

Nature Restoration Law for European Cities

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Urban Greening in Europe has seen significant advancements in recent years, focusing on both ecological benefits and improving the quality of life for urban residents. Key developments include the growing popularity of green roofs and facades in various European cities, which for example help improve air quality and reduce the urban heat island effect.

Cities are also focusing on creating larger urban forests and parks, benefiting both the environment and residents' mental health. Additionally, cities like Utrecht, Valencia and Copenhagen are creating ecological corridors and green networks that connect parks and natural areas, promoting biodiversity. These trends reflect Europe's increasing focus on green mental health, biodiversity and livability through urban greening. Also local, national and EU legislation is having a big impact on the urban greening sector. One of the biggest is the Nature Restoration Law. It is not only there for natural areas but also for cities. In this paper we try to inform you regarding to that law in urban areas.

The Nature Restoration Law is a regulation of the European Union to protect the EU environments and restore its nature to a good ecological state through renaturation. The Nature Restoration Law constitutes the first ever legal requirement for large-scale nature restoration with the aim of ensuring no further deterioration of protected habitats and species. The law is a core element of the European Green Deal and the EU Biodiversity Strategy and makes the targets set therein for the restoration of nature binding. Crucially, the proposed Nature Restoration Law covers terrestrial, coastal, freshwater ecosystems and urban ecosystems (European Parliament, 2024).





Timeline:

- The United Nations decade on Ecosystem Restoration, 5 June 2021
- The regulation of the Nature Restoration Law was proposed by the European Commission on 22 June 2022 as a part of the European Green Deal and the EU Biodiversity Strategy
- An agreement on a compromise was reached by the European Parliament and the Council on 9 November 2023
- The law was adopted in the Council of the European Union on 17 June 2024
- The law was published in the EU's Official Journal on 29 July 2024
- **The law came into force on 18 August 2024** (20th day after publication)



UNITED NATIONS DECADE ON
**ECOSYSTEM
RESTORATION**
2021-2030



- National governments must submit their plans to the European Commission by September 2026. These plans will then be assessed, with the aim of starting implementation from July 2027.

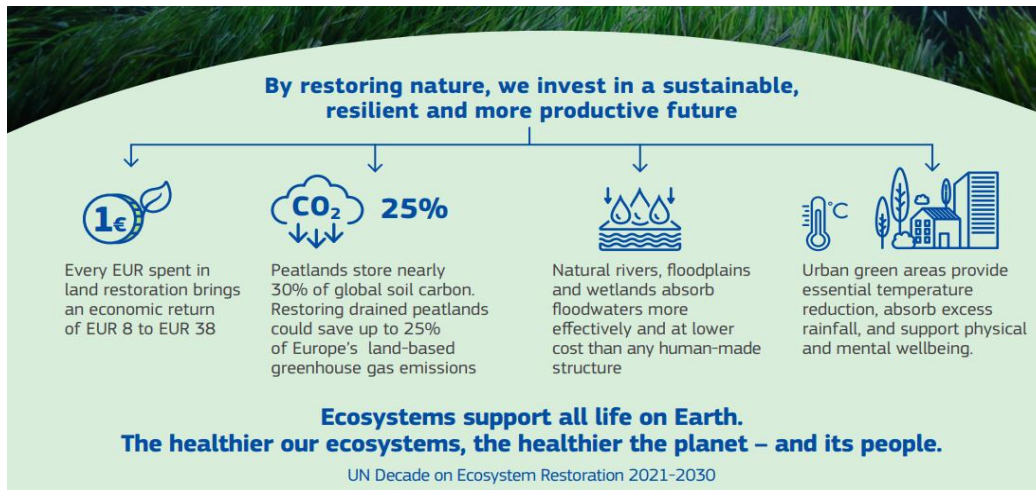
In this law there are the **specific targets in the timeline for urban ecosystems**:

- No net loss of urban green spaces and tree canopy cover with associated ecological values in every EU city, town, and suburb by 2030.
- A positive trend in urban green spaces and tree canopy cover with associated ecological values in every EU city, town, and suburb until a satisfactory level is reached, as agreed in the plans for 2040 and 2050. Special attention will be given to the net gain of green space integrated into existing and new buildings and infrastructure developments (including renovations and redevelopments).
- To meet the above objectives, local authorities must closely monitor the quantity and associated ecological quality of urban green spaces and tree canopy cover.

(for the articles in the law referring to urban ecosystems: see attachment 1)

Due to this law it will affect cities and hopefully is making a big impact on citizens: climate adaption (heath island effect), wellbeing and biodiversity.

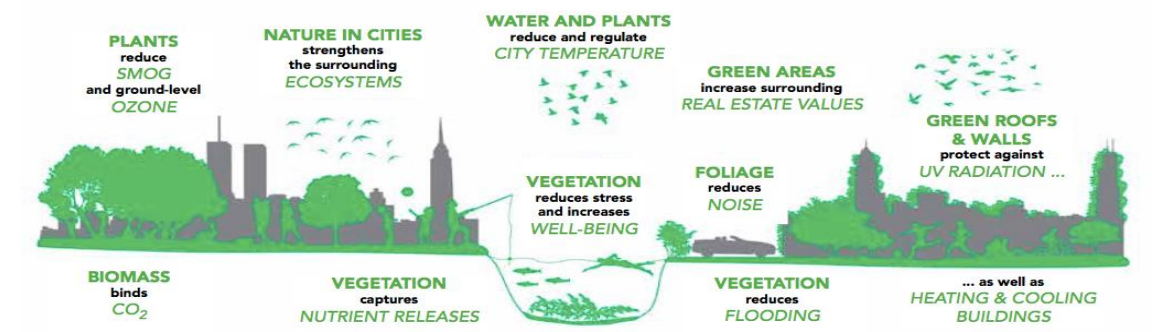
With three quarters of all EU citizens living in cities, regions and towns it is evident that urban action must be a cornerstone of the European Union's efforts in nature restoration. But it is clear that increasing, accelerated urbanization, and stronger urban-rural linkages, are increasing the pressure on natural and semi-natural habitats in cities, towns and regions. Urban green areas in future can provide essential temperature reduction, absorb excess rainfall, and support physical and mental wellbeing (Wilk and Utkarsh 2022).



From European Commission (2022): [Nature Restoration Law. For people, climate, and planet](#)

If cities want to achieve these targets in the nature restoration law there is a big need for:

- A green infrastructure and policy on a local level;
- Physical green and nature inclusive buildings, therefore we need knowledge and trained professionals on all EQF levels;
- Monitoring of green areas and tree canopies with additional help from technology and/or AI;
- Monitoring of green impact in order to measure ecosystem services in cities;
- Maintenance in line with nature, therefore we need knowledge and trained professionals on all EQF levels;
- Awareness of the positive effects on physical and mental wellbeing;
- Awareness and involvement of citizens. For example by using citizen science tools and involving primary and secondary schools.



In parallel with the Nature Restoration Law for urban areas, legislation has also been introduced concerning urban water management and wastewater treatment: **the European Strategy for Water Resilience**.

This strategy by the European Commission focuses on improved water management, addressing water scarcity, and promoting sustainable water use through a range of measures and policies.

Key Objectives:

- **Restoring the water cycle:** The strategy aims to protect and restore the water cycle from source to sea, enhancing resilience against floods, droughts, and water scarcity. This also includes the implementation of existing EU legislation on freshwater management.
- **Water-smart economy:** The focus is on water-efficient practices and green infrastructure to retain water, prevent pollution, and improve water-use efficiency. Target: 10% more efficiency across all sectors by 2030.
- **Clean and accessible water:** Guidelines aim to reduce water consumption and improve water quality, including tackling pollutants such as PFAS.
- **Accelerating innovation:** The strategy encourages the development of new solutions, such as digital tools for monitoring and more efficient water use.
- **Improved cooperation and governance:** Stronger governance structures and increased cross-border cooperation are essential, especially in shared river basins.



Key Actions:

- **Investing in infrastructure:** Renewal of water networks to reduce leakage and increase efficiency, partly financed by the European Investment Bank.
- **Awareness and education:** Campaigns to raise awareness about water conservation and to share best practices.
- **Legislation and targets:** New rules on water use and abstraction at river basin level, based on up-to-date insights into water availability and climate risks.

Sources

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****Source nature restoration law: [L 202401991EN.000101.fmx.xml](#). European Parliament. (2024)**
Nature Restoration Law: Regulation (EU) 2024/1991 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2024 on nature restoration and amending Regulation (EU) 2022/869

Article 8

Restoration of urban ecosystems

1. By 31 December 2030, Member States shall ensure that there is no net loss in the total national area of urban green space and of urban tree canopy cover in urban ecosystem areas, determined in accordance with Article 14(4), compared to 2024. For the purposes of this paragraph, Member States may exclude from those total national areas the urban ecosystem areas in which the share of urban green space in the urban centres and urban clusters exceeds 45 % and the share of urban tree canopy cover exceeds 10 %.
2. From 1 January 2031, Member States shall achieve an increasing trend in the total national area of urban green space, including through the integration of urban green space into buildings and infrastructure, in urban ecosystem areas, determined in accordance with Article 14(4), measured every six years from 1 January 2031, until a satisfactory level as set in accordance with Article 14(5) is reached.
3. Member States shall achieve, in each urban ecosystem area, determined in accordance with Article 14(4), an increasing trend of urban tree canopy cover, measured every six years from 1 January 2031, until the satisfactory level identified as set in accordance with Article 14(5) is reached.

Article 14

Preparation of the national restoration plans

4. Member States shall determine and map urban ecosystem areas as referred to in Article 8 for all their cities and towns and suburbs.

The urban ecosystem area of a city or of a town and suburb shall include:

- (a) the entire city or town and suburb; or
- (b) parts of the city or of the town and suburb, including at least its urban centres, urban clusters and, if deemed appropriate by the Member State concerned, peri-urban areas.

Member States may aggregate the urban ecosystem areas of two or more adjacent cities, or two or more adjacent towns and suburbs, or both, into one urban ecosystem area common to those cities, or towns and suburbs, respectively.

5. By 2030, Member States shall set, through an open and effective process and assessment based on the latest scientific evidence, the guiding framework referred to in Article 20(10) and, if available, the guiding framework referred to in Article 20(11) satisfactory levels for:

- (a) pollinator populations referred to in Article 10(1) and for the indicator referred to in Article 12(2);
- (b) each of the chosen indicators referred to in Article 11(2);
- (c) each of the chosen indicators referred to in Article 12(3);
- (d) urban green space referred to in Article 8(2); and
- (e) urban tree canopy cover referred to in Article 8(3).