

River continuity and freshwater ecosystem restoration

Making river and wetland (ecological) restoration mainstream!

BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY | KEY TARGETS WATER



30% of EU land and sea protected; 1/3 strict protected

Freshwater ecosystems are included



Freshwater ecosystems restoration

WFD objectives to be met by 2027



Restore at least 25.000 km free flowing rivers

**Removal of primarily obsolete barriers
Restoration of floodplains and wetlands**



Restore and preserve ecological flows

??

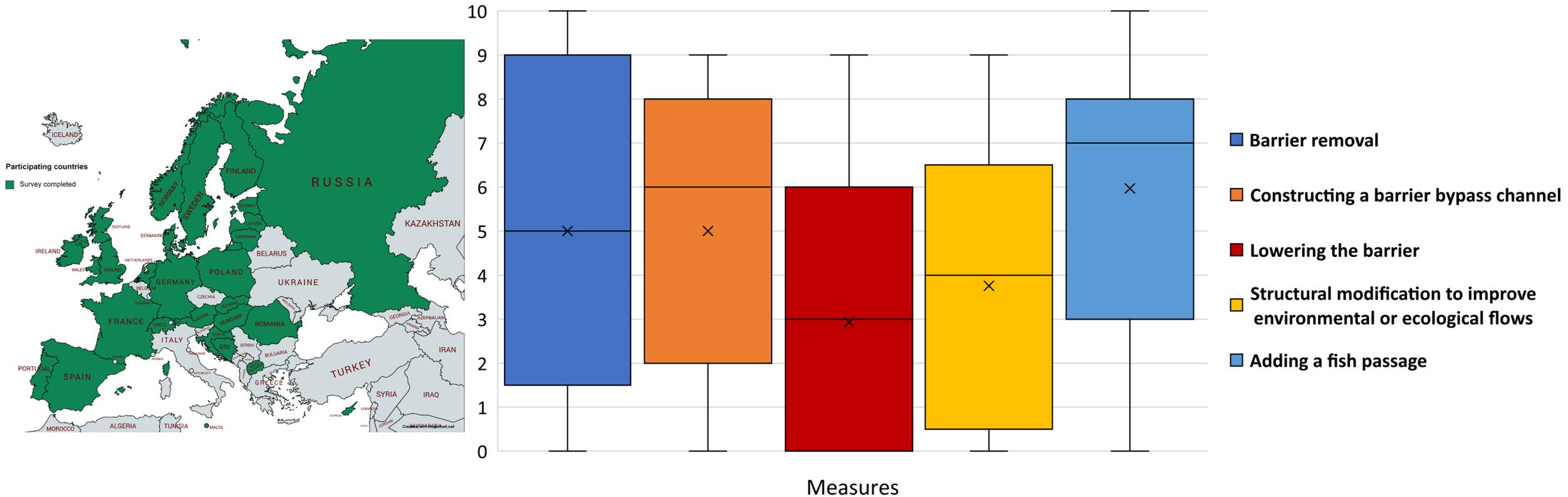
EU policies call for greater nature/river restoration efforts



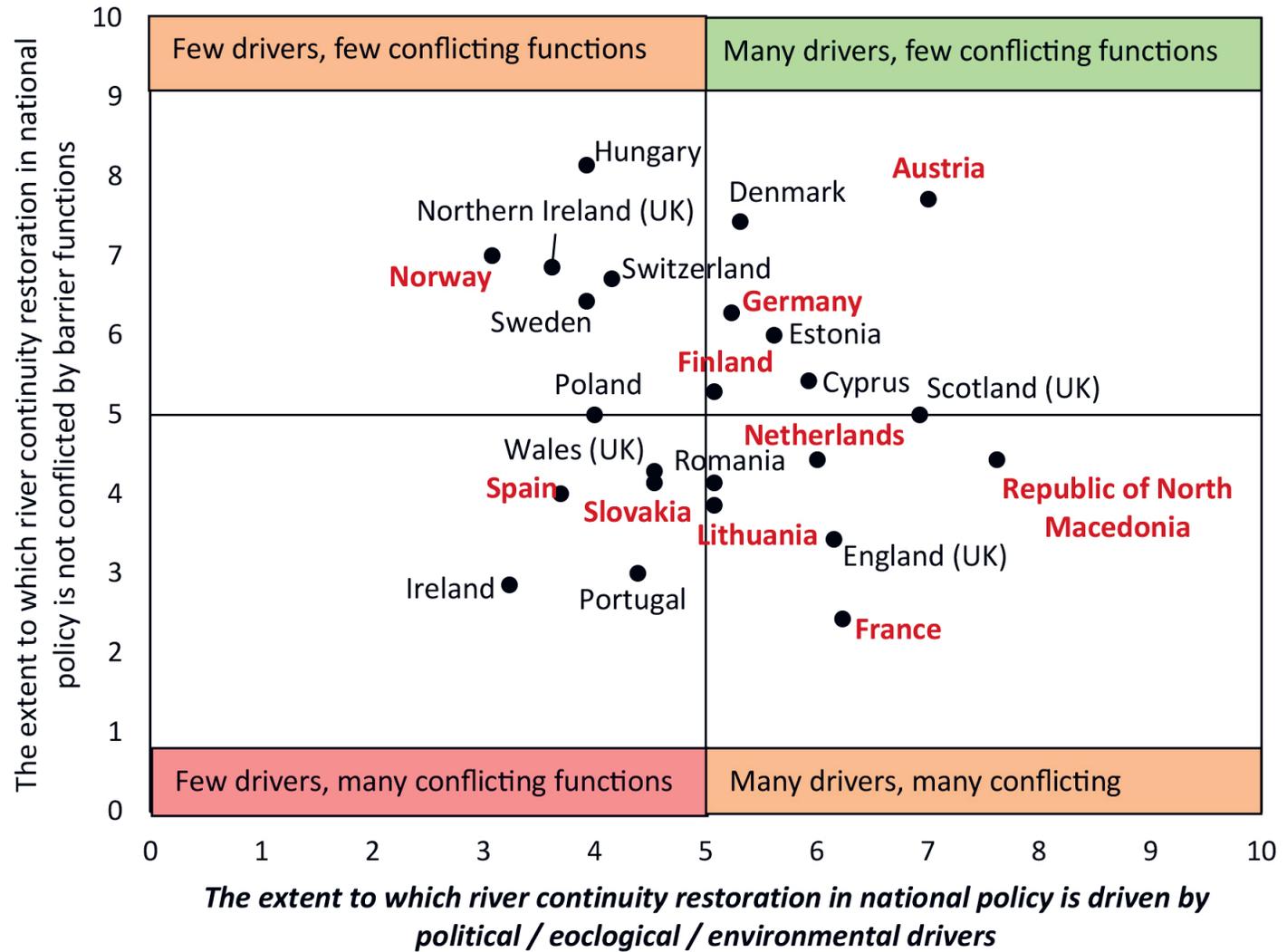
- remove (primarily obsolete) barriers to longitudinal and lateral connectivity,
- Inventerise barriers, conduct necessary research and quantify the area that needs to be restored,
- prepare and submit national restoration plans.
- More attention to hydro-morphology, water flows, sediment and nutrients transport and climate adaptation.



Which measures are applied to restore river continuity? Scale: 0 (not considered) to 10 (highest priority)



A European national river continuity restoration policies review



In depth study of laws and interviews with policymakers and planners and policy implementers by Clara Schmidt, STOWA. Publication Clara Schmidt and Bart Fokkens, ECRR.

Some general findings

- River continuity part of water law
- No shared terminology
- **Implementation prioritisation mainly driven by fish migration and Natura 2000**
- **Goals for restoration generally and only sometimes specifically for continuity**
- All policies updated in the last 3 years
- Harmonisation in data management / data base is desirable
- **Only some countries have a specific barrier data base**
- **Highest ecological impact is popular but lack of knowledge**
- Restoration plans and measures are mentioned for some countries
- Public participation differs from more to less top down
- **Financing almost only public and unstable**
- Implementation method determined by policy criteria **and** circumstances
- **Monitoring and evaluation of the policy is hardly done**
- Project monitoring very limited

Some recommendations

- River continuity restoration needs to be (more) integrated in other (sector) policies.
- **River continuity restoration should include other functions as maintenance of food webs, transport of nutrients and sediments and hydro-morphological processes**
- **Prioritisation should include all aspects of ecological, social and economic nature**
- **Completeness of the policy is important, but is less determining for its effectiveness than the existing circumstances**
- Top-down policy approach allows the prioritisation according to all criteria
- The centralised approach provides a certain overview of a catchment or even a whole country
- **The bottom-up and decentralised approach enhances the willingness and cooperation of all involved stakeholders**
- **In all countries is an evolving river continuity restoration policy process existing that should be supported for the future developments like free-flowing rivers**



The EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030 with 25.000 km free-flowing rivers and the EU Nature Law stimulate:

- **the development of river continuity restoration to river eco-system restoration**
- **development of new knowledge and skills**
- **policy monitoring and evaluation is essential**



**OPEN
RIVERS
PROGRAMME**

Restoring endangered
European rivers

The programme offers three grant categories with the majority of support directed to preparing for and removing small dams from rivers.



Learn more
www.openrivers.eu

The programme was created with funding from Arcadia.

Removal of the Galaxias Weir, Portugal.
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Next call for dam removal
applications:

3 November 2023

Charitable organisations, not-for-profit organisations and public sector entities eligible to apply



Thank you for your attention!

10/20/2023

EURO-INBO 2023 River continuity and
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