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Commissioner for Environment  
Oceans and Fisheries

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Representatives of the Lapland Region  
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Lapland Region  
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Dear Representatives of the Lapland Region,

Thank you for sharing the Plea for Salmon.

The European Commission attaches high importance to having free flowing rivers in Europe, allowing amongst others the transport of sediment and the migration of fish but leading also to a much broader opportunity to restore nature in the river and the surrounding area.

In the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030, the Commission put forward a target of achieving 25,000 kilometers of free flowing rivers in the EU by 2030. In the next half year, the Commission will publish technical guidance to this effect, ensuring a common understanding of the challenge and of the instruments at our disposal.

As you know, the main EU legal instrument in this area is the Water Framework Directive. Existing obstacles in the rivers you mention will need to be addressed if they impede achieving good status for the water bodies concerned. When it comes to new projects affecting water quality, in particular Article 4(7) of the Water Framework Directive will need to be applied, implying a thorough check on all conditions and criteria provided for in the said Directive before such projects can go ahead.

We trust the Finnish authorities at all levels are aware of the obligations under the Water Framework Directive and will fully apply the legislation.

Yours sincerely,

Virginijus Sinkevičius