

EU Nature Directors' Meeting. 20-22 September 2023

Wrap up & Summary

Working Session I: Nature restoration plans as a tool for integrating policies and delivering multiple ecosystem services

1. Involving **citizens, other sectors and stakeholders** in the drafting and planning of measures, including national nature restoration plans, with a particular focus on agriculture and fisheries sectors with the aim of **increasing inclusivity and ownership** of measures to be implemented by the sectorial administrations and stakeholders. Good governance, transparency and early involvement are needed.
2. Integrating **different institutional levels** (local, subnational, national and EU) and **training nature and other sectorial institutions**, since implementation is under responsibility of all of them and there are already good examples of how administrations such as municipalities have contributed to other debates like climate change.
3. Importance of science-based information for communication. Identifying and communicating **synergies between nature restoration actions and other challenges** such as climate change, the future of farming or producing renewable energy, and **streamlining financial tools such as market-based instruments, and improving incentives** within EU Funds, such as CAP (rather than call “restoration action” call it “flood protection measures, etc”). Nature based solutions.
4. **National restoration plans** can be a good tool to encompass all these requirements and to ensure integration of biodiversity into sectors, in a context of ameliorated spatial planning and systemic application of multifunctional measures. NRP need to foresee their **means of implementation and resources**.
5. Focusing our narrative more on **short-to-long term benefits** of nature restoration actions for people and given economic activities. Also, increasing **awareness and capacity building** in administrations, economic sectors and society to facilitate **acceptance, monitoring and implementation** of nature restoration interventions.
6. Giving more importance to **communications, and notably its positive messages**, at local, national and EU level, with self-reinforcing campaigns for a wide array of audiences, but specifically targeted to communities and sectors most benefited by nature restoration actions. There is a need to increase **communication expertise in** social media and other tools and focus on **education** at all levels. It is important that people know there is time to act.

Working Session II: Financing biodiversity conservation and restoration in the EU

1. There are **lots of financial instruments and opportunities available**, both traditional (CAP, EMFF, cohesion funds), but also innovative sources such as ETS revenues; but they are not necessarily sufficiently uptaken for biodiversity. There are still **funding gaps**, and there is a need to identify their causes (problems in accessing; lack of administrative capacity, expertise and knowledge; complex and inflexible rules; channelling and implementing funds with particular resistance from some sectors – including public and private stakeholders).
2. To overcome these gaps and challenges, it is important to adopt a **multidisciplinary approach** where the barriers are overcome and there is good use of funds for biodiversity, and incoherencies are avoided in terms of funding goals and results. The Commission has an important role to support MS in ensuring both planning and actual spending of the EU funds for biodiversity.
3. Moving away from EU funding and reflecting on how to better **integrate the private sector**, in particular those with more funds available, e.g., banking and energy sectors. There are already examples of companies investing in nature restoration and it is important to showcase those success stories, and the **benefits** they provide.
4. Not only is it important to involve other sectors, but also to bring **financial and managing authorities** on board, helping them understand funding needs and potential gaps, as well as the relevance of addressing them. **Communication efforts** and a focus on **transparency** of funds and how they are used could contribute to this goal.
5. The need for **dedicated funding for biodiversity** that is **fit for purpose** was highlighted, notably since other sectors are reluctant to earmark funds for biodiversity in sectorial financial instruments. Also, there is a need to look beyond the funds going to biodiversity and identify **potential harmful subsidies** as well. Making sure biodiversity has its funding sources, but also that other funding sources are compatible with biodiversity targets.

Working Session III: Best practices in reconciling renewable energies and biodiversity conservation and pursuing a biodiversity-aligned transition to low-emissions energy

- Improving energy efficiency and reduction of energy consumption, should be a high priority.** But yet, renewable energy is a social priority and an appealing business opportunity. Both renewable energy as well as biodiversity conservation and restoration are crucial to respond to the climate challenge.
- Early mapping and spatial planning** are crucial to enhance **win-win solutions** and in avoiding harmful decisions to biodiversity and ecosystems, be it compulsory or voluntary. This exercise also needs to be done through a **solid impact assessment**, considering territorial differences and the potential for different types of renewable energy production in a given area. **Public consultations** in an early stage can help avoiding further problems in later stages.
- After planning, there is a need to identify where energy-producing facilities could be installed trying to have **minimum impact** on nature, but even then there should also be **compensation and mitigation** efforts. In this regard, **involvement of local communities** is essential also in creating positive opportunities for biodiversity.
- In addition to proper site selection, a range of **options to mitigate and correct impacts** on biodiversity exist such as: inclusion of nature inclusive design requirements in projects or in criteria for selection of projects; technology systems in project design and implementation (i.e.: radar cameras; temporary stops; painting blades in black reduces collision risks significantly; nature inclusive design; etc.).
- Positive effects of renewable energy deployment on nature need to be assessed and integrated. Some **positive experiences for biodiversity** exist, such as: the creation of grazing areas or resting areas for species; creation of habitats with good conditions for pollinators; potential of grids as ecological corridors; balancing overfishing areas; artificial reef effect.
- Engaging with Investors** at an early stage will allow that they understand the implications for biodiversity of their potentially harmful activities as well as their potential positive contributions to biodiversity. **Regulation, certification schemes, and monitoring and data availability and sharing** can ensure all energy-related activities are biodiversity sensitive.
- Technology and innovation** are an opportunity for solutions that allow for energy production while protecting and preserving biodiversity, but also for planning, implementation and monitoring. Coordinated, continuous, detailed and up-to-date monitoring and data are crucial, and should therefore be an integral part of permitting conditions.