



## Annual Report 2021

Approved in the GMM 2022 on 14 November 2022



### 1. Board

In 2021 the Board has met 9 times in formal Board Meetings. These meetings were held virtually by conference calls. The priority Board tasks were to follow-up the GMM2020 actions, the River Continuity Restoration Survey, the workplan 2021, the ECRR governance, the Funding Strategy, the European River Symposium 2021 and the Arcadia contract 'Ready to be removed dams 2022'.

Other Board actions in 2020 concerned:

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- strengthening the contacts with the International Water/River Commissions,
- contacts with the new member Finnish Freshwater Foundation,
- the involvement in the LIFE Dordogne project,
- the participation in the Blue Rivers Consortium preparations for a Horizon 2020 project proposal on the EC Biodiversity Strategy implementation,
- the organization of the GMM2021,
- the MICS project (Measuring Impact of the Citizen Science)
- Contacts with the newly established European Open Rivers Programme
- European Open Rivers Programme Advisory Group (ECRR Chair Martin Janes is a member)
- Powers of the Board and Management rules
- Strengthening ECRR's knowledge platform function

Information on these items can be found in other chapters of this report.

## **2. Operational activities.**

### ***Website.***

In 2021 special pages were added to the website, these were a page for the European River Symposium and a page for the river restoration European Community of Practice. For the European River Symposium this page was the main communication channel. The CoP page needs to be further developed in accordance with the development of the CoP itself. By the end of the year the Extranet module was replaced. The new module is more user friendly, but has less features than the previous one, this is apparently not a practical problem.

### ***Newsletters***

#### ***ECRRNetwork eNews***

In 2021 the ECRRNetwork eNews were, like in 2021 6 times issued. The European River Symposium and the launch of the report of the pan-European River Continuity Survey were real good news items for the ECRR. But also ECRR related items or topics as the European Open Rivers Programme and the EC Guidance document on barrier removal were very worthwhile to pay special attention for. Maybe more attention should/could be given to member's news items.

#### ***ECRR Technical Newsletter***

The ECRR newsletter was issued twice in 2020, one in May and one in August. Both were thematic, with the first on the River Continuity Survey and the other one on the European River Symposium. Many positive responses were received, but there were also requests for issues with articles on different topics, like nature based solutions and flood risk management and river restoration.

### ***River Wiki***

UK, Norway, Netherlands, Russia, Sweden, Finland, Poland and Italy are using the River Wiki. And ideas were raised to use the RiverWiki for dam removal projects, maybe in a different section.

### ***Twitter account***

In 2021 the number of followers of the twitter account @ECRRNetwork increased from 1,250 to almost 1,400 followers. ECRR is only periodically active on twitter, especially when we have real own news-items.

### ***LinkedIn***

The ECRR LinkedIn page is more and more being used and viewed, but the number of followers is still limited with 175. ECRR uses with the same frequency the group account Restoring

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Europe's Rivers with 675 followers. With more capacity these accounts could be used with a higher capacity.

### ***Facebook***

ECRR has no Facebook account. However, in the past ECRR initiated a River Restoration Community of Practice amongst a number of River Basin Authorities. A few representatives of them run a Facebook account of the European River Restoration Community. They approached ECRR in 2019 for (more) contacts and if possible support. In 2021 the CoP was highlighted at the European River Symposium and there is now a special page for the CoP at the ECRR website.

### ***Youtube***

ECRR has a (new) Youtube channel replacing the RESTORE one, although the RESTORE one is still in use as it is holding a.o. presentations from the past conferences. In 2021 all the recorded presentations of the European River Symposium 2021 were converted to Youtube and connected to the ERS webpage on the ECRR site.

### ***Communication with ECRR members and newsletter / network subscribers.***

An existing idea is to add a hidden page to the Extranet with information about the Member representatives, e.g, biography, position, personal professional interest in relation to river restoration. This could help to intensify contacts between the members with maybe, also some new cooperation. Up till now this idea was not yet materialized and should be reconsidered in 2020.

## **3. Organisation.**

### ***Members***

As an association the ECRR has organisations as members. The objectives of these organisations must be compatible with ECRR association's objective. In 2021 ECRR had 15 members (see chapter 7) and one registered partner. ECRR would like to welcome more members. National institutions / organisations, dealing with river restoration, from Central and Eastern greater Europe are first of all potential candidates. But also regional international institutions / organisations, like river commissions and river NGO's would be welcome. A recruitment campaign could be considered.

### ***Board***

The ECRR has a Board with maximum of 9 members. In 2021 the Board had 3 members fulfilling the functions chair, secretary and treasurer. Although the Board meetings, with this number, are as such very effective, but for a better total functioning it would be better to have one or two more. Extension is therefore needed. Moreover, in 2023 replacement of a Board member may become actual, to vary with the appointment terms. An appropriate process to attract new Board members should therefore be started.

### ***Staff***

ECRR Association had in 2021 for the first time a staff member. A student at Wageningen University Research, who was in 2020 an intern with STOWA and implemented the River Continuity Survey for the ECRR extended her internship in the course of 2021 with the ECRR. Her task was to complete and report on the River Continuity Survey, to write a technical newsletter article on the survey, to organize a session at the European River Symposium to present the survey, to write a narrative report about the European River Symposium and last but not least to implement a contract ECRR entered, to inquire for 'ready to be removed dams' together with World Fish Migration Foundation / Dam removal Europe and GWPCEE. Later in this report, more information will be given on various products obtained through all her good work. She did a wonderful job but went for a very nice job to a Dutch Public Water Company.

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### ***Board Advice and Coordination***

As in previous years this task was in 2021 on a voluntary basis again done by one person, part time (50 % fte). This task comprises the following secretarial tasks:

- Coordination of the Technical Newsletter production
- ENews production and subscribers database administration
- Website maintenance and updates
- Bookkeeping and accounting
- Board meetings preparation and reporting
- GMM meeting preparation
- Annual reporting
- Taking care of ECRR correspondence

A large part of this task could and should be passed on to a communication officer and another part could be taken over by an administrator. In 2021 steps have been taken to draw up, according to the Dutch governmental volunteer policy, including an allowance policy, a contract model that can be applied for the involvement of one or more volunteers to do (part of) this work or even other type of activities.

As an associate expert the same person coordinated also as a volunteer the River Continuity Survey, supported on behalf of the ECRR the programming, organization and reporting of the European River Symposium and advised the Board on member affairs.

## **4. ECRR Workplan 2021.**

### ***Introduction***

As 2021 was completely a Covid-19 year appeared life in Europe. ECRR's activities were again heavily affected by the prevention measures taken by the national governments. The effects on the ECRR activities were that international travelling and face to face meetings were cancelled. The GMM2020, could again not be held in in combination with a national river restoration seminar as originally planned. Moreover, a number of international river (restoration) events could not be visited as they were cancelled or postponed. ECRR was the co-organiser of the European River Symposium held in May. Fortunately this was from the beginning planned to be a virtual meeting by Zoom.

### ***ECRR Members Meetings***

#### ***ECRR GMM2021***

As the ECRR GMM2020 could not be held in Oslo in September the meeting was rescheduled to 9 November and was held as a webinar. The meeting consisted of two parts.

#### **A. The formal GMM2021**

Next to the regular items of the GMM a number of specific items were addressed and if needed approved in the meeting. The most important ones were a new ECRR regulation 'Powers of the Board and Management Rules', Plan of Action ECRR Association's Funding Strategy 2020 – 2021, Workplan 2021 and 2022 and a proposed 'Two-day field meeting' for ECRR members, next to a continued virtual one day GMM in autumn.

The proposal on the "Powers of the Board and Management Rules' contains some additional rules as a bylaw to the articles to specify powers and rules of two entities within the ECRR: Members and the Board. As ECRR is an association (non-profit type) of organization, the decision making is given to its members. However, to ensure smooth operation and management, the Board has suggested to revise the current rules, adding the mandate to the Board to act on specific issues on behalf of ECRR and its members.

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The rules ensure that the association has satisfactory internal controls and formalized processes that ensure compliance with established principles for financial reporting and internal controls. A 3-member Audit Committee, one of them the (Board) treasurer, is to be established on a rotation basis (2-year term for the two other members) to audit the operation of the ECRR functions and financial behavior. The members were happy to approve this 'bylaw' including the installation of an audit committee.

The discussions on the 'Action Plan on ECRRs Association Association's Funding Strategy' showed that ECRR should refresh its value added and articulate well its future strategic intentions (see points 8-9), so as to be able to fit these to potential funding schemes. So far, the discussion has been on several models – these include LIFE NGO grant scheme, crowdfunding, generic grant schemes for in-country funding, large grant opportunities, donor package proposals, short sponsor packages for conferences. It was agreed that it was still helpful for ECRR to have 1 or 2 members provide a very short page review of what the key messages (for ECRR to consider) are on each.

A key message for drafting the 'Work Plan 202' is that ECRR should rethink its current format and have a broader, but more focused strategic approach on how to best employ new tools (such as (online) workshops), recruit/encourage new members, and appropriately use an impetus of the EU Green Deal and follow up strategies adopted at the EU level (Biodiversity Strategy, Recovery and Resilience Plan). A (strategic) discussion should be devoted to the following aspects:

- How to best address new EC strategies (incl. guidance document on river restoration) on agenda of the ECRR?
- How to engage with and recruit new members of ECRR?
- Which type of knowledge is needed to exchange?
- What are suitable tools to be explored, used, revised (River Wiki, Newsletter, social media, online workshops, conferences, Barrier tracker, surveys, etc..) to make the ECRR a leader and knowledge broker
- What are the opportunities of ECRR to enter consortia to bid for projects?
- Technical issues, such as how are we going to document successful river restoration projects, and what are criteria of the project to be successful?

It was suggested to devote significant time in the spring 2022, possibly at the 'Two-day field meeting (face-to-face, hopefully) to discuss this Workplan format and agree on the Workplan 2022. ECRR Board will provide in February 2022 a 'two-pager' on the main strategic directions for ECRR as a basis for a renewed workplan. Also, members are encouraged to provide input into the Workplan 2022 on their (inter) national and local activities.

The members agreed on the proposal for an in principle annual 'Two-day field meeting' in spring/early summer and a one day virtual GMM in November. For 2022 the 'Two-day field meeting' was proposed to organize it Norway, making use of the original offer for a GMM in Oslo.

### B. ECRR Matters!

As a continuation of the success of this the format this part gave again a space to present the several initiatives/projects that ECRR is involved in either through the Board and members. Some of these 'matters' are described here, others that were more prominent in 2021 will be described separately in the next chapters.

Presentation on Finish Freshwater Foundation: Liisa Hämäläinen presented FFF – a young foundation aimed to support river restoration initiatives in Finland. The foundation joined the

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ECRR in 2021. Its main agenda comprises of sharing knowledge, networking practitioners at the national level and participate in implementation projects. FFF is keen to be involved in ECRR.

Members were informed on the involvement of ECRR in the LIFE -Nature project on Dordogne river. It is a complex restoration project of 8,8 mil. Although the involvement of ECRR is small (in terms of budget), it has an important role in knowledge development, proof reading of deliverables, and dissemination of project results. The project is scheduled on until – 2026.

I.S.Rivers 2022 will be held 4-8. July, 2022, where there are possibilities of ECRR to held a workshop (prior to the conference) or to be directly involved with a ECRR side event/session during the conference. There are four themes of the conference into which the ECRR could fit well.

The 20<sup>th</sup> Euro - INBO meeting will in 2022 be held in Annecy, France from September 26 – 29. Technical workshops, plenary sessions, as well as technical and cultural visits are on the program, on themes such as an ECRR theme on the restoration of ecological continuity, conciliation of uses or international cooperation.

And there were the following other messages:

- OFB: There should and will be more promotion of the Wild River Label
- EA Norway: The launch of the Norwegian National Restoration Plan and the use of the RiverWiki
- CIREF: Spain (and Portugal) also developing a river restoration strategy and policy
- University of Life Sciences: Poland working on a river restoration certification.

### ***Pan – European Survey to strengthen and improve policies and strategic planning regarding river continuity restoration.***

At the end of 2021 a preliminary report about the survey results was completed and in January 2022 in a virtual meeting presented to all country representatives, responsible for the information from their country. The outcome was that the report missed still some countries that were working on the survey. And some other countries wanted to adjust parts of the input information, as they now understood where was really asked for with certain questions. And the Steering Group would like to have a more adequate adequate interpretation and presentation of the results and the study for the a launch of the report at the European River Symposium being held in May 2022. It was therefore decided to make the extension with a few countries, to allow the adjustments and to improve the report with an extensive interpretation of the results, not just on the country level, but also for the European level. And in particular with a focus on policy making and planning. Moreover the idea came up to present the results in a special thematic issue of ECRR's Technical Newsletter, which was also accepted. Fortunately, realizing this all became possible through contracting the intern who made already the first report.

Speaking about river continuity restoration, one should realise that the scope of river continuity restoration embraces more than solely improving connectivity for biota to migrate. It encompasses the flow of water, sediment and biota downstream and the possibility for biota to migrate upstream. Measures to improve river continuity range from technical fish migration facilities to entire dam removal addressing part of all environmental impacts caused by artificial barriers in rivers.

A main conclusion of the survey is, that river continuity restoration is to a reasonable extent recognized in current national policies, but the speed of implementation should be substantially

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increased. This asks for broader and more comprehensive plans, where the implementation of the Biodiversity Strategy 2030 offers an excellent opportunity. In addition to the target of 25.000 km o free flowing rivers, targets could be set to construct fish passes and by-passes to improve at least the passability for fish but also the habitat connectivity for other species. Moreover, environmental flows or sediment management are alternative solutions to mitigate the impact of manmade barriers in rivers.

The final conclusions on the survey are that ECRR's choice to make river continuity a central theme has been a good choice, the experiences gained can help to strengthen ECRR's knowledge platform in this direction and that ne contacts made, help to extend the network and can lead to more members.

### ***European River Symposium 2021***

Organising the European River Symposium, since the last one was in 2016, was not a simple task. And this was especially very difficult, because there was no single organization who was able to take the full technical, organizational, financial and programmatic responsibility. Moreover, it should be organized as a virtual event on 26 and 27 May 2021. This was only possible through forming a partnership with at the end 11 partners and some supporting partners. Especially WWFCEE deserves a special word of thanks as they made a high contribution with providing the secretariat for the organization.

Through forming the partnership the programme of the conference was also developed in partnership. Although, the total approach lead for each organization to a rather laborious contribution, the result was a conference with a broad programme of a high quality. The intent of the Symposium was to help participants get acquainted with the new initiatives to support rivers and wetlands in the Biodiversity Strategy and the Green Deal and to stimulate the use of these opportunities. With 14 session over two days and always two sessions in parallel the audience was offered a lot where they had to make a choice out.

Involving over 250 participants, 70 panelists and presenters, including 6 Keynote Presentations, the Symposium also identified new tools and resources in the European Green Deal and Biodiversity Strategy to further expand the actions undertaken in the interest of rivers and wetlands. Actions by important economic actors such as agriculture, hydropower, and urban municipal waste water services, and various industrial production sectors were all identified as key to improvements made and in future needed. The Symposium concluded that innovative financing instruments to support protection and restoration of rivers offer new hope that these mechanisms along with the right use of European legal and legislative tools (Water Framework Directive) and dialogue and cooperation between sectors using and affecting rivers and wetlands that their condition and health can be improved.

The symposium strengthened dialogue and cooperation between sectors using and affecting rivers and supported initiatives that the condition and health of rivers can be improved. This challenge is to be addressed at the local, regional, and national levels. Promotion of healthy ecosystems, green infrastructure and nature-based solutions should therefore be systematically integrated in policies and planning.

ECRR produced two conference reports. A 'narrative report' giving an impression of the discussions, main conclusions and recommendations offering new hope that that the conditions

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and the health of the rivers can be improved. The right use of legal and legislative tools, the available funding opportunities together with the dialogue and cooperation between sectors and with stakeholders and the public, all using and affecting rivers the way forward is the overall conclusion of this report.

The second report, is the 'Technical report on key themes and lessons European River Symposium 2021. This report can contribute to the work in the coming years on the collective efforts to strengthen and improve the protection and restoration of rivers and their associated landscapes. Hopefully the report is found in the work of the readers and that it stimulates and creates opportunities for further dialogue and cooperation in those efforts.

For the ECRR a final conclusions can be that the central role ECRR had in the organization and programming contributed to ECCR's profile and fame and we learned to know a number of organisations much better than we did before, like the TNC, WWFCEE and GWPCEE.

### ***An inquiry on 'Ready to be Removed Dams***

In June 2021 Global Water Partnership Central and Eastern Europe (GWP CEE), European Centre for River Restoration (ECRR) and World Fish Migration Foundation (WFMF) conducted a survey to identify barrier removal opportunities across Europe. The assignment was done on behalf of the European Open Rivers Programme (in prep) and seeks to identify potential dam removal projects and collate a list of opportunities that do not require significant preparatory work, meet a number of hard criteria set and which can be removed relatively quickly and would be ready for review by this new programme in the autumn of 2021.

Response from our combined networks was highly positive and demonstrated the internationally high level of interest in river restoration. We received a total of 222 submissions through an online survey, in which stakeholders were asked 32 questions about their barrier removal project. This provided us with a detailed picture and a comprehensive data set. We selected projects that met the criteria of the call.

Of all submissions, 65 projects from 15 countries fulfil all the criteria. Of these, a total of 47 barriers are unconditionally ready for removal in 2022 while 18 will be ready under certain conditions specified individually. We identified 5 high-value candidates based on the ecological yield of their removal and the financial and temporal effort to remove them. This metric is intended as a first, coarse prioritization aid and can be refined over time. 50 barriers did not meet criteria of the call (because of their size or removal readiness) but were included as a separate group for independent consideration.

For the ECRR a main conclusion is this cooperation between the three organisations went very well. They have each other much to offer, concerning knowledge and experience and their networks are very complementary.

### ***Information and communication***

The newsletters, social media, and presentations cover in principle a broad range of river restoration aspects. However, this year there a strong focus on river continuity, especially in relation to the River Continuity Survey implemented. We experienced that intensive communication around one 'new' special subject, can help to get more attention and appreciation for also the organization and the people behind.



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### **External Communications Centre role**

*Horizon 2020 MICS (Measuring Impact Citizen Science).*

ECRR continues to disseminate application of Citizen Science to river restoration with an 'end article' in the Technical Newsletter issue in February 2022.

### **Representation and participation**

Again, due to the Covid-19 pandemic there were no life events that could be visited. Instead of this many, often free webinars could be followed, but this has not often been done as it was a very busy year with the important products that were delivered (see above).

### *19<sup>th</sup> Europe-INBO 2021, Malta*

ECRR Coordinator participated in this hybrid conference virtually, with a special interactive workshop on 'How digital solutions can contribute to the implementation of EU water policies. The Declaration of Malta will be published in the Technical Newsletter issue of February 2022.

### *Blue Rivers Consortium*

The Amber consortium has been transformed in a permanent consortium Blue Rivers, with 29 partners from 15 countries that seeks to reverse the loss of river biodiversity. Being a member of the consortium still allows ECRR to participate in other, comparable, consortia.

Their main field of interest are: 1. Nature-based solutions, 2. River connectivity, 3. Ecosystem services, 4 River restoration. Most organization are science oriented and they are looking for (applied) research projects e.g. Horizon etc.. ECRR is through invitation one of the partners of this consortium and could contribute to the international dissemination of information, knowledge sharing and communication.

## 5. ECRR Member's activities 2021

**(NC=National Centre; TC=Topic Centre)**

NC Sweden	Participated in River Continuity Survey; GMM2021.
NC France	Steering Group River Continuity Survey; Participated in the River Continuity Survey; Input to the ECRR workplan 2020 – 21 ; 4 <sup>th</sup> edition of the IS Rivers Conference in June 2022 and 4 webinars planned as a warming up in 2021 with the ECRR Network to identify local river managers and practitioners and preparation of an 'ECRR' Workshop in 2022 GMM2021.
NC Poland	Participated in the River Continuity Survey GMM2021.
NC Italy	GMM2021.
NC Norway	National River and Wetland Restoration Seminar 2021; New projects were uploaded to the RiverWiki. Translation of the Amber Barrier Tracker was carried out together with NC Sweden River Continuity Survey participant GMM2021.
NC Ukraine	Not available
NC Finland	Participated Steering Group River Continuity Survey;

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	National River Restoration Conference 2021; Uploaded new RiverWiki projects; Contribution to the European River Symposium by supporting the Sustainable Hydropower Session; GMM2021.
NC Russia	Participated in the River Continuity Survey; Production 2 Technical Newsletter; Co-editing 2 Technical Newsletter; GMM2021.
NC UK	National River Restoration Conference; Operation and maintenance of the RiverWiki / Database; English, technical RR communication materials; Uploaded new RiverWiki projects; MICS project; Contributed to the European River Symposium; GMM2021.
NC Netherlands	Hosted ECRR intern (January/February/March) for River Participated Continuity Survey; Participated in the Project Group River Continuity Survey;
TC Fishmigration	Cooperation with GWP and ECRR on the inquiry for 'Raedy to be removed dams'; Contributed to the European River Symposium; GMM2021.
TC INBO	Europe-INBO2021 Conference, Malta with participants from 63 countries; Contributed to the European River Symposium with four sessions; GMM2021.
TC WI	Member of Steering Group River Continuity Survey; Financial Support River Continuity Survey; GMM2021;
TC GWP	Several events, communications in English on RR in CEE; Inquiry 'Ready to be removed dams';
CIRF	Preparation I.S. Rivers 2022 workshop; GMM2021.
CIREF	Editing 2 Technical Newsletters; Participated Spain & Portugal) in River Continuity Survey GMM2021.
F.F.F.	GMM2021.

## 6. ECRR's Financial Reports 2021

### *Profit & loss Account 2021*

Financial statement 2021				
<b>Revenues</b>			<b>Costs</b>	
Member fees 2021	€	9,500.00	Bank costs	€ 154.50
Contract EORP	€	7,500.00	Survey Monkey	€ 195.00
			WIEA 2nd instal. RCS	€ 1,240,25
			River Continuity Survey	€ 3,368,43
			ERS Conference	€ 1,950.00
			Contract Intern	€ 6,000.00
			Secretariat	€ 199.28
			Insurances	€ 654.29
			<b>Total</b>	€ 13,761.75
<b>Result</b>				€ <b>3,238.25</b>
<b>Total general</b>	€	<b>17,000.00</b>		€ <b>17,000.00</b>

Accountancy sheet in Euro's					
<b>Assets</b>	<b>1-1-2021</b>	<b>31-12-2021</b>	<b>Liabilities</b>	<b>1-1-2021</b>	<b>31-12-2021</b>
Bank	12,228.82	28,415.07	Work capital	11,591.82	6,591.82
Creditors	363.00		ECRR Dord. Reserve	1,000.00	2,000.00
			LIFE Dord. Reserve		12,948.00
			ECRR Strategic Reserve		5,000.00
			Profit		1,875.25
	<b>12,591.82</b>	<b>28,415.07</b>		<b>12,591.82</b>	<b>28,415.07</b>

### *Estimated Funding budget 2021*

Because work is already underway in 2022 on the development of a new methodology for drawing up a (multi-year) Policy, Planning and Work Plan, including a funding and budgeting system, no Estimated Funding budget has been drawn up for 2022.

### *Explanatory remarks concerning costs made outside the justified and presented funding budget.*

- ✓ Board members and coordinator have no (direct) costs claimed made for the regular fulfilling of the activities in relation to their position with the ECRR.

## 7. ECRR's Members and formal partners in 2021

### *Members*

Italian Centre for River Restoration  
The River Restoration Centre

Italy  
United Kingdom

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Iberian Centre for River Restoration	Spain / Portugal
Finnish Environment Institute	Finland
Russian Institute for Integrated Water Management and Protection	Russia
Foundation for Applied Research STOWA	Netherlands
Norwegian Environment Agency	Norway
Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management	Sweden
Institute for Water Problems and Land Reclamation	Ukraine
Department of Hydraulic Engineering of the Warsaw University of Life Sciences	Poland
French Agency for Biodiversity	France
International Network of Basin Organisations	France
Wetlands International European Association	Netherlands
World Fish Migration Foundation	Netherlands
Finnish Freshwater Foundation	Finland

**Partner**  
GWP(CEE)

## Closing European River Symposium 2021

