



Media Release from Living Rivers Europe

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Could this be the beer of the future? 100 environmental groups launch European campaign to save the EU water law

A lot of things go into beer production, but it all starts with good quality water. But imagine a world where your favourite beer looked, smelt and tasted like dirty water. Or instead of your usual pint, you were served up a bowl of dry, crunchy hops. That's the scenario 100 NGOs want to prevent as they launch a new campaign calling on the European Commission to defend the EU law that protects all sources of Europe's water, such as rivers, streams, lakes, wetlands and groundwater, during its ongoing evaluation (known as a "fitness check").

The online campaign, called [#ProtectWater](#), is led by WWF, the European Environmental Bureau, European Anglers Alliance, European Rivers Network and Wetlands International, who together form the Living Rivers Europe coalition.

The campaign uses provocative scenarios and imagery around the future of beer to encourage citizens in Europe and beyond to participate in the European Commission's public consultation on the EU Water Framework Directive (WFD), which is running until 4 March 2019. This consultation is the only opportunity for the general public to have its say during the evaluation of the law, and the campaign provides an easy tool for citizens to express their support to keep this law strong and effective.

Whilst the scenarios painted in the campaign might seem extreme, beer companies are indeed worried about the future quality of water in Europe, and have issued a [joint statement](#), signed by Csopor, and Slovakia's Association of Small Independent Breweries, amongst others. All of these

companies recognise that their ability to produce good quality beer relies on the protection and sustainable management of Europe's water sources, and therefore support the WFD in its current form.

Freshwater ecosystems are the most threatened on the planet [1] and the situation is no different in Europe. 60% of EU waters are not healthy today because Member States have allowed them to be exploited in ways that cause permanent harm, such as through dams, the construction of other destructive infrastructure, and unsustainable agriculture. Through the WFD, Member States agreed to put a stop to this and achieve "good status" for their waters by 2027 at the very latest (the original 2015 deadline was missed by a long shot). 2027 is also the year which the #ProtectWater campaign playfully poses as the fictional 'expiration date' for good beer.

Roberto Epple, President European Rivers Network, said: "The Water Framework Directive is our most powerful tool to ensure that Europe's rivers, lakes and wetlands are protected and restored for generations to come. It shouldn't be weakened but strongly supported by all Member States and enforces by the EU. Through this campaign, citizens can join the fight to protect our waters".

Where political will exists, the WFD provides an effective framework for addressing the main pressures facing our waters [3], but Member States need to significantly step up their efforts and funding if the 2027 deadlines are to be achieved. Results to improve the health of their waters have been few and far between, and Member States are now discussing how the law can be weakened to introduce greater flexibility for themselves.

Sergiy Moroz, Senior Policy Officer for Water and Biodiversity for the European Environmental Bureau (EEB), said: "The EU has world-leading water protection laws that are up to the job of protecting freshwater ecosystems from pressures such as the impact of hydropower and pollution and over-abstraction from agriculture and industry. But, shockingly, the political will from EU governments to use them is lacking. It is unacceptable that instead of trying to improve the health of our rivers and lakes EU governments are discussing how to weaken vital protection for our waters."

More information about the #ProtectWater campaign is available at: www.livingrivers.eu

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Notes to the editors:

[1] [Living Planet Report](#), WWF, 2016

[2] [European waters: Assessment of status and pressures 2018](#), EEA, 2018

[3] [Bringing life back to Europe's waters: The EU water law in action](#), 2018

> About the [#ProtectWater](#) campaign

- The goal of #ProtectWater simple: to defend the EU Water Framework Directive (WFD) and in doing so, protect Europe's rivers, lakes, groundwater and wetlands, and the wildlife they house, for generations to come.
- The campaign is led by Living Rivers Europe (WWF's European network, the European Anglers Alliance, European Environmental Bureau, European Rivers Network, and Wetlands International), who together represent a movement of over 40 million people across Europe.
- More than 100 NGOs are currently supporting the campaign, including BirdLife and Friends of the Earth.
- The campaign allows anyone to easily take part in the European Commission's public consultation on the evaluation of EU water policy, which includes the WFD. Living Rivers Europe believes that only a loud call from citizens to keep the WFD strong will ensure that this law, and the rivers, lakes and wetlands that depend on it, are protected. By filling in the e-action's form (available on www.livingrivers.eu as well as all participating organisations' websites), individuals can quickly and easily send the suggested response to the public consultation to the European Commission on their behalf.
- The European Commission launched its online consultation on the EU Water Framework Directive on 17 September 2018 - but only in English. Due to the delay in making the questions available in all official languages (and thus to all EU citizens), we decided to start our public engagement campaign by answering only one question and to translate this answer into all languages. With this answer, however, we address all the main aspects of the WFD review, indicating why we believe the law is fit for purpose and should be maintained.

For more information, please visit www.livingrivers.eu

>About the Water Framework Directive (WFD) and Living Rivers Europe

- The WFD is one of the EU's most progressive pieces of environmental legislation. It requires the protection, enhancement and restoration of our rivers, wetlands, lakes and coastal waters, but Member States are currently failing make it work on the ground.
- Under the WFD, EU governments have committed to ensure no deterioration and achieve good status for the vast majority of all water bodies by 2015, and at the very latest by 2027.
- Where implemented, the WFD has proved to be effective in achieving its goals of good water status and non-deterioration, successfully balancing environmental, social and economic requirements.
- The WFD is currently undergoing its standard review in the form of a 'fitness check'. Every piece of EU legislation goes through this process. The fitness check will look at the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, coherence and EU added value of the WFD (and its 'daughter' directives) and the Floods Directive. It includes the ongoing stakeholder consultation and public consultation.
- As the Living Rivers Europe coalition, we are working on safeguarding the EU WFD and strengthening its implementation and enforcement. [Click here to read the full Living Rivers Europe vision statement.](#)