

FAILURE TO ENFORCE EU LAW IS GIVING THE GREEN LIGHT TO HYDROPOWER IN EUROPE

The story in numbers¹

ALL OF EUROPE / EU COUNTRIES



21,387 / 19,268
EXISTING PLANTS



278 / 122
UNDER CONSTRUCTION



8,507 / 5,734
PLANNED

Growth of hydropower contradicts EU law



Percentage of EU freshwater habitats that are not healthy²



Date by which all rivers, lakes and wetlands in the EU must be healthy under the EU Water Framework Directive

The construction of hydropower dams is an obstacle to meeting this target »

1. WWF, RiverWatch, EuroNatur, GEOTA, 2019. Hydropower pressure on European rivers: The story in numbers

2. European Environment Agency, 2018. European waters: Assessment of status and pressures 2018

3. #ProtectWater campaign, www.livingrivers.eu

Spotlight on Austria

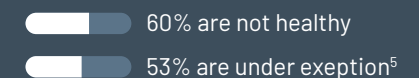
With more than 4,000 existing plants, Austria is one of the top three countries with the most hydropower. Despite this, it continues to invest in it - 100+ plants are on the cards. A recent study found that not even a third of the permits authorising new hydropower plants were in line with the non-deterioration principle of the EU Water Framework Directive⁴

Citizens want to see the EU water law enforced

375,000+ EU citizens³ called on the European Commission and their governments to make the Water Framework Directive work. This includes saying no to projects which damage rivers, like hydropower

Strong law, weak enforcement

EU governments can exempt a specific water body from meeting the Water Framework Directive's objective - this must be in exceptional cases only. But exceptions have become the rule. Of the water bodies in the EU:

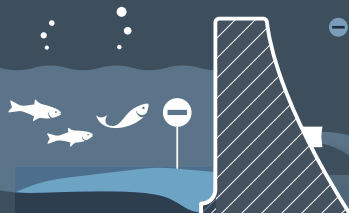


This includes exemptions to allow new hydropower developments to go ahead

4. WWF Austria, ÖKOBÜRO, 2018. Umsetzung des Verschlechterungsverbots gemäß EU-Wasser Rahmenrichtlinie in Österreich im Bereich Wasserkraft // 5. EEA WISE, 2018.

Did you know?

- Hydropower dams trap sediments that protect riverbanks and deltas against floods and sea level rises
- They release methane and CO₂ from their reservoirs and are therefore not climate neutral
- They destroy rivers and block fish migration routes, seriously contributing to the loss in freshwater biodiversity
- They rely on a healthy supply of water. With droughts and water scarcity on the rise, it is not a climate resilient source of energy



28% OF PLANNED HYDROPOWER IS IN EUROPE'S PROTECTED AREAS

The story in numbers¹



3,936

EXISTING HYDROPOWER
PLANTS IN PROTECTED AREAS



77

UNDER CONSTRUCTION



2,396

PLANNED IN PROTECTED AREAS

Protected on paper, not in practice



Protected areas offer a safe
haven to Europe's most
valuable and threatened
biodiversity

In the EU, these areas are
protected under the EU Birds
and Habitats Directive and EU
Water Framework Directive



These laws are being broken.
Governments are continuing
to destroy these habitats with
hydropower

Big risk, small gain

Built in 1999 in Spain's Sierra de Castril Natural Park, the El Portillo dam was initially part of plans to develop a water transfer project. Despite mounting evidence that the dam was destroying stocks of the endangered southern brown trout, a small hydropower plant was built below the dam, putting the species at even greater risk – and all for a miniscule 1.8 MW of electricity. 91% of all planned and existing hydropower in Europe is small and produces very little electricity

4,000+ plants
planned for
the Balkans
and Eastern
Mediterranean²

The Balkans alone hold some of the
healthiest rivers in Europe and many
vulnerable species

30% of rivers here are "pristine" with no
signs of pollutants

50% are in very good health

Spotlight on Romania

JIU RIVER

The Jiu River houses 1,142 different
species, around 200 of which are
protected. Since 2003, there have
been plans to build a medium-sized
hydropower plant, although the area
is a Natura 2000 site. The project
would divert 85% of the water,
resulting in biodiversity loss and
destruction to the surrounding
national park

Species in focus

STERNULA ALBIFRONS



The little tern is protected under the EU Birds Directive. Its
habitat along Croatia's Drava River, mainly gravel and sand
bars protected under Natura 2000, has been degraded by the
construction of hydropower. Because of this, only 4 breeding
pairs on average remain on the Drava, with the last breeding
spots squeezed along the last free-flowing 50km stretch.

1. WWF, RiverWatch, EuroNatur, GEOTA, 2019. *Hydropower pressure on European rivers: The story in numbers*;

2. ECA-Watch Austria, EuroNatur, 2012. *Balkan Rivers: The Blue Heart of Europe. Hydromorphological status and dam Projects*