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Abstract book

"Shaping aquatic science for the future we envision"

Stakeholders perspectives on European riparian zones

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We investigated differences in perspectives among stakeholders and countries regarding the socio-ecological roles, threats, and management priorities of riparian zones (RZ) across five EU countries (Sweden, Germany, Spain, Portugal, Italy) using an online survey. The countries are key study areas for the Biodiversa+ project RIPARIANET, including five European biogeographical regions: boreal, continental, Alpine, mediterranean and Atlantic. Responses from more than 500 participants indicate that scientists and practitioners share similar perspectives, recognizing the crucial role of RZ in supporting local biodiversity, although ~50% viewed the local river basins as in relatively poor (low to moderate) conditions. Among the key threats, habitat modification was perceived as a dominant issue across countries; among the critical management needs, riparian restoration was frequently mentioned by German respondents, while in Portugal environmental education was considered more important. Overall, there was poor awareness of the European eco-schemes to incentivize the creation and maintenance of riparian buffer zones. Our large-scale survey highlights commonalities and differences in stakeholder perspectives across Europe, which reflect the range of conditions, socio-ecological roles and threats facing RZ across ecoregions. These insights could foster broader governmental and public support in the implementation and achievement of conservation and restoration targets within the EU.