

EN

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Answer given by Mr Sinkevičius
on behalf of the European Commission
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Hydropower makes an important contribution to achieving Europe's energy and climate targets, in 2018 providing more than 36% of all renewable electricity production in the EU-27¹. At the same time hydropower is covered by extensive EU legislation to ensure environmental protection.

The Water Framework Directive 2000/60/EC (WFD)² requires Member States to ensure good status of all water bodies. For heavily modified water bodies (including bodies affected by barriers)³, Member States should ensure at least good ecological potential and are required to take all possible measures to mitigate impacts, such as ensuring ecological flow and best approximation to ecological continuum. Hydropower projects must undergo a full assessment under Article 4(7) WFD and comply with all conditions set out therein. There is ample guidance under the WFD to foster the correct implementation of these provisions⁴. Hydropower projects may also be subject to an environmental impact assessment procedure in line with Directive 2011/92/EU, as amended⁵, or to an appropriate assessment under the Habitats Directive⁶. All these environmental protection requirements are applicable to EU funded projects as well, including those that are implemented through shared management.

Hydromorphological alteration due to hydropower has been reported in the 2nd River Basin Management Plans (RBMPs)⁷ as a major pressure. The Fitness Check of the WFD⁸ calls for a better integration with energy policies. The Commission is currently following up on its assessment of the 2nd RBMPs and on the Fitness Check and will consider further action, as appropriate.

¹ Eurostat figures for 2018, <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/energy/data/shares>

² https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:5c835afb-2ec6-4577-bdf8-756d3d694eeb.0004.02/DOC_1&format=PDF

³ Article 4(3) WFD of the WFD.

⁴ Guidance documents 36 and 37 respectively on Article 4(7) and 4(3) have been published recently :

https://ec.europa.eu/environment/water/water-framework/facts_figures/guidance_docs_en.htm

All technical reports on hydromorphology published in the context of the CIS working group ECOSTAT are published on CIRCABC: https://circabc.europa.eu/ui/group/9ab5926d-bed4-4322-9aa7-9964bbe8312d/library/93d92aba-e904-4a48-91b6-5951d9f20647?p=1&n=10&sort=modified_DESC

⁵ Directive 2011/92/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 December 2011 on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment, as amended by Directive 2014/52/EU, specifies that for installations for hydroelectric energy production (projects included in its Annex II point 3(h)) Member States have to determine whether they shall be subject to an environmental impact assessment prior to their authorisation. This assessment evaluates the potential impact on environment, including biodiversity, water and human health.

⁶ with a view to potential negative effects in Natura 2000 areas as required in Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive: Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora.

⁷ https://ec.europa.eu/environment/water/water-framework/impl_reports.htm

⁸ https://ec.europa.eu/environment/water/fitness_check_of_the_eu_water_legislation/index_en.htm