The EU Biodiversity targets and the role of Protected Areas towards 2030

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The state of play of the preparation of the nature restoration law

European Commission

EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030

“subject to an impact assessment**, the Commission will put forward a proposal for legally binding EU nature restoration targets in 2021 to restore degraded ecosystems**, in particular those with the most potential to capture and store carbon and to prevent and reduce the impact of natural disasters. This will identify the conditions in which the targets must be met, as well as the most effective measures to reach them. The impact assessment will also look at the possibility of an EU-wide methodology to map, assess and achieve good condition of ecosystems so they can deliver benefits such as climate regulation, water regulation, soil health, pollination and disaster prevention and protection”

Work done to date

- Four consultation workshops have been held with Member States and stakeholders. Workshops were attended typically in the range of 150-200 participants.
- A number of ISG meetings and thematic meetings with key DGs have taken place.
- The Open Public Consultation on nature restoration targets received over 111,000 responses.
- Staff Working Document to be submitted to the Regulatory Scrutiny Board is in preparation.
- Contractor is now carrying out ‘thematic impact assessments’ for each of the main ecosystem types, considering the potential targets, indicators and baselines, as well as for overall options for the analysis.

2-steps approach

- Step 1:
  - Definitions.
  - Overarching target for ecosystem restoration.
  - Specific targets for ecosystems for which data and monitoring mechanisms are available.
  - Requirements to monitor ecosystems for which data and monitoring mechanisms are not yet fully developed, and establishment of process for developing a methodology for assessing the condition of these ecosystems, allowing for a later setting of baselines and targets.
  - Implementation requirements, enabling measures and national restoration plans

2-steps approach

- Step 2:
  - Set baselines and targets for those ecosystems for which data and monitoring mechanisms are not yet fully developed

Defining “restoration” versus “recovery”

- Restoration is the process of assisting the recovery of an ecosystem as a means of conserving biodiversity and ecosystem resilience.

  - ***Restoration*** is thereby considered the activity *(which includes both active and passive restoration)*.

  - ***Recovery*** is thereby considered the outcome sought or achieved through restoration.

  Full recovery *is defined as the condition whereby, following restoration, all key ecosystem attributes closely resemble those of the reference model* ***(= good condition)***

  Ecosystem restoration *includes measures taken for* ***the improvement of the condition of an ecosystem*** *but also* ***the re-creation / re-establishment of an ecosystems*** *where it was lost*

Overarching target for ecosystem restoration

- **By 2050, ecosystems in the EU are restored to and maintained in good status**

  - Supported by new instrument and existing legislation BHD, WFD, MSFD, ELD, etc… as well as policy measures described in the BDS2030

Specific targets for ecosystems for which data and monitoring mechanisms are available

- inland and coastal wetlands
- natural and semi-natural forests
- agricultural habitats and grasslands + farmland birds
- heathlands and scrub
- rivers, lakes and alluvial habitats
- marine
- pollinators
- urban
- soil

→ **Restoration of areas in not-good condition + re-creation**

→ **Restoration will be required both inside *and* outside the Natura 2000 network of protected areas**

→ benefits for **biodiversity**, **climate change mitigation/adaptation** and impact reduction of **natural disasters/extreme events**

National Restoration Plans – components (1/2)

- **Mapping & condition assessment of ecosystems**: mapping/inventory of ecosystems relevant for the restoration targets (areas of occurrence, condition), approximate estimates of areas where the ecosystem was lost, identification of the most suitable areas for improving & re-stablishing / re-creating ecosystems.
- **Restoration objectives, measures and planned outcomes** restoration objectives and measures should be quantified & made spatially explicit.
- **Timing and feasibility**: timing for the implementation of restoration measures up to 2030, 2040 and 2050.
- **Links with the implementation & measures under existing (environmental) EU legislation**: restoration measures would take into account and build on e.g. Natura 2000 management plans and prioritised action frameworks, river basin management plans, marine strategies, national energy and climate plans, etc.

National Restoration Plans – components (2/2)

- **Benefits and co-benefits** associated with the restoration targets, e.g. contribution to climate change mitigation/adaptation and disaster prevention, and other socio-economic benefits linked to restoration (e.g. for fisheries and generated jobs).
- **Financing**: costs of identified measures and the means of intended financing.
- Measures to ensure **non deterioration** of ecosystem condition in the long-term, encompassing both, areas (already) in good condition and those that are being restored.
- A framework to **monitor and report** on the condition of ecosystems as well as restoration progress towards the targets.
- **Public participation** - description of how **stakeholders** contribute to restoration measures and would be given opportunities to participate in the preparation of NRPs.

National Restoration Plans – regular review

The NRPs need to cover the national planning towards targets for 2030 – 2040 - 2050

- Regular national review

Different levels of specificity need to be developed over time, the NRPs should therefore be regularly reviewed and adapted.

- Regular peer review on EU level

Help ensure that the objectives and measures of the NRPs are adequate to reach the targets

→ **Monitoring and reporting**: monitoring systems to ensure effective implementation of measures and progress towards good condition of habitats/ecosystems; make best possible use of existing reporting requirements without unnecessary burdens.

Enabling measures at EU level

- **EU funds and programmes are available** such as: E.g. Programme for the Environment and Climate Action (LIFE), European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD), European Agricultural Guarantee Fund (EAGF), European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF), European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), Cohesion Fund and Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF). Horizon Europe

- **Public/private investment** can be stimulated through initiatives outlined in the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030, such as the **EU taxonomy** & Business for Biodiversity; natural-capital and circular-economy initiative, the last of which is to mobilise at least €10 billion over the next 10 years.

- **Market-based instruments** such as tax systems and pricing schemes could also be promoted, including in the context of the European Semester.

Non-deterioration

- Important to ensure that the condition of ecosystems in the EU does not deteriorate (further)!
  - Protection of restored areas → to ensure the full recovery of the restored areas and ensure the long-term viability of the restored ecosystem; returns of investments for restoration are maintained!
  - Protection of areas that need to be restored from further degradation → less efforts/investments will be needed to restore them later!
  - Protection of areas that are already in good condition and need to be maintained → avoid further efforts/investments at later stage!
- All these areas, if do not degrade again, will continue to provide ecosystem services over time, e.g. carbon sequestration or storage.

Non-deterioration in the NRL

Need to ensure a comprehensive protection level:

- Ecosystems/habitats/species covered by restoration targets in step 1 → non deterioration duty in step 1
- Ecosystems/habitats/species NOT covered by restoration targets in step 1 →
  - monitoring mechanism to measure ecosystem conditions
  - set baselines
  - set targets and non-deterioration duty in step 2

How to ensure non-deterioration?

National restoration plans would need to outline measures to ensure no deterioration of the condition of ecosystems in the long-term:

- Designation as protected areas (*to be taken into account for the 30% protected area and 10% strictly protected area targets*)

- other means, e.g. OECM, private land conservation measures.

Restoration/protection

Member States may choose to **achieve** the restoration targets by ensuring strict protection of the areas hosting the degraded ecosystems (passive restoration), especially in the marine environment.

Thank you for your attention

European Commission