

Unanimously passed by Parliament, the "Rhône Development" law will enable CNR to plan ahead until 2041

The "Rhône Development" law, brought before the *Assemblée Nationale* by Patrick Mignola, member of parliament for France's Savoie *département*, was definitively passed on 17 February. It shores up and modernises CNR's model for integrated management of the Rhône river. As soon as this law is enacted, CNR will bolster its contribution to the ecological and energy transition of the country's regions up until 2041 through its commitments and responsibilities (renewable energy, river transport and irrigation).

The law validates CNR's unique model in France

The passing of the "Rhône Development" law is the culmination of a consultation process that has taken more than eight years. This process finally came to an end in Parliament where the law was unanimously passed by all political groups represented, before being voted through in the Senate (France's upper chamber). The legislative text will soon be enacted and will be entered into the Official Journal.

One hundred years after the 1921 law which entrusts a single operator with three interdependent and inseparable responsibilities – hydropower, river transport and irrigation –, the legal system has renewed its confidence in this integrated model in which water from the river and the electricity generated are used to serve the regions' green growth.

Laurence Borie-Bancel, Chairwoman of the CNR's Executive Board, said: *"This law being unanimously passed is a source of immense pride for our 1400 employees. The integrated river management model – the only one of its kind – has been preserved. Our activities can help provide solutions to the climate emergency. Consultation with the regions, something for which we are already well known, is further bolstered. The challenges facing biodiversity will be even more inextricably intertwined with our responsibilities. A new chapter is beginning in the history of our company, taking it forwards until 2041. As an industrial company and the leading producer of 100% renewable electricity (from water, wind and sun), CNR is thus seeking to speed up the energy and ecological transformation across France's regions*."*

Serge Bergamelli, Chairman of CNR's Supervisory Body, said: *"The parliamentary debate did not fail to highlight the singular and exemplary nature of the Rhône concession's operating model. A majority public-owned company made up of the Caisse des dépôts and 183 regional authorities, CNR enjoys the support of a powerful industrial player – ENGIE – as part of a mixed public / private governance structure which grants full importance to the State concession holder. This productive and redistributive model is virtuous: not only does it fund the river's development, it also funds innovation and the ecological and environmental transition of the areas along the Rhône. The law provides the women and men in charge of operating the concession with 18 years of visibility and stability".*

Press contacts

BCW on behalf of CNR: cnr-presse@bcw-global.com +33 (0)6 87 76 76 49 - +33 (0)7 49 66 96 35



The law tailors CNR's responsibilities to the requirements of the ecological transition

The law will result in several commitments representing investment of more than €1 billion in the regions until 2041 to help take up the energy and ecological challenges. It can be broken down as follows:

- **€500 million of investment in river infrastructure**

A new €500 million investment programme is being implemented to develop the Rhône, expand its hydropower capacities, increase the reliability of navigation and ensure the viability of fish populations.

As far as hydraulic infrastructure is concerned, in line with the aims of the multiannual energy programme (MEP), the law makes provision for optimising electricity generation along the Rhône, setting a target of 600 GWh – enough to meet the annual electricity needs of 236,000 residents. In particular, this involves:

- Increasing the installed capacity of the Montélimar's hydroelectric power plant
- Building six small hydropower plants, each fitted with fishways
- Designing new hydroelectric infrastructure in the Saint-Romain-de-Jalionas area (south of Lyon)

As far as navigation is concerned, the legislation makes provision for doubling the gates downstream of the Châteauneuf- du-Rhone and Bollène locks so as to support and encourage an increase in river traffic on the Rhône.

- **€165 million per five-year period for public-interest responsibilities**

The legislation also makes provision to update the master plan so that CNR can invest €165 million per five-year period (5Rhône Plans) in five key areas serving the Rhône Valley:

- “energy” to develop green energies,
- “navigation” to bolster river transport,
- “agriculture” to contribute to sustainable agriculture,
- “environment” to help create a more lively and dynamic biodiversity corridor,
- “complimentary initiatives” to support regional projects.

- **Priority given to innovation and developing renewable energies**

Developing renewable energies is at the core of what CNR wants to do to support France in its drive to achieve net zero by 2050. With the passing of this law, CNR will be able to promote and share new energy vectors – such as renewable hydrogen – and deploy innovative solar solutions, such as floating photovoltaic installations, large linear photovoltaic farms and agrivoltaic facilities.

- **Priority given to dialogue with the regions**

CNR is a public-interest company whose shareholders include more than 183 local authorities, the Caisse des Dépôts Group and ENGIE. It has positioned itself as a regional partner, speeding up the ecological transition. Dialogue, consultation and co-construction are the cornerstones of what it does. With this law which modernises CNR's concession agreement, the legislation has sought to bolster this method, with the participation of regions and the State in projects and tasks under way and tighter control.

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The extension is an essential milestone in CNR's history. It will help it to embrace the challenges that lie ahead and meet the targets set by the multiannual energy programme (MEP) so as to successfully deliver the energy and ecological transformation across the country's regions.

About CNR

CNR (Compagnie Nationale du Rhône) is France's leading producer of 100% renewable electricity, with total installed capacity of 4000 MW. It converts energy from the sun, the wind and water in the Rhône river, for which it has held the concession for nearly a hundred years. Its business as an energy company is what enables it to fund the development of its other public-interest activities, working alongside other stakeholders across the region: implementation of navigation and port zones, irrigation and management of water resources, development of the Rhône river and protection of natural ecosystems. CNR manages these three natural resources – wind, water and the sun – as shared property, the governance and part of the value of which it shares with the regions. The expertise it has in three key areas – energy, transport and irrigation – enables it to develop innovative energy and ecological solutions for regions throughout the country. CNR is France's only public-interest limited company. It is a majority public-owned company (183 local authorities and public centres, the Caisse des Dépôts group). ENGIE is its leading industrial shareholder.

Key figures:

550 km of river managed

30,000 ha under concession

15.4 TWh of electricity of exclusively renewable origin produced (in 2020)

4000 MW of installed capacity (water, wind and sun)

152 pieces of hydraulic, wind power and photovoltaic infrastructure (49 hydroelectric power plants, 57 windfarms and 46 photovoltaic power plants).

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