



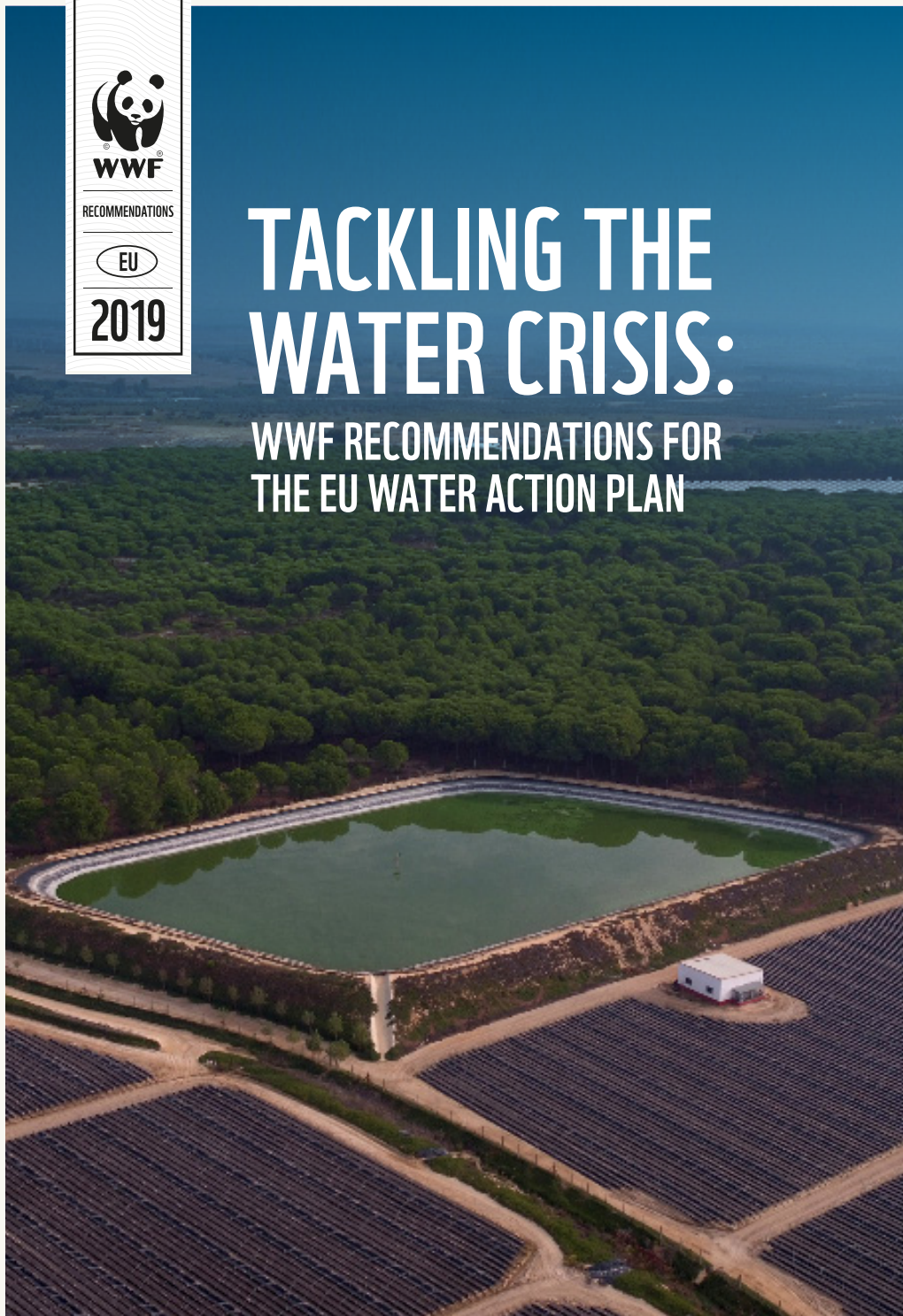
RECOMMENDATIONS

EU

2019

# TACKLING THE WATER CRISIS:

WWF RECOMMENDATIONS FOR  
THE EU WATER ACTION PLAN



# The gifts we receive from healthy rivers, lakes & wetlands

..are key to delivering the 4 main pillars of the European Green Deal

## 1 EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030

### Thriviving biodiversity

There are **500+** freshwater fish species in Europe, **80%** of which are endemic<sup>1</sup>

## 2 Climate resilient Europe

### Reduced flood and drought risks

Healthy rivers give us healthy floodplains which are resilient to floods and droughts. They also carry sediments, protecting deltas from rising sea levels

## 3 Climate neutral Europe

### Carbon sinks

Peatlands - one of Europe's most endangered freshwater ecosystems - are the largest carbon sinks of any ecosystem. They absorb and store carbon, making them invaluable in the fight against climate change<sup>2</sup>

## 4 Farm to fork strategy

### Sustainable agriculture

Sustainable agriculture and aquaculture need a decent supply of good quality water. Healthy rivers provide nutrients, sediments and water

### Bonus!

### Economic prosperity

**6%** of the EU's added value is generated by economic sectors that are highly dependent on a decent supply of good quality water. These same sectors provide **44 million jobs**<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> European Commission, 2011. *European Red List of Freshwater Fishes*

<sup>2</sup> RAMSAR, 2018. *Global Wetland Outlook 2018*

<sup>3</sup> European Commission, 2019. *Blue2 study: Assistance for better policy-making on freshwater and marine environment*

# But Europe's freshwater ecosystems are at risk

...because the EU water law is not implemented



**60%** of EU rivers, lakes, wetlands and streams are not healthy<sup>4</sup>

**83%**

decline in freshwater species has been observed globally since 1970 - equivalent to 4% per year. This is double the decline in terrestrial and marine species<sup>5</sup>

There are **25,000+** hydropower plants in Europe. Hydropower dams destroy rivers, resulting in the loss of freshwater biodiversity<sup>6</sup>

**1 in 3**

European freshwater fish species are threatened with extinction<sup>7</sup>



The costs of not implementing the EU Water Framework Directive and achieving its objectives would result in annual costs in the range of **5-20 billion €**<sup>8</sup>

**53%**

of EU water bodies are under at least one exemption to the EU Water Framework Directive<sup>9</sup>



<sup>4</sup> European Environment Agency, 2018. *European waters: Assessment of status and pressures 2018*

<sup>5</sup> WWF, 2018. *Living Planet Report 2018*

<sup>6</sup> European Environment Agency, 2015. *Hydrological systems and sustainable water management*. <https://www.eea.europa.eu/soer-2015/europe/hydrological-systems>

<sup>7</sup> European Commission, 2011. *European Red List of Freshwater Fishes*

<sup>8</sup> European Commission, 2011. *The costs of not implementing the environmental acquis*. Final report (ENV.G.1/FRA/2006/0073)

<sup>9</sup> EEA WISE, 2018 (WFD reporting European Commission dashboards).



# RECOMMENDATIONS

The European Green Deal is a golden opportunity to secure the gifts freshwater ecosystems provide to society. WWF calls on the European Commission to include the five following points in the upcoming Water Action Plan:

- 1 Declare the EU Water Framework Directive “fit for purpose”** – keeping this law strong will give EU Member States the scope and framework to prepare ambitious River Basin Management Plans for 2022-2027.
- 2 Establish a fund** for removing barriers from European rivers **and phase out all conflicting funding** resulting in loss of river connectivity, including funding for hydropower plants.
- 3 Make sure the third River Basin Management Plans** – to be developed by Member States by the end of 2021 – **contain all the guarantees** that surface and ground waters will be in good status by 2027, including through full implementation of the Water Framework Directive’s polluter-pays, user-pays, and cost-recovery principles.
- 4 Launch a large-scale deployment plan of nature-based solutions for water management** in order to enhance the natural treatment of pollution, sustain biodiversity, and increase resilience to climate change.
- 5 Plan for the setting of legally-binding targets** on restoring wetlands and floodplains and rewetting EU drained peatlands in the EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030.



#### Why we are here

To stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature.

[wwf.eu](http://wwf.eu)

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