

To

**Ursula von der Leyen,
President of the European Commission**

cc
Frans Timmermans
Executive Vice-President of the European Commission
European Green Deal

Virginijus Sinkevičius,
Commissioner for Environment, Oceans and Fisheries

Janusz Wojciechowski,
Commissioner for Agriculture

18 March 2022

Dear President von der Leyen,

We are extremely alarmed by the European Commission's intention to once again postpone its proposal for legally binding nature restoration targets, which was foreseen for 23 March.

We understand the extremely difficult context in which this proposal is being finalised. With the devastating humanitarian crisis caused by the war in Ukraine ongoing, the priority right now is to end the conflict and ensure the safety and wellbeing of all those affected. But unfortunately, the biodiversity and climate crises won't stop for anyone.

Delaying the restoration law by months would jeopardise the EU's response to the climate and biodiversity crises and will put the European Green Deal agenda into further question.

Nature restoration is crucial to increase our resilience against the impacts of the climate crisis and to protect us from devastating events like floods, forest fires or droughts, all of which are increasing in frequency across our continent and our planet. Enshrining nature restoration principles and targets in law is the best pathway towards a resilient and sustainable Union, capable of withstanding external shocks - including to its food systems. By acting responsibly now, we will ensure that Europe is well-placed to face potential future crises.

We strongly reject the misleading use of "food security" arguments by those opposed to addressing the biodiversity and climate crisis. Millions are at risk of malnutrition in the coming months, especially in North Africa and the Middle East. To address this, we need to find solutions in partnership with those countries impacted and stop utilising food crops for producing energy, cut waste, reduce livestock numbers and reduce dependence on (gas-based) nitrogen

fertilizer. **Putting the restoration law on ice would do absolutely nothing to alleviate this crisis – on the contrary, it will make a future food crisis more likely.**

We therefore urge you not to delay the publication of an ambitious and enforceable nature restoration law, nor other important initiatives like the EU legislation on pesticides or the planned legislative framework for sustainable food systems, and to uphold the commitment expressed in the Biodiversity Strategy to show leadership in efforts to agree on a Global Biodiversity Framework.

Last year, over 104,000 EU citizens asked to adopt the restoration law without delay as part of the European Commission's own public consultation process. The nature and climate commitments of the Green Deal are central to making our society more resilient and sustainable and are now more necessary than ever.

Yours sincerely,

Ester Asin
Executive Director, WWF European Policy Office

Anaïs Berthier
Head of EU Affairs, ClientEarth

Jeremy Wates
Secretary-General, EEB

Ariel Brunner
Senior Head of Policy, BirdLife Europe and Central Asia

This letter is supported by the following organisations:

Inter Environnement Wallonie, Belgium

Mammal Conservation Europe

International Mire Conservation Group

Eurosite - the European Land Conservation Network

Suomen luonnonsuojeluliitto - Finnish Association for Nature Conservation

European Pond Conservation Network

Rewilding Europe, The Netherlands

Youth and Environment Europe

Latvian Fund for Nature

Milvus Group - Bird and Nature Protection Association

Eko-zivot

BirdLife Sweden

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Riverwatch - Society for the Protection of Rivers

Lipu - BirdLife Italia

Czech Society for Ornithology, BirdLife Czechia

Mediterranean Institute for Nature and Anthropos [MedINA]

European Anglers Alliance

Deutsche Stiftung Meeresschutz

Whale and Dolphin Conservation

NABU (Naturschutzbund Deutschland) e.V.

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Platform for the landscape

Sciaena

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Society for the Protection of Prespa, Greece

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Living Rivers Foundation

Latvian Ornithological Society

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BirdWatch Ireland

Danish Society for Nature Conservation (Danmarks Naturfredningsforening)

North Sea Foundation

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EuroNatur

Oceana

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BUND e.V. (Friends of the Earth Germany)

Bulgarian Society for the Protection of Birds/ BirdLife Bulgaria

Fédération Spéléologique Européenne

European Cave Protection Commission

Peraltrestrade Dolomiti, member of free Rivers Italy

Deutscher Naturschutzring (DNR)

Seas At Risk

MME/BirdLife Hungary

DOPPS - BirdLife Slovenia

Vogelbescherming Nederland (Partner of BirdLife in The Netherlands)

BirdLife Austria

Umanotera, Slovenian Foundation for Sustainable Development

Spinning Club Italia a.s.d.

Compassion in World Farming EU

Societas Europaea Herpetologica, EU

Naturefriends International, Austria

Environmental protection Club of Latvia

Naturalists Club Poland

Coalition Clean Baltic (CCB)

Natagora, Belgium

Føroya Fuglafrøðifelag (Faroese Ornithological Society)

Waddenvereniging, Netherlands

Environmental Justice Foundation (EJF)

Fundacja Hektary Dla Natury, Poland

CEEweb for Biodiversity

Italian Centre for River Restoration (CIRF) - Italy

Fundacja Strefa Zieleni, Poland

Sustainable Water Network (SWAN) - Ireland

A Rocha International

Sharkproject International

Center for protection and research of birds (MNE)

BirdLife Finland

OceanCare

Romanian Ornithological Society (SOR)/BirdLife Romania

Birdlife Estonia

ProVeg International

Coordinamento Nazionale Tutela Fiumi - Free Rivers Italia

Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)

LPN - Liga para a Protecção da Natureza

Hellenic Ornithological Society / BirdLife Greece

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Swedish Society for Nature Conservation

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Polish Society for the Protection of Birds (BirdLife Poland)

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DOPPS-BirdLife Slovenia

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GEOTA-Grupo de Estudos de Ordenamento do Território e Ambiente (PT)

Generation Climate Europe

Biom Association - BirdLife Croatia

Tour du Valat Foundation

Cork Nature Network (Ireland)

Societas Europaea Herpetologica (SEH)

Fundación Global Nature

Ab Ovo Association, Kraków, Poland (river restoration)

The Global Youth Biodiversity Network Europe (GYBN Europe)

Arnika (Czech Republic)

Coalition for Rivers (Czech Republic)

Good Energies Alliance Ireland (Ireland)

Bodensee-Stiftung (Lake Constance Foundation)

Global Nature Fund

EcoAlbania

Opolskie Towarzystwo Przyrodnicze (Poland)

BDBiol - Berufsvertretung Deutscher Biologen

Clean Air Action Group (Hungary)

Lithuanian Fund for Nature (Lithuania)

Landesnatuschutzverband Baden-Württemberg

BOS+ (Belgium)

Coastwatch (Ireland)

Green Foundation Ireland

Centro Ibérico de Restauración Fluvial (Spain-Portugal)

Sonairte -the National Ecology Centre (Ireland)

Biodiversity Action Europe (BAE)

Cork Environmental Forum, Ireland

Polish Ecological Club (PKE)

ZERO - Associação Sistema Terrestre Sustentável

Reptile Amphibian Conservation Europe (RACE)

Quercus - Associação Nacional de Conservação da Natureza

French Herpetological Society (SHF)

CIREF-Centro Ibérico de Restauración Fluvial

Association Hyla, Croatia

NaturFreunde Deutschland

Ecologistas en Acción (Spain)

SOS/BirdLife Slovakia

Verband der deutschen Höhlen- und Karstforscher e.V.

Irish Whale and Dolphin Group

BirdLife Denmark

Irish Wildlife Trust

Citizen Science Freshwater Network Ireland

Murphy's Rock and the Bride Valley Support Group

Naturschutzbund Österreich - Austrian League for Nature Conservation

Naturschutzgesellschaft Schutzstation Wattenmeer e.V.

EUROPARC Federation

Our Fish

Fundació ENT

Ecologistes en Acció, Catalunya

Associació de Naturalistes de Girona

Fair Seas, Ireland

German Angling Association (DAFV)