Adopted by
General Assembly

Brussels, Belgium
13-14 November 2026

Motion

Protecting our Wealth:

biodiversity is a must!

Signed by: Youth and Environment Europe (YEE)

Co-signed by: European Alliance of Young Men's Christian Associations (YMCA Europe), Youth of European Nationalities (YEN)

Introduction

Nature, and the biodiversity it contains, makes us rich - not monetarily, but in terms of our well-being. A person who regularly spends time in nature is happier,[1] as this reduces stress[2] and lowers the risk of cardiovascular disease.[3] We therefore have a responsibility to protect the nature around us, and care for the nature that we have. Consequently, laws about nature count as youth rights.

Moreover, biodiversity is key for the health of our planet.[4] If our nature is sufficiently biodiverse, it's able to regenerate the environment. Currently, we're using our planet so extensively as a garbage disposal that it loses this ability. Additionally, with shrinking animal habitats, we are experiencing the human-wildlife conflict more often.

This urgent duty of stewardship was codified in the Birds and Habitats Directive and we must be nature positive by 2030, according to the EU's Nature Restoration law.[5] This means that EU Member States are forbidden from taking action that leads to the degradation of their Natura 2000 lands.

We foresee several problems, each of which could also become an opportunity, both in the implementation of these commitments and in their level of ambition.

First, Member States do too little to prevent land degradation. Their goals often reflect a paper reality that does not capture the real damage that certain industries create. With long intervals between monitoring rounds and a narrow focus on selected industries, European nature is losing its biodiversity. Member States should take the lead in improving the state of nature, starting by using science-based thresholds, ending destructive practices and promoting genetic diversity among species.

Secondly, the European Commission should have more confidence in the strength of individuals and civil society. By providing funding and accessible information on existing opportunities, community based restoration and rewilding actions would be able to thrive. Community-based restoration is preferable because it ensures local ownership, embeds ecological knowledge of the area and keeps the benefits of restoration (i.e. well-being, education and local economies) with the people who live closest to the land, rather than with external actors.

Lastly, we want to highlight the role of agriculture in nature conservation. The agricultural sector is vital for preventing famine and for creating a prosperous society. However, we need to be deliberate and selective about how the agricultural sector is shaped. Where agricultural practices exceed what land and ecosystems can sustain, such as habitat removal, monocultures and excessive nutrient loads, they degrade the soil, water and biodiversity on which both nature and farming itself depend. For the future of our planet and our well-being, the Common European Agricultural Policy (CAP) needs to further incentivise regenerative production and measures to boost biodiversity, for example via financial support in the Multiannual Financial Framework. In transitioning towards a sustainable food system, the European Commission must support young farmers and rural communities throughout the process.

1 https://www.utwente.nl/nl/bms/nieuws/2024/4/1469588/observeren-van-de-natuur-maakt-gelukkiger

2 https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S1618866720307494

3 https://www.mdpi.com/1660-4601/18/9/4790

4 https://www.uu.nl/achtergrond/waarom-is-biodiversiteit-belangrijk

5 https://environment.ec.europa.eu/topics/nature-and-biodiversity/nature-restoration-regulation_en

Call for action

Considering the above stated observations and considerations, we call for the following:

The European Commission

- To compel Member States when they do not comply with the regulated deadlines via the infringement procedure;
- To make financial resources available for civil society organisations to implement community-based restoration and rewilding actions and to codify this in the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF);
- To incentivise a shift to a regenerative food-system, ensuring policies, protect small farmers, young farmers, rural communities and communities affected by agricultural pollution, via financial (in MFF) and regulatory interventions;
- To transition towards a society without agricultural pollution near Natura2000 areas by regulating clear reduction targets for agricultural nitrogen and ammonia emissions;
- To work towards minimising agricultural nitrogen and ammonia emissions through science-based, proportionate and differentiated reduction targets that reflect natural conditions and the biological realities of farming as a contribution to the EU's zero pollution vision;
- To implement European regulation that promotes human-wildlife coexistence, in line with the Bern convention;
- To implement strong implementation of the Kumming-Montreal Global Biodiversity framework;
- To implement an ecosystem-based approach to habitat management;
- To promote sustainably produced European agricultural products through quality and origin schemes, clear labelling and public procurement that rewards farmers for higher environmental standards;
- To align EU trade policy with its biodiversity objectives by requiring, where compatible with international trade rules, that imported agricultural products meet environmental and animal welfare standards equivalent to those applied to European producers.

European countries

- To codify approaches that lead to land conservation, restoration and rewilding in national law;
- To make financial resources available for civil society organisations to implement community-based restoration and rewilding actions;
- To codify policies that protect small farms, young farmers, rural communities and communities affected by agricultural pollution into law;
- To support the transition for farmers and rural communities affected by the shift away from environmentally harmful agricultural models towards environmentally friendly agricultural practices, such as regenerative agricultural business models, with income support, diversification opportunities, training and support for sustainable livelihoods;
- To implement national regulation that promotes human-wildlife coexistence, in line with the Bern convention.

Member Organisations of the European Youth Forum

- To support and advocate for strong implementation of regulations and laws that lead to a nature positive landscape;
- To collaborate with local, regional, national and international civil society organisations to implement community based restoration and rewilding actions.







Co-funded by the European Union

The European Youth Forum is funded by the European Union and the Council of Europe. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union, the Council of Europe or the European Youth Foundation. Neither the European Union nor any other granting authority can be held responsible for them.