

WILL YOU LEAVE A LASTING LEGACY FOR NATURE?

BirdLife Europe & Central Asia, EEB (European Environmental Bureau), Friends of the Earth Europe and WWF European Policy Office call on Commissioner Karmenu Vella to take decisive action in his remaining time as EU Environment Commissioner to improve the implementation and enforcement of the EU's world-leading nature laws – the Birds & Habitats Directives¹.

Hydropower dams: threats to the implementation and enforcement of the EU Birds & Habitats Directives

The #NatureAlert Countdown is on! But there is still time to take action to save threatened wildlife and habitats across Europe, such as the “Amazon of Europe” – the Drava River!

European biodiversity is in freefall. Major gaps in the implementation and enforcement of our nature laws is leaving nature dangerously exposed to serious threats from the development of hydropower. Europe's rivers are already saturated with more than 25,000 hydropower plants. Hydropower dams fragment rivers, destroy wetlands and, as a consequence, threaten the species that depend on them for their habitat and survival. They also block fish migration routes and trap sediments. The construction of additional hydropower plants would exacerbate the negative impacts that already exist and therefore contradict both the conservation objectives of freshwater habitats protected under Natura 2000 and the objectives of the Water Framework Directive.



SAVE THE DRAVA RIVER, CROATIA



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Spanning Austria, Croatia, Hungary, Serbia and Slovenia, the lower courses of the Drava and Mura Rivers, and related sections of the Danube, are among Europe's most ecologically important riverine areas – the so-called "Amazon of Europe". The Mura-Drava-Danube is proposed to be the world's first five-country UNESCO Transboundary Biosphere Reserve.

In Croatia, the Drava River is currently threatened by plans to develop two more hydropower plants, Molve 1 and Molve 2 in Koprivnica-križevci County bordering with Hungary. The location of the proposed hydropower plants falls within a protected Natura 2000 site. This is the only free flowing part of the river, where the Drava remains in its most natural state – with many gravel bars, steep banks, side arms and alluvial forests. With its floodplains, Drava is an important habitat for Black storks, White-tailed eagles, Sand martins, and Starlet. Notably, this site hosts the river's very last breeding pairs of Little terns in Croatia.

The development of a hydropower plant within a protected Natura 2000 site goes against the EU Birds and Habitats Directives. Its construction will significantly impact the Natura 2000 site and the iconic species and habitats it protects.

¹ [January 2019, 'Joint Policy Brief on the Implementation and Enforcement of the Birds & Habitats Directives'](#)

**The #NatureAlert countdown is on!
Will you, Commissioner Vella, leave a lasting legacy for nature?**

Please support our call for the European Commission to closely monitor the situation in Thrace and bring any unresolved infringement cases to the European Court of Justice.

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