

Challenges and potential of river restoration and conservation in Estonia

Brief history and achievements

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Preconditions for Biodiversity Mainstreaming

- Political will
- Science based knowledge
- Management programmes, strategies, plans
- Legislation, law enforcement
- Greater awareness, community engagement
- Capacity building
- Collaboration of stakeholders
- Financial sustainability

Political will/political wind

- **Problem EE:** About 1000 dams or **weirs** (old mill dams).
 - If no unified action plan, no reasonable result
- Mindset of legislative power (public communication)
- Laws and regulations towards free flowing water and pursuing of recovery of natural biodiversity maximum

- § of Success: All rivers, not permitted damming* must grant free passage to Fish (Water Act 2009) (EU 2004, Water Policy Directive)

*Damming in EE is defined and considered - artificial manipulation of water level more than 30cm on salmonid rivers or 1m others (obstruction regulation)



Management, planning, science

- About 1000 dams or weirs or ruins
- All dams mapped, registered, monitored (mapinfo online)
- 600-700 are not passable to fish
- 125 rivers with 160 weirs are now registered as high priority rivers
- Created more than 100 fish passages. Artificial passages seem not to guarantee results projected on paper. Estonia has taken more one-way approach, towards nature type fish passage or free flowing rivers 😊

Sindi dam removal, publicity and communication

- Biggest Project in Estonia
- Opened 3300km of river system to migratory Fish
- Preparatory work and legislation - 15y.
- Project management and processes since 2015
- 2020 award of Most Substantial Act of Nature Preservation 2019
- Life work award to Hans Soll, local initiative group, political will
- Money talks, politics walk 😊

Sindi dam



Community engagement

- Voluntary fish/salmon patrol
- 300 men covering 9 rivers for 5y.
- Legislation towards „Nature Patrol“
- Financial support from governmental programmes of environmental support
- Strong message to community, constant PR on environmental/Fish/salmon protection, necessity, affairs

International ground and support

- Water Policy Directive
- Habitat Directive (Natura areas), salmonid rivers, Natura areas and rivers, all protected species are equally prioritized
- Financial support of Cohesion Fund and EU Maritime and Fisheries Fund

In a nutshell

- Problem – scope and results
- Political will, local engagement and PR. Has to come from community, needs constant and systematic approach
- Legislation, effective use of EU legislation. Directives.
- Money: effective use of EU funding, being initiative as a member state