



Trans-European Swimways Network

Swimways of European Importance (SEIs)

Migratory freshwater fish have suffered a staggering 93% decline in Europe between 1970 and 2017. The main reason is the severe fragmentation of their swimways, i.e., their migratory corridors that connect their breeding areas with other parts of the river needed to complete their life cycle.

The [Trans-European Swimways Programme](#) and the Trans-European Swimways Network (TEN-S) aim to protect and strengthen the connectivity of existing swimways. In order to help prioritise conservation and restoration efforts, a set of biological criteria were developed to quickly scan readily available distribution data and identify the Swimways of European Importance (SEIs). Here we present the criteria, resulting 392 SEIs, and next steps.

The identification of SEIs will allow European countries to further implement the requirements of the Bern Convention and the Habitats Directive, and it provides very timely information to restore river connectivity to meet the targets of the EU Nature Restoration Law and Global Biodiversity Framework.

SEIs Selection Criteria Development

The basis of the criteria for SEIs is to identify rivers of high species richness for threatened or protected migratory freshwater fish. This is based on the listing of European migratory freshwater fish in the global, European and European Union IUCN Red Lists of Threatened Species, the appendices of the Bern Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats in Europe, and the annexes of the EU Habitats Directive.

Methods:

Uses distribution data of:



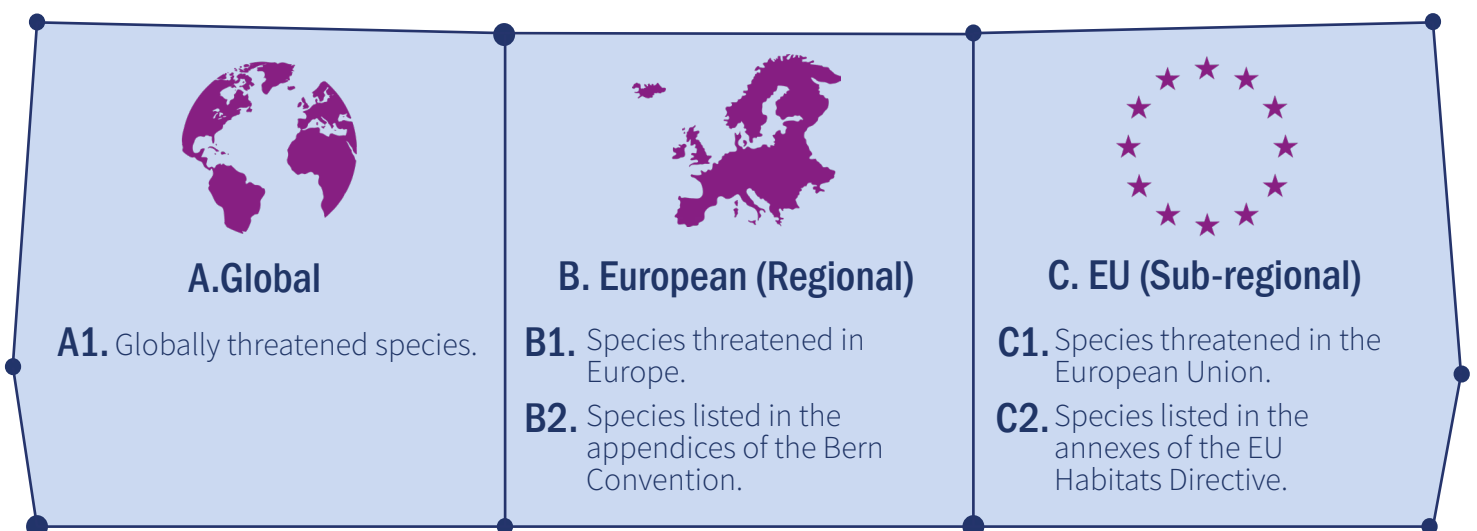
Considers rivers with average annual discharge greater than:



Criteria is based on:



Swimways that support a significant number of migratory freshwater fish species are considered, according to five categories of criteria:



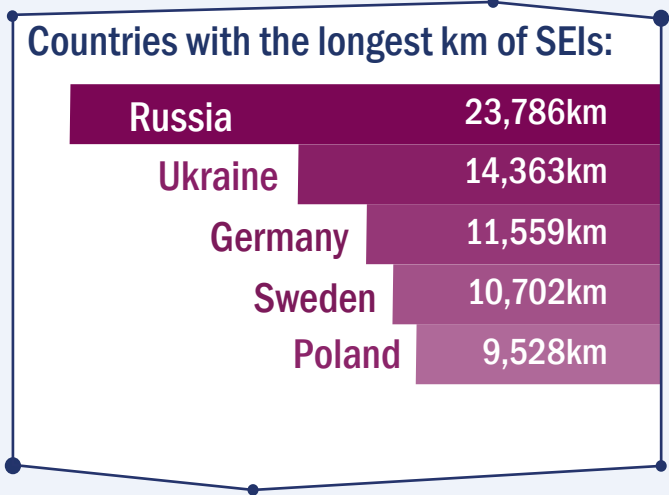
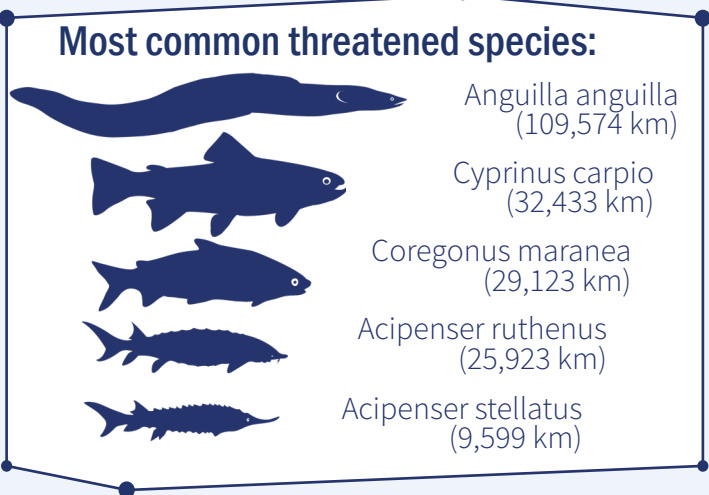
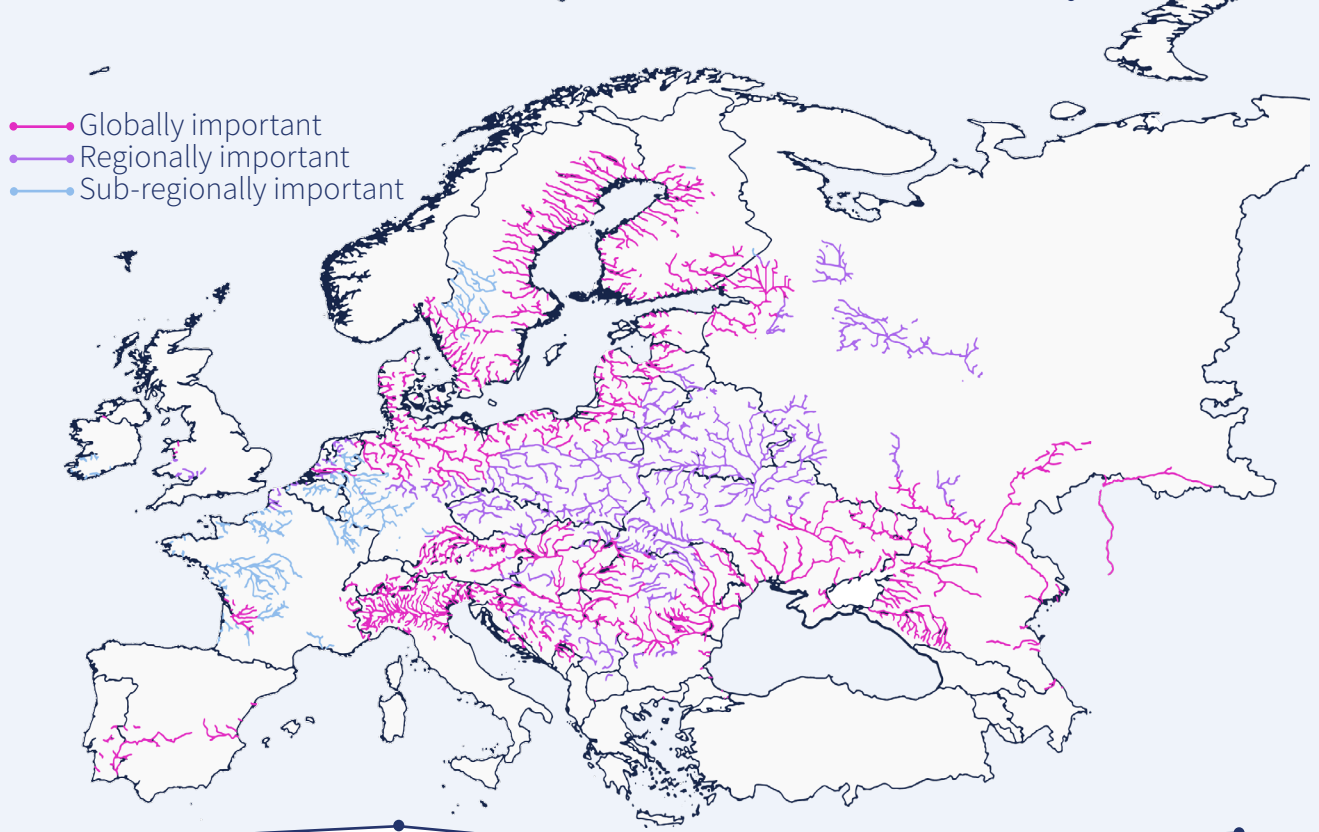
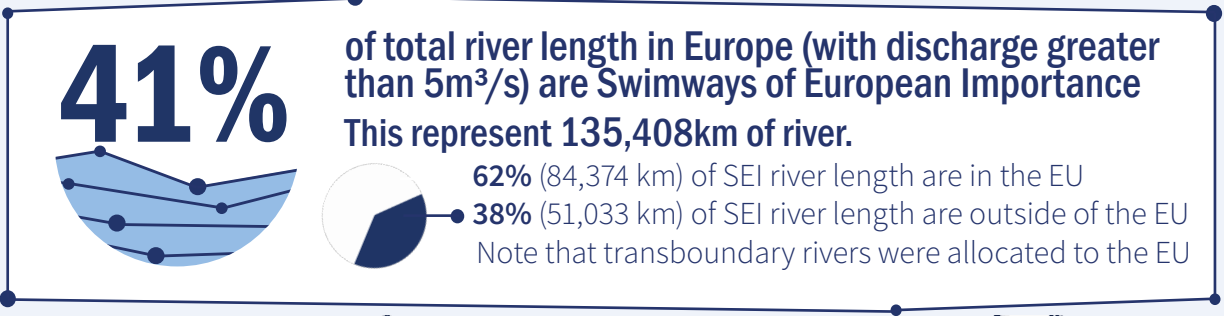
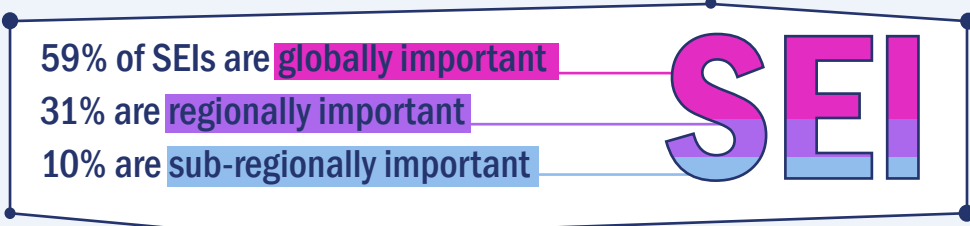
Thresholds for each criterion are set to select the most species-rich 20% of river sections

To learn more, please read our [SEIs Selection Criteria Development report](#).

SEIs are the most important swimways in Europe and in the EU. However, other swimways can be important at national or local level.

Results:

Results show the preliminary delineation of **392 Swimways of European Importance** and their qualifying migratory fish species.



What's next?

Next, we plan to identify SEIs also based on their cultural and economic importance. We are going to work with local experts and organisations across Europe to describe the threats, conservation and restoration opportunities for each SEI, and make this information available in an online database to guide conservation and restoration of important swimways.

To learn more about the Swimways of European Importance, please read our [2024 full technical report](#).

Join the Trans-European Swimways Network (TEN-S)!

Are you interested in this work and want to contribute to it? The TEN-S welcomes any organisation or individual interested in migratory freshwater fish conservation in Europe. Join us and help protect these species and their swimways.

For more information:

Wetlands International Europe
Mundo J,
Rue de l'Industrie 10
1000 Brussels
Belgium
europe@wetlands.org
<https://europe.wetlands.org>



Wetlands International Europe is the single network organization in Europe united by the vision of a world where wetlands are treasured and nurtured for their beauty, the life they support and the resources they provide.

In collaboration with:



Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the authors only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or CINEA. Neither the European Union nor CINEA can be held responsible for them.