which covers the floodplain with riverine forests, grasslands and reedbeds. This Ramsar Site is a drinking water reservoir, biodiversity hotspot and significant flood retention area. The event brought together more than 150 participants including national Ramsar Administrative Authority, regional and local authorities, members of national, regional, provincial and local parliaments and experts representing scientific institutions, non-governmental and civil society organisations, joined by regional and national media. The event WWD 2018 was also the opportunity to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the designation of this Transboundary Ramsar Site, shared between France and Germany, and stretching over 170 km along the Upper Rhine between the cities of Basel, Strasbourg and Karlsruhe with many smaller settlements in between. This year’s World Wetlands Day theme “Wetlands for Sustainable Urban Future” was much welcomed by local authorities and inhabitants of the Rhine river plain.

Authorities form the French region Grand Est were joined by their neighbours from Germany’s federal state Baden-Württemberg. Representatives of the French national Ramsar Authority from the Ministry of Ecological and Solidary Transition in Paris were joined by their German colleagues from the Federal Ministry of Environment, Nature Conservation, Construction and Nuclear Safety in Bonn, and by the Austrian Ramsar national focal point from the Federal Ministry for Sustainability and Tourism in Vienna. The latter provided the audience with a brief history of the establishment and the development of the Trilateral Ramsar Platform on the Morava-Dyje-Danube floodplain, shared by Austria, the Czech Republic and Slovakia, as an illustration of transboundary wetland
cooperation in the Danube basin.

Participants visited the nearby riverine forest on both sides of the national border to discover an area that was inundated only a week earlier, during one of the regular winter floods. The celebrations ended with an evening “Veillée Ramsar” organised by the NGO Alsace Nature, which brought together inhabitants of Rhinau, boatmen and fishermen to tell their personal stories about the river and its floodplain.