

## What we need now?

The European Commission must now work with Member States and all relevant stakeholders to fast-track implementation and ensure that the WFD's objectives are reached by 2027 at the very latest. Concretely, we will be looking out for the following implementation gaps to be tackled:

### On dam removal:

- In the past, Member States' River Basin Management Plans (RBMPs) have missed the opportunity to improve river health by tackling hydromorphological pressures (changes to the physical shape and/or flow of a water body), including through dam removal. Dam removal has large economic benefits, in terms of job creation, and is cost-efficient when compared to the costs of maintaining obsolete dams, and increases resilience to extreme weather events.
- Whilst the EU's Biodiversity Strategy includes the concrete commitment to restore 25,000 km of free-flowing rivers (including through dam removal), it is neither clear from this nor from the Recovery Package how the Commission will financially support this target. Dedicated funding is needed to turn this commitment into a reality, and the Natural Capital and Circular Economy Initiative proposed under the Recovery Package could be an opportunity for this. Freeing up money for this initiative is a win-win, helping meet the Biodiversity Strategy's targets and the objectives of the WFD.

### On drought:

- Drought management strategies need to be developed as part of Member States' River Basin Management Plans and as a preventative response to climate change, rather than solely as an emergency response when droughts have already hit. Water management is not an isolated issue and must be tackled holistically, as required under the WFD.

### On financing:

- The European Commission's WFD [implementation report](#) and fitness check conclusions highlighted lack of funding as a significant obstacle to the law's implementation. If Member States were to fully implement cost recovery under the WFD, they would not be depriving themselves from a source of revenue. Moreover, they would ensure that the costs of implementing the measures were not solely borne by consumers, while at the same time incentivizing good practices.

### On hydropower:

- The pressure of hydropower dams on Europe's rivers is immense, with [more than 20,000 existing plants and more than 8,000 additional ones](#) on the cards. With the costs of solar and wind plummeting, the EU must invest in these renewable options rather than giving the green light to more hydropower plants, and invest in the refurbishment of existing hydropower plants.