

The Natura 2000 network, which is based on special protection areas under the Flora Fauna Habitat Directive as well as on bird protection areas under the Bird Directive, exists in SI, HR, BG and GR. In total, 232 HPPs can be found in Natura 2000 areas, 77 of which are already in operation or being constructed. Of the 155 planned projects, 4 fall under category 1 (National Parks) and 20 under category 2 (Biosphere Reserve).

With at least 8,991 rkm, the Natura 2000 network comprises the largest amount of river stretches of all categories. This is not only due to the high density of the network, but also due to the high priority on riparian habitats across all countries. Considering the fact that many narrow protection corridors (often only some 100 m in width) do not exactly overlap with the overall river network geometry (which is based on European GIS CCM2 database), this analysis would include nearly another 1,000 river kilometres within Natura 2000 areas.

An important example is the Sava River: a chain of dams was planned along its course in SI and HR before – or even while – the Natura 2000 network was being established. In SI this led to the construction of several huge dams and the planning for many more.

Other significant examples are projects along the Neretva near Opuzen (HR) or on Kupa/Kolpa (HR and SI).

The construction of two more Danube dams along the BG-RO border is relatively improbable, since almost the entire valley is a designated Natura 2000 area.

In Bulgaria, the entire Maritza valley is subject to hydropower development plans.

Source: Euronatur & RiverWatch