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## Freising Declaration SER Europe Conference, 22-26 August 2016

**Freising, Germany, 26th August 2016.** At the biannual Conference of the European Chapter of the Society for Ecological Restoration (SER), 350 scientists and practitioners from all over Europe assembled. We are highly concerned about the insufficient progress in European ecological restoration and the uncertain future of EU nature legislation.

The EU Birds and Habitats Directives are the key legal instruments in the EU to restore biodiversity. A 'fitness check', ordered by the European Commission, shows that these Directives are 'fit for purpose', and any problems with them are due to poor implementation and enforcement. Most EU environmental ministers publicly announced their support for the Directives. The European Parliament, with an overwhelming majority, confirmed the importance of the Directives and opposed their revision. More than 500.000 EU citizens expressed their support for the Directives.

SER Europe urges the EU Commission to reiterate its commitment to full implementation of the existing directives and the EU Biodiversity Strategy. In light of the unfavorable conservation status of most protected species and habitats in the EU, as was confirmed in the State of Nature report 2015 (EEA 2015), restoration should be a priority for the European Commission and the Member States. Substantially increasing restoration measures is critical for achieving the objectives of the Nature Directives as well as EU and international biodiversity targets. Restoring nature not only benefits biodiversity, but is also an investment in human well-being. SER Europe encourages the adoption of the Restoration Action Plan by the Parties to the Convention of Biological Diversity.

Ecosystem restoration must be fully integrated into EU and national sectoral policies and land-use planning. In order to achieve high quality ecological restoration, the European Commission should adopt standards for restoration that integrate ecological knowledge, economics and socio-cultural concerns. Providing additional ear-marked funding is also essential to boost restoration actions. States with a sound restoration action plan and verified restoration efforts could be rewarded with access to additional EU-funding (for instance by adopting a dedicated "TEN-G" instrument). It is also important to raise awareness for the benefits of restoration for social well-being.

As the European Chapter of SER we can help with the effective implementation of EU restoration obligations (Nature Directives) and commitments (15% restoration target) and the dissemination of knowledge on ecological restoration amongst all parties involved.

### References:

- Milieu, IEEP and ICF (2016), [Evaluation Study to support the Fitness Check of the Birds and Habitats Directives](#), March 2016.
- European Environment Agency (2015), [State of nature in the EU. Results from reporting under the nature directives 2007–2012](#), EEA Technical report No 2/2015.
- Cortina-Segarra, J., K. Decler, and J. Kollmann (2016). [Speed restoration of EU ecosystems](#). *Nature* 535: 231-231.