

Public consultation on EU biodiversity policy initiatives

Evaluation of the EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020, review of the application of the EU Regulation on Invasive Alien Species, and development of binding EU nature restoration targets for 2030

Fields marked with * are mandatory.

Introduction

The Commission is carrying out a public consultation to inform several key biodiversity initiatives:

1. The evaluation of the [EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020](#) (2011-2020),
2. The review of the application of the [EU Regulation on Invasive Alien Species](#),
3. The development of legally binding EU nature restoration targets: a key commitment of the [EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030](#).

This consultation covers three distinct surveys: one under each of these headings.

You may choose to answer the questions under all, or under only one or two of these headings, depending on their relevance for you or for your organisation.

The above policy initiatives are interconnected. The EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020 set the EU biodiversity policy framework for the period 2011-2020. This Strategy is currently undergoing an evaluation. The EU Regulation on Invasive Alien Species was adopted in implementation of Target 5 of the 2020 Biodiversity Strategy. The review of its application will provide insights for improving its implementation, as well as for the evaluation of Target 5.

In May, the Commission published a Biodiversity Strategy for 2030, with the aim to put EU biodiversity on the path to recovery by 2030. One of the core commitments in the Strategy is to propose, by the end of 2021, a legally binding instrument setting EU targets to restore damaged ecosystems by 2030.

Lessons learnt from the policy period 2011-2020 will be considered in the implementation of the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030, in order to improve the design and delivery of key actions.

III. Development of legally binding EU nature restoration targets

Introduction

Biodiversity loss in the EU is continuing at an alarming rate. According to the 2020 State of Nature in the EU report, 39% of wild bird species assessments and 63% of protected non-bird species' assessments show poor or bad status. Only 15% of protected habitats' assessments show a good status. As ecosystems degrade, so does their capacity to provide benefits to society. According to the first EU-wide assessment of ecosystems, most ecosystem types in the EU (urban, agroecosystems, woodland and forests, heathland and shrub, sparsely vegetated lands, wetlands, freshwater and marine ecosystems) show deteriorating trends. The report concludes that the current potential of ecosystems to deliver flood protection, crop pollination, timber and nature-based recreation is equal to or lower than it was in 2010.

An EU Nature Restoration Plan and binding EU restoration targets

The EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 aims to put Europe's biodiversity on the path to recovery by 2030 for the benefit of people, the planet and climate, and to encourage global action so that by 2050, all of the world's ecosystems are restored, resilient and adequately protected.

To help halt and reverse biodiversity loss, the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 outlines an **EU Nature Restoration Plan**. A key element of this plan is a commitment by the Commission to propose, in 2021, **binding EU nature restoration targets**. The aim is to restore degraded ecosystems, in particular those with the most potential to capture and store carbon (carbon-rich ecosystems) and to prevent and reduce the impact of natural disasters.

Sometimes, reducing key pressures (such as pollution or over-exploitation) is sufficient to help ecosystems recover by themselves. Heavily damaged ecosystems may also need active restoration measures (for example by introducing native species, changing landscape/seascape features, or by increasing the extent of ecosystems). The restoration of degraded ecosystems can address various elements (for example specific habitats or specific species) and be carried out at various geographical scales. Furthermore,

restoration approaches need to take into account that future restored ecosystems should be climate resilient.

To date, the efforts to restore ecosystems in the EU have been insufficient. In 2011, a key voluntary target of the EU 2020 Biodiversity Strategy was to restore at least 15% of degraded ecosystems by 2020. This voluntary target has not been met, and restoration plans were only developed by a couple of Member States. Some progress has been reported, in particular in areas where legal obligations exist in the Birds and Habitats Directives, the Water Framework Directive, the Floods Directive and the Marine Strategy Framework Directive, but there are still challenges that hinder restoration progress. For instance, there is no requirement for Member States to have biodiversity restoration plans. There are not always: clear or binding targets; specified timelines; clear definitions of what is meant by restoration or the sustainable use of ecosystems. There is also no requirement to comprehensively map, monitor or assess the condition of ecosystems, the benefits they provide to society and restoration efforts. The EU Mapping and Assessment of Ecosystems and their Services initiative has made methodological progress in this respect, but there are still significant data gaps.

Moreover, existing legislation covers only some of the EU's ecosystems. For example, the Birds and Habitats Directives cover many natural and semi-natural parts of ecosystems but not cropland, intensively used grassland, forest plantations and urban ecosystems. Soil health and soil biodiversity are not explicitly covered by EU legislation. Thus, there is no EU legislation to explicitly address a number of ecosystems and habitats in need of restoration or species whose decline needs to be reversed. Furthermore, in most cases (with the exception of the prioritised action frameworks) there are no clear links between restoration needs and EU funding instruments.

Why are we consulting?

This consultation is part of the impact assessment that will underpin the Commission's proposal for binding EU restoration targets. We would like to have your views on the main elements and the approach to devising the Commission's proposal for binding restoration targets. Further targeted consultations and public workshops will be carried out to obtain stakeholder views on the conditions in which these targets should be implemented, as well as on the potential social, economic and wider environmental impacts that need to be taken into account. For more information, see https://ec.europa.eu/environment/eu-nature-restoration-targets_en.

Questions on the development of binding EU nature restoration targets

1. The EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020 set the following target in 2011: "By 2020, ecosystems and their services are maintained and enhanced by establishing green infrastructure and restoring at least 15% of degraded ecosystems". While the evaluation of the strategy is ongoing, there is sufficient evidence that the 15% restoration target has not been achieved. **In your view, which of the factors below have undermined the delivery of the target?**

1.1. The target was too general: there was no common understanding of its scope and application to different ecosystem types

- Fully agree
- Tend to agree
- Neither agree nor disagree

- Tend to disagree
- Completely disagree
- Don't know / no opinion

1.2. There was no strategic restoration approach across the EU

- Fully agree
- Tend to agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Tend to disagree
- Completely disagree
- Don't know / no opinion

1.3. The responsibilities of key actors to implement the target were not clear

- Fully agree
- Tend to agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Tend to disagree
- Completely disagree
- Don't know / no opinion

1.4. There was no implementation obligation: the target was voluntary

- Fully agree
- Tend to agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Tend to disagree
- Completely disagree
- Don't know / no opinion

1.5. Funding was insufficient to carry out restoration actions

- Fully agree
- Tend to agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Tend to disagree
- Completely disagree
- Don't know / no opinion

1.6. Knowledge and skills were insufficient to carry out restoration actions

- Fully agree
- Tend to agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Tend to disagree
- Completely disagree
- Don't know / no opinion

1.7. Conflicting land use interests were not tackled successfully

- Fully agree
- Tend to agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Tend to disagree
- Completely disagree
- Don't know / no opinion

2. In order to step up the restoration of degraded ecosystems, the EU should:

2.1. Set legally binding targets for the Member States to restore degraded ecosystems

- Fully agree
- Tend to agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Tend to disagree
- Totally disagree
- I don't know / no opinion

2.2. Provide better guidance to help Member States develop restoration plans and strategies

- Fully agree
- Tend to agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Tend to disagree
- Totally disagree
- I don't know / no opinion

2.3. Promote better use of existing EU funding opportunities for restoration

- Fully agree
- Tend to agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Tend to disagree
- Totally disagree
- I don't know / no opinion

2.4. Promote the development of economic incentives and business opportunities related to ecosystem restoration and sustainable management

- Fully agree
- Tend to agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Tend to disagree
- Totally disagree
- I don't know / no opinion

2.5. Support stakeholder training and awareness raising on restoration

- Fully agree
- Tend to agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Tend to disagree
- Totally disagree
- I don't know / no opinion

2.6. Strengthen and expand the monitoring of the condition of ecosystems and the services they provide across the EU

- Fully agree
- Tend to agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Tend to disagree
- Totally disagree
- I don't know / no opinion

2.7. Support research and innovation to strengthen the knowledge base on restoration

- Fully agree
- Tend to agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Tend to disagree
- Totally disagree
- I don't know / no opinion

2.8. Encourage cooperation with the EU's neighbouring countries to restore cross-border ecosystems

- Fully agree
- Tend to agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Tend to disagree
- Totally disagree
- I don't know / no opinion

2.9. Other- please specify

150 character(s) maximum

3. To what extent should the following criteria guide the setting of priorities for restoration?

Ecological effectiveness: restoration will contribute to:	High priority	Moderate priority	Low priority	Not at all priority	No opinion/ I don't know
Improving the health of ecosystems, habitats or species of high biodiversity value	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Improving the connectivity of natural areas (ecological corridors including migration routes)	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Improving the resilience of ecosystems to climate change	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Benefits to society: restoration will contribute to the provision of the following ecosystem services:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
- climate change mitigation, including carbon sequestration	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

- climate change adaptation	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
- disaster risk reduction (such as protection from floods and storms)	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
- water purification	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
- water quantity regulation	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
- air quality regulation	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
- nutrient cycling	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
- soil fertility	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
- gene pool maintenance	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
- pollination	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
- pest and disease control	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
- fish stock maintenance	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
- human health and well-being benefits from interaction with nature	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
- multi-functionality, i.e. the capacity of healthy ecosystems to deliver a wide range of ecosystem services	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
- Other services	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cost-effectiveness of the restoration measures	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other criteria	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

4. Restoration is the process of assisting the recovery of an ecosystem that has been degraded, damaged, or destroyed. Restoration targets may be set in a number of different ways. They can relate to incremental improvements of ecosystem condition or to reaching good condition; to a percentage of EU area or a specified extent of ecosystems on which restoration activities should take place. The restoration commitments of the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 include such different approaches. **In your view, should EU restoration targets be set as (multiple answers possible):**

- A general EU level restoration target across all ecosystems
- Specific EU level targets per ecosystem or habitat
- Specific EU level targets per species or groups of species
- Other

5. Should any of the following ecosystem types be prioritised for restoration in the EU?

	High priority	Moderate priority	Low priority	Not at all priority	No opinion/ I don't know
Urban ecosystems , such as urban green areas and brownfields	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Agroecosystems , such as grasslands, dehesas and montados, and landscape features (including on croplands) such as for example fallow land, buffer strips, hedges, terrace walls and ponds	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Forest ecosystems including natural, semi-natural forests and plantations	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Heathlands and shrublands	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sparsely vegetated lands , such as rocky areas in mountains, beaches and dunes	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Inland wetlands , such as marshes, peatlands, wet grasslands, fluvial forests, riparian areas and floodplains	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Soil ecosystems (across urban, agricultural, forest and other terrestrial ecosystems)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Freshwater ecosystems , such as rivers and lakes	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Marine ecosystems , such as coastal wetlands, nursery habitats, shallow biogenic constructions and deep water corals	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

6. How important do you consider the following factors and measures for ensuring that future EU restoration targets are delivered?

6.1. Specify how EU targets should be broken down into national contributions, taking into account national characteristics

- Very important
- Somewhat important
- Not at all important
- I don't know / no opinion

6.2. Require Member States to establish national restoration plans

- Very important
- Somewhat important
- Not at all important
- I don't know / no opinion

6.3. Put in place a comprehensive system to monitor, map and assess the condition of ecosystems and the services they provide

- Very important
- Somewhat important
- Not at all important
- I don't know / no opinion

6.4. Put in place a mechanism for regular reporting on progress in meeting the targets

- Very important
- Somewhat important
- Not at all important
- I don't know / no opinion

6.5. Raise public awareness about the benefits from restored nature

- Very important
- Somewhat important
- Not at all important
- I don't know / no opinion

6.6. Other - *please specify*

150 character(s) maximum

7. What measures are needed to ensure that restored ecosystems are kept in good condition in the long term?

7.1. Anticipate climate change effects in the planning of restoration actions, to ensure resilience to climate change

- Very important
- Somewhat important

- Not at all important
- I don't know / no opinion

7.2. Establish long-term monitoring and reporting on the condition of restored ecosystems

- Very important
- Somewhat important
- Not at all important
- I don't know / no opinion

7.3. Designate certain restored ecosystems as protected areas

- Very important
- Somewhat important
- Not at all important
- I don't know / no opinion

7.4. Other - *please specify*

300 character(s) maximum

8. Is there anything else you would like to add?

1000 character(s) maximum

You may attach relevant supporting documents to this questionnaire.

The maximum file size is 10 MB

Only files of the type pdf,txt,doc,docx,odt,rtf are allowed

THANK YOU FOR RESPONDING TO THIS QUESTIONNAIRE

Contact

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THE ROYAL SWEDISH ACADEMY OF AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY

Additional Feedback: Development of legally binding EU nature restoration targets

General comments:

- This response has been made from a SE perspective, so the answers given reflect the situation in Sweden with regard to these issues.
- The conditions for restoration projects in different ecosystems vary between MS.
- This process is still in an early stage and it is difficult to answer the questionnaire without having more background. Any suggestions that are made within the future process must be based on scientific evidence and take into account the different conditions in different MS.
- Swedish success in restoration is not dependent on EU targets since there are also strong national processes in place.

Specific comments to the following questions:

- Comment to 1.4: Several restoration actions have been taken in SE in various ecosystems such as forests, wetlands, agricultural lands etc. Since the targets were not clear it is not possible to say whether the targets have been reached or not.
- Comment to 2.1: This is a very complex issue and not possible to reply to at this early stage of the process. Conditions vary greatly between MS.
- Comment to question 3, regarding connectivity: The importance of connectivity varies greatly between ecosystems and biogeographical regions, and therefore it is difficult to assess the importance of connectivity to different ecosystems.
- Comment to the questions under 6.: Important to limit administration as much as possible in all parts of this so resources are used for actual restoration.