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
Michael Succow Foundation, Partner in the Greifswald Mire Centre
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.
GRÜNE LIGA e.V., Germany
Rewilding France, France
Sociedade Portuguesa para o Estudo das Aves (SPEA)
France Nature Environnement (FNE), France
Natuurpunt, Belgium
Wetlands International Europe
Lithuanian Ornithological Society, BirdLife Lithuania
Platform for the landscape
Sciaena
Hnutí DUHA - Friends of the Earth Czech Republic
Society for the Protection of Prespa, Greece
International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW)
Living Rivers Foundation
Latvian Ornithological Society
Fundación Nueva Cultura del Agua
Ostwind e. V., Germany
Podkarpackie Towarzystwo Przyrodników Wolne Rzeki
BirdWatch Ireland
Danish Society for Nature Conservation (Danmarks Naturfredningsforening)
North Sea Foundation
A ROCHA - Associação Cristã de Estudo e Defesa da Natureza
EuroNatur
Oceana
Sociedad Española de Ornitología (SEO/BirdLife)
Deutsche Umwelthilfe e. V. (Environmental Action Germany)
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
BirdLife Cyprus / ΠΤΗΝΟΛΟΓΙΚΟΣ ΣΥΝ∆ΕΣΜΟΣ ΚΥΠΡΟΥ

Società Botanica Italiana

Società italiana di Biogeografia

Swedish Plant Geographical Society

Natuurmonumenten, The Netherlands

Swedish Society for Nature Conservation

The Nature Conservancy (TNC)

A Rocha France

Polish Society for the Protection of Birds (BirdLife Poland)

Buglife - the Invertebrate Conservation Trust

Natuur & Milieu, The Netherlands

Natuur en Milieufederatie Zuid-Holland, The Netherlands

DOPPS-BirdLife Slovenia

Friends of Ina and Gowienica Association (TPRIiG)

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)
Landesnaturschutzverband 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 Coservation
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)
Noé (France)
Butterfly Conservation Europe (BCE)
LandschappenNL, The Netherlands
CIPRA International (Commission Internationale pour la Protection des Alpes)
Ocean Research and Conservation Association of Ireland (ORCA Ireland)
LPO France (Ligue pour la Protection des Oiseaux)
Naturschutzbund Vorarlberg (League for Nature Conservation of Vorarlberg)
Surfrider Foundation Europe
Bündnis für eine enkeltaugliche Landwirtschaft e.V.
Polish Ecological Club Pomeranian Branch
Lliga per a la defensa del patrimoni natural, DEPANA
GUFI (Gruppo Unitario per le Foreste Italiane) Italy
Natural Heritage Foundation, Poland
Polish Society for Nature Conservation