

Restoring nature: in the face of urgency, let's inspire people to take action

JULIE MARSAUD and ALAIN DURAND

The loss of biodiversity and the degradation of ecosystems are continuing at an alarming rate under the effect of direct and indirect anthropogenic pressures, whether in the form of urbanisation and pollution, overexploitation, the development of invasive alien species, or global warming. In the European Union, 80% of natural environments are in a poor state and the number of birds has declined by 25% in 40 years, even by almost 60% for species in agricultural environments.

However, beyond their intrinsic value, the services provided by nature are essential for the survival of humanity. For example, 75% of cultivated species depend on pollinators, around 50% of global GDP relies on nature and 80% of jobs in France depend directly or indirectly on biodiversity..

MOBILISING ALL RESTAURANT LEVERS

In order to halt this deterioration, the European Union regulation of 24 June 2024 on nature restoration sets quantitative and binding targets for the first time for Member States. **By 2026, they will have to define and implement a national restoration plan,** specifying in particular the areas and the restoration actions planned.

In this context, the ESEC notes that the current tools and resources must be strengthened and that those behind the restoration projects must be given more support. The challenge is to remove the obstacles in order to set the process in motion and achieve the ambitious objectives of restoring nature. To this end, **this opinion makes 16 recommendations based on three main areas.**

The national plan is an opportunity to harmonise existing policies and tools. By making choices explicit, providing the necessary support for commitment and making visible the benefits of a restored natural environment for society, France will be able to meet the challenge of ensuring that its development is respectful of nature.



30%

European objective: to restore at least 30% of degraded land and sea by 2030 and all ecosystems by 2050.



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1 ENSURE BETTER GOVERNANCE

How?

- Develop high-level political support to make favorable trade-offs with sectoral policies.
- Plan at the territorial level, drawing inspiration from the prefiguration approach of 'territorial ecological restoration plans'.
- Support local stakeholders with a 'one-stop shop' managed by the regional biodiversity agencies.

2 STRENGTHENING KNOWLEDGE, MOBILISING SKILLS AND PROMOTING PEOPLE'S INVOLVEMENT

How?

- Create a national resource center coordinated by the French Biodiversity Agency
- Launch a national awareness and mobilisation campaign aimed at the general public on the objectives and projects of nature restoration
- Integrate into the national nature restoration plan a quantified trajectory to develop training and skills development for professionals
- Recognise the commitment of **private or public landowners** to nature restoration (via a label)

3 DEVELOPING EXISTING TOOLS THAT ARE NOT EASILY ACCESSIBLE OR INSUFFICIENTLY ATTRACTIVE

How?

- Increase the transition to the territorial level:
 - by reinvigorating the dynamics of contracts in the Natura 2000 network, the deployment, attractiveness and support for tools (environmental real obligations and environmental rural leases)
 - by developing natural compensation, restoration and renaturation sites (SNCRF) in a structured manner
 - by mobilising land tools and strong protection for sites that require it
- Guarantee the financial needs of the plan via the Green Fund, monitor the green budgets of local authorities and innovative or little-used financing tools (payments for environmental services), biodiversity certificates/credits, patronage.
- In any case, one condition for success is essential: reducing the pressure on nature upstream. This means reducing public spending that is harmful to biodiversity and ensuring compliance with the "zero net artificialization" (ZAN) and "avoid, reduce, compensate" (ERC) policies.

REPORTERS

Julie MARSAUD

01 44 43 64 22 • julie.marsaud@lecese.fr

Julie Marsaud is an advocacy expert at WWF France, which she represents in the EESC's Environment and Nature Group. She sits on the Environment Commission.

Alain DURAND

01 44 43 64 01 • alain.durand@lecese.fr

Alain Durand is the former vice-president of the National Hunters' Federation, which he represents at the EESC in the Agriculture Group. He sits on the Environment Commission.