

Nature restoration

2022/0195(COD) - 27/02/2024 - Text adopted by Parliament, 1st reading/single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 329 votes to 275, with 24 abstentions, a legislative resolution on the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on nature restoration.

The European Parliament's position adopted at first reading under the ordinary legislative procedure amends the Commission's proposal as follows:

Aims of nature restoration

The proposed Regulation lays down rules to contribute to:

- the long-term and sustained recovery of biodiverse and resilient ecosystems across the Member States' land and sea areas through the restoration of degraded ecosystems;
- achieving the Union's overarching objectives concerning climate change mitigation, climate change adaptation and land degradation neutrality;
- enhancing food security.

This Regulation establishes a framework within which Member States should put in place effective and area-based restoration measures with the aim to jointly cover, as a Union target, throughout the areas and ecosystems within the scope of this Regulation, at least **20 % of land areas and at least 20 % of sea areas by 2030, and all ecosystems in need of restoration by 2050.**

Restoration of terrestrial, coastal and freshwater ecosystems

To reach the overall EU targets, Member States must restore at least **30%** of habitats covered by the new law (from forests, grasslands and wetlands to rivers, lakes and coral beds) from a poor to a good condition by 2030, increasing to **60% by 2040, and 90% by 2050.** In line with Parliament's position, EU countries should give priority to Natura 2000 areas until 2030.

Member States should put in place the restoration measures that are necessary to improve to good condition areas of habitat types listed in Annex I which are not in good condition.

If a Member State considers that it is not possible to put in place restoration measures by 2050 that are necessary to reach the favourable reference area for a specific habitat type on 100 % of the surface, the Member State concerned may set a lower percentage at a level between 90 % and 100 % in its national restoration plan and provide adequate justification.

Energy from renewable sources

The proposed Regulation introduces a new article stipulating that the planning, construction and operation of plants for the production of energy from renewable sources, their connection to the grid and the related grid itself, and storage assets should be presumed to be in the **overriding public interest.**

Member States should be able to exempt such renewable energy projects from the obligation that no less damaging alternative solutions are available for the purposes of the application of those derogations, provided that the projects have been subject to a strategic environmental assessment or an environmental impact assessment.

National defence

When putting in place restoration measures, Member States may exempt areas used for activities the sole purpose of which is national defence if those measures are deemed to be incompatible with the continued military use of the areas in question.

Restoration of urban ecosystems

By 31 December 2030, Member States should ensure that there is no net loss in the total national area of **urban green space and of urban tree canopy cover** in urban ecosystem areas, compared to the year of entry into force of this Regulation. From 1 January 2031, Member States should achieve an increasing trend in the total national area of urban green space, including through the integration of urban green space into buildings and infrastructure, in urban ecosystem areas.

Restoration of the natural connectivity of rivers and natural functions of the related floodplains

Member States should make an inventory of artificial barriers to the connectivity of surface waters and, taking into account the socio-economic functions of the artificial barriers, identify the barriers that need to be removed to contribute to meeting the restoration targets and fulfilling the objective of restoring at least **25 000 km** of rivers into free-flowing rivers in the Union by 2030.

Restoration of pollinator populations

Member States should, by putting in place in a timely manner appropriate and effective measures, improve pollinator diversity and **reverse the decline** of pollinator populations at the latest by 2030 and thereafter achieve an increasing trend of pollinator populations, measured at least every six years from 2030, until satisfactory levels are achieved.

Restoration of agricultural ecosystems

Member States must make progress on two of the following three indicators: (i) the grassland butterfly index; (ii) the share of agricultural land with high-diversity landscape features; (iii) the stock of organic carbon in cropland mineral soil. They should restore at least **30% of drained peatlands** by 2030 (at least a quarter shall be rewetted), **40%** by 2040 and **50%** by 2050 (where at least one-third shall be rewetted). Rewetting will remain voluntary for farmers and private landowners.

Restoration of forest ecosystems

Member States should:

- achieve an increasing trend at national level of the **common forest bird** index;
- put in place the restoration measures necessary to enhance biodiversity of forest ecosystems, in addition to the areas that are subject to restoration measures pursuant to Article 4(1), (4) and (7), while taking into account the risks of forest fires.

- achieve an increasing trend at national level of at least six out of seven of the following indicators for forest ecosystems: (i) standing deadwood; (ii) lying deadwood; (iii) share of forests with uneven-aged structure; (iv) forest connectivity; (v) stock of organic carbon; (vi) share of forests dominated by native tree species; (vii) tree species diversity.

- contribute to the commitment of planting at least **three billion additional trees by 2030** at Union level.

National restoration plans

Member States should adopt national restoration plans detailing how they intend to achieve these objectives, taking into account the most recent scientific data. They should coordinate the development of national restoration plans with the mapping of areas that are required in order to fulfil at least their national contributions towards the 2030 renewable energy target and, where relevant, with the designation of the renewables acceleration areas and dedicated infrastructure areas.

Temporary suspension

In order to allow for a rapid and effective response when an unforeseeable, exceptional and unprovoked event occurs that is outside the control of the Union, with severe Union-wide consequences on the availability of land required to secure sufficient agricultural production for Union food consumption, **implementing powers** should be conferred on the Commission in respect of the temporary suspension of the application of the relevant provisions of this Regulation to the extent and for such period as is strictly necessary, up to a maximum of 12 months, while preserving the objectives of this Regulation.