



Press Release

DAMS ARE COMING DOWN ALL OVER EUROPE!

New report by Dam Removal Europe reveals another record-breaking year for river barrier removal in 2022 with a new country joining the movement.

Groningen, The Netherlands (April 25, 2023) - The dam removal movement set a new record in Europe in 2022 with at least 325 river barriers coming down across the continent - a 36% increase on the previous record set in 2021.

The [latest report](#) uncovers a surprising figure of (at least) 325 barriers have been removed in 16 European countries – a new record! As in 2021, most of the removed barriers were weirs, as these structures have a high probability of being old and obsolete and can be removed in a cost-efficient way. Several factors have contributed to the new numbers such as newly available funding opportunities, like the [Open Rivers Programme](#), the coordinated efforts of national and regional public authorities to report removed barriers, and the hype created by findings of last year’s report disseminated all around Europe.

As argued by Yurena Lorenzo, European Programme Manager at [Wetlands International Europe](#), “Seeing the numbers of barrier removals increase year after year is a great achievement for Dam Removal Europe's coalition. This is proof of the successful mainstreaming process of barrier removals as a key restoration tool which is emerging increasingly from not only bottom-up initiatives, but also top-down ones thanks to newly integrated policies”.

The podium gathered no new champions, with Spain affirming its place as the European leader in dam removal, followed by Sweden and France. However, new faces joined the movement. Luxembourg recorded its first-ever barrier removals by removing a weir. The removal was part of a bigger project aimed to restore the ecological continuity of the Pétrusse River.

For Herman Wanningen, Director of the [World Fish Migration Foundation](#), it is important to highlight such positive cases, to show how dam removal operations can be replicated and scaled up across the globe: “We started a riverlution, but only with the joint action of river practitioners, authorities, policymakers, and citizens, will be possible to achieve the EU Biodiversity Strategy targets”.

Given the latest developments in European climate policy and the Commission’s proposal for a Nature Restoration Law, it is important to keep highlighting dam removal as a crucial tool to accomplish ecosystem restoration and celebrating success stories across Europe.

Moreover, barrier removal also contributes to the global Freshwater Challenge to restore 300,000km of degraded rivers by 2030, a goal launched at the UN Water Conference held in New York in March.





Besides pollution, habitat degradation, and over exploitation of natural resources, freshwater ecosystems face one major issue: dams.

It has been found that [over 1,2 million barriers fragment European rivers](#), with many being obsolete. Among the several harmful consequences is biodiversity loss, with a [decline of 93% in freshwater migratory fish populations in Europe](#) and 76% on a global level. The alarming numbers ask for cost-effective and efficient solutions to restore rivers. Dam removal has been paving its way in nature restoration tools – a trend has been confirmed across Dam Removal Europe’s annual reports.

[The report is available for consultation or download here.](#)

Editor’s Notes:

- [Find the press package with the report \(PDF file\), press release \(in English\), and pictures here.](#)

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About Dam Removal Europe

Dam Removal Europe (DRE) is a coalition of 7 organisations: the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), The Rivers Trust, The Nature Conservancy, the European Rivers Network, Rewilding Europe, Wetlands International, and the World Fish Migration Foundation. The ambition of DRE is to restore the free-flowing state of rivers and streams in Europe. In that respect, DRE aims to establish barrier removal as a restoration tool and to mainstream this practice. More information: www.damremoval.eu

