

Brussels, 8 February 2023

Letter: **EU Hydropower complies with comprehensive environmental standards and actively contributes towards achieving EU's climate and biodiversity targets**

Dear Ambassador Lars Danielsson, Permanent Representative of Sweden to the European Union,
Dear MEP Markus Pieper,
Dear MEP Christian-Silviu Buşoi,
Dear MEP Nils Torvalds,
Dear Commissioner Kadri Simson,
Dear EVP Frans Timmermans,
Dear Commissioner Virginijus Sinkevičius,

Cc: MEP Pascal Canfin, Shadow rapporteurs from the ITRE Committee for the revision of the Renewable Energy Directive

As the representative of the European power sector, which is committed to the EU's climate and biodiversity goals, **Eurelectric would like to defend the central place of hydropower in the revision of the Renewable Energy Directive.**

To reach the EU's ambitious decarbonisation targets, the share of variable technologies like wind and PV will need to increase significantly, with generation dominated by these sources. The resulting need **to balance the differences in generation and demand will be provided by the flexibility and storage capacity of hydropower plants**, making them an essential tool to address these challenges on a large scale. From design to construction and operation, **hydropower is based on a European value chain**, independent of imports of raw materials, skilled labour, or technological competence. Moreover, **many hydropower plants offer further benefits to society**, such as climate change adaptation (flood and drought mitigation), the provision of drinking water and water for irrigation and industrial needs, the promotion of tourism and navigation, as well as the removal of waste from our rivers.

The European Commission's REPowerEU proposal aims to protect the environment while accelerating the deployment of renewable energy by designating "acceleration areas" for renewable projects. **Ongoing discussions related to the exclusion of individual technologies are negatively perceived, as only the use of all available renewable sources ensures minimal environmental impact.** Hence, the Commission proposal was right **to include hydropower among the technologies of overriding public interest and suitable for "acceleration areas"**, this being a technology-neutral position and endorsed by Parliament. Indeed, there is a great potential for upgrading existing facilities as well as building new plants whose low environmental impact meets the requirements.

According to EU and national law, every hydropower plant must go through a comprehensive permitting process during its authorisation to guarantee its environmental performance and to ensure its sustainability. The key piece of legislation is Directive 2000/60/EC (Water Framework Directive), which has been in force for more than 20 years now and guarantees a high level of respect for biodiversity.

.../...

In addition, the EC's proposal provides for a series of measures by which Member States can prevent environmental issues. When designating "renewables acceleration areas", a **Strategic Environmental Assessment is required to show that no significant impacts are expected**. When a concrete project application is submitted, its potential consequences must be screened again. This gives national permitting authorities the necessary leeway to reject applications or to impose an ordinary environmental assessment if necessary.

Eurelectric emphasises that there should not be, by principle, any exclusion of a renewable technology from "acceleration areas". Accurate knowledge of local conditions and available sites is required to facilitate accelerated procedures while ensuring minimal environmental impact. It is precisely this knowledge that is available in the hydropower sector due to decades of experience in keeping negative impacts to a minimum. **Therefore, we urge you not to discriminate against a domestic, renewable and flexible energy source such as hydropower, as this could jeopardise the EU's quest for energy independence and security of supply.**

We trust that our concerns will be given due consideration and stand ready should you wish to discuss this issue with our environmental and hydropower experts.

Yours sincerely,



Cillian O'DONOGHUE
Policy Director