

# Interview with Mrs. Heide Jekel, President of the International Commission for the Protection of the Elbe

The day you receive this issue of VTEI magazine, it rarely coincides with the date of the Magdeburg Seminar, organized by the International Commission for the Protection of the Elbe (ICPOL). We therefore take this opportunity to bring you a brief interview with the current President of this Commission, Mrs. Heide Jekel. You can find her biographical profile under the interview.

## What was the impetus to dedicate yourself to the issue of water management?

After my studies my first job was in a German district government as water lawyer. I dealt with licensing of water uses, designation of water protection zones etc. This very interesting combination of legal and technical issues in the environment sector has shaped my future professional life.

## At least at European level, you are very active in the field of water management. What was your first "international" experience in this field?

When I started working in the framework of the UNECE Water Convention. Even before it became a global convention, a lot of countries from the whole world has met and discussed together in workshops and meetings under this Convention.

## Do you have any experience or comparing with the activities of similar commissions outside the EU that are dedicated to water management?

Several river or river basin commissions from other areas in the world are participating in the work of the Water Convention. They exchange their experience and knowledge with the commissions from the UNECE region. Working structures are often similar, but political and economic conditions are sometimes rather different. And water quantity/water scarcity is a much bigger issue than in the commissions in the EU.

## You have been the president of IKSE since this year. Prior to that, you worked in the same position in IKSO, you actively represent Germany in other international commissions (e.g. ICPDR). What is your comparison of work from the position of president in the Elbe and Oder commissions?

I do not think that there are big differences in being a president of one or the other commission. As president you represent the commission and together with the secretariat you keep the commission and its daily work running. Of course the commissions are different with regard to the number of delegations or negotiation mentalities etc. But as president work is rather similar.

## Within IKSE you are already 11<sup>th</sup> President of this Commission. What are your goals that you would like to achieve from your position?

I would like to continue the successful work of this commission and keep the good atmosphere of cooperation between the Czech Republic and Germany in the framework of the ICPE. We will finalize and publish the third international river basin management plan and the second international flood risk management plan. We will continue the discussions on the implementation of the challenging ICPE sediment management concept. And we will tackle other challenges like the effects of climate change like water scarcity and droughts.

## Thanks to your work, you have also visited the Czech Republic for several times. Is there any city or any place you would like to return to or would you like to see again in the Czech Republic?

This is a difficult question as the Czech Republic has so many beautiful cities and regions. I would like to return to the Old Father Mountains (Hrubý Jeseník) for example.

## Heide Jekel



Mrs. Heide Jekel, born 1961, is Head of the Division „Cooperation in International River Basins, Freshwater Management Conventions, International Freshwater Protection Law“. She represents Germany in six international river basin commissions and several bilateral water commissions. After having graduated in law Mrs. Jekel had started her professional career in the district government in Coblenz and the environment ministry of the German federal state Rhineland-Palatinate. Since 1994 she has worked in the Federal Environment Ministry, first dealing with legal issues concerning the final disposal of radioactive waste, then as environment attaché in the Permanent Representation of Germany to the European Union in Brussels, inter alia during the German EU Presidency in the first half of 1999. Afterwards she has worked several years in the water law division, e.g. transposing the EC Water Framework Directive into national federal law. She has been the president of IKSE since 2021.