



RESILIENT WETLANDS

EXPLORING THE ROLE OF
INLAND WETLANDS & PEATLANDS
IN MITIGATING CLIMATE CHANGE

Current status of the EU policy context related to wetland restoration

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22 November 2023

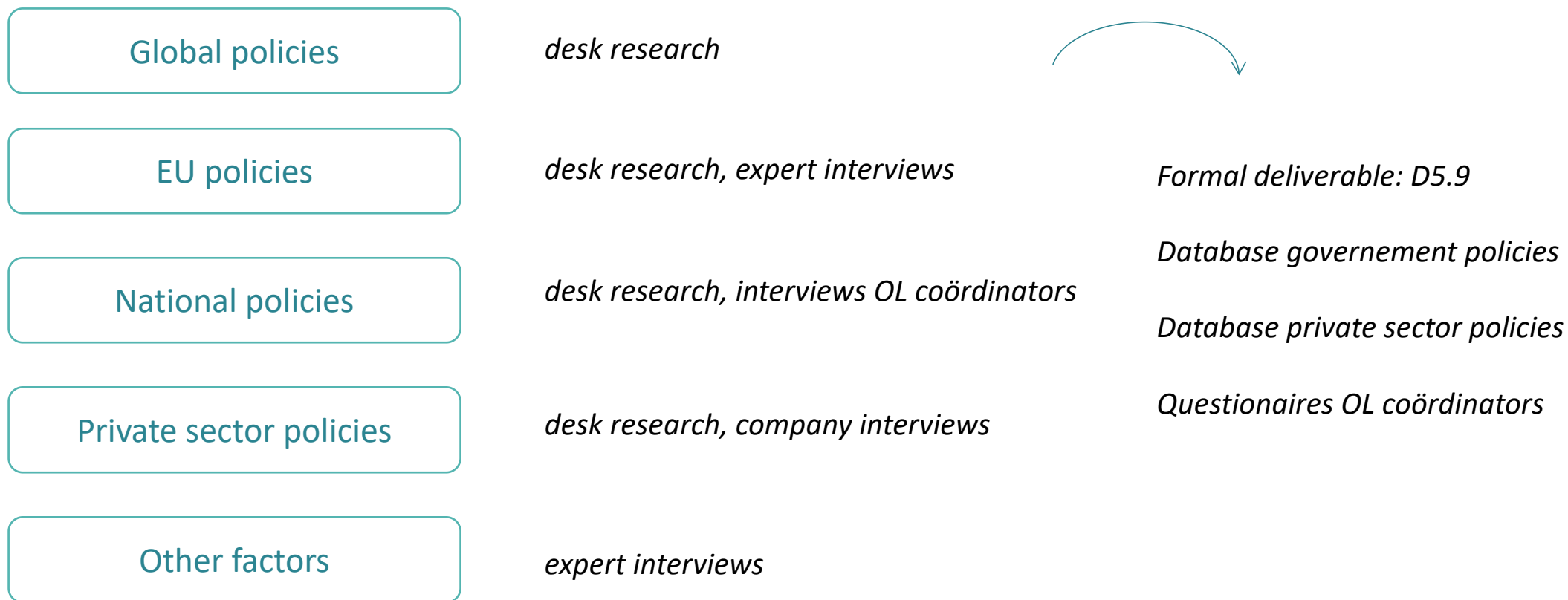


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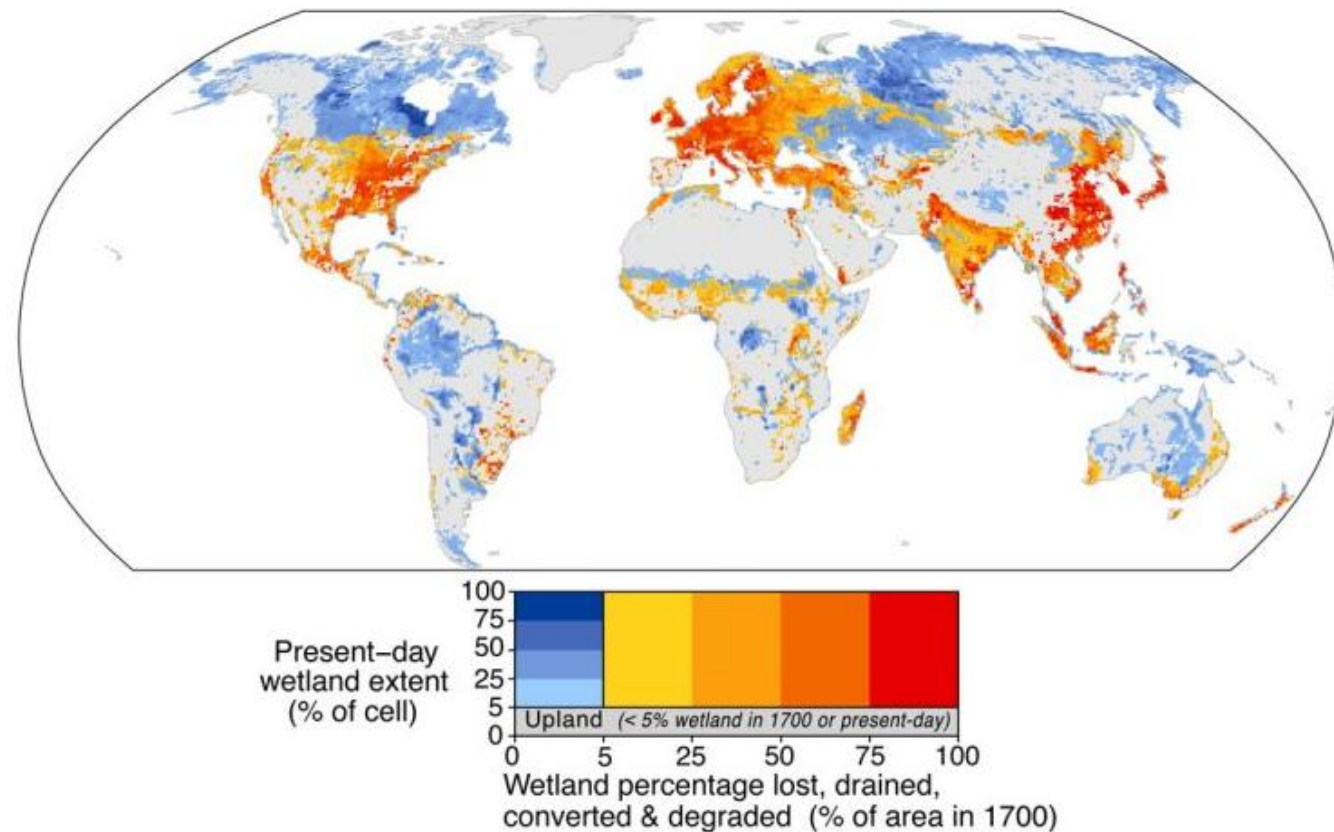
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Policy overview for healthy wetlands

enabling or disabling wetland restoration



- Over the past 300 years an estimated 20% of global wetlands have been destroyed.
- Europe, was the worst affected area, with Ireland losing more than 90% of its wetlands, Germany, Lithuania and Hungary more than 80% and the UK, the Netherlands and Italy more than 75%.

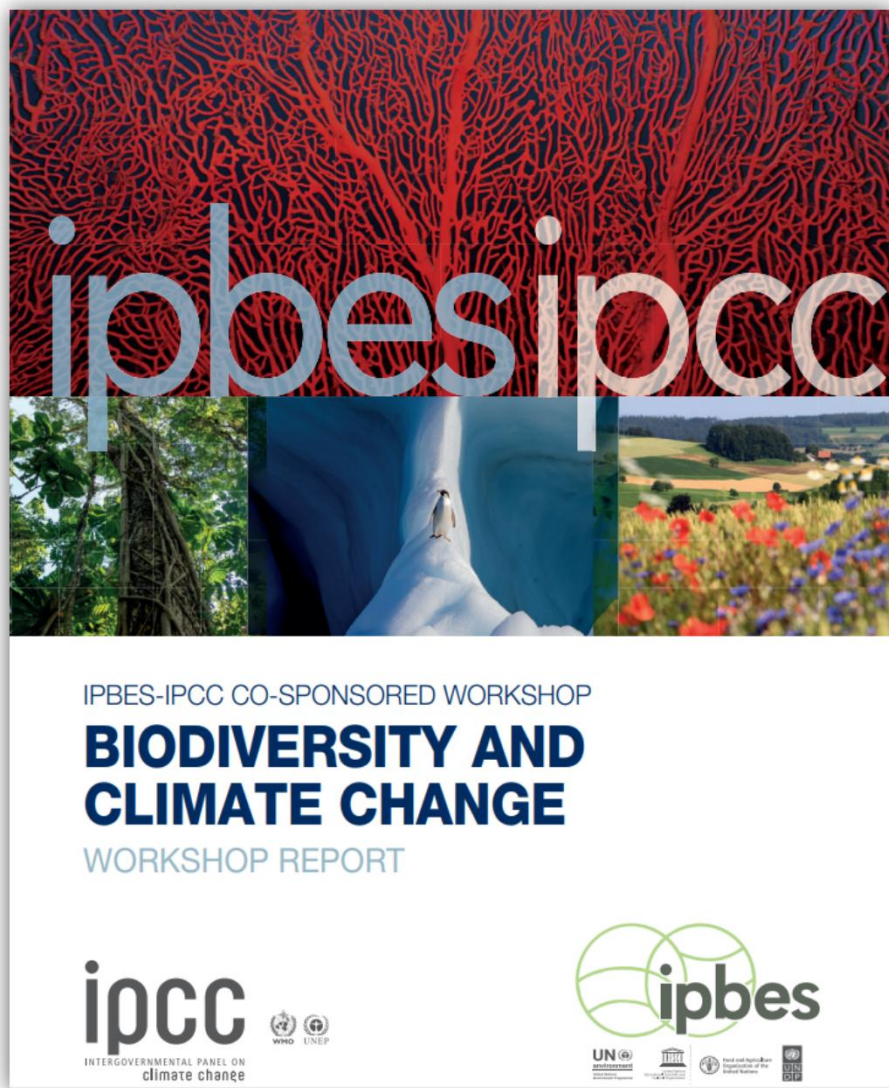


Global Policies



CONVENTION ON WETLANDS
(Ramsar, Iran, 1971)



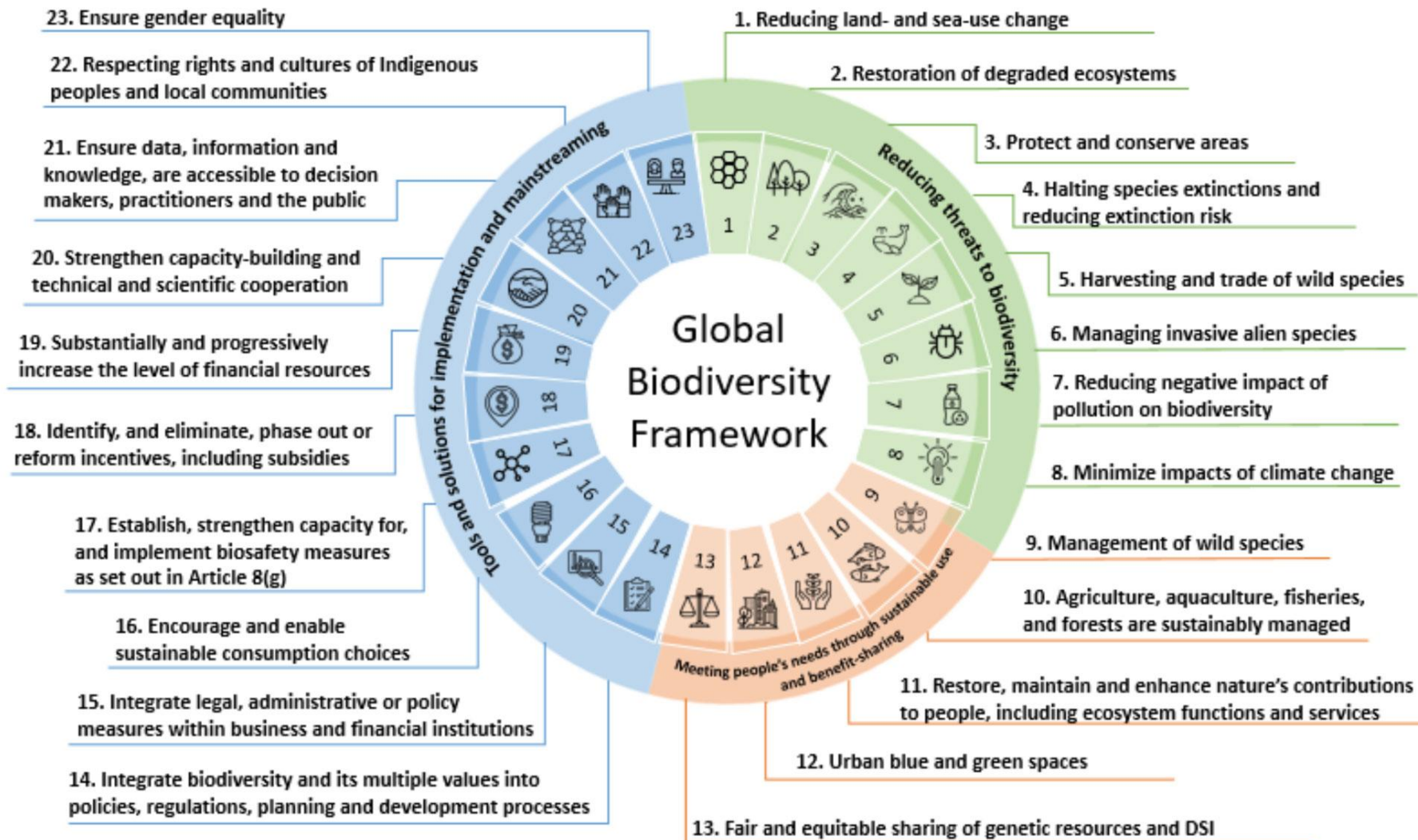


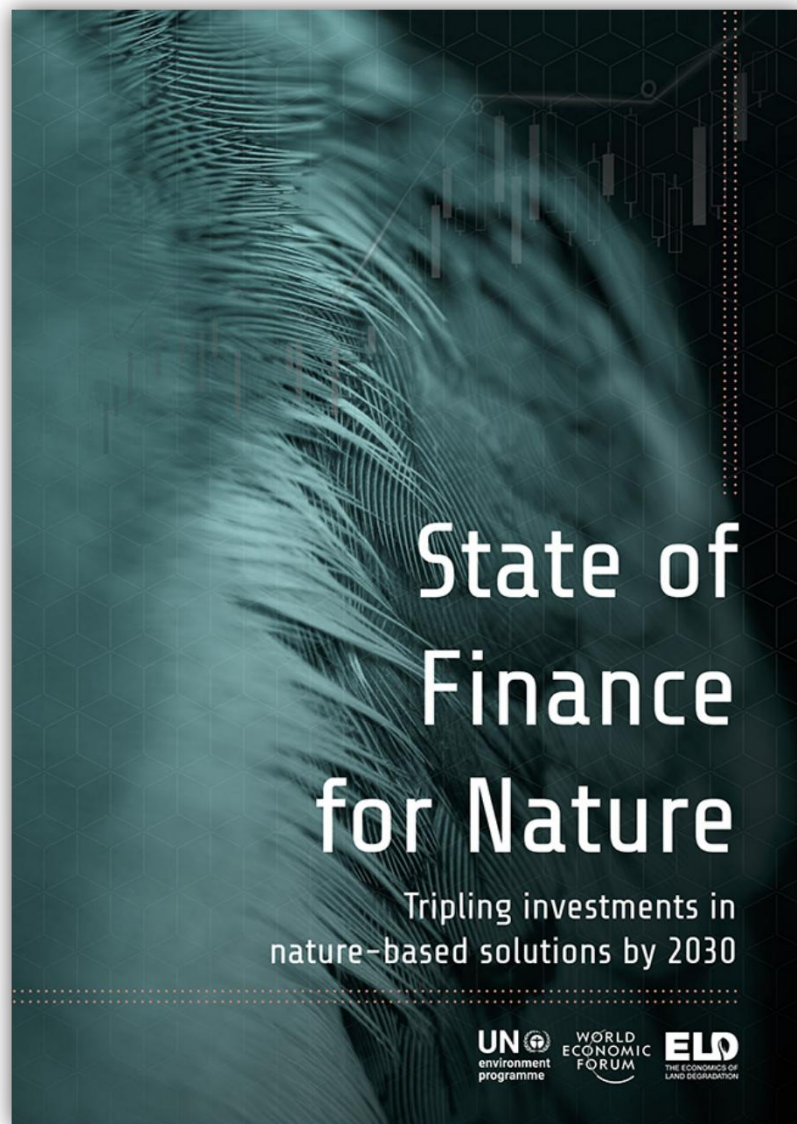
Climate Change and Biodiversity Loss Must Be Tackled Together, Not Separately

The two leading science groups studying ecosystems and climate urged protection of carbon-rich habitats and warned against solutions to warming that lower species diversity

Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework

Themes and Targets





Investments in nature-based solutions must at least triple by 2030 and increase four-fold by 2050 to meet climate change, biodiversity, and land degradation targets”



- Global goals often **not legally binding** and strongly depend on commitment of signatories
- This may be **prone to political realities** on the ground and (sub)national power relations.
- To safeguard and restore wetland ecosystems would require **strong international and national incentives** that enable to break with business as usual development scenarios.
- Wetland degradation, climate change and biodiversity loss must be seen as **an integral part of other policies** like trade, finance, energy, water, agriculture, infrastructure and spatial planning.

EU Policies relevant to wetlands

Biodiversity strategy

Protect nature & reverse the degradation of ecosystems

Nature Restoration Regulation

Restore >20% of land and sea areas by 2030

Birds & Habitats Directive

Favourable conservation status of >1000 species and 230 habitat types



Carbon Removal Certification Framework

Scale up carbon removal activities

Regulation on LULUCF

EU-level carbon removal target of 310Mt CO₂eq in 2030

Water Framework Directive

Good chemical and ecological status of all water bodies by 2027

Methane strategy

slash CH₄ emissions by 30% by 2030

Climate Law:

cut GHG emissions by >55% in 2030

Soil strategy

All EU soils in healthy state by 2050

Common Agriculture Policy

Nitrates Directive

Reduce nitrates pollution from agriculture

Directive on Soil Monitoring and Resilience

Make sustainable soil management the norm

Farm to fork strategy

Accelerate transition to a sustainable food system

Regulation on Sustainable Use of Plant Protection Products

How are draft national CAP Plans doing on Protection of peatlands and wetlands?



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- **EU policies and legislation have been and are key in setting the norms and targets for nature and environment in the EU**
 - **EU policy and legislation, and how it has been implemented in the members states, has not resulted in achievement of a healthy states of wetlands in Europe**
 - **Without the EU legislation the situation (to reach conservation targets) would have been worse**

EU Policies

- Most relevant components in relation to wetlands restoration is **EBS** (with NRL as main implementation instrument) the **climate action plan** and **Farm to Fork strategy**.
- The final version of the proposed NRL was proposed in November 2023. How it will be implemented and enforced by Member States will be a determining factor for wetlands restoration in Europe.



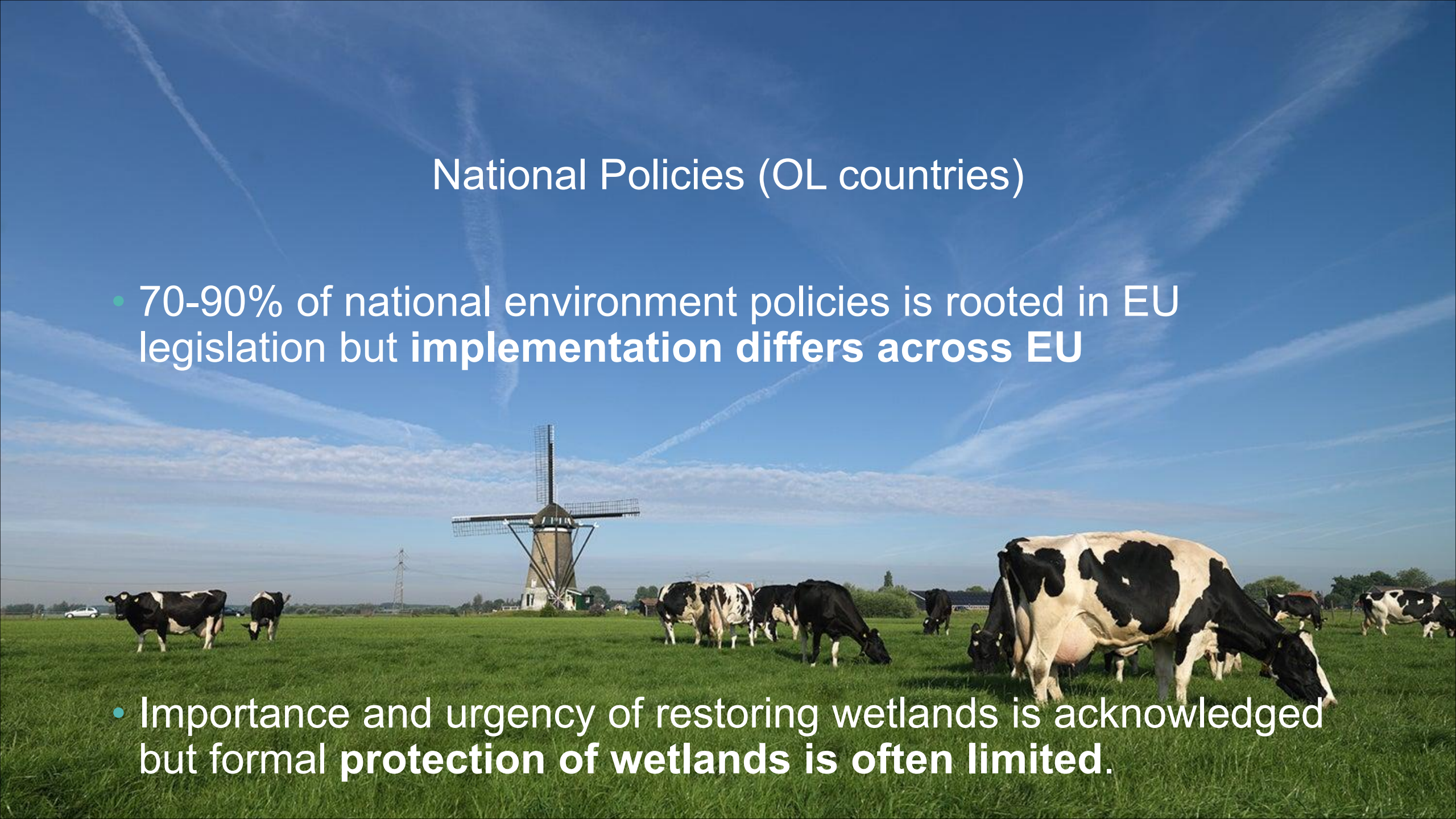
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- **Coherence of EU policies with the Green Deal remains a challenge**, in particular when it concerns the CAP.
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 - **We've seen ambition levels fall in EU Green Deal (proposed) legal instruments** such as the NRL and Directive on Soil Monitoring and Resilience

Final text NRL after trilogue session

- Restore >30% of habitats in poor condition by 2030, 60% by 2040 and 90% by 2050.
- A year after entry into force of the legislation, the Commission comes with a financing proposal.
- Obligation to prevent significant deterioration for areas that have reached good condition and for certain listed areas of terrestrial and marine habitats BUT this is now based on obligation of conduct (and not of results).
- Peatlands under agricultural use: the restoration targets are: 30% by 2030, 40 % by 2040, 50 % by 2050; BUT only a third of the said percentage will have to be rewetted. AND Member States can be exempted.
- No obligation to rewet for farmers or private landowners, and rewetting will remain voluntary (for them, not for Member States...) but that rewetting must be made an attractive option for farmers and landowners.
- Emergency break procedure: suspend implementation of the agriculture-related targets (including peatlands rewetting...)

National Policies (OL countries)

- 70-90% of national environment policies is rooted in EU legislation but **implementation differs across EU**
- Importance and urgency of restoring wetlands is acknowledged but formal **protection of wetlands is often limited.**

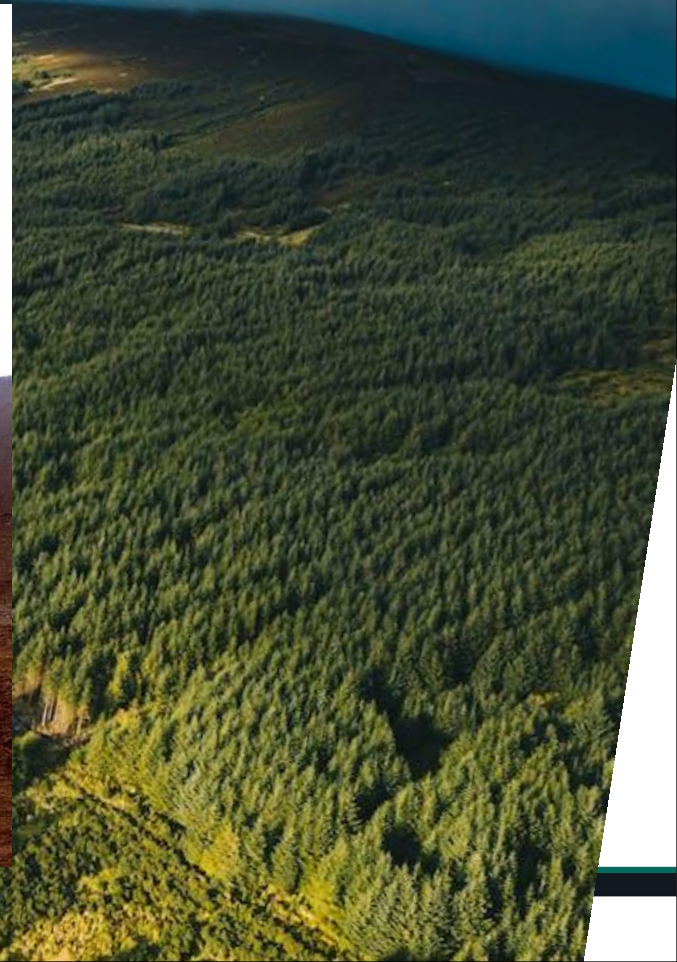
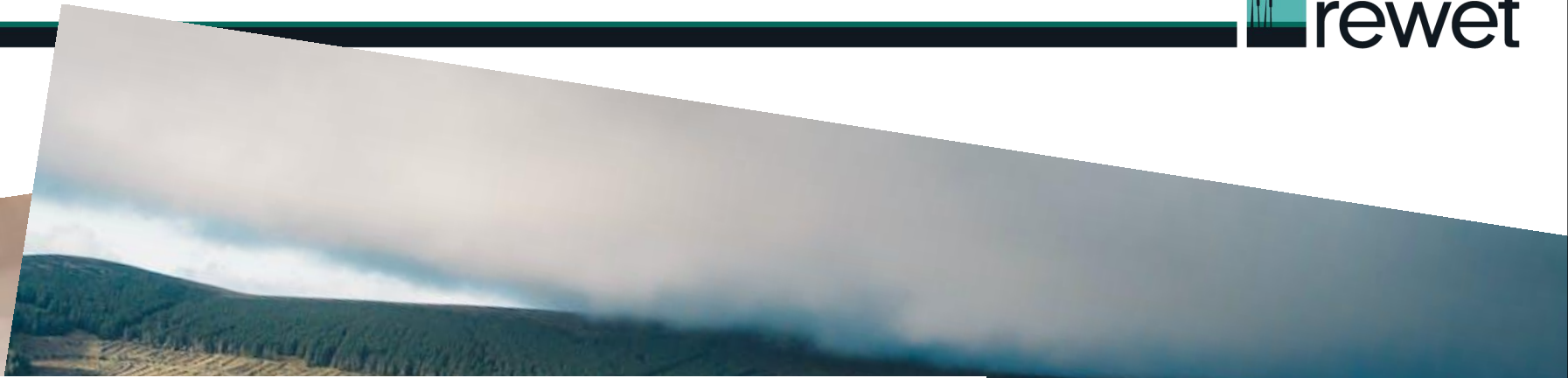


National Policies (OL countries)

- **Ambition level is weathering down** with decentralized responsibilities and implementation is prone to local realities, e.g. strong stakes in dairy sector, forestry or the horticulture / potting soil industry
- **Lack of legally binding EU environmental targets**, especially outside of protected areas, and poor enforcement
- **Lack of coherence of green policies with other key policies** like spatial planning, extraction of natural resources, agriculture and economic development.
- **Lack of financial incentives** for landowners to conserve and restore wetland ecosystems
- **Historical land use practices** have altered hydrology and ecological functioning, taking long to recover (also transforming **public attitude towards wetlands**)



Industrial turf harvesting, Ireland



Private sector

- Environmental policies of companies are mostly guided by **legislation, CSR and economic benefits**
- Current policies are not sufficient to address ongoing degradation of wetlands. **Private sector policies lack necessary incentives for long-term monitoring, transparency, accountability, management, and funding**
- Current programmes do **not tackle the root causes of wetland degradation, including land-use changes, pollution, and excessive water use**
- Regional/national programmes are needed that pool restoration opportunities and describe **common methodologies on quantification and reporting** on restoration
- **Limited market options for investment in wetlands** (mainly restricted to carbon credits) in combination with high risks and uncertainties
- Initiatives aimed at the private sector like the **TNFD and the new EU Non-Financial Reporting Directive** may help take away these bottlenecks



[Coillte's replanting decision on 'blanket bog' in Wicklow Mountains ignites environmental backlash - Irish Mirror Online](#)

General findings

- Our policy analysis underscores **the importance of both global and EU policies in shaping environmental standards.**
- It also highlights the **need for more effective measures to achieve wetland restoration and biodiversity conservation throughout the EU.**
- **Prioritization** and sufficient **financial resources, local and regional stakeholder involvement, public support,** and **policy coherence** at various levels are critical in enabling successful wetland restoration.

COORDINATOR



PARTICIPANTS





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