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The Regulation on Nature Restoration (Nature Restoration Law) came into effect on Sunday (18 August).Full implementation of the law is crucial to restore the EU’s biodiversity and stop further biodiversity loss, to reach climate neutrality by 2050 and adapt to climate change, and to enhance food security for EU citizens. In doing so, the law will support the achievement of other European ambitions, such as water security.It is also a key instrument to help the EU and its Member States meet international biodiversity commitments under the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.The law sets in motion a process for continuous and sustained recovery of nature across the EU's land and sea while supporting more sustainable economic development and agricultural production and working hand in hand with the development of renewable energy.As an overall target to be reached at the EU level, Member States will put in place restoration measures in at least 20% of the EU's land areas and 20% of its sea areas by 2030. By 2050, such measures should be in place for all ecosystems that need restoration. The law includes requirements to put in place restoration measures to achieve the good condition of key habitat types and habitats of species on land and at sea. It also requires maintaining urban green space and urban tree canopy cover and increasing this after 2030.It will help achieve, by 2030, the objective of restoring at least 25,000 km of rivers into free-flowing rivers. In addition, it will contribute to reversing the decline of pollinator populations and improving their diversity, enhance biodiversity in agricultural ecosystems and the biodiversity of forest ecosystems, and contribute to the commitment to plant at least three billion additional trees by 2030 at the EU level.National restoration plansDifferent restoration targets apply to different ecosystems and Member States will decide the specific measures they will put in place on their territories. For this purpose, each Member State will develop a national restoration plan, setting out restoration needs and measures to fulfil the obligations and achieve the targets of the law adapted to the national context, and taking into account the diversity of different regions.National restoration plans should include a timeline for implementation, the financial resources needed and intended means of financing, as well as expected benefits, especially for climate change adaptation and mitigation. Member States need to identify synergies with other policies, such as climate change mitigation and adaptation, land degradation, disaster prevention, agriculture, fisheries, forestry and renewable energy development.Member States must submit a draft plan to the Commission within two years from the date of entry into force, setting out milestones for 2030, 2040 and 2050. These plans need to be developed openly and transparently, allowing the public and all relevant stakeholders to participate in the process. The Commission will support national authorities in creating these plans. The Commission will assess the draft plans and may make observations that Member States must consider in their final plans. Within six months of receiving any observations, each Member State must finalise its plan, publish it and submit it to the Commission. The European Environment Agency will draw up regular technical reports on progress towards the targets. Member States must review their plans by 2032 and 2042 at the latest.Member States can mobilise the necessary funds from public and private sources, including from EU funds. They can draw from a variety of EU funding opportunities, including the common agricultural policy funds, regional funds, the LIFE Programme, Horizon Europe (the EU research fund) and the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund.Specific targets and obligationsTo meet the EU-wide objectives for nature restoration, the Regulation sets quantified and time-bound restoration targets for habitats included in Annex I of the Habitats Directive (including forest habitats, peatlands, grasslands, rivers and lakes) as well as targets for habitats of protected species under the Habitats and the Birds Directives, and restoration targets for essential marine habitats covered by the nature directives and the Marine Strategy Framework Directive. Beyond the habitats covered by existing legislation, to ensure the continued provisions of ecosystem services to European citizens, the law requires Member States:to halt the loss of urban green and increase urban green space and urban tree canopy coverto restore the natural connectivity of rivers and the natural functions of related floodplainsto halt and reverse pollinator declineto restore and rewet peatlands under agricultural useto put in place measures aiming to increase farmland bird populations and to achieve a positive trend in certain other key biodiversity indicators in agricultural ecosystemsto achieve a positive trend in a range of biodiversity indicators in forest ecosystemsto contribute to the EU-level commitment of planting at least three billion additional trees by 2030BackgroundThe economic cost of the degradation of nature is very high. Every euro spent on restoration can deliver a return on investment of more than €8, depending on the ecosystem. Only healthy and productive ecosystems can provide the many services we all depend on, including resilience to climate change and natural disasters, such as droughts and floods as well as long-term food security. More than half of global GDP depends on nature and its services. The European Central Bank found that in the Eurozone, around 3 million companies (which is 72% of companies in the eurozone) are highly dependent on at least one ecosystem service to produce their goods or provide their services. Severe losses of functionality in these ecosystems would cause critical problems for these companies and the European economy.The bio-economy also relies on nature for its resources. Restoring and maintaining biodiversity in agricultural, marine, forest and other ecosystems is economically profitable and provides a more resilient and stable production of agricultural and fisheries products as well as timber and other materials for the bio-economy. Despite EU and international efforts, biodiversity loss and the degradation of ecosystems continue at an alarming rate, harming people, the economy, nature and the climate. Today, over 80% of conservation status assessments for European habitat types are in poor or bad status with many further deteriorating. Past efforts to protect and preserve nature have not been able to reverse this worrying trend.Flagship reports such as the European Environment Agency's 2018 State of Nature in the EU report or the work of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) show that European ecosystems are under increasing pressure, especially from land use and land use changes and suffer from climate change and other threats such as nutrient pollution due to overuse of fertilisers and chemical inputs. The law is a key element of the European Green Deal and the EU Biodiversity Strategy and builds on existing EU environmental legislation. For More InformationRegulation on Nature RestorationNature Restoration Law webpage Mobilizing public and private finance for biodiversity, including from the EU budget.Discover what our world would look like without pollinating insects with this virtual-reality experience.Information on the conservation of wild pollinator species in the EUA unique forum for dialogue and policy interface to discuss the links between business and biodiversity at EU level.The source of data and information on biodiversity in Europe.Mapping out, assessing, and accounting for ecosystems and their services to inform environmental policy.The science-policy interface on biodiversity and ecosystem services.Find a Natura 2000 site by Birds Directive Sites or Habitats Directive SitesA voluntary scheme to protect biodiversity and ecosystem services in the EU Outermost Regions and Overseas Countries and Territories.The EU Platform brings together a range of stakeholders to effectively address conflicts related to large carnivore conservation and management.The European Red List identifies species that are threatened with extinction at the European level so that appropriate conservation action can be taken to improve their status.Big changes often start small. #ForOurPlanet is a world-wide campaign encouraging everyone to act now, and showing how you can help protect our planet though local personal and local action. I'm Eveline, founder of Rail Voyage — a slow travel community inspiring people to explore Europe more consciously by train. My mission is to shift the way we travel: encourage travelers to take the scenic route, slow down and connect deeply with cultures, nature and local communities. Through storytelling and curated journeys, I want to help people discover the beauty of lesser-known places and foster a more mindful approach to travel.To celebrate Natura2000 Day, here are 5 places in Europe you need to visit! They are all part of Natura 2000, the largest network of protected areas. The Dolomites, Italy For true adventurers, the Dolomites offer lush beech forests and mesmerizing rivers. Located in the northeastern part of Italy, the Dolomites form part of the Southern Limestone Alps. This site is home to the mighty Lynx and Golden Eagle.In addition to being one of the Natura2000 jewels, the Dolomites are a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Cinque Terre Another must-visit nature spot in Italy is Cinque Terre. Visitors can enjoy the amazing views of the Mediterranean reefs and the vegetated sea cliffs. This nature site is home to Euplagia quadripunctaria, also known as the Jersey Tiger . Hikers can enjoy the breath-taking views of Liguria’s nature, the hidden caves, and forests filled with holm oak – tree species native to the Mediterranean region.Amalfi Coast Known for its dramatic cliffs, citrus fruits, vines and olive trees, the Amalfi coast is also home to many protected species that few are thinking of when they picture the Italian beaches. Explorers might catch a glimpse of the Salamandrina, and birdwatchers could see the Sylvia and Turdu or even hear for the distinct call of the turtle dove.This is another nature treasure where the Natura2000 network meets UNESCO World Heritage. Etna Next, taking you to the highest active volcano in Europe – mount Etna. This high-altitude nature wonder is home to resilient species that need to survive the volcanic eruptions. Visitors can see for the perfectly camouflaged Alectoris Graeca Whitakeri bird, a rare treat found only in this special spot or the elusive Lionychus beetle hanging out in the lava nooks.Rhine River From trains to boats, travellers that are found of rivers must see The Rhine River. Flowing from the Swiss Alps to the North Sea – this nature wonder is about 1,230 kilometers long.Travelers can make a stop at Heisinger Ruhraue, just a short trip away from the city buzz. It's a haven of tranquil beauty, with serene lakes where water plants sway effortlessly, and lush mixed forests that hug the riversides. Chris Bruggeman is a keen observer of nature and biodiversity, using the Observation.org website to record the species he spots in his native Belgium.Why does nature appeal to you?I've been fascinated by nature since primary school, inspired by two teachers. In secondary school, I created a herbarium, which deepened my love for plants. My greatest passions are plants and insects, and recently, mushrooms as well. I've been active in nature organizations like Wielewaal and Natuurpunt in Belgium for over 45 years, focusing mainly on nature studies. Nature provides peace, wonder, and the joy of discovery—it's truly self-enriching. Plus, you meet many interesting and like-minded people, expanding your circle of friends.Why do you record your observations?In the past, I noted everything down in notebooks, which piled up over time. My plan is to enter those old observations on waarnemingen.be someday. This site is fantastic because you can register your findings, and they can be used for scientific purposes. In our region, we've been tracking butterfly observations since 1991, initially compiling our findings in annual reports, later on the website. This allows us to see trends in the number of butterflies – unfortunately mostly negative. Recording observations is a gold mine for information, which I use as an editor of a natural history magazine to report on the state of nature, introduce new species, or illustrate trends like species decline and the advance of southern species.How often do you go out?Almost daily! Now that I'm retired, I have the time to explore either in the wild or my garden to document what I see. I also conduct inventories in local nature reserves.Favourite Natura 2000 site?That’s a tough question because choosing just one is hard. My first choice is Bellebargiebos in Waarschoot, an old forest where I inventoried mushrooms before it was officially accessible. It’s a hotspot, with rare species regularly found, even new ones to Flanders. Sadly, the area isn’t large, so peace is increasingly disturbed, affecting biodiversity.Het Leen comes second; I’ve visited it almost daily in recent years, updating an inventory of over 4,500 species there. Recently, I’ve focused on smaller nature areas that aren't part of the Natura 2000 network, but they serve as perfect connectors between larger forests.Observation you're most proud of?While there are many, the discovery of ‘ruige taaiplaat’ (Lentinus strigosus) in Het Leen in 2023 stands out—it made national news as it hadn’t been seen in Flanders for 20 years.A nice anecdote?When I'm alone studying and photographing mushrooms, I often lie hidden in bushes, unintentionally surprising passers-by when I suddenly stand up. It's equally surprising for me if I get discovered by a curious stray dog!Tips for the novice observer?Patience is key for any beginner. Knowledge comes from practice and experience. Be critical of app suggestions—always cross-check with the internet or nature books after your excursions to verify your observations. This approach helps you learn and also trains your memory. The Regulation aims to restore ecosystems, habitats and species across the EU’s land and sea areas in order toenable the long-term and sustained recovery of biodiverse and resilient naturecontribute to achieving the EU’s climate mitigation and climate adaptation objectivesmeet international commitments of habitats are in poor statusinvested into nature restoration adds €4 to €38 in benefitsbee and butterfly species are in decline The regulation combines an overarching restoration objective for the long-term recovery of nature in the EU’s land and sea areas with binding restoration targets for specific habitats and species. These measures should cover at least 20% of the EU’s land and sea areas by 2030, and ultimately all ecosystems in need of restoration by 2050.The regulation contains the following specific targets:targets based on existing legislation (for wetlands, forests, grasslands, river and lakes, heath & scrub , rocky habitats and dunes) - improving and re-establishing biodiverse habitats on a large scale, and bringing back species populations by improving and enlarging their habitatspollinating insects – reversing the decline of pollinator populations by 2030, and achieving an increasing trend for pollinator populations, with a methodology for regular monitoring of pollinatorsforest ecosystems – achieving an increasing trend for standing and lying deadwood, uneven aged forests, forest connectivity, abundance of common forest birds and stock of organic carbonurban ecosystems – no net loss of green urban space and tree cover by 2030, and a steady increase in their total area from 2030agricultural ecosystems – increasing grassland butterflies and farmland birds, the stock of organic carbon in cropland mineral soils, and the share of agricultural land with high-diversity landscape features; restoring drained peatlands under agricultural usemarine ecosystems – restoring marine habitats such as seagrass beds or sediment bottoms that deliver significant benefits, including for climate change mitigation, and restoring the habitats of iconic marine species such as dolphins and porpoises, sharks and seabirds.river connectivity – identifying and removing barriers that prevent the connectivity of surface waters, so that at least 25 000 km of rivers are restored to a free-flowing state by 2030 EU countries are expected to submit National Restoration Plans to the Commission within two years of the Regulation coming into force (so by mid 2026), showing how they will deliver on the targets. They will also be required to monitor and report on their progress. The European Environment Agency will draw up regular technical reports on progress towards the targets. The Commission, in turn, will report to the European Parliament and to the Council on the implementation of the Nature Restoration Regulation. Discover examples of successful nature restoration projects throughout Europe Previous and upcoming actions Nature Restoration Regulation enters into forceEuropean Parliament agrees final text for Nature Restoration RegulationCommission adopts proposal for a Nature Restoration LawDecember 2020 - September 2021Five stakeholder workshops took placeThese workshops discussed policy options and collect views from a broad range of stakeholders on:the options for restoration targets, how these targets should be implemented, and the potential social, economic and wider environmental impacts that need to be consideredthe preliminary findings of the impact assessment support study.11 January - 5 April 2021Online public consultation open for feedbackThis public consultation collected stakeholder views, in particular on the main elements and approach to devising the Commission's proposal for binding restoration targets. 4 November - 2 December 2020Public feedback on the Inception Impact AssessmentThis Inception Impact Assessment collected feedback from stakeholders and the public on the main elements of the initiative.Publication of the EU biodiversity strategy for 2030 As cities grow denser and climate change intensifies rainfall and extreme weather events, urban areas across the Baltic Sea region are facing mounting pressure. Flooding, stormwater surges, water pollution, and biodiversity loss are becoming the new normal. The City Blues project, funded by the EU Interreg Baltic Sea Region programme, is stepping up to meet this challenge—by helping cities turn to nature for answers.Led by the City of Tampere, and bringing together partners from Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Norway, and Sweden, City Blues is reimagining how cities manage water and climate risks. At the heart of the project is a simple yet powerful idea: nature-based solutions (NBS)—multifunctional, cost-effective measures that tackle climate challenges while supporting biodiversity and improving quality of life.Shared Challenges, Shared SolutionsCities like Aarhus, Malmö, Stavanger, Tampere, and Tartu all face similar problems: frequent urban flooding, eroding streambanks, limited water retention capacity, and rising pollution from land use and stormwater runoff. Add to this the growing heat island effect and loss of urban biodiversity, and the need for integrated solutions becomes urgent.The City Blues project connects experts across these cities to exchange experiences and develop practical, scalable NBS such as rain gardens, bioswales, retention ponds, and alluvial meadows. These blue-green interventions don't just manage water—they enhance urban resilience, boost biodiversity, and create healthier environments for people.“The project aims to protect and improve the water quality of receiving lakes and, ultimately, the Baltic Sea by reducing nutrient loading and wastewater emissions,” explains Project Manager Anna Vilhula from the City of Tampere. “At the same time, we build long-term resilience and promote biodiversity in urban areas.”A Model for the FutureA major output of the City Blues project is a web-based joint operational model, to be launched in spring 2026. This practical tool will offer cities across Europe the know-how to implement NBS throughout their lifecycle—from planning and design to maintenance and eventual repurposing.Importantly, the model includes guidance on stakeholder involvement, ensuring that local communities, decision-makers, and urban planners work together in shaping resilient and liveable cities.“Cities need this model to learn from one another’s successes and avoid common pitfalls,” says Murel Truu, expert from Tallinn University of Technology. “It provides a lifecycle-based approach to nature-based solutions that’s adaptable across urban environments and governance systems.”City Blues shows that when cities collaborate and put nature at the core of climate adaptation, the results ripple far beyond flood prevention. They support cleaner water, greener streets, and stronger communities—building water resilience not just for today, but for generations to come.#WaterWiseEU campaign This story has been submitted by a partner of the #WaterWiseEU campaign. The EU-wide campaign focuses on water resilience, aiming to change the way we see, use and value water. Find out more about the campaign and how you can get involved.