

THE NATURE RESTORATION LAW & FOREST MONITORING

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ABOUT: The proposed Nature Restoration Law will set legally binding targets for nature restoration in the EU. The objective is to mitigate and reverse biodiversity loss, ecosystem degradation and climate change, and to boost the EU's existing framework for protecting ecosystems. The overall proposed target is a 20% restoration target of land and sea area by 2030 and of all ecosystems in need of restoration by 2050. Targets for nature restoration in different ecosystems will apply to every EU member state and they will be required to submit nature restoration plans that will be reviewed by the Commission. In these plans, Member States will be required to report their progress towards meeting their domestic restoration target. The NRL includes sub-targets for a range of ecosystems, including forests.

Article 4 sets out targets for restoring Annex I forest habitats listed under the Habitats Directive to 'good' condition, expanding the area of habitats that will be required to have conservation measures for 2030, 2040, and 2050. By 2030, forests covering between 4.9 to 9% of EU land area should be placed under restoration measures.

Article 10 establishes targets for the restoration of forests to enhance biodiversity, which will require the restoration of existing forests and the expansion of forest habitat. This Article includes criteria for restoring forest ecosystems, in which Member States must achieve increasing trends at the national level for six forest ecosystem indicators (see monitoring and reporting requirements below). These indicators will need to be measured from the date of entry into force and will be subsequently measured every three years until satisfactory levels are reached.

As part of the requirement to report on progress towards meeting domestic national targets, Member States will need to quantify areas needing restoration to reach such targets. To support the restoration of forests under Articles 4 and 10, Member States will need to identify such forest areas in their plans under Article 11(4).

Due to the fact that many ecosystems constitute natural carbon sinks, under Article 11 Member States are directed to prioritise the restoration of ecosystems that have the highest potential to capture and store carbon, thus synergizing climate change mitigation with nature restoration. Because forests have the highest sequestration rate of any terrestrial habitat (EEA, 2023), their restoration will inevitably be emphasized in national plans.

MONITORING AND REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

Member States will be required to monitor almost all ecosystem types. National Nature Restoration Plans will need to be submitted every two years after the Regulation's entry into force. These plans will need to demonstrate how Member States plan on accomplishing their national targets, and how they will monitor and report on their progress. The NRPs will need to establish targets for ecosystems and provide a monitoring system for which data and monitoring mechanisms will be

utilized to demonstrate progress towards meeting targets. Targets will be set first for ecosystems in which data and monitoring mechanisms already exist, including habitat types listed in Annex I of the Habitats Directive.

For areas outside Annex I habitats, an EU-wide methodology for assessing the conditions of these ecosystems will need to be developed. At the Member State level, forests will need to be monitored for increasing trends until satisfactory levels are reached on six indicators, including: standing deadwood; lying deadwood; share of forests with uneven-aged structure; forest. Connectivity; common forest bird index; and stock of organic carbon.

HOW CAN THE FOREST MONITORING FRAMEWORK PLAY A ROLE IN SUPPORTING NRL TARGETS FOR FORESTS?

Currently, there are currently few EU level monitoring requirements for forests outside of the Birds and Habitats Directives and the LULUCF Regulation. Under the Birds and Habitats Directives, only 36 million ha of forests are monitored in the Natura 2000 network out of a total area of 157 million ha of forest in Europe ([FISE 2022](#)). Therefore, a Forest Monitoring Framework will be needed to support the establishment of monitoring systems outside Annex 1 Habitats to demonstrate progress within national Nature Restoration Plans.

In addition, there is a lack of comparable data on forests monitored at the Member State level. The effectiveness of NRPs in achieving increasing progress on six forest indicators will require harmonization of data at the EU level that is collected for the purposes of monitoring progress towards achieving the forest-related objectives of the NRL.



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