Bring back bogs! Green Demands

Draft for public consultation

# Improve Knowledge and Protection

**Goals**:

Increase knowledge on status and ecology

Stop destruction/ habitat conversion

Stop deterioration, improve protection status, improve ecological functioning, notably Carbon sinking

Lessen impact

**Instruments:**

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

Mandate the EEA to make use of the already existing COPERNICUS Data and initiatives funded by its Horizon programme (like Satellite-based Wetland Observation Service - SWOS<https://www.swos-service.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/jo_swos_20seiter_210x210_eng_240918.pdf> ) to map and monitor its wetlands and peatland areas and 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.
Additionally, monitoring of typical species should be increased which needs training and funding. Interpretation of satellite images could be included in Earth observation programmes, to classify/identify plant communities (desiccation -> succession), also to monitor water balance/saturation etc.

*Improve + empower research*

Continue to support research on climate and biodiversity of wetlands. Especially the Greifswald Mire Centre is renowned for their trailblazing research on bogs + mires world wide. Their work needs to be properly funded, including educational programmes to ensure that more research is done worldwide.

*Stop flushing money down the drain(age)*

Phase out any funding or subsidies relating to unsustainable use of wetland and peatland (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.. )

*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 the Member States, who must ensure strict adherence to the site specific management plans; the EU commission must 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 priorities. Peat extraction must be limited to certain specific purposes (e.g. medical or scientific use) where there’s no alternative.

The Swiss example shows that there are substitute materials available and an also provides the blueprints for an exit plan:.<https://www.bafu.admin.ch/bafu/en/home/topics/economy-consumption/info-specialists/peat-exit-plan.html>

*Cleaner water and soil*

Adequately reflect the important role of wetlands and peatland 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. MS can be helped to remediate degraded sites or restore long-converted, drained or degraded wetlands as part of climate change mitigation plans, through the LIFE+ budget (which should be greatly increased) and cohesion/regional funding instruments.

Additionally, their water and soil should be explicitly addressed in the upcoming zero pollution action plan.

# 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 bogs, mires and wetlands in the EU, if possible, related to the individual situation in each member state. Ensure commitment of member states to fulfil these targets. Provide approaches for spill-over effects (e.g., endangered species now living on drained peatland because their original habitat was destroyed)

*LIFE and ESIF Programmes*

Set aside sufficient funding in LIFE and ESIF for restoration of bogs and wetlands. Make sure that longer duration of the projects is guaranteed as it is essential for success. Lower co-funding thresholds to allow participation of poorer MS/communities. Create special funds for minimal-invasive practices which often are needed in hill moors. 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 (wildlife vs forestry); find synergies for tourism to benefit local communities.

*MoorFutures for all*

Create EU Moor Future Certificates for optional compensation of unavoidable CO2 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. German example shows first successes <https://www.moorfutures.de/konzept/>

# Use Sustainably

**Goals**

Show sustainable ways to use bogs and mires

Provide possibilities for agriculture and land owners

Produce recyclable and sustainable construction materials

**Instruments**

*Promotion of paludiculture*

Educate professionals in agriculture and forestry on the concept of Paludiculture through dedicated programmes. Paludiculture is the sustainable use of wet bogs, mires, moors etc. through biomass production or low intensity grazing by water buffaloes or hardy varieties of cows and other wetland-adapted ruminants, while preserving the wetland ecosystem.
MS should be encouraged to introduce paludiculture 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 sinking).
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.

# People’s Part

**Goals**

Raise awareness for the importance of bogs + wetlands

Bottom-up community initiatives to create ownership for ecological targets

Share beauty and specialty of these ecosystems

**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*

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.

*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.

*Bottom-up community initiatives*

Use existing EU/MS co-funded approaches such as LEADER (rural development fund of the CAP) to bring communities together to protect their wetland habitats and find sustainable income streams.