

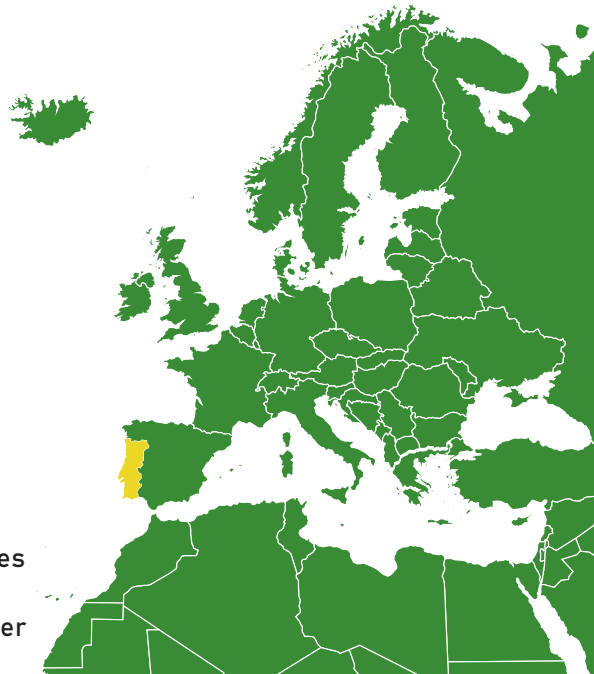
WILL YOU LEAVE A LASTING LEGACY FOR NATURE?

BirdLife Europe & Central Asia, EEB (European Environmental Bureau), Friends of the Earth Europe and WWF European Policy Office call on Commissioner Karmenu Vella to take decisive action in his remaining time as EU Environment Commissioner to improve the implementation and enforcement of the EU's world-leading nature laws – the Birds & Habitats Directives¹.

HYDROPOWER DAMS: THREATS TO THE IMPLEMENTATION AND ENFORCEMENT OF THE EU BIRDS & HABITATS DIRECTIVES

The #NatureAlert Countdown is on! But there is still time to take action to save threatened wildlife and habitats across Europe, such as the Tâmega river!

European biodiversity is in freefall. Major gaps in the implementation and enforcement of our nature laws is leaving nature dangerously exposed to serious threats from the development of hydropower. Europe's rivers are already saturated with more than 25,000 hydropower plants. Hydropower dams fragment rivers, destroy wetlands and, as a consequence, threaten the species that depend on them for their habitat and survival. They also block fish migration routes and trap sediments. The construction of additional hydropower plants would exacerbate the negative impacts that already exist and therefore contradict both the conservation objectives of freshwater habitats protected under Natura 2000 and the objectives of the Water Framework Directive.



SAVE THE TAMEGA RIVER AND ITS TRIBUTARIES, PORTUGAL



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There are several hydropower dams currently under construction in the Tamega river basin in Portugal. The Tamega River is one of the last unregulated tributaries of the Douro River and until recently was seen as an important refuge for migrating fish species. This is now threatened by the ongoing construction of the Gouvaes hydropower dam and reservoir which will flood part of the Alvao-Morao site, protected under the EU Nature Directives as an important habitat for threatened species such as the European otter or the Iberian wolf.

The project is financed in large part by the European Investment Bank, in contradiction to its recently adopted Guidelines for Investment in Hydropower Development since neither the requirements of the Nature Directives on authorisation of damaging projects have been fully applied nor have the cumulative impacts of the planned hydropower projects been properly assessed.

Until recently, there were other hydropower dams planned outside of the protected area such as Fridao dam which would have had a negative impact on the integrity of the site. Fortunately, the decision has been taken recently not to proceed with the construction of the Fridao dam which now leaves the Gouvaes dam as the main threat to the protected site.

Due to the fact that the ongoing construction of Gouvaes dam and reservoir is having significant negative impacts on the protected area and that the proposed mitigation measures are not sufficient, the European Commission should call for construction of the entire Tamega Hydropower Scheme to be stopped before further damage occurs. The project has been characterised by a lack of transparency in the decision making process and insufficient impact assessments which resulted in poor design and implementation of the hydropower project, including inadequate mitigation measures such as fish passes that had been proposed.

¹ [January 2019. 'Joint Policy Brief on the Implementation and Enforcement of the Birds & Habitats Directives'](#)

**THE #NATUREALERT COUNTDOWN IS ON!
WILL YOU, COMMISSIONER VELLA, LEAVE A LASTING LEGACY FOR NATURE?**

**PLEASE SUPPORT OUR CALL FOR THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION TO PUT PRESSURE
ON PORTUGAL TO STOP THE ENTIRE TAMEGA HYDROPOWER SCHEME.**

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