

# Peatland Paper - Green Demands for restoration and protection!

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## Improve Protection

### Goals:

- Stop destruction/ habitat conversion
- Stop deterioration, improve protection status, improve ecological function, notably carbon sinks and biodiversity reserve

### Instruments:

#### *Stop flushing money down the drain(age)*

Phase out any funding or subsidies relating to unsustainable use of wetland and peatland under drained condition (e.g. for agricultural, horticultural, forestry, or use for combustion) immediately. All relevant legislation must prohibit the use of EU subsidies for converting or draining wetlands and peatlands (CAP, cohesion, transport...). [Read more](#).

#### *Stop digging*

Phase out the use of peat in horticulture (vegetable gardening, plant breeding, professional as well as private) and in combustion for energy generation or heating. These practices must be banned by EU legislation as soon as possible. The EU's Birds and Habitats Directives must be properly implemented by all Member States, who must ensure strict adherence to the site-specific management plans; the EU commission must seriously defend European law and be ready to press for infringement procedures in cases of negligence. Especially regarding planning permission, control systems must be put in place to protect all sites as a priority. Peat extraction must be limited to certain specific purposes (e.g. medical or scientific use) where there is no alternative.

#### *Cleaner water and soil*

Stop exemptions to the Water Framework Directive to preserve effectively wetlands and peatlands. Adequately reflect the important role of wetlands and peatlands in the management of the water cycle (e.g. flood prevention) in the Water Framework Directive. They should be recognised as a specific form of water bodies requiring large buffer zones to avoid eutrophication. Member States can be supported in remediating degraded sites or restore long-converted, drained or degraded wetlands as part of climate change mitigation plans, through the LIFE+ budget (which should be substantially increased) and cohesion/regional funding instruments.

# Rewet and Restore

## Goals

- Adopt ambitious legislation
- Secure EU funding
- Acquire (additional) private funding for preservation and restoration measures

## Instruments

### *EU Nature Restoration Plan*

Set specific legally binding targets for restoration of wetlands and peatlands in the EU, related to the individual situation in each Member State and downsized for every Member State. Ensure commitment of Member States to fulfil these targets. Protection of complete peatland bodies and catchment areas is necessary. Provide approaches for spill-over effects (e.g., endangered species now living on drained peatland because their original habitat was destroyed). Encourage Member States to declare biodiversity protection and climate action as overriding public interest so that blockade of restoration projects by single land owners is no longer possible.

### *EU Climate Framework*

Peatland greenhouse gas emissions are included in the Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry (LULUCF) sector, but largely overlooked. Peatlands feature as “organic soils” in different land use categories like cropland management, grassland management, forest management and wetlands. Drainage-based agricultural land use has the highest share of emissions. Peatlands cover only 5 % of EU’s agricultural land but are responsible for about 25 % of total emissions of agriculture and agricultural land use and counteract the possible forest sink. Ambitious targets should be set in the updated LULUCF regulation; rewetting of peatlands must be explicitly mentioned as nature-based solution in the EU’s climate policy and strict criteria for eco-schemes related to rewetting peatland have to be established to incentivise farmers to change to practices that can be used on wetlands (paludiculture).

### *LIFE and ESIF Programmes*

Set aside sufficient funding in LIFE and ESIF for restoration of wetlands and peatlands. (Some states already use ERDF-funding to finance peatland restoration.) Make sure that long duration of the projects is guaranteed, as this is essential for success. Co-funding thresholds must be lowered in order to allow participation of less wealthy Member States and communities. Create special funds for minimal-invasive practices which often are needed in smaller peatlands. Set up exchanges between communities and civil services to share best practice for re-wetting operations. Find synergies between re-wilding initiatives and reintroduction of keystone species (e.g. beavers as hydrological system engineers). Invest EU/public funds in community initiatives including conflict mediation; find synergies for tourism to benefit local communities.

### *FFH Directive*

Require peatland protection as a conservation objective of protected areas with corresponding habitats, corrections of the alignment and implementation deficits in extension of Natura 2000 protection status to all pristine peatlands.

### *MoorFutures for all*

Create EU peatland carbon credits building on MoorFutures for voluntary compensation of unavoidable CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. Open for individuals or businesses, not as a tradeable compensation scheme or replacement of emission reduction, but for voluntary participation in climate action, bringing back Europe’s ecosystems + increasing perception. The German example is already promising. [Read more here and here](#)

# Use Sustainably

## Goals

- Show sustainable ways to use rewetted peatlands
- Provide possibilities for agriculture and land owners
- Produce recyclable and sustainable construction materials

## Instruments

### *Change CAP to change agriculture*

It is fundamental to have coherence in our policies to preserve our wetlands and peatlands. Stopping subsidies to draining and to irrigation, which are the main causes for the deterioration of peatlands and wetlands, is central to preserve these carbon sinks, the specific biodiversity and to tackle climate change.

### *Promotion of paludiculture*

Educate professionals in agriculture and forestry on the concept of Paludiculture through dedicated programmes. Paludiculture is the sustainable use of wet peatlands through biomass production or low intensity grazing by water buffaloes or hardy varieties of cows and other wetland-adapted animals, while preserving the wetland ecosystem. [Read more:](#)

MS should be encouraged to introduce paludiculture, which does not disturb the organic soil, in the CAP as an eco-scheme or as rural development programmes, linked to stewardship commitments and payments for public goods, with careful scrutiny of grazing densities/pressure vs. results (biodiversity and carbon sink).

Use other existing CAP measures for marketing to promote products maintaining high-nature value (HNV) farming systems, rural communities and habitats; encourage exchanges of best practice between administrations and communities. Encourage bottom-up approaches to empower wetland communities to come together to plan and protect and if appropriate obtain a sustainable income from their habitats e.g. via the LEADER programme in the CAP's rural development pillar.

### *Paludiculture Premiums and MoorFutures*

Dedicate specific CAP premiums to paludiculture, on top of first pillar subsidies per hectare. Reimburse land owners forfeiting their cultivated agricultural use of peatland for the sake of restoration, or rather encourage them to switch to low density, low intensity grazing via paludiculture and be rewarded by CAP eco-schemes and compensated by CAP rural development measures.

### *Include life cycle assessment in revision of Construction Products Regulation*

Provide premiums for sustainable nature-based construction materials made from paludiculture products.

# Improve Knowledge

## Goals

- Increase knowledge on status and ecology
- Monitoring in whole EU

## Instruments

### *Improve + empower research*

Continue to support research on climate and biodiversity of wetlands/peatlands. Especially the Greifswald Mire Centre (GMC) is renowned for their trailblazing research on peatlands worldwide.

Their work needs to be properly funded, including educational programmes to ensure that more research is done worldwide. At the same time, the scientific knowledge already available serves as a basis for energetic and comprehensive protection of peatland-

#### *EU (& world) wide monitoring and of peatland and wetlands*

Bring together relevant partners (EEA, JRC, GMC, Wetlands International-European Association etc.) to identify and agree the most suitable approach for a peatland monitoring and mapping in the EU. Such a Service could help to identify threats like illegal peat extraction, drainage and habitat conversion to agriculture and forestry. This service could be offered to all signatories of the Paris Agreement as Copernicus data is not restricted to Europe

EU efforts should support the Global Peatland Assessment which is currently implemented by the partners of the Global Peatlands Initiative and coordinated by UN Environment.

Additionally, monitoring of typical species should be mandatory which needs training and funding. Interpretation of satellite images could be included in Earth observation programmes, to classify/identify plant communities (desiccation leading to succession), also to monitor water balance/saturation and other relevant parameters.

## People's Part

### Goals

- Raise awareness for the importance and beauty of bogs + wetlands
- Support bottom-up community initiatives to create ownership for ecological targets

### Instruments

#### *PR Campaign*

Create public attention through videos on social media, photo competitions, advertising, events etc. Focus on the role for climate and biodiversity or sustainable livelihoods. This must be a long-term exercise in order to get the message across.

#### *Adopt A Bog / Adopt a Fen*

Support and stimulate partnerships of businesses/groups/families/communities to engage in bog protection and restoration. Create projects for hands-on experience within youth programmes. Use existing EU/MS co-funded approaches such as LEADER or the European agricultural fund for rural development (EARFD) to bring communities together to protect their wetland habitats and find sustainable income streams.

#### *Green Tourism*

Support initiatives for gentle exploration of these fascinating ecosystems. For example, wooden trails with information boards can combine nature experience with scientific knowledge.