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Time for EU Member States to implement the Water Framework Directive for real

The Water Framework Directive (WFD) is an ambitious and innovative piece of legislation that must not be weakened. This was the main message conveyed at a conference held in the European Parliament where anglers, scientists, policy-makers, NGOs and industry representatives discussed the status of the Directive and exchanged views on what is needed to achieve the WFD targets.

The conference, chaired by **MEP Ricardo Serrão Santos**, was organised by the *Forum on Recreational Fisheries and Aquatic Environment*, supported by the *European Anglers Alliance (EAA)* and the *European Fishing Tackle Trade Association (EFTTA)*.

Mark Owen, Head of Freshwater at Angling Trust, speaking on behalf of EAA and the Living Rivers Europe¹ coalition stressed that the lack of implementation by the Member States is the problem, not the Directive. “*We think that the WFD is super. We like it! We do not want it changed. What we do want is for it to be implemented by the Member States*”, he said.

Veronica Manfredi, Director at the European Commission, acknowledged that EU waters are still affected by a series of pressures and notably pollution coming prominently from agriculture and transport, some sources of energy production as well as microplastics and pharmaceutical residues. To address these issues, the European Commission will publish a report in a few weeks time, which will include country specific recommendations. In this respect, funding has been identified as a persistent problem undermining the proper implementation of the WFD.

The conference was concluded by a lively debate during which the panellists generally praised the WFD as an excellent piece of legislation that could dramatically improve the status of EU waters if implemented correctly and some of them advised against any modification to its approach, standards and targets. While the WFD should be maintained as it is, policy-makers were urged by several speakers to improve stakeholders’ involvement and ensure better integration of water management aspects into relevant sectoral policies and specifically, agriculture, energy, flood risk management and transport.

The WFD is the most comprehensive instrument of EU water policy and one of the most important pieces of EU environmental legislation. Adopted in 2000, the Directive aims to achieve good status of Europe’s freshwater bodies by 2027 at the latest. The European Commission is currently carrying out an evaluation, or “Fitness Check”, of the WFD to assess whether the current water policy framework is adequate and fit for purpose to address the challenges faced by European freshwaters and to look at the future of the Directive for the time beyond 2027.

¹ “[Living Rivers Europe](#)” is made up of five international environmental NGOs: the European Anglers Alliance (EAA), the European Environment Bureau (EEB), the European Rivers Network (ERN), the Wetlands International European Association (WI-EA) and the WWF, European Policy Office (WWF EPO). The platform was launched in 2017 to closely monitor the evaluation process of the EU’s Water Framework Directive.

The RecFishing Forum Secretariat is provided by [EAA](#) and [EFTTA](#)

Contact: Sofia Minero: +32 4 93 21 64 56 - sofia@eaa-europe.eu

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Pictures below:



From left to right: Prof. Laurence Carvalho (NERC Centre for Ecology & Hydrology), Mark Owen (European Anglers Alliance), MEP Ricardo Serrão Santos and Veronica Manfredi (Director, DG Environment, European Commission).

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From left to right: Janet Doyle (EFTTA), Fulvia Cojocaru(Romanian Permanent Representation), Nenad Peric (COPA-COGECA), Prof. Laurence Carvalho (Centre for Ecology & Hydrology), Martin Schönberg (Eurelectric), Fred Bloot (European Anglers Alliance), MEP Ricardo Serrão Santos, MEP Mark Demesmaeker, Katarina Mulec (Balkan River Defence), Mark Owen (European Anglers Alliance), Veronica Manfredi (European Commission).

The presentation made during the event are available online here:

<https://www.eaa-europe.org/european-parliament-forum/ep-recfishing-forum-events/>

About EAA and EFTTA:

- **EAA, the European Anglers Alliance** comprises angling organisations from 12 European countries with about 3 million members.

www.eaa-europe.org

- **EFTTA, the European Fishing Tackle Trade Association** is the leading European trade association for manufacturers and wholesalers of sportfishing equipment.

www.eftta.co.uk

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