



Policy brief

Restoring Nature for a Resilient Future

A Roadmap for National Implementation

Key Messages

- **Translate EU targets into clear, ambitious and comparable national objectives** to create a shared understanding of successful implementation while allowing for local differences.
- **Align legislation, funding and land-use policies with restoration objectives** so that existing policies and public resources support, rather than undermine, restoration.
- **Reduce administrative bottlenecks and clarify responsibilities** to minimise uncertainty and delays for restoration actors.
- **Provide long-term funding and implementation capacity** that reflects the timescales and resources needed for effective restoration.
- **Build shared monitoring and evaluation into restoration from the outset** to identify what works, strengthen the evidence base and support wider replication.
- **Strengthen cross-disciplinary knowledge sharing and restoration capacity** so practitioners can access expertise and lessons learned across disciplines, projects and countries.
- **Make adaptive restoration part of implementation** so that measures can evolve in response to evidence, new knowledge and changing environmental conditions.
- **Build mechanisms to scale successful approaches** so effective restoration can reach more landscapes and engage more landowners.

Introduction

Nature restoration is a crucial tool for adapting to the consequences of climate change and halting biodiversity loss, both of which pose growing risks to livelihoods, security, and wellbeing across the Baltic Sea region. The European Union (EU) Nature Restoration Regulation (NRR) marks a major step towards reversing ecosystem degradation across Europe. As Member States work towards submitting draft national restoration plans by 1 September 2026, with final plans expected by September 2027, the focus must shift from setting targets to ensuring that restoration can be effectively planned, implemented, monitored and adapted in practice.

This policy brief was developed by the Baltic Sea Region Youth Forum Working Group on Environment & Climate Change, drawing on interviews with practitioners and organisations involved in nature restoration across the Baltic Sea region. Their experiences highlight a range of practical barriers and opportunities that can shape the success of restoration efforts.

The recommendations presented here focus on the practical conditions needed to translate the NRR's targets into effective restoration action on the ground, providing guidance for policymakers, public authorities and practitioners involved in implementation. They address key stages of the restoration process, from preparing for implementation and enabling effective delivery to monitoring, adapting, and scaling successful approaches.

Why Nature Restoration Matters

Healthy ecosystems are essential for resilient societies. They store carbon, regulate water, protect against floods and droughts, maintain soil fertility, support food production and provide habitats for biodiversity. As climate change and biodiversity loss intensify, restoring degraded ecosystems is increasingly important for strengthening the resilience of communities, economies and natural systems.

Across the Baltic Sea region, ecosystems are under pressure from eutrophication, pollution, drainage, intensive agriculture and other forms of land and resource use, with consequences for both nature and society. Floods and droughts put pressure on agriculture, infrastructure and water availability, while biodiversity loss undermines ecosystem health and resilience. In the Baltic Sea, these pressures have contributed to declining fish stocks, affecting both biodiversity and the incomes and jobs of coastal communities. The region further has a special responsibility for its large share of wetlands, which, before extensive drainage, provided vital habitats and stored significant amounts of carbon.

Nature restoration can help reverse these trends and rebuild the capacity of ecosystems to support people and nature, making it an investment in a resilient Baltic Sea region. The region's ecological diversity create significant opportunities for restoration, from recovering degraded wetlands and peatlands to improving the health of marine, freshwater and terrestrial ecosystems. Together, these efforts can strengthen biodiversity, ecosystem health and the region's ability to adapt to climate change.

Recommendations

A. Prepare: Establish the Conditions for Effective Restoration

- **Recommendation 1: Translate EU targets into clear, ambitious, and comparable national objectives**

Member States should translate the targets of the NRR into clear, specific and ambitious national objectives, while maintaining a common understanding of what successful restoration looks like across the region. National targets and implementation plans should provide sufficient clarity on the ecosystems, areas and outcomes to be restored, as well as the responsibilities and timescales involved.

- **Recommendation 2: Align legislation, funding, and land-use policies with restoration objectives**

Restoration objectives should be reflected consistently across agricultural, water, forestry and land-use policies at a domestic and EU level. Existing legislation, management programmes and funding mechanisms should be reviewed to identify policies, practices or incentives that conflict with the restoration objectives.

Public funding should increasingly support land uses and management practices that contribute to ecosystem recovery, rather than maintaining activities that undermine restoration efforts. For example, the EU Common Agricultural Policy should provide stronger incentives for nature-friendly and restoration-compatible land uses, such as paludiculture on rewetted peatlands. The ongoing review of the EU Water Framework Directive should likewise strengthen support for natural hydrological conditions where appropriate, including by reducing pressures from drainage and rapid water removal.

- **Recommendation 3: Reduce administrative bottlenecks and clarify responsibilities**

Inconsistent permitting procedures, complex funding applications and unclear responsibilities create significant delays and uncertainty for restoration projects. The EU and Member States should streamline authorisation and funding processes, establish clear responsibilities across relevant authorities, and ensure consistent and proportionate procedures.



B. Deliver & Assess: Make Restoration Implementable and Measurable

- **Recommendation 4: Provide long-term funding and implementation capacity**

Nature restoration is a long-term process that requires sustained planning, implementation, monitoring and management. Funding mechanisms should reflect these timescales by providing continuity across the different stages of a restoration project, and across political cycles and changes in government, rather than relying primarily on short-term funding cycles.

Adequate resources are also needed to build the capacity to deliver restoration effectively. Local authorities, project managers and practitioners need sufficient staff, technical expertise and training to manage complex restoration processes, including stakeholder engagement, land acquisition, planning, permitting and long-term monitoring.

- **Recommendation 5: Build shared monitoring and evaluation into restoration from the outset**

Monitoring is essential for understanding whether restoration measures deliver their intended ecological outcomes. Yet current

approaches often remain fragmented at project level, limiting opportunities to compare results and learn across initiatives.

Experiences from restoration practitioners in the Baltic Sea region highlight the value of shared approaches that allow knowledge and results to travel between projects, which could include regional collaborations through CBSS.

- **Recommendation 6: Strengthen cross-disciplinary knowledge sharing and restoration capacity**

Effective restoration requires collaboration between ecologists, planners, engineers, scientists, land managers, and local authorities. Policymakers should support opportunities for these practitioners to exchange knowledge, access best practices and develop the skills needed to plan and deliver restoration effectively.

C. Review & Scale: Learn, Adapt and Expand What Works

- **Recommendation 7: Make adaptive restoration part of implementation**

Restoration frameworks should allow plans and management measures to be adjusted in response to monitoring results, emerging scientific knowledge and changing environmental conditions, including the impacts of climate change. Adaptive management should be recognised as an essential part of effective restoration rather than as a deviation from the original plan. Providing sufficient flexibility within implementation frameworks would allow practitioners to respond to new evidence, address unforeseen challenges adapt restoration measures as climate conditions change, improving outcomes over time.

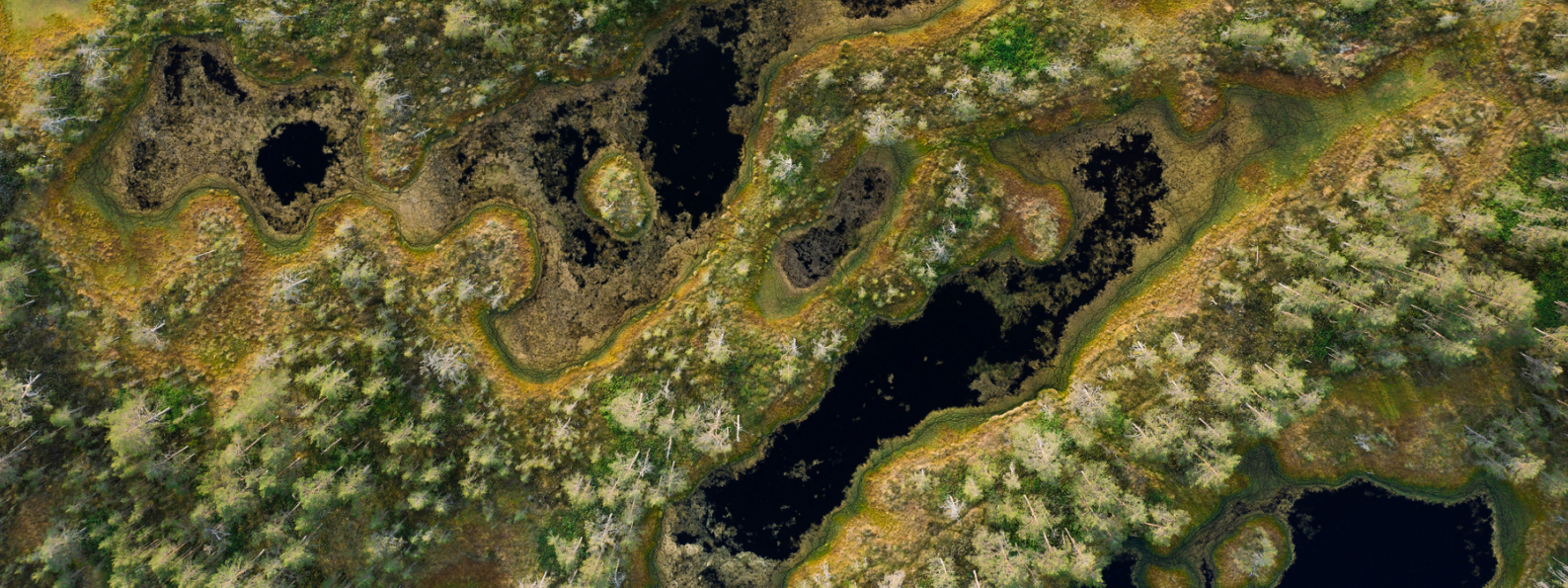
- **Recommendation 8: Build mechanisms to scale successful approaches**

Successful restoration approaches should be made easier to replicate across projects, landscapes, and countries. Policymakers should support networks that connect restoration initiatives, facilitate the exchange of best practices and create opportunities to build on approaches that have demonstrated positive results.

Scaling restoration will also require diverse and accessible sources of finance. Public funding should be complemented by mechanisms that can mobilise private investment and incentivise restoration on privately managed land, including voluntary markets and other emerging financing models. Clear frameworks and safeguards will be important to ensure that such mechanisms support genuine, additional restoration and complement rather than replace public responsibility for meeting restoration targets.

From Regulation to Restoration

The EU Nature Restoration Regulation provides an important framework for reversing ecosystem degradation across Europe. However, successful restoration requires more than ambitious targets. Member States need clear implementation pathways, aligned policies and funding, efficient administrative processes, robust monitoring, opportunities for adaptation, and mechanisms that enable knowledge and successful approaches to move between projects and across borders.



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Contributing Organisations

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About this Policy Brief

The Baltic Sea Region Youth Forum (BSRYF) is an independent youth-led platform associated with the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS). The Working Group on Environment & Climate Change brings together young volunteers aged 16–29 from across the Baltic Sea region to work on environmental and climate-related issues. Further information can be found at www.cbss.org/youth/.

This policy brief draws on interviews with organisations and practitioners involved in nature restoration across the region. The insights gathered through these conversations also form the basis of the **Steps for Nature** podcast, published in the lead-up to Baltic Sea Day on 27 August 2026.

Listen to the podcast here:

