

PRESS RELEASE

Nature Restoration – How to and by whom?

Brussels, 22 June 2022 – **Today, the European Commission adopted its proposal for a Regulation on Nature Restoration. While European forest owners would have a key role in the possible implementation, their first analysis has identified some important questions to be addressed in the future discussions.**

Active involvement of forest owners in any biodiversity conservation initiatives and related decision-making processes is one of the most important enablers for biodiversity conservation. Such involvement should include **acknowledging and respecting ownership rights**. The proposal duly refers to the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights regarding environmental protection, but does not clearly identify the right to property which is also part of the Charter. As designation of land for restoration will be mandatory for Member States, an essential question remains on how prior and informed consent of forest owners will be guaranteed in this process.

The EU has a shared competence with the Member States on different sectorial policies with an impact on forests. However, forest management *per se* is not a shared competence. The proposal's provisions should thus be dealt with careful considerations of the **subsidiarity principle**.

The **choice of instrument**, a Regulation, as opposed to a Directive, decreases the level of flexibility given to the Member States to tailor their restoration plans according to their local needs. This is especially surprising as the Nature Directives, which this Regulation is aimed at supporting, have been deemed fit for purpose.

European forest owners appreciate that the proposal reflects on the unavoidable changes on species and ecosystems due to **impacts of changing climatic conditions**. In the assessment of the results of such a proposal, this concept is essential. The future of our forests relies on sustainably managed and resilient forests. Sustainable forest management choices are made through looking to future and not the past. This approach is even more important when it comes to targets for forest ecosystems' restoration, as they rely on long-term processes and have a limited ability to naturally migrate or adapt given the fast pace of climate change.

CEPF will further analyse the proposal of the European Commission and its accompanying Impact Assessment. This analysis will focus especially on how the multifunctionality of European forests, the cost-effectiveness of different options, and the uncertainties in the restoration process have been considered.

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