

The EEA report 'Drivers of and pressures arising from selected key water management challenges — A European overview' shows that a broad range of measures are already available to improve the state of Europe's water bodies. **Water retention** measures, **nature-based solutions** and **land use change measures** offer multiple benefits. Overall, better and more coherent **implementation** of the existing legislation — including the Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive, the Floods Directive, and the Water Framework Directive — would reduce key pressures on water. Moreover, all water-using sectors, such as agriculture, energy, mining, aquaculture and navigation, should adopt management practices that can keep water ecosystems healthy and resilient, the EEA report states. These include farming programmes that reduce the use of pesticides, hydropower that ensures passage for fish, stringent fuel standards for navigation, and preservation of river banks.

Currently, key problems include **pollution** from **urban and industrial waste water**, diffuse pollution from agriculture, and pollution from mining and dwellings that are not connected to a sewage system. Overall, 22 % of Europe's surface water bodies and 28 % of the groundwater area are significantly affected by diffuse pollution from agriculture, both by **nutrients** and **pesticides**. Deposition of **air pollutants**, particularly mercury, leads to the **poor chemical status** of Europe's water bodies.

Moreover, about 34 % of surface water bodies are significantly affected by **structural changes**, linked to, for example, stabilising the river channel, water storage, hydropower, flood protection, or irrigation. Structural changes affect river course and flow, which can have a major impact on the river and floodplain biodiversity. Many of the structures are different types of **barriers**, but for about 40 % of affected water bodies the purpose of the barriers is unclear, the EEA report notes.

Lesser but still important pressures include **aquaculture** and **invasive alien species**. **Water scarcity** and **drought** events are an increasing problem in many areas of Europe, both permanently and seasonally, the report warns. About 6 % of Europe's surface water bodies and 17 % of the groundwater area are significantly affected by **water abstraction**, mainly linked to agriculture, public water supply and industry.

Source: eea.europa.eu