

**Question for written answer E-000155/2021  
to the Commission**

Rule 138

**Aurelia Beigneux (ID)**

Subject: Fragmentation of European rivers is major threat to biodiversity

Europe is criss-crossed by many rivers. River ecosystems provide a habitat for flora and fauna which are sometimes native to a particular region. Rivers also play an essential role in regional development – a fact to which the many mills and factories built next to rivers over the centuries bear witness.

A study conducted as part of the Amber programme was published on 16 December 2020 in *Nature*<sup>1</sup>. Its findings are alarming: our continent's rivers are fragmented by many barriers. The study identified 1.2 million barriers over the 1.65 million km long river network. This figure does not tell the whole story, as countries are not aware of all the barriers obstructing watercourses, in part because no up-to-date maps are available.

Biodiversity suffers greatly as a result of this fragmentation: the pools which form have an impact on macroinvertebrate communities and boost the proliferation of plankton, with the result that planktivorous species flourish, reducing fauna diversity. Moreover, these barriers lead to a build-up of sediment in rivers and riparian woodland.

What action does the Commission intend to take in view of the preliminary findings of this Europe-wide study?

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<sup>1</sup> Belletti, B., Garcia de Leaniz, C., Jones, J. et al., 'More than one million barriers fragment Europe's rivers', *Nature* 588, 436-441 (2020).