

The EU 2030 Biodiversity Strategy: Progress, Importance, and Youth Engagement

Part of the European Green Deal, the EU 2030 Biodiversity Strategy (1) aims to restore Europe's biodiversity by 2030, benefiting people, the planet, the climate, and the economy, while working towards the EU's 2050 goals for ecosystem resilience, protection, and restoration. The strategy responds to the urgent need to address biodiversity loss, as shown in the European Environmental Agency's 2020 report, which indicates that 39% of bird species and 75% of habitats in the EU are in insufficient conservation status (2). It also emphasises the need for improved management of protected areas to prevent harm from land use changes, pollution, and unsustainable practices.

Pillar 1: Protecting Nature in the EU

Aligning with the global commitments made by EU Member States under the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework at COP 15 (3), the strategy seeks to **protect 30%** of the EU's land and sea areas, with **a third of these areas under strict protection**. It also proposes a Trans-European Nature Network to establish ecological corridors and stresses the importance of closely monitoring conservation goals.

Pillar 2: Restoring Nature in the EU

It aims to **restore large degraded ecosystems** and achieve a 30% favourable conservation status for habitats and species by 2030. Goals include reversing pollinator decline, reducing pesticide use by 50%, restoring rivers, minimising the impacts of agriculture and fishing, and controlling invasive species.

1. European Commission. (20.5.2020). COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS. EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030. Bringing nature back into our lives. (COM(2020) 380 final). <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A52020DC0380>

2. European Environment Agency. (2024). Biodiversity: state of habitats and species. <https://www.eea.europa.eu/en/topics/in-depth/biodiversity?activeTab=fa515f0c-9ab0-493c-b4cd-58a32dfaae0a>

3. Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity. Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. <https://www.cbd.int/gbf>

Pillar 3: Enabling Transformative Change

The strategy calls for creating a European biodiversity governance framework, setting up a strategic biodiversity research agenda, and enhancing environmental law enforcement. It also includes mobilising **€20 billion annually** to support the strategy's initiatives.

Pillar 4: A Global Biodiversity Agenda

The strategy emphasises international cooperation for ecosystem protection and restoration, working with global partners, and engaging in key events like the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity.

Current Progress and Challenges

In March 2024, the European Commission published its mid-term review of the 8th Environment Action Programme (EAP), which includes the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030. The European Environment Agency (EEA) also published a monitoring report on the EAP in December 2023. Based on these reports, many of the objectives of the Biodiversity Strategy are still unmet.

- 30% protected areas: 26% of terrestrial areas, and only 12% of marine areas are now protected in the EU. Member States are expected to submit a list of existing protected areas and propose additional areas, but so far, only 7 out of 27 countries have submitted their pledges.
- Bird and pollinator populations continue to decline, and forest connectivity has not improved.
- Organic farming covers only 9.1% of agricultural land in the EU, still far from the 25% target set for 2030.

Some progress has been made, such as the adoption of the Nature Restoration Law in June 2024, which sets binding restoration targets for specific habitats and species, covering at least 20% of the EU's land and sea areas by 2030 (4). Member States are expected to draft their National Restoration Plans within two years of the law's implementation. However, the effectiveness of its enforcement remains uncertain and requires close monitoring.

At the current pace, the EU is **unlikely to meet** the Biodiversity Strategy's 2030 targets. European ecosystems continue to face significant pressure from human activities. To achieve these goals, Member States must intensify efforts and **further integrate biodiversity into policies** such as the Common Agricultural Policy and the Common Fisheries Policy.

The progress towards meeting the targets of the Biodiversity Strategy can be followed on the Commission's [dashboard](#) and [actions tracker](#).

Critical Role of Biodiversity in Climate Resilience

- **Protecting ecosystems:** The Biodiversity Strategy aims to legally protect at least 30% of the EU's land and sea by 2030. These protected areas are vital for safeguarding ecosystems from habitat loss and exploitation (5). The Strategy also highlights the importance of species protection, as they contribute to essential ecosystem functions like pollination, seed dispersal, nutrient cycling, and pest control (6).
- **Restoring degraded areas:** Restoring natural areas is crucial not only for species and habitat recovery but also as a tool against climate change (7). The Strategy sets goals to restore degraded ecosystems, focusing on those with high carbon sequestration potential, such as wetlands, peatlands, and seagrass meadows.

4. European Commission, Nature Restoration Law. https://environment.ec.europa.eu/topics/nature-and-biodiversity/nature-restoration-law_en

5. Gray, C. L., Hill, S. L., Newbold, T., Hudson, L. N., Börger, L., Contu, S., ... & Scharlemann, J. P. (2016). Local biodiversity is higher inside than outside terrestrial protected areas worldwide. *Nature communications*, 7(1), 12306. <https://doi.org/10.1038/ncomms12306>; Lester, S. E., Halpern, B. S., Grorud-Colvert, K., Lubchenco, J., Ruttenberg, B. I., Gaines, S. D., ... & Warner, R. R. (2009). Biological effects within no-take marine reserves: a global synthesis. *Marine Ecology Progress Series*, 384, 33-46. <https://doi.org/10.3354/meps08029>; Geldmann, J., Barnes, M., Coad, L., Craigie, I. D., Hockings, M., & Burgess, N. D. (2013). Effectiveness of terrestrial protected areas in reducing habitat loss and population declines. *Biological Conservation*, 161, 230-238. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.biocon.2013.02.018>

6. Giller, P. S., & O'Donovan, G. (2002). Biodiversity and ecosystem function: do species matter?. In *Biology and environment: proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* (Vol. 102, No. 3, pp. 129-139). Royal Irish Academy. <http://dx.doi.org/10.3318/BIOE.2002.102.3.129>

7. Kopsieker, L., Costa Domingo, G., Underwood, E. (2021). Climate mitigation potential of large-scale restoration in Europe. Analysis of the climate mitigation potential of restoring habitats listed in Annex I of the Habitats Directive. Policy Report, Institute for European Environmental Policy. <https://ieep.eu/publications/climate-mitigation-potential-of-large-scale-nature-restoration-in-europe/>

- **Integrating biodiversity across sectors:** To tackle the main causes of biodiversity loss, the strategy integrates conservation goals into sectors like agriculture and fisheries (8). It promotes reducing chemical pesticide and fertiliser use, supporting organic farming, and adopting sustainable fishing practices.
- **Creating long-term change:** The Strategy seeks to establish conditions for sustainable and effective biodiversity conservation through a strengthened governance framework, research, better enforcement, and sufficient funding.
- **Co-benefits:** The Strategy also offers wider societal benefits, including human well-being, climate resilience, and the overall health of the planet. Biodiversity loss poses major risks to ecosystem services (9) that we all depend on. Protecting nature is vital to address climate change impacts, ensure food security, prevent disease outbreaks, and enhance overall quality of life.

Empowering Youth for a Biodiverse Future

Biodiversity degradation presents significant challenges for young Europeans, as it affects planetary boundaries and threatens the livelihoods of current and future generations, placing a disproportionate burden on youth. Young people need healthy, diverse ecosystems for their well-being, health, food security, and resilience against climate change. While the EU 2030 Biodiversity Strategy acknowledges these generational impacts, a stronger response is required to safeguard the well-being of Europe's youth (10).

Young Europeans can play a key role in securing their own future by contributing to the protection of biodiversity. Initiatives like citizen science or hands-on restoration projects provide opportunities for young voices to be heard. Not only can young people play a crucial role in the implementation of this Strategy, but they can also advocate for stronger environmental policies, particularly beyond 2030.

8. Shankar, T., Praharaj, S., Sahoo, U., & Maitra, S. (2021). Intensive farming: It's effect on the environment. *Int. Bimon*, 12, 37480-37487.

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/357423421_Intensive_Farming_It's_Effect_on_the_Environment ; Ortuño Crespo, G., & Dunn, D. C. (2017). A review of the impacts of fisheries on open-ocean ecosystems. *ICES Journal of Marine Science*, 74(9), 2283-2297. <https://doi.org/10.1093/icesjms/fsx084>

9. EUR-Lex - Ecosystem services. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/EN/legal-content/glossary/ecosystem-services.html>

10. European Commission. (20.5.2020). COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS. EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030. Bringing nature back into our lives. (COM(2020) 380 final). <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A52020DC0380>

A societal and cultural shift is now needed to transform our relationship with nature, especially in Europe, where industrialisation and consumerism have historically justified the exploitation and destruction of species and habitats. Amidst the current extinction and climate crises, young people are increasingly challenging outdated approaches to Nature, and promoting new narratives that recognise the inherent value of all communities of life.



Generation Climate Europe (GCE) is the largest coalition of youth-led networks on climate and environmental issues at the European level.

For more info contact us via
biodiversity@gceurope.org!

