

Press Release **TWO-PAGES: 10/12/2021**

30 European Expert Networks and Associations and more than 1300 Scientists demand ambition in the EU Nature Restoration Law

- The *Declaration 'Scientists in Support of an Ambitious European Union Nature Restoration Law'* was approved on 10.9.2021 resulting of the 12th European Conference on Ecological Restoration organised by SER Europe.
- 30 expert networks and organisations from 12 European countries and 5 European-wide, support the Declaration.
- 1329 individual European scientists and experts in the field of nature restoration have expressed their support for the Declaration.
- The Declaration for an Ambitious EU Nature Restoration Law urges for 12 actions and considerations to achieve ambitious, timely, cost-effective and long-lasting results from the new law

350 scientists participated from 7-10 September 2021 in the 12th European Conference on Ecological Restoration, held online and organised by the University of Alicante (Spain) and SER Europe. As a result, the Conference ended with approving the *Declaration 'Scientists in Support of an Ambitious European Union Nature Restoration Law'*.

SER Europe is closely following the process where the European Commission is working on a new nature restoration law, with legally binding targets, as part of the Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 and the European Green Deal. With this framework, Europe can lead the world by example and contribute to the success of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration and the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

The EU nature restoration law shall respond to the environmental crisis at a scale that is commensurate with the magnitude of the challenges. Scientific evidence supports the need to develop and enforce an ambitious law that restores biodiversity and significantly contributes to mitigating climate change and adapting to its impacts while sustaining the supply of ecosystem services and the wellbeing of people.

The Declaration so far gathered 1329 individual supports of scientists and experts from 32 European countries. Most importantly, the Declaration also has the support of 30 European networks and associations (list at the end), from 12 countries and 5 European wide. Amongst these, prominent organisations like ALTER-Net (network of biodiversity research institutes from 19 European countries), the European Ecological Federation (grouping 19 national networks of ecologists), Eurosite (European network of conservation and restoration practitioners), the European Federation of Soil and Water Bioengineering and national affiliated organisations to SER Europe from France, Germany, The Netherlands, Portugal and Spain. The influential British Ecological Society is among the signatories as well.

In 12 statements the Declaration addresses key issues for the future EU Nature Restoration Law:

- An innovative 'legal principle on ecological restoration' should help achieve the highest recovery possible for natural and semi-natural ecosystems and avoid greenwashing. In contrast, restoration in urban, intensive agricultural, and forestry areas can merely focus on remediation and rehabilitation actions (e.g. less use of pesticides, more green landscape elements, more deadwood, less fertilisation and draining, more ecological management of parks and gardens) without necessarily pursuing complete ecological integrity.

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- The new law must complement the existing legal obligations such as the Birds and Habitats Directives, the Water Framework Directive and the Marine Strategy Framework Directive by adding clear deadlines, defining ambitious area targets in and outside the protected areas, and improving overall connectivity, in line with the '30% protected area target' of the European Biodiversity Strategy 2030.
- All wetlands and freshwater ecosystems, forests, permanent (semi-natural) grasslands, and shallow marine areas deserve high priority for restoration because of their crucial role in climate change mitigation and adaptation.
- National restoration strategies should be evidence-based and consider both current and historical habitat distribution, conservation status, focus species and an overall reduction of pressures.
- Monitoring and reporting of restoration success using multicriteria sets of standards are mandatory.
- Finally, restoration must be recognised as an investment, not a cost, and long-term earmarked funding is necessary. At the same time, damage to nature from climate and other policies needs to be avoided and adverse subsidies dismantled.

The full text of the Declaration is available at the link indicated below and sent together with this PR.

List of organisations supporting the Declaration:

Alternet Association · European Ecological Federation · Eurosite · European Association of Native Seed Producers (ENSPA) · European Federation of Soil and Water Bioengineering · SER Europe · AEET - Asociación Española de Ecología Terrestre · ALDEIA - Acção, Liberdade, Desenvolvimento, Educação, Investigação, Ambiente · British Ecological Society · Cadiz Society of Natural History · Institució Catalana d'Història Natural · CIREF - Centro Ibérico de Restauración Fluvial · Commonland · CREAM Ecological Research Centre · Czech Botanical Society · Czech entomological Society Česká společnost entomologická · Czech Society for Ornithology · Czech Society of Ecology · Estonian Fund for Nature / Eestimaa Looduse Fond · French Society of Ecology and Evolution · Fundació Catalunya La Pedrera · GRN · Hellenic Ornithological Society/BirdLife Greece · INBO - Forest and Nature Research Institute · OBN · Reseau REVER · Semillas Silvestres® · SPECO - Sociedade Portuguesa de Ecologia · The Norwegian Botanical Society · Norsk Botanisk Forening · Turkish Association for Landscape Architecture Education and Science (PEMDER).

Society for Ecological Restoration Europe Media Contact for interviews and further information: Jordi Pietx, SERE Program Manager jordi.pietx-at-ser-europe.org – General SERE contact: info-at-ser-europe.org

SER Europe Declaration website: <https://chapter.ser.org/europe/declaration-on-eu-restoration-law/>
SERE2021 Conference: <https://sere2021.org/>