

European Rivers Programme 2027

Declaration

September 2018

During the first European Rivers Summit, held in Sarajevo, from September 27-29, 2018, we – the participants of this Summit – agreed on the following list of demands for the **protection** of the last free-flowing rivers in Europe as well as for the **restoration** of ecologically important rivers and river stretches.

Riverine ecosystems are biodiversity hotspots of global importance. At the same time, they are among the most endangered habitats in the world. Europe's rivers are no exception: according to the European Environment Agency, almost two thirds of European rivers are in a bad ecological state. One of the main threats rivers are facing is hydropower. Further expansion of this outdated, overly exploited and ecologically damaging source of energy is putting the last free-flowing rivers on the entire continent at risk.

The following demands serve the successful implementation of the objectives of the EU Water Framework Directive by 2027.

We call upon the...

- **European Commission, European Parliament, Energy Community, EBRD and EIB and the Heads of State of all countries in Europe**
 - To stop promoting and funding hydropower projects as a sustainable source of energy.
 - To foster the energy transition toward a low energy-demanding development at all levels of society.

- **European Commission and the European Parliament**
 - To prohibit all subsidies for hydropower projects during the revision of the Energy and Environment State Aid Guidelines.
 - To stop promoting small-scale hydropower projects and to tighten environmental requirements, e.g. by making EIAs for projects with low capacities as well as the consideration of cumulative impacts obligatory by law. In EU Member States and EU candidate countries, we advise that the River Basin Management Plans (RBMPs) should be used as a diagnostic tool for assessing cumulative impacts at catchment level.
 - To support the Energy Community in enforcement of EIA and SEA legislation by strengthening its dispute settlement mechanism.

- To train judges and other relevant legal staff (e.g. prosecutors, advocates) on environmental and energy issues and laws.
- To support the fight against corruption by conditioning financial support on compliance with EU laws and Rules of Law.
- To reconsider the methodology of the indicative list of potential hydropower projects in the WB6 countries and to delete greenfield projects from this list.
- To enforce the requirement of non-deterioration as well as the legal objective of bringing European water bodies in good ecological status, ultimately by 2027, as stipulated in the Water Framework Directive.
- To establish and publish a pan-European inventory of ecologically outstanding, free-flowing rivers.
- To establish a European-wide system for permanent protection for particularly outstanding and free-flowing rivers, modelled on the “Wild & Scenic Rivers Act” of the USA.
- To ensure EU Member States and candidate countries achieve full recovery of the environmental and resource costs of hydropower projects and include these costs in the RBMPs pricing measures for hydropower activities. This will contribute to achieving the environmental objectives of the WFD, in accordance with the polluter pays principle.
- To create a fund of at least € 1 billion per year for river protection and restoration as well as the management and conservation of protected rivers. This fund should promote inter alia the removal of dams and other barriers, especially those whose concessions have expired and/or are ecologically particularly damaging.

➤ **EBRD and EIB**

- To establish no-go zones for hydropower developments in ecologically sensitive and protected areas in consultation with local communities and endorse the Eco-Masterplan for Balkan Rivers.
- To disclose in advance any planned hydropower projects to be financed by commercial intermediary banks and require independent environmental impact assessments including effective stakeholder participation for all projects.
- To support alternative renewable energy technologies with a view to protect nature.

➤ **Energy Community**

- To ensure that the key principles and obligations of the EU Nature Directives and the EU Water Framework Directive are integrated in the Energy Community Treaty.
- To continue and intensify the enforcement of the EIA and SEA Directives for hydropower projects in the Contracting Parties.

- To discourage Contracting Parties from including subsidies for hydropower in their new subsidy systems and assist them to effectively promote solar power and energy efficiency.

➤ **Heads of State**

- To discontinue subsidies for hydropower plants.
- To speed up the transposition and implementation of the EU Water Framework Directive and the Nature Directives.
- To ensure the active participation of stakeholders and the public in the early stages of planning and in the management of river basins, according to the requirements of the Water Framework Directive.
- To ensure full transparency of Water Framework Directive implementation, to provide open and accessible information and education for the public, and to make use of citizen science for the generation of data on water management issues and characteristics of the river basins.
- To require adequate assessments of the environmental impacts and ensure effective stakeholder participation in accordance with the key environmental directives (EIA, WFD and Habitat Directives) for all hydropower plants irrespective of capacity.
- To establish a national eco-masterplan with no-go areas for hydropower development and other destructive projects on rivers in your country in consultation with local communities.

Sarajevo, 30 September 2018