



2022/0195(COD)

26.5.2023

## OPINION

of the Committee on Fisheries

for the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety

on the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council  
Nature restoration  
(COM(2022)0304 – C9-0208/2022 – 2022/0195(COD))

Rapporteur for opinion: Caroline Roose

(\*) Associated committee – Rule 57 of the Rules of Procedure

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## SHORT JUSTIFICATION

In 2019, the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) sounded a global alert: ‘Nature is declining globally at rates unprecedented in human history – and the rate of species extinctions is accelerating, with grave impacts on people around the world<sup>1</sup>.’ But the report also said it was not too late to act, provided we act quickly to conserve and restore nature.

The 2019 European Environment Agency report ‘Marine messages II’<sup>2</sup> highlighted the urgent need to take action to restore marine ecosystems, in particular to increase resilience to climate change and to halt biodiversity collapse. The 2020 European Court of Auditors Special Report ‘Marine environment: EU protection is wide but not deep’<sup>3</sup> took stock of the existing legislation and showed that ‘EU protection rules have not led to the recovery of significant ecosystems and habitats’.

The evaluation of the EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020 concluded that the EU had not achieved the goal of restoring at least 15% of degraded ecosystems by 2020. It is therefore logical for ecosystem restoration to be one of the priorities of the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030.

The proposed regulation allows for a change of approach. As Parliament called for, it sets several binding targets for ecosystem restoration. Member States will have to meet these targets by establishing national nature restoration plans, which should mean that implementation can be as close as possible to the areas concerned.

Article 5 of the proposal directly concerns marine ecosystems, therefore including the fisheries sector. The rapporteur chose not to address in this draft opinion Article 4 and Articles 6 to 10, which concern other ecosystems. It should be noted, however, that the restoration of these ecosystems (coastal ecosystems, watercourses) is likely to have a positive impact on maritime fisheries, for example by putting an end to pollution affecting marine ecosystems or by restoring spawning grounds and nurseries where certain marine species reproduce.

The restoration of marine ecosystems goes hand in hand with the objectives of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP). Without healthy ecosystems there can be no healthy fish populations and therefore no fishing. The restoration of degraded marine ecosystems plays a key role in ensuring the long-term sustainability of fishing activities. It is fully in line with the concept of ecosystem-based fisheries management under the CFP.

Ecosystem restoration will require spatial protection measures. A recent study by the European Parliament’s Policy Department for Structural and Cohesion Policies on the costs and benefits of spatial protection measures as tools for fisheries management<sup>4</sup> showed that introducing such measures is economically beneficial for the fisheries and aquaculture sectors, makes it possible

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<sup>1</sup> IPBES (2019): Global assessment report on biodiversity and ecosystem services of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services.

<sup>2</sup> EEA Report No 17/2019 Marine messages II: Navigating the course towards clean, healthy and productive seas through implementation of an ecosystem-based approach.

<sup>3</sup> ECA Special Report 26/2020: Marine environment: EU protection is wide but not deep.

<sup>4</sup> Costs and benefits of spatial protection measures as tools for fisheries management, PE 733.087 - July 2022

to stabilise catches where they are in decline, and is accompanied by job creation and increased income for small-scale fishers.

The rapporteur therefore supports the general approach of the proposal for a regulation and wishes to draw attention to four points in particular.

### **Restoration targets**

The proposal for a regulation provides for targets for the surface where restoration measures should be put in place. While these means-based targets have the advantage of being easily measurable, they need to be accompanied by results-based targets. On the basis of Parliament's resolutions, the recommendations of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and the EU Biodiversity Strategy, the rapporteur proposes targets of restoring at least 30% of degraded marine ecosystems by 2030, 60% by 2040 and 90% by 2050. In order to achieve these results-based targets, the rapporteur also proposes increasing the means-based targets.

### **Implementation of measures to restore marine ecosystems**

The restoration of marine ecosystems differs from the restoration of other types of ecosystems due to the transnational nature of marine ecosystems. The Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union provides that the Union has exclusive competence in the area of conservation of marine biological resources. While Member States will be able to take the necessary measures at national level to implement their national restoration plans for other ecosystems, this will rarely be possible for marine ecosystems.

The Commission has chosen to base the adoption of restoration measures on existing CFP tools, in particular Articles 11 and 18 of the CFP basic regulation (Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013).

The mechanisms in place under the CFP mean that each Member State having an interest in the management of the fisheries activities concerned by a conservation measure must agree with that measure. This requirement for unanimity complicates the adoption of the necessary measures. The European Court of Auditors found in 2020 that in seven years this procedure had been successful in only a very limited number of cases.

There is therefore a real risk that Member States which have included conservation measures in their national restoration plans will not be able to implement them if another Member State opposes them. Measures needed to achieve the targets set by the regulation could be blocked.

In order to avoid this situation, Member States should be encouraged to cooperate in preparing their national restoration plans. It should also be possible for Member States to submit the joint recommendations at the same time as the draft restoration plan. Once the final restoration plan is adopted, a deadline of 12 months should be set for Member States to submit joint recommendations if they have not already been submitted. Finally, in the event of a blockage, the Commission should be able to use the urgency procedure provided for in the CFP basic regulation.

### **Species whose habitat needs to be restored**

The list of species whose habitat needs to be restored (Annex 3) contains around 20 species and has a number of gaps. The rapporteur considers that the list should be extended to cover these additional species, adding species classified as critically endangered or endangered according to IUCN categories, as well as commercial species whose habitat restoration would improve the status of their stocks and benefit fishers in the long term.

### **Transparency and stakeholder participation**

The successful implementation of this regulation will depend largely on the commitment of local communities, including fishers, to the restoration of marine ecosystems. The rapporteur considers that the provisions on stakeholder consultation and transparency contained in the proposal for a regulation should be strengthened. More frequent updating of national restoration plans is also desirable in order to be able to take into account as quickly as possible the data and assessments that will be available.

The Committee on Fisheries calls on the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety, as the committee responsible, to propose rejection of the Commission proposal.

## PROCEDURE – COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

<b>Title</b>	Nature restoration
<b>References</b>	COM(2022)0304 – C9-0208/2022 – 2022/0195(COD)
<b>Committee responsible</b> Date announced in plenary	ENVI 4.7.2022
<b>Opinion by</b> Date announced in plenary	PECH 4.7.2022
<b>Associated committees - date announced in plenary</b>	24.11.2022
<b>Rapporteur for the opinion</b> Date appointed	Caroline Roose 15.9.2022
<b>Discussed in committee</b>	30.11.2022      24.1.2023
<b>Date adopted</b>	24.5.2023
<b>Result of final vote</b>	+:                    15 -:                    13 0:                    0
<b>Members present for the final vote</b>	Clara Aguilera, João Albuquerque, Pietro Bartolo, François-Xavier Bellamy, Isabel Carvalhais, Maria da Graça Carvalho, Asger Christensen, Rosa D’Amato, Francisco Guerreiro, Niclas Herbst, Jan Huitema, France Jamet, Predrag Fred Matić, Caroline Roose, Bert-Jan Ruissen, Marc Tarabella
<b>Substitutes present for the final vote</b>	Martin Hlaváček, Ska Keller, Gabriel Mato, Raffaele Stancanelli, Lucia Vuolo, Stéphanie Yon-Courtin
<b>Substitutes under Rule 209(7) present for the final vote</b>	Pablo Arias Echeverría, Anna-Michelle Asimakopoulou, Marco Campomenosi, Clare Daly, Gilles Lebreton, Mick Wallace

## FINAL VOTE BY ROLL CALL IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

15	+
ECR	Bert-Jan Ruissen, Raffaele Stancanelli
ID	Marco Campomenosi, France Jamet, Gilles Lebreton
PPE	Pablo Arias Echeverría, Anna-Michelle Asimakopoulou, François-Xavier Bellamy, Maria da Graça Carvalho, Niclas Herbst, Gabriel Mato, Lucia Vuolo
Renew	Asger Christensen, Martin Hlaváček, Jan Huitema

13	-
NI	Marc Tarabella
Renew	Stéphanie Yon-Courtin
S&D	Clara Aguilera, João Albuquerque, Pietro Bartolo, Isabel Carvalhais, Predrag Fred Matic
The Left	Clare Daly, Mick Wallace
Verts/ALE	Rosa D'Amato, Francisco Guerreiro, Ska Keller, Caroline Roose

0	0

Key to symbols:

+ : in favour

- : against

0 : abstention