

November 2023

Essential role for peatlands in the EU Nature Restoration Law

Summary of the negotiations' state of play

The EU Nature Restoration Law is crucial for restoring European nature after decades of biodiversity loss. The law is initiated to turn the tide and stop the crisis in Europe, as a flourishing biodiversity on our continent is essential to deal with climate, food security, and health challenges. The partner organisations of [REWET](#) stress the importance of an ambitious and effective Nature Restoration Law, in which peatlands are firmly embedded.

On the week of 7 November, three of the main European Union bodies will discuss the different proposals for the EU Nature Restoration Law. The negotiations between the European Parliament, European Commission, and Council of the European Union started in July 2023 and are now in their final phase. The objective of this third “Trilogue” meeting is to reach an agreement for a final text for the EU Nature Restoration Law.

This state of play provides a brief summary of what happened, what topics will be important topics in the upcoming negotiation and why this legislation will be key to facilitating the success of the REWET project.



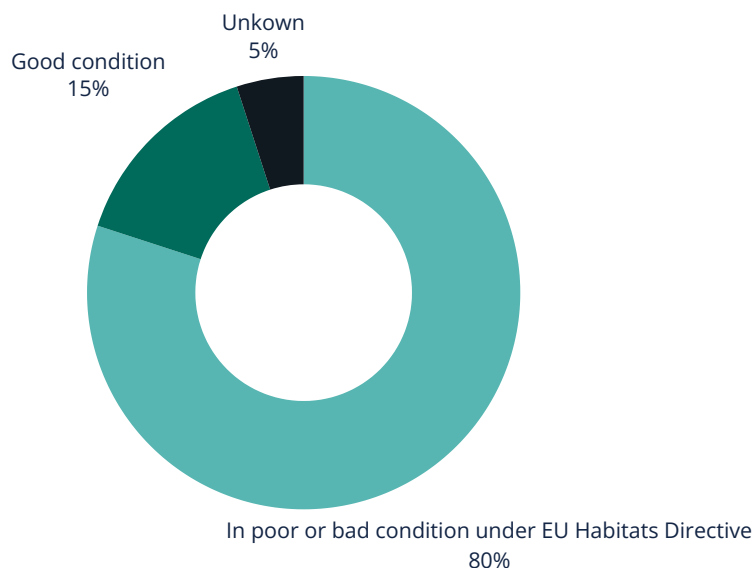
What is the Nature Restoration Law?

The Nature Restoration Law is a key element of the European Green Deal and EU Biodiversity Strategy. It is the first continent-wide law relating to restoration of degraded ecosystems. The aims are long term recovery of EU ecosystems, climate change mitigation, and nature resilience. The initiative faced strong backlash from conservative groups, but received strong civil society support, including:

- [Joint declaration](#) calling to bringing back Power to the Peatlands;
- [Call from 6000 scientists](#) rejecting the unjustified argumentation against the law;
- [Statement to support](#) the Nature Restoration Law signed by 90 large companies;
- Joint policy brief from Wetlands International Europe and the Greifswald Mire Centre providing [questions & answers](#) on peatlands and a general [policy brief](#) on peatlands in the Nature Restoration Law.

Article 9 in the Nature Restoration Law is a crucial element of the act, since restoring drained peatlands makes a vital contribution to climate adaptation and mitigation, among other things.

Conservation status of habitats at EU level



Rounded figures. Source: European Environment Agency

The Trilogue negotiations

The “Trilogue” are the negotiations that involve the European Parliament (EP), European Commission (EC), and the Council of the European Union. They started in the summer of 2023 and are ongoing. The aim is to reach a compromise between the different proposals for a final text for the legislation.

The negotiations are crucial and will determine the level of ambition for topics like restoration of wetlands and peatland ecosystems. After the first Trilogue in July 2023, the second in October, the next is planned for 7 November, with the final text expected on 9 November, 2023.



Peatland area in France. © pisces2386 from Getty Images

Important topics

Several critical points with relevance for wetlands are under discussion in the trilogues. Among the discussions, is the ambition relating to Article 4 on the restoration of terrestrial, coastal and freshwater ecosystems in and outside Nature 2000. Article 9, addressing the restoration of agricultural ecosystems, also receives opposition on the alleged grounds of food security, despite being unfounded. For drained peatlands, article 9.4 is a crucial element of the act.

Proposals on the table

The last Trilogues will discuss the restoration of terrestrial, coastal and freshwater ecosystems in and outside Nature 2000 and on the definition of “non-deterioration”, which will have repercussions on how EU Member States may be constrained to ensure that restored habitats do not deteriorate.

The initial proposal of the EC offered a satisfactory level of ambition – while the ambition was still not sufficient to meet climate and biodiversity objectives of the European Union. The EP proposed a significantly diluted version of the act. While the Council’s version includes some of the main ecosystem restoration targets, it allows more leeway and loopholes for member states.

Targets for the restoration of agricultural ecosystems, including peatlands, have been subject to a re-drafting aiming to reach a compromise between the three institutions.

Proposals on Article 9 compared to EC's initial proposal

| European Parliament | European Council |
|---|--|
| Article 9 for restoration of agricultural ecosystems was deleted (notably on alleged grounds of food security), removing the targets for the restoration of agricultural ecosystems, including of drained peatlands under agricultural use. | A bonding peatland restoration target is included as part of Article. 9, but offers large loopholes for member states not to implement the restoration measures. |

Why is embedding peatlands in the NRL essential?

With 80% of EU's habitats in poor or bad condition under [EU Habitats Directive](#), Europe needs a strong law for restoration to deliver healthy ecosystems. These are crucial for well-being both of nature and humans, and provide crucial ecosystem services to societies.

In addition, nature restoration, especially peatland restoration, is needed to meet EU's climate and biodiversity objectives.

REWET: sustainable wetlands restoration

REWET facilitates sustainable restoration and conservation of terrestrial wetlands. Restoration of ecosystems is needed at a large scale, and this legislation will provide binding targets for ecosystems restoration at EU level. The project will support the implementation of the Nature Restoration Law by maximising wetlands carbon absorption, while respecting their biodiversity.

In the REWET project, funded by the European Union, European organisations have joint forces to study the full potential of wetland areas. With information from seven open laboratories, we develop a comprehensive understanding of how European wetlands can best contribute to climate mitigation and adaptation.

More information?

- [Visit the REWET website](#)
- [Or contact Caspar Verwer, REWET project coordinator at IUCN NL](#)



Funded by
the European Union

This project is funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or CINEA. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.