

“BIODIVERSITY AND HYDROPOWER: A GREEN DEAL FOR MIGRATORY FISH?”.



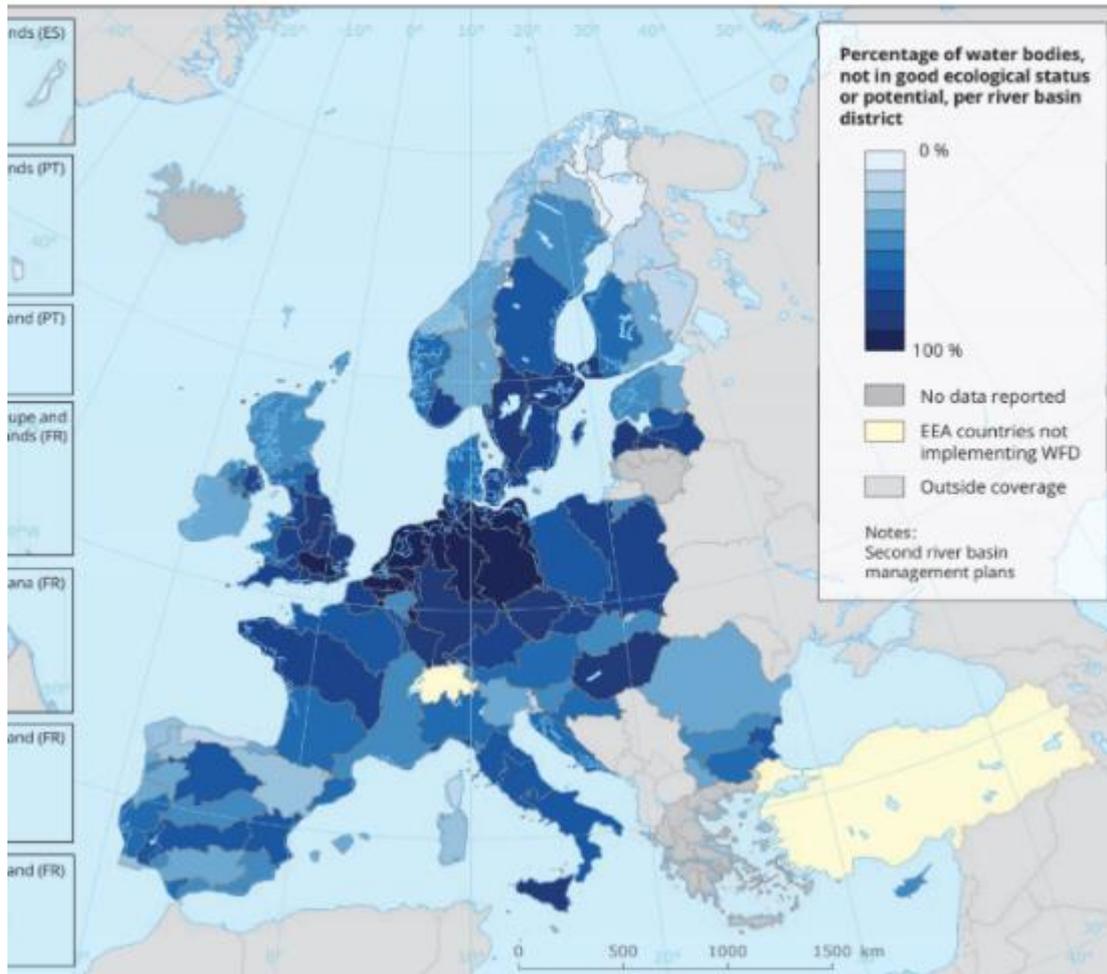
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Sergiy Moroz

In 2020, 60% of EU surface water bodies are still not in good status

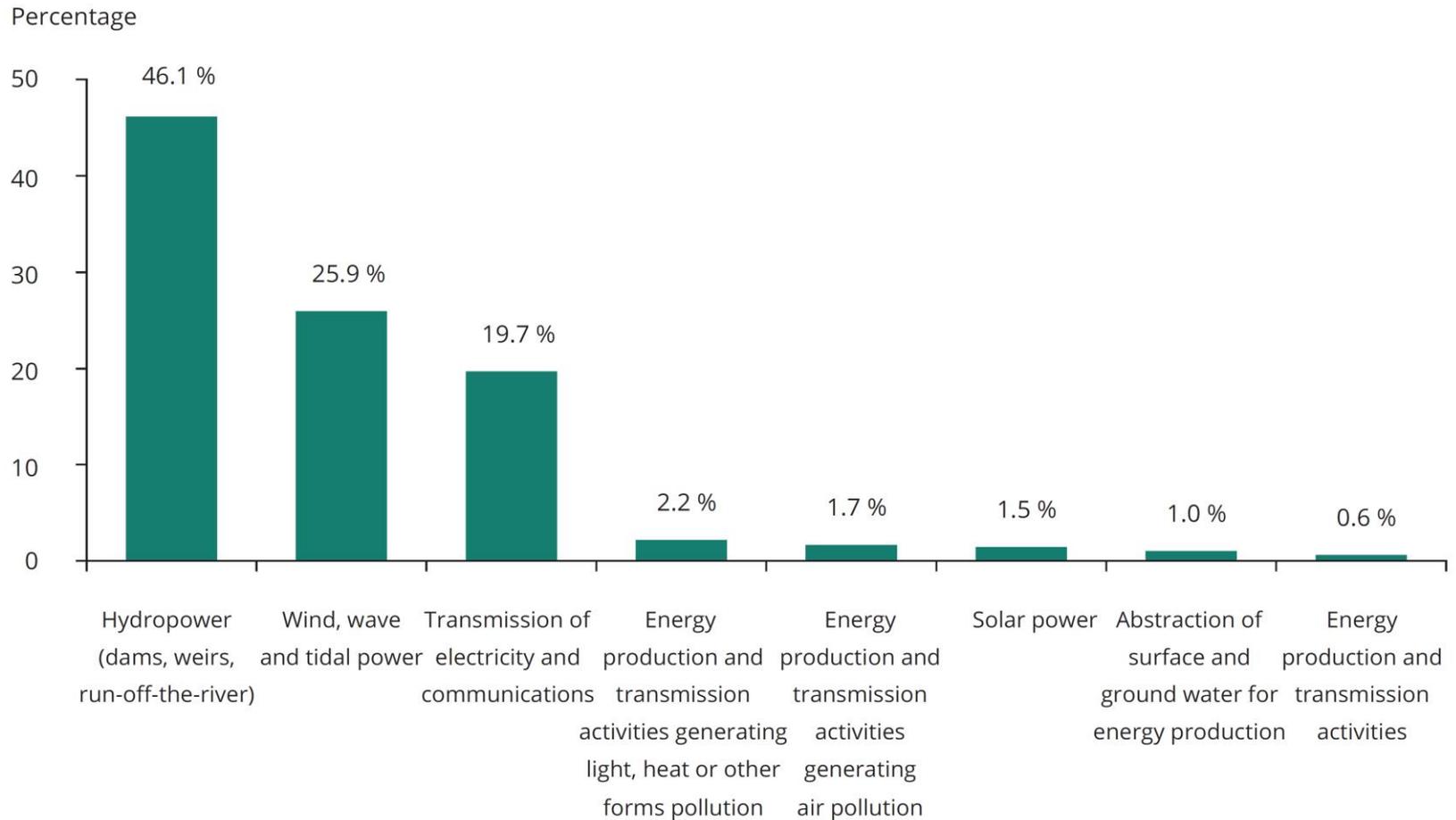
Country comparison — results of assessment under the Water Framework Directive of ecological status or potential shown by river basin district



- Hydromorphological pressures are the largest pressures on EU surface waters (EEA, 2018)
- WFD Fitness check conclusions points out three obstacles to the achievement of WFD objectives:
 1. insufficient funding
 2. slow implementation
 3. insufficient integration of environmental objectives in sectoral policies
 4. exemptions became the rule, not the exception

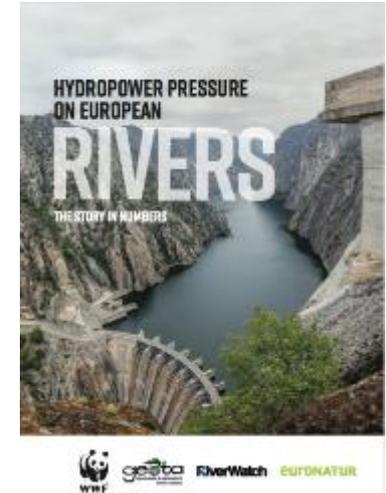
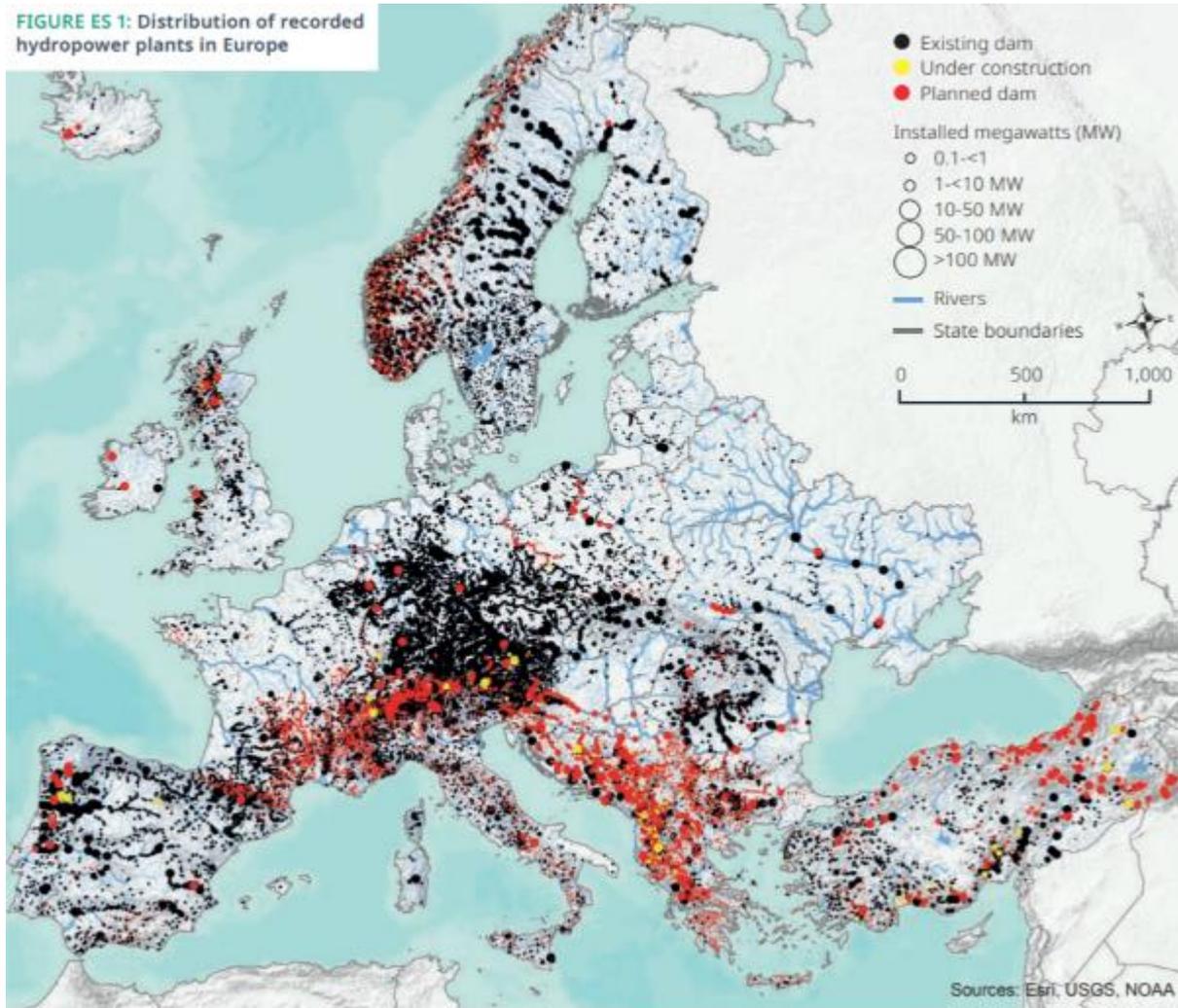
State of Nature Report

Figure 4.11 Distribution of level 2 pressures caused by energy production for habitats and species, shown as the percentage of pressures within this level 1 group



Yet thousands of hydropower plants are on the card

FIGURE ES 1: Distribution of recorded hydropower plants in Europe



- 21,387 existing hydropower plants
- 8,785 additional plants which are planned or under construction
- 91% of the plants recorded by the study are small plants (capacity <10MW)

150 NGOs call to stop support to hydropower

- End subsidising new hydropower plants of all sizes, e.g. via regional policy.
- End to European Investment Bank and European Bank for Reconstruction and Development financing.
- All new hydropower to be excluded from the list of renewable energies eligible for State Aid.
- Public finance for new hydropower plants to be reallocated to ecological refurbishments, dam removal projects especially where the dams are now obsolete, and towards other renewable energies.

NO MORE NEW HYDROPOWER IN EUROPE: A MANIFESTO

For decades in Europe we have been building hydropower plants along our rivers, damaging one of the most precious resources for all life on earth: rivers and freshwater ecosystems. The time has come to put an end to the expansion of hydropower in Europe before we wipe out entire ecosystems and all the services they provide to people and nature. New hydropower is of negligible benefit in transitioning to climate neutrality in the EU and its irreversible impacts on biodiversity, landscapes and even sometimes water supply¹ can no longer be justified.

GREEN HYDROPOWER IS A MYTH

Hydropower severely impacts freshwater ecosystems, which are already under threat. Only 40% of surface waters in the EU (rivers, lakes, wetlands, transitional and coastal waters) are in good ecological condition² and populations of migratory freshwater fish species have plummeted by 93% in Europe since 1970.³

Building hydropower plants in Europe, including small and run-of-the-river plants, has negative consequences on rivers' flow, fish migration, habitat loss, sediment transport and on erosion, to quote only its most direct impacts, and runs directly counter to the commitments expressed in the EU Biodiversity Strategy's proposal to restore 25,000 km of free-flowing rivers.

A recent study on the effects of dams in the Mediterranean basin shows that hydropower, including small projects, is the most important driver of potential fish species extinction. The study states that "should hydroelectric expansion in the region go ahead as planned, 74% (186) out of all (251) threatened freshwater fish species will be negatively impacted, with 65% (163) set to decline due to small projects alone."⁴ Building a hydropower plant across a river is almost like suffocating it, sometimes to death. There is no green hydropower.

THE BENEFITS OF NEW HYDROPOWER IN EUROPE ARE NEGLIGIBLE

The expected contribution of planned hydropower to the energy transition is negligible. Even if all of the 5,500+ hydropower plants planned in the EU (in addition to the 19,000+ existing ones) were built, the share of the EU electricity generation provided by hydropower would go from 10% to 11.2-13.9%.⁵ And this contribution will become even less significant as we move to the near-full electrification through wind and solar – whether directly or indirectly – of sectors such as transport, heating and industry.

Hydropower is also losing its comparative financial advantage, as stricter regulations, land availability and growing recognition of its serious environmental impacts are increasing installed costs, while the costs of alternatives such as solar, wind and various forms of energy storage are dropping rapidly.⁶ The potential of hydropower to contribute to mitigating

¹ WWF, [Seven sins of dam building](#), 2013.

² EEA, [European waters: Assessment of status and pressures](#), 2018.

³ IUCN, WWF, WWF, TNC, ZSL, [The Living Planet Index \(LPI\) for migratory freshwater fish](#), 2020.

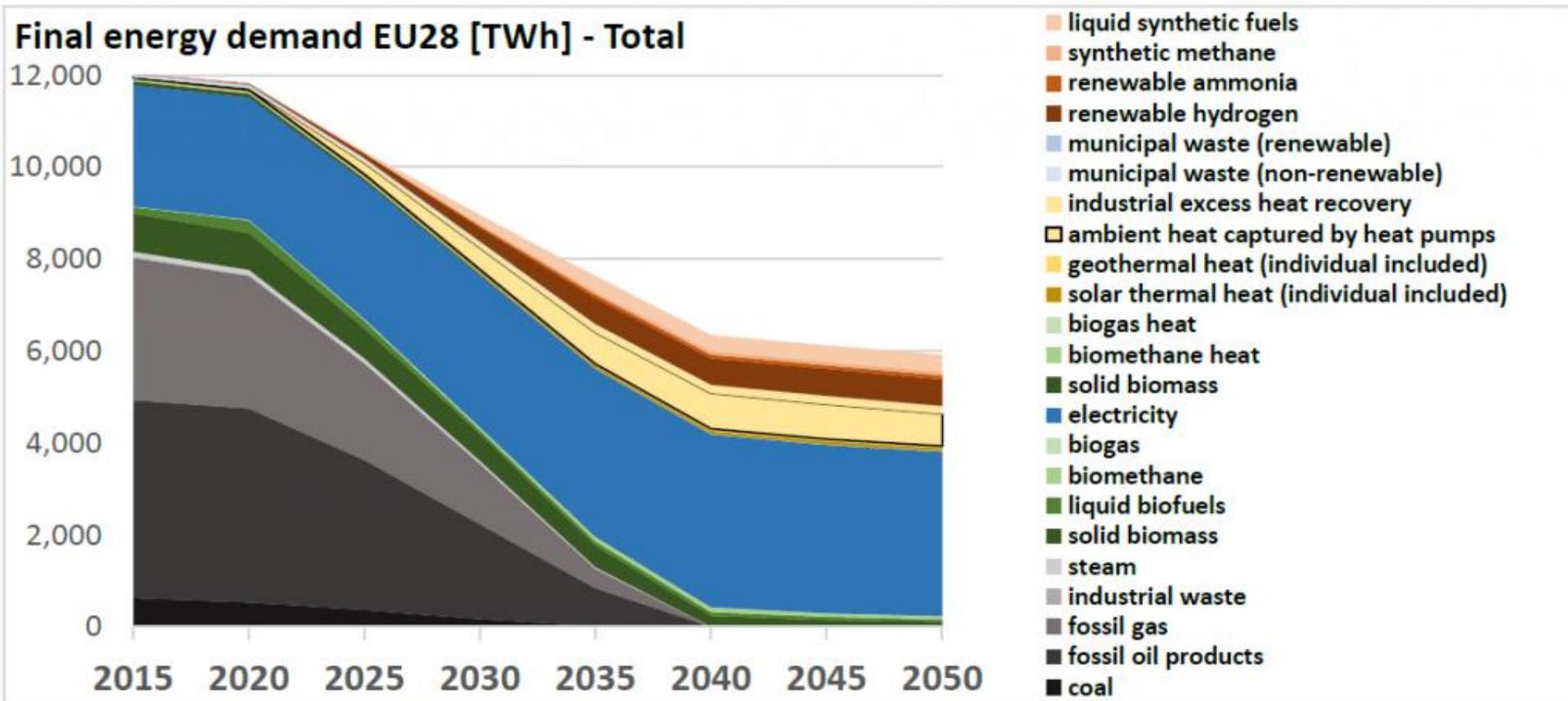
⁴ Freyhof Jörg, Bergner Laura, Ford Matthew, [Threatened Freshwater Fishes of the Mediterranean Basin Biodiversity Hotspot](#), 2020.

⁵ Eurostat, 2017.

⁶ IRENA, [Renewable power generation costs in 2019](#), 2020.

<https://eeb.org/library/>

EU can achieve climate neutrality by 2040



<https://www.pac-scenarios.eu/scenario-development.html>

The Living Rivers Europe coalition: our asks

- A better implementation and enforcement of the Water Framework Directive;
- An effective integration of water management aspects into relevant sectoral policies, particularly agriculture, energy, flood risk management and transport; and
- The maintenance of the Water Framework Directive's high standards of water resources and ecosystem protection.



Essential points to be addressed in the EP resolution

- How to secure the necessary funding for water measures
- How to improve the integration of the directives' environmental objectives in sectoral policies, particularly in agricultural, energy and transport sectors
- Considerable variations in the implementation of the Directives between the Member States
- Insufficient application of the user and polluter pays principles and inadequate cost recovery
- Use of exemptions from the WFD objectives



THANK YOU!

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 **@EuropeanEnvironmentalBureau**

eeb@eeb.org

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