



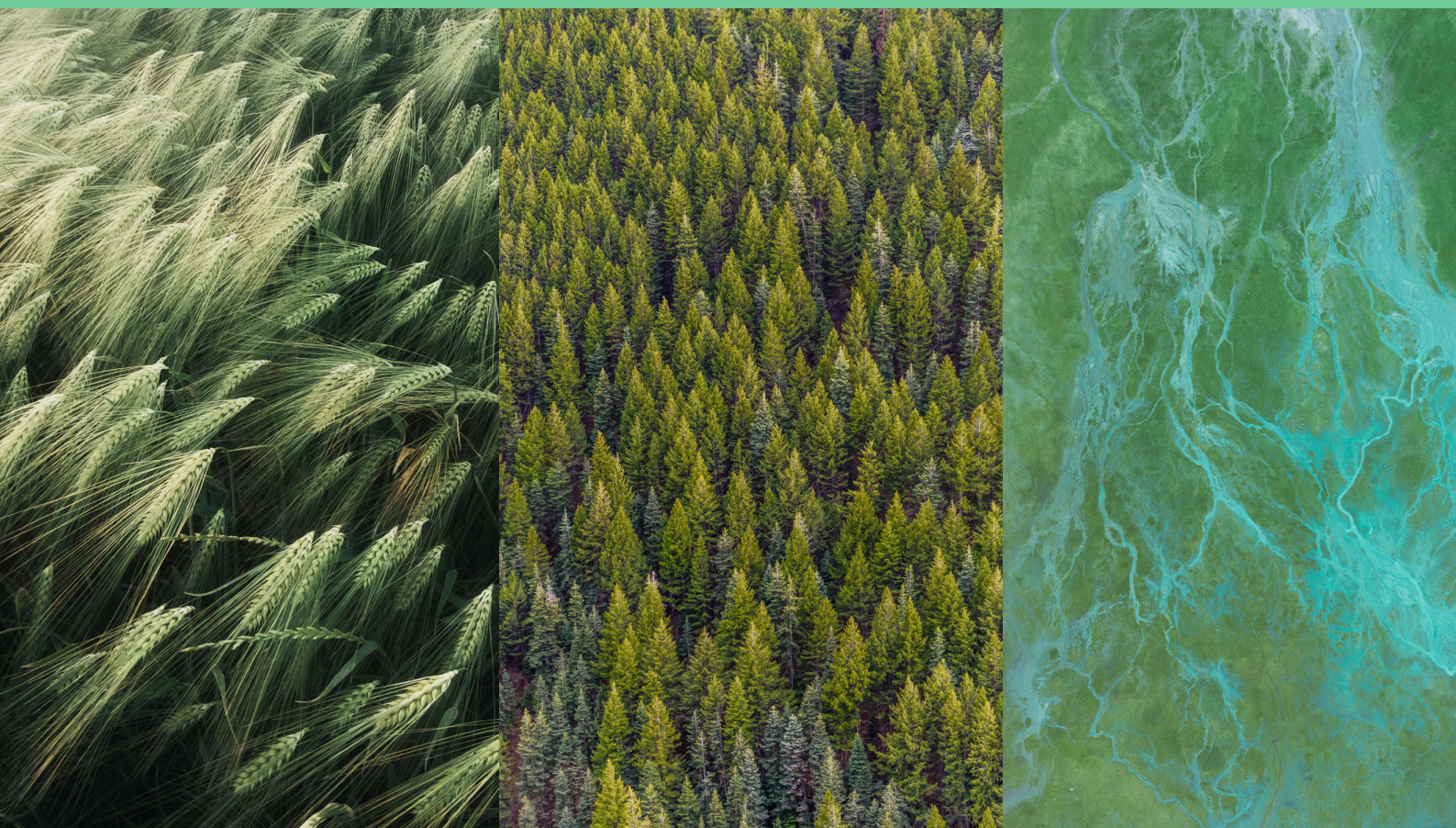
Generation
Climate
Europe

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

YOUTH DIALOGUE

THE ROLE OF YOUTH IN THE EUROPEAN NATURE RESTORATION LAW

Published May 2023



Group of the Progressive Alliance of
Socialists & Democrats
in the European Parliament



GUE/NGL
THE LEFT
IN THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT



epp
group
in the european parliament



THE GREENS/EFA
in the European Parliament

**renew
europe.**

Introduction

On 2 March 2023, **Generation Climate Europe** (GCE) held its fourth **European Parliament Youth Dialogue** (EPYD). This follows the European Commission's publication of a proposal for a **new regulation on nature restoration** in June 2022. The regulation aims to restore 20% of the EU's terrestrial and aquatic environments, and employs strategies on climate change mitigation and adaptation. Indeed, the EU has failed to attain the objectives formulated by the EU Biodiversity Strategy of 2020. In point of fact, 81% of protected habitats and 63% of protected species are still poorly or badly conserved.

The Nature Restoration Law is now in the hands of the **European Parliament** and the **Council of the European Union**, with the proposal for the new regulation on nature restoration being forwarded to the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI) of the European Parliament. The proposal will be further discussed by the Council and an indicative plenary sitting is scheduled for 10 July 2023.

As the debate and voting sessions will soon take place this summer, it is essential to incorporate **young people's voices and thoughts** into the formal adoption process of the law. Youth will be the ones to suffer the consequences of nature degradation from human-caused activities, and as such, young people are echoing the need for **intergenerational inclusivity and implementation of ambitious targets** to safeguard future generations. Moreover, young people have the opportunity to transfer **knowledge and awareness of nature restoration** policies to future generations, as they have the potential to develop influential long-term restoration projects. Ultimately, it is imperative to recognize that young people hold **valuable expertise** in ecosystem restoration practices, and as such, their involvement must be taken into consideration throughout the process.

"What comes to your mind when you hear nature restoration?"



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Who we are

Founded in October 2019, GCE is the **largest coalition of youth-led networks** at the European level, pushing for stronger climate and environmental action by the EU. We bring together some of the largest European youth networks, representing over **460 national organisations across 47 countries**, gathering the voices of over 20 million young Europeans. Uniting students, young workers unions, high-school and university organisations and environmental movements, GCE is an inclusive forum enabling youth to get involved in today's environmental debates.

Who was involved

GCE Project Lead for this Dialogue, Remy Rupp, moderated the event, with two other GCE representatives – Giulia Costa and Gaetan de Baene – taking a central part in the Dialogue. Two members of other European NGOs supported the second session of the debate.

Two Members of the European Parliament, **MEP César Luena** (S&D) and **MEP Jutta Paulus** (Greens/EFA) joined the Dialogue as panellists, and contributed to the discussion with their thoughts and visions about the Nature Restoration Law and its future implications. Although **MEP Christine Schneider** (EPP) was not able to attend, she sent a brief video where she addressed the role of youth in the context of the Nature Restoration Law.

Hosted by GCE, the event was live-streamed and publicly accessible for youth all over Europe via Facebook, LinkedIn and YouTube, and participants could send in questions for the panel. **35 people** in total participated in the debate. No representatives from Renew Europe, The Left, ECR and ID were able to join the Dialogue.

The European Parliament Youth Dialogue was an **opportunity to engage directly with young Europeans**, while discussing with MEPs and sharing concerns and hopes on the Nature Restoration Law.



César Luena



Jutta Paulus



Christine Schneider

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Structure of the Event

The event lasted one hour and was divided into three sections. It began with a presentation on the Nature Restoration Law, followed by an introduction of the MEPs, and an open discussion with the audience. This event was a crucial **opportunity to inform youth and the general public about the Nature Restoration Law**. More importantly, it provided a space for discussion between MEPs and youth.

The event consisted of two interactive sessions focused on the following topics:

Design of the Nature Restoration Law

- Is the Nature Restoration Law, as currently drafted, inclusive and consistent?

Implementation of the Nature Restoration Law

- How can we effectively involve rights-holders in the Nature Restoration Law, as well as in the National Restoration Plans?
- How can we ensure that action will be taken on time? How can youth help achieve this?

Did you miss it ? [You can access the recording here !](#)



The image shows a YouTube video player interface. At the top left, there is a blue circular icon with a white tree symbol. To its right, the video title "The Role of Youth in the EU Nature Restoration Law (EPYD)" is displayed in white text. Below the title, a dark grey box contains a white play button icon and the text "Climate change • Climate change refers to long-term shifts in temperatures and...". On the right side of the video player, there is a white share icon and the word "Share". The background of the video player is a light blue gradient with the text "EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT YOUTH DIALOGUE" in large, bold, white letters. In the center of the video player, there is a large red play button icon. Below the video player, there is a dark grey button with the text "Watch on" and the YouTube logo, followed by the text "The Role of Youth in the EU Nature Restoration Law" in white.

The Dialogue: A Closer Look

Overview of the Nature Restoration Law

Remy Rupp started the Dialogue by giving a broad overview of the schedule and then gave the floor to Giulia Costa to explain the current situation within the Nature Restoration Law and the progress GCE has made in relation to how youth should be more included within the law.

Indeed, earlier this year, GCE presented the **position of youth on the Nature Restoration Law in a position paper**. In this paper, GCE stated the importance of involving youth as **rights-holders** in policy and decision-making processes in the field of ecosystem restoration. We have also renewed our **demands** based on the current proposal of the Nature Restoration Law so that youth may be better represented.



This is a key moment to ensure the adoption of an ambitious restoration law that meaningfully includes youth!



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Network Europe



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YOUNG
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Why should youth be engaged with Nature Restoration?

1

Restoration is an intergenerational equity issue

- Timely, large-scale nature restoration is urgently needed as younger generations will disproportionately suffer from continued biodiversity loss.

2

Youth involvement in restoration will increase support for nature restoration

- Engaging with youth and younger generations on the topic of restoration will increase their awareness and knowledge of nature and the need to restore it.

3

Young people have important knowledge and expertise in nature restoration

- Many young people have received extensive environmental education and awareness. This knowledge equips them with a solid foundation to understand the significance of nature restoration.

4

New sustainable jobs and opportunities can be created for young people

- Nature restoration can generate opportunities for new skills and employment.



Youth's position on the EU Nature Restoration Law

Already back in **November 2021**, youth organisations published a **Youth Position Paper** on the EU Nature Restoration Law

Our **original demands** were:

1. Active involvement of all relevant stakeholders, including young people, in decision-making processes and actions related to nature restoration.
2. Consistency in the policy structure, as the legislation must reflect the interdependence of the environment and its components.
3. It is crucial that funding genuinely contributes to the protection of biodiversity and is tracked appropriately. Funding should be made accessible and usable especially for youth

Have our demands been met?

The NRL does **not go far enough** to include young people and does not respect the principle of intergenerational equity

Our Renewed demands

1

Youth must be explicitly recognized and mentioned as an important stakeholder in the process

2

There must be early and effective opportunities for youth to participate in the development of national restoration plans

3

The Regulation must respect the principle of intergenerational equity by ensuring that most action is taken before 2030

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What did the MEPs say during the Panel Discussion?

MEP César Luena

What is the role of youth in nature restoration?

- The role of youth has to be **larger** in restoration and should make more **noise** to create a **positive disturbance** as a catalyst for change.
- Nature Restoration has a lot of enemies; many don't want it to be mandatory, especially the private sector. But it is key to **incentivize** nature restoration.
- Restoring ecosystems must happen everywhere in order to **multiply the measurable benefits** of nature restoration.
- An amendment has been proposed that forces the European Union to **consult citizens** when making new legislation. Youth should create a strong organization to be part of the **stakeholders**.
- The fight against climate change is overpopulated, but biodiversity activism needs more **room for action**.

"There should be a way to integrate nature in the Erasmus+ programme so that topics like Nature Restoration can be inclusive"

How does the NRL currently involve youth?

- Youth are **not really included** in the proposal from the European Commission.
- MEPs are having **difficulties** getting environmental legislation through.
- Youth need to push the European People's Party (EPP) to be **more ambitious**.
- Youth need to **care about their role** in nature restoration and make noise.
- Youth should request meetings with commissioners to **raise awareness**.
- It is important that youth advocates for **long term visions** and for **future generations**.

"The fight against climate change is overpopulated, but the fight against nature restoration has more room for action"



César Luena

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

YOUTH DIALOGUE

MEP Paula Juttus

What is the role of youth in nature restoration?

- Youth has a **good campaigning strategy** regarding the Nature Restoration Law.
- The **Green Belt Initiative** is also a good opportunity for youth to get support from the EU.
- Youth should be a **nuisance** and make noise.
- **Industries** must be held accountable regarding their actions that harm biodiversity.
- Youth should choose **jobs** based on the company's contribution to the environment.

How does the NRL currently involve youth?

- Youth have **not been consulted** by the European Commission. The conference on the future of Europe advocated for more youth involvement.
- **Voting age** for the European Parliament should be lowered. Right now, the average voting age is around 55.
- The EU needs to have a **shadow carbon price** for the costs of activities that do not have a carbon price now.



"This is not just about the beauty of the landscape or the beauty of the animals or the right of nature to thrive [...] but this is really about our basis of living"

How can youth support the adoption of an ambitious NRL?

- The **biodiversity crisis** is not as recognized in the European Union. This has direct impacts on nature restoration so support is needed.
- We need a **campaign** to make it clear that this is about our basis for living.
- Highlighting the **positive aspects** of restoring nature is key.

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MEP Christine Schneider

What is the role of youth in nature restoration?

- Youth is crucial in developing **biodiversity for the future**
- If the importance of biodiversity is introduced early in **school**, it will benefit nature.
- **Consumption** makes individuals responsible.

How does the NRL currently involve youth?

- There is a need to include a **diversity of stakeholders** across ages and sectors, like youth.

How can youth support the adoption of an ambitious NRL?

- We need to learn from previous mistakes.
- Not as important to have high ambition. There are already rules against biodiversity loss but they do not work sufficiently.
- What is important is to include everyone.

"I don't think ambitious targets are the answer to our problem. We have already rules against biodiversity loss and they don't work enough. The question is why."



**Christine
Schneider**

"Nature restoration concerns everyone. With our consumption behaviour, we all contribute to more or less sustainability, more or less biodiversity. We are responsible and called upon. The youth is our future, the backbone of our society."

Questions from the audience

1) Are you, Jutta and César, willing to push for the inclusion of youth in the text and get your parties to support it as well? If not, who has this kind of leverage and could you help get us in contact?

MEP César Luena: Yes! You can also write to the president of the S&D Group.

MEP Jutta Paulus: Yes! Email actions don't make much of an impression. However, paper letters work better with MEPs, especially right-wing political groups.

2) Young people and young professionals are very active and mobilize in different ways. But sometimes what is lacking is enabling space, opportunity and even fundings. Do you have any suggestion on how to ask effectively for this?

MEP César Luena: Social media or other campaigns are good. National organisations are also good. And letters to MEPs are effective as well.

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Recommendations

MEP César Luena

The importance of education.

A dedicated Erasmus network for nature? Should we be getting younger people on board for this? Should we consider how to involve children and young adults in this? Or even younger children?

Write letters to right-wing MEPs.

Writing to right-wing MEPs could be very impactful. At GCE, we can provide templates and ask our Member Organizations as well as our friends and colleagues to send out letters.

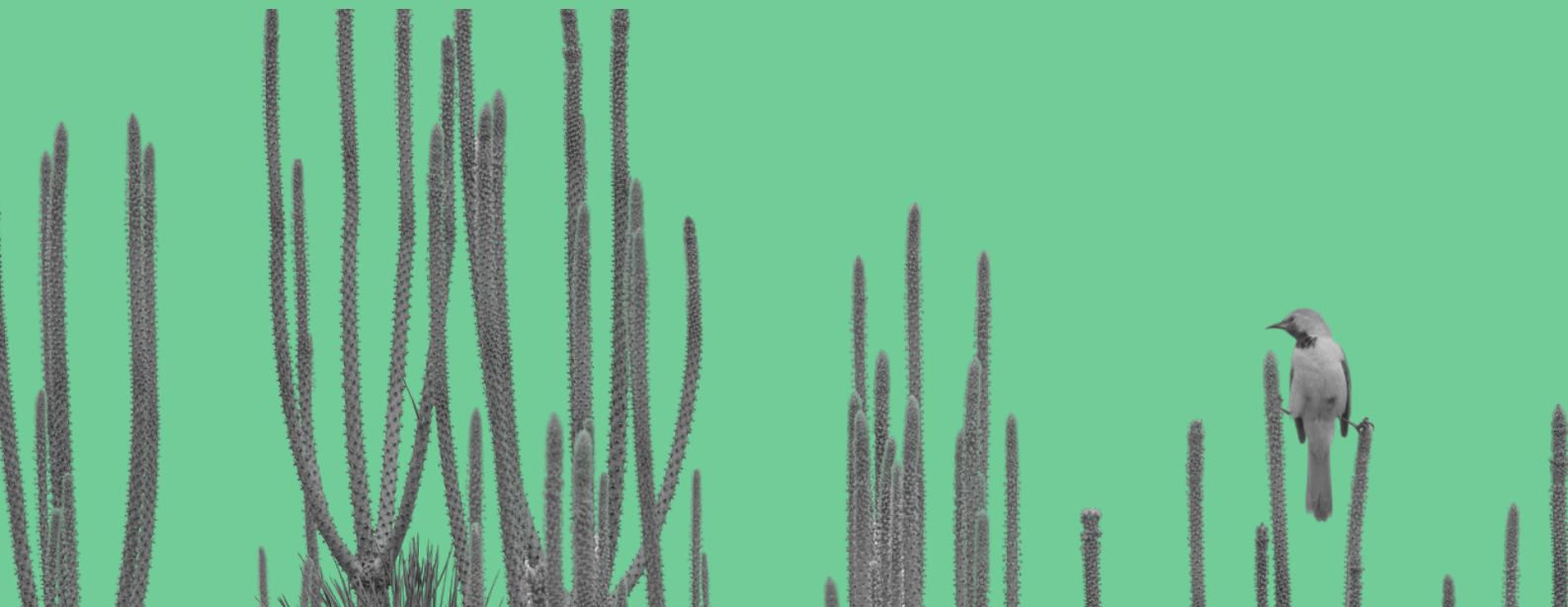
MEP Jutta Paulus

Engage with MEPs across the political spectrum.

Especially those that have supported the EU Green Deal but are now not supporting the Nature Restoration Law, which is very contradictory.

Make noise for nature & be a nuisance.

We need to put pressure on politicians, raise awareness, and show that youth deeply care about the issue. GCE is already involved, and we are ready to fight for nature.



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Reflecting on the dialogue recommendations

Question for ourselves:
What do we actually want to achieve? Maybe writing advocacy papers is not the best way to go about it?



Whether we have 200 young people attending our EPYD or 35, we represent youth and as such we have the power to push for our demands.

Both MEPs acknowledge youth as important stakeholders in nature restoration and provide support for our demands. However, we need to increase our 'lobbying' power and presence.

We need to make ourselves understood, not only as activists and volunteers but also as professionals on this topic.



Acknowledgment

This European Parliament Youth Dialogue is a series of three events between the youth and the European Parliament in 2023. It is organised and coordinated by Generation Climate Europe, with operating support from Youth and Environment Europe. It is equally supported by the five main political groups in the European Parliament: the Greens / European Free Alliance; the Left (GUE/NGL); the Socialist and Democrats (S&D); the European People's Party (EPP); and Renew Europe.

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