



## Urgent need for a Green Deal for migratory fish *The EU must achieve consistency between biodiversity protection and decarbonisation of the energy production*

*With the new Biodiversity Strategy, the EU has set itself a target of restoring 25,000 kilometres of free-flowing rivers by 2030, in addition to the requirements for Member States to reach ‘Good Status’ in all water bodies in Europe by 2027. This is essential to tackle the dramatic decline in freshwater migratory fish population in the last 50 years: a 93% drop according to the Living Planet Index Report. Hydropower and dams are identified amongst the key drivers of this decrease. There is an urgent need for further awareness raising on the impact of hydropower on the aquatic environment and to strike consistency between the biodiversity and decarbonisation objectives of the EU, in terms of policies, implementation and funding. The European Parliament is working intensely on the roll-out of the Green Deal for Europe. The webinar of the Forum on Recreational Fisheries and the Aquatic Environment took place in this context and following the World Fish Migration Day which took place on 24 October.*

On 28 October, **MEP Carmen Avram (Romania, S&D Group)** and **Michal Wiezik (Slovakia, EPP Group)** co-chaired a webinar of the European Parliament Forum on Recreational Fisheries and Aquatic Environment dedicated to a discussion on the impact of hydropower on fish migration and the EU’s new commitments under the Biodiversity Strategy for 2030.

Both Members of the European Parliament pointed out to the dramatic decrease in freshwater biodiversity over the last decade and the urgent need to take action to restore and protect migratory fish species. **MEP Michal Wiezik** recalled how fragmented European rivers are, with more than 1 million barriers while “migration is crucial for the life cycle of fish species”. “A single action will not get us to the shore” argued **MEP Carmen Avram**, calling for a comprehensive approach to the issue of balancing biodiversity and decarbonisation objectives. She also pointed out to the importance of national plans and a thorough examination, at local level, with a case by case assessment of the costs and benefits of each hydropower plant.

MEPs also called for greater awareness about this dramatic situation to be raised amongst European decision makers and citizens. **Mark Owen**, Head of Freshwater at Angling Trust, representative of the European Anglers Alliance in the Living Rivers Europe NGO coalition, highlighted that “anglers have been very concerned by the impact of hydropower on fish species and migration for a long time. The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in even more people going fishing and becoming more aware of issues regarding the freshwater environment. It means that, in the future, citizens will demand even more actions from Governments and the EU to improve the quality of the aquatic environment.”

**Sergiy Moroz**, Policy Manager for Water & Biodiversity at the European Environmental Bureau, also part of the Living Rivers Europe coalition, made a strong call on behalf of 150 NGOs for the EU to end subsidies to the construction of new hydropower plants and to reallocate the funds to the removal of old and obsolete dams and to the ecological refurbishment of existing hydropower plants. “It is possible to achieve ambitious climate goals, even earlier than 2050, without relying on hydropower” he concluded.

Restoring free-flowing rivers and preventing new barriers on European rivers is not only important to achieve the EU biodiversity objectives. It will also bring many economic, social and health benefits, some of them linked to angling activities and the recreational fisheries sector.



### **Note to the editor:**

#### **About the event:**

You can read more about the event on [this page](#). The agenda of the event can be downloaded [here](#). The panellists' presentations and the report of the event will be published on that page.

#### **About the Forum:**

The Forum on Recreational Fisheries and Aquatic Environment (RecFishing Forum) was created in 2014, at the beginning of the previous European Parliament legislature. **By providing a cross-party discussion platform**, the Forum has been an essential tool for the **Members of the European Parliament to establish a direct connection with the recreational fishing community, its network of scientists, in-house experts and other representatives of the sector** in order to gather knowledge, information and data on the topics that were discussed in the European Parliament.

More information about the Forum [here](#).

#### **About EAA and EFTTA:**

The **Secretariat of the Forum is provided by two associations working together**: the [European Anglers Alliance](#) (EAA) and the [European Fishing Trade Tackle Association](#) (EFTTA). The EAA and the EFTTA work at the EU level and beyond to improve the aquatic environment, to achieve sustainable management of the fish stocks and to protect and promote recreational angling [rod and line fishing] in Europe. They also advocate for recreational fisheries to be managed in a fair and equitable way with respect to the other fisheries sectors.

The **European Anglers Alliance (EAA)** is a pan-European organisation for recreational angling, which defends European recreational anglers' interests at the European level and beyond. EAA was launched in Brussels in 1994. There are about 3 million affiliated members to EAA's 17 member organisations and affiliates from 15 European countries.

The **European Fishing Tackle Trade Association** was established in London in 1981 with a clear purpose: to support the European sportfishing tackle sector – the manufacturers and wholesalers, the importers and exporters. Every year, EFTTA organises EFTTEX, the leading European Fishing Tackle Trade Exhibition.