



Generation
Climate
Europe



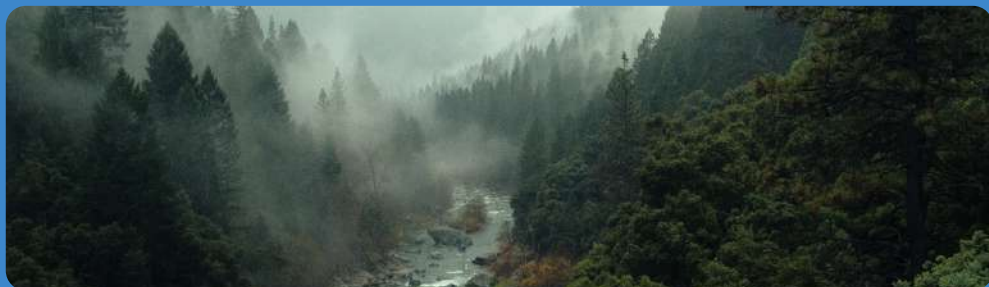
Council Presidency Youth Dialogue

Introduction

Generation Climate Europe (GCE) hosted its **Council Presidency Youth Dialogue** (CPYD) on 22 November 2023. After intensive trilogue discussions between the European Commission, the European Parliament and the Council on the Nature Restoration Law (NRL), a compromise was reached between all three institutions. This agreed to put the law on a strengthened path following drastic cuts to its effectiveness previously undertaken by the Parliament. The NRL cannot face further reductions of integrity given key components of its framework that already weaken the binding nature of many of its targets and allow for loopholes that undermine the timely implementation of restoration measures.

The NRL was most recently approved by the Parliament's ENVI Committee on 29 November 2023, and now awaits final approval by the European Council and a Plenary session of the Parliament in early 2024. As it stands now, EU Member States **shall aim to restore 20% of ecosystems by 2030**.

Such targets will theoretically serve to combat biodiversity loss, help mitigate climate change, and strive to uphold the virtues of intergenerational equity. Incorporating the values and voices of young people into the framework of the NRL is imperative to ensure representation of those who will be disproportionately affected by climate change and environmental degradation. Given young people's involvement in current efforts to protect the environment, their valuable knowledge in addressing environmental challenges and threats, and their stake in the future creation of green jobs, the CPYD served as a platform to address youth concerns in the final adoption process of the NRL. Furthermore, it provided an opportunity for participants to express and present their views on youth participation and decision-making.



About GCE

Founded in October 2019, GCE is the largest coalition of youth-led networks at the European level on climate and environmental issues. We bring together Europe's largest youth networks, representing over 381 national organisations across 46 countries and uniting the voices of over 20 million young Europeans. Bringing together students, young workers' unions, high-school and university organisations and environmental movements, GCE is an inclusive forum that enables youth to engage in today's environmental debates.



Timeline

The timeline on the next page shows the legislative steps taken by the NRL, following the Commission's initial adoption of the proposal on 22 June 2022. It also shows the actions taken by GCE to involve young people and youth organisations in the development and adoption of the NRL.

On 29 November 2023, the proposal successfully passed the Environment Committee with 53 votes in favour and 28 against. As of now, the law requires approval by the Member States and the European Parliament in Plenary.

Timeline

NRL Timeline

22 June 2022 ●

Commission adopts NRL proposal

20 June 2023 ●

NRL was first endorsed by Member States through the Environment Council

27 June 2023 ●

ENVI Committee votes on heavily amended and weakened NRL

12 July 2023 ●

EP adopts ENVI's weakened commitments at Plenary

9 Nov 2023 ●

Trilogue discussions come to a close

29 Nov 2023 ●

ENVI Committee final vote following trilogue adaptation of NRL

Feb 2024 ●

EP Plenary vote

Mar 2024 ●

Environmental Council vote

GCE Timeline

● March 2023

European Parliament Youth Dialogue & Youth Position on NRL

● May 2023

EPYD Booklet

● June 2023

Email and Social Media Campaigns & Joint Statement

● 26 July 2023

Second Joint Statement reacting to the Plenary vote

● 22 Nov 2023

Council Presidency Youth Dialogue

● Feb 2024

CPYD Booklet

Participants

One of the Project Co-Leads for the CPYD, Marie Tritz, introduced the event and its structure, followed by brief presentations by Biodiversity Coordinator Fenja Kroos, and Nature Restoration Project Officers Erica Migliorati and Jakob Mohl.

Speakers representing Sweden and Spain, the 2023 Presidencies of the European Council, took part in the event. The panel included:

- **Karin Nutti Pilflykt**, Advisor of the EU Unit of the Saami Council,
- **Fernando Magdaleno Mas**, Deputy Director General of Terrestrial and Marine Biodiversity at the Ministry for the Ecological Transition and Demographic Challenge of Spain representing the Spanish Presidency and
- **Xabier Triana**, Head of International Relations of the Spanish Youth Council.

The event was held on Zoom and made publicly accessible for youth across Europe and around the globe via YouTube. Attendees from six continents were able to submit questions for the panel.



Questions addressed by the speakers

How would you like to see youth involved?

- The climate crisis resonates deeply with the daily lives of the Saami. Healthy ecosystems, especially forests for Saami communities, are crucial for environmental, cultural and socioeconomic vitality. Restoration efforts are therefore essential.
- Saami youth follow traditional ways of life, including reindeer husbandry and the use of traditional knowledge. They also actively organise across countries within Saami communities and beyond.
- There is a difference in understanding between older and younger generations, chiefly with regard to the value of integrating traditional ecological knowledge with modern approaches.

How do we ensure that national restoration plans recognise the importance of working with local communities, especially those with a close connection to nature, and young people?

How do we ensure that there is an appropriate dialogue?

- Saami people are the only officially recognised Indigenous group within the EU, and the NRL fails to include their knowledge into its framework. For millennia, the Saami have lived together with nature, thereby developing knowledge and solutions for nature restoration.
- There are several Saami youth organisations open to collaboration. It is important that large organisations amplify Saami voices.

'Saami face systemic challenges, including discrimination and unequal power dynamics. [...] Inclusivity and rights for all ethnic backgrounds must be upheld.'



Karin Nutti Pilflykt

How can the NRL contribute to the achievement of the EU's climate targets and the protection of biodiversity?

- This regulation has a win-win aspect: it combines environmental and social policies. Until now, policies have been fragmented and addressed challenges one by one. The NRL allows a nexus approach integrating previous policy and combining all the challenges faced.
- Restoration must not be limited to pilot cases but instead become ordinary management of different socio-environmental systems.
- There is uncertainty about how Member States will be able to reach single objectives. These must be addressed in a shared way to reach common restoration goals. An effort-based approach allows such flexibility.
- National restoration plans will define specific processes to make the overall goals feasible in each habitat type. This is where stakeholders will share their insights to make goals measurable.

What does effective change require?

- Decisions must be science-based and the process must be transparent and participatory. Indeed, ministries, NGOs and technical teams alone cannot achieve change. People must be involved in order for all co-benefits of restoration to be understood.

'Restoration is not against the people or against land activities.'

'It supports them and contributes to agriculture and forestry as it guarantees these sectors for the future.'



**Fernando
Magdaleno Mas**

How would you like to see youth involved?

- The NRL proposal is important but on its own it is not enough to tackle the climate crisis. It marks a change in the right direction, but the EU's climate ambitions are still not convincing.
- The National Youth Council currently emphasises its stance on ecocide and is fighting for its official recognition as a crime. There is still a need to recognise the relationship between environmental rights and human rights.

Does the NRL fall short of what is needed?

- Generally, there are no big examples of good restoration plans in Spain. Plans typically focus more on preventing environmental damage and disasters. Youth also lack specificity when advocating for restoration, failing, for instance, to cite specific measures.

'In general, youth are not consulted and informed enough to be an important part of European decision-making.'

'There is never enough pressure to participate in these processes, especially when it comes to diversity and the inclusion of different voices since youth representatives are often from privileged backgrounds.'

Xabier Triana

National Restoration Plans (NRPs)



How is the development of NRPs expected to unfold?

- Submissions of NRPs to the European Commission are to occur within two years of the Regulation coming into force, following the phased-in approach:
 - First submission of NRPs must cover the period until June 2032, with a strategic overview for the period beyond June 2032.
 - By June 2032, restoration plans shall be submitted for the ten years until 2042 with a strategic overview until 2050¹.
 - By June 2042, plans for the remaining period shall be submitted up to 2050.
- Plans should define the restoration measures required to meet the binding targets set in the law and specify the total area to be restored, as well as a timeline.
- Member States will be responsible for monitoring and reporting on their progress.
- The European Environment Agency will draw up regular technical reports on progress towards the targets. The Commission, in turn, will report to the European Parliament and the Council on the implementation of the Nature Restoration Law.

¹ <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2023/11/09/nature-restoration-council-and-parliament-reach-agreement-on-new-rules-to-restore-and-preserve-degraded-habitats-in-the-eu/>



What are some lingering challenges of developing and implementing NRPs and how can they be addressed?

- Landscapes in need of restoration do not stop at national borders. Horizontal intergovernmental cooperation and vertical stakeholder participation must produce synergized NRPs, thereby acting as key planning instruments to implement large-scale restoration action.
- Financial resources must be channelled towards funding restoration measures by providing a financial plan giving an overview of available funding on all political levels in addition to private funding.
- NRPs must provide an EU-wide methodology for assessing the conditions of ecosystems. Further monitoring systems will be necessary as additional targets will be set for ecosystems for which data and monitoring mechanisms are not yet fully developed.
 - There is a need to minimise administrative burdens through existing frameworks². Member States should highlight linkages to other EU regulations for synergies in national and regional implementation³.
- Member States must ensure that NRPs are developed in a rapid manner to address dangerous ecological and climatic tipping points, incorporating youth perspectives in spurring timely action.

² Birds and Habitats Directive (also known as Nature Directives); Regulation on Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry (LULUCF); Water Framework Directive (WFD); Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD).

³ https://ieep.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/3_-Nature-Restoration-and-Synergies-with-EU-environmental-policies.pdf



Our Reflections

What was the value of this event for promoting youth inclusion in EU environmental legislation?

- The CPYD represented a considerable diversity of participants and provided a space for discussion on the future inclusion of youth, a diversity of ethnic backgrounds, and a wider array of stakeholders in environmental law in Europe and beyond.
- Acting as a symbol for large-scale unity and action required to reverse biodiversity loss, pollution and climate change at the European level and beyond, this event will hopefully serve as an inspiration for young people.
- Furthermore, it shall serve to build partnerships with other youth organisations striving to uphold the integrity of biodiversity in their own communities.

How did the CPYD shed light on opportunities for youth to become further involved in the future?

- The NRL provides opportunities for the improvement and restoration of ecosystems, which will be treated differently by each EU Member State.





- Therefore, the CPYD brought together a rich variety of speakers and participants from different backgrounds and with different expertise to discuss the NRL, with a special focus on the role of youth participation. With NRPs soon to be drawn up, young people should seek to become active in their development and promote the urgency of nature restoration by seeking and being provided employment or advocacy opportunities.
- The inclusion of younger generations would also be a key factor for equity and diversity, enabling more comprehensive and effective measures.

What were the shortcomings of the CPYD?

- Despite having such a wide range of topics and speakers, the CPYD did not manage to engage a large live audience. Since the aim of the event was more symbolic, this fact did not detract from the event's overall value. However, GCE must continue to work to improve its outreach to spaces it and other youth organisations have not yet accessed.





Acknowledgements

Accounting for youth in environmental decision-making is essential for developing nature-based and equity-focused solutions to environmental threats. We would like to sincerely thank Karin Nutti Pilflykt, Xabier Triana and Fernando Magdaleno Mas for their participation in the CPYD and their valuable contributions to discussions on youth stake in the Nature Restoration Law.

Contributors

Fenja Kroos
Damien Jahan
Noah Stommel
Erica Migliorati
Jakob Mohl
Sarah Gangl
Sophia Edejer
Edoardo Gaggi
Isild Gueudet
Marie Tritz
Marta Kaçol
Milan Calloens

Designed by
Andra-Raluca Seghedin

Published:

Images

[pine watt](#) on [Unsplash](#) (cover)

[Sampath Liyanage](#) on [Unsplash](#) (cover)

[Claudio Testa](#) on [Unsplash](#) (pg. 1)

[Markus Spiske](#) on [Unsplash](#) (pg. 2)

[Austin Kehmeier](#) on [Unsplash](#) (pg. 2)

[Callum Shaw](#) on [Unsplash](#) (pg. 3)

[The Climate Reality Project](#) on [Unsplash](#) (pg. 5)

[Johannes Andersson](#) on [Unsplash](#) (pg. 9)

[Bailey Zindel](#) on [Unsplash](#) (pg. 10)

[v2osk](#) on [Unsplash](#) (pg. 11)

[Markus Spiske](#) on [Unsplash](#) (pg. 12)