

WHAT DO CITIZENS AND LANDOWNERS THINK?

Insights from large-scale surveys on wetland restoration

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Two surveys reveal citizens' and landowners' views

CITIZENS · n=4,946

30 Apr–14 May 2025

- National survey of values and attitudes.
- Six-task choice experiment: biodiversity, water quality, flood/drought prevention, greenhouse-gas outcomes and annual household cost.

LANDOWNERS (forest and farmland) · n=2,034

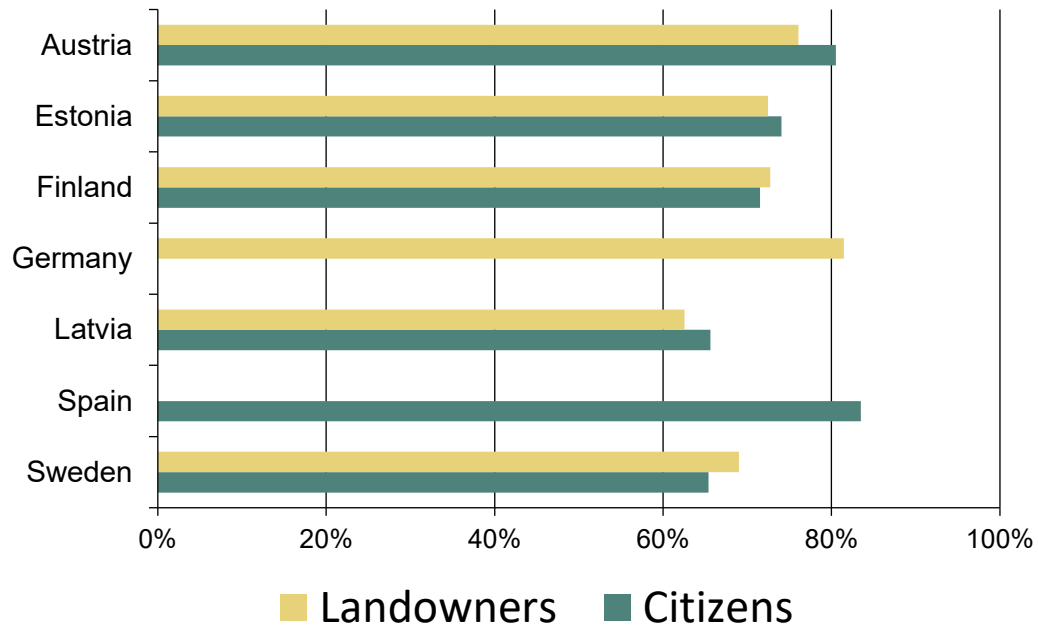
26 Jan–13 Feb 2026

- Attitudes, knowledge, collaboration, restoration experience and intentions.
- Payment-card question on compensation requirements.

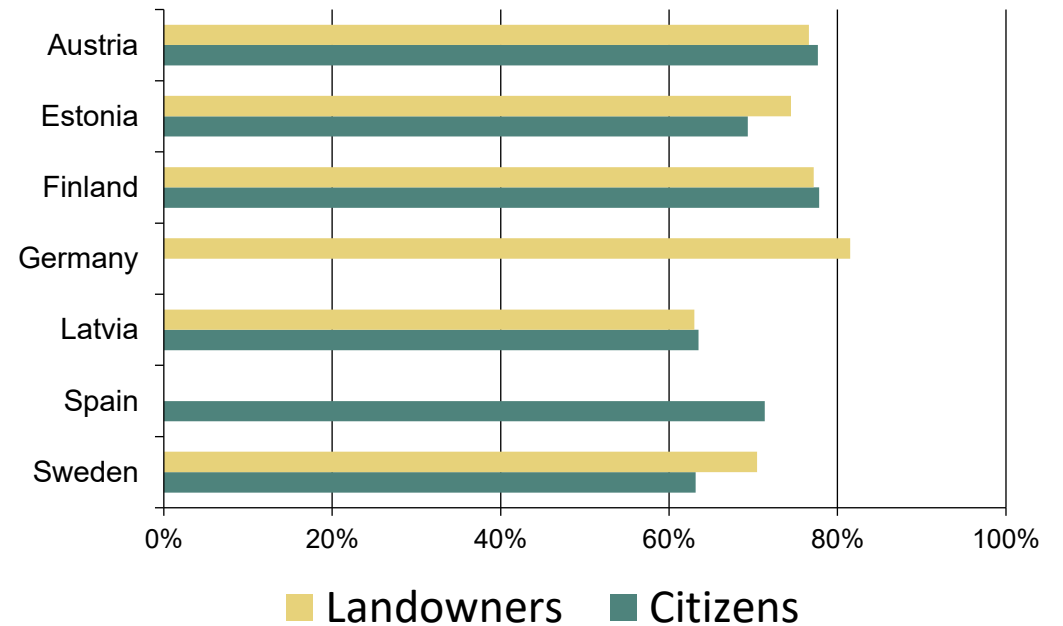


Restoration is widely seen as necessary and acceptable

Necessary — 73% overall



Acceptable — 72% overall



Source: ALFAwetlands citizen and landowner surveys. Spain: citizens only; Germany: landowners only.

Four citizen preference profiles explain different restoration choices

55% ENVIRONMENTAL OUTCOMES

Rejects business as usual; environmental benefits outweigh cost. Austria and Spain are overrepresented; Finland and Latvia underrepresented. Broad socio-economic reach.

18% COST-SENSITIVE TRADE-OFFS

Supports environmental outcomes but reacts strongly to cost. Values water quality, emission reductions and biodiversity. Associated with Finland, higher education and women.

18% WEAKLY STRUCTURED

Choices are inconsistent. Estonia and Latvia are overrepresented; Finland and Sweden underrepresented. Lower education/income, non-urban residence and land ownership are more common.

9% STATUS QUO

Strongly favours business as usual; environmental attributes do not drive choices. Linked mainly to Latvia and Sweden, lower education and men.

Source: ALFAwetlands D5.1 (2026) · latent-class N=4,877

Compensation requirements vary widely

**25% would restore at least
some area for €0–500/ha**

LOWER COMPENSATION

- Earlier restoration experience
- Existing plans to restore

**10–20% would not restore
even above €7,000/ha**

HIGHER COMPENSATION

- No plans or uncertainty
- Older age
- Larger holdings and restoration areas

PESTLE analysis reveals landowners' environmental motivation—but practical barriers block action

Supporting factors

- **Environmental.** Strongest motivating factor; biodiversity, water-related benefits and climate mitigation drive interest.
- **Social.** Family, neighbour and stakeholder support strengthen participation.

Barriers

- **Economic.** Main barrier; costs, limited returns, resources and workload dominate concerns.
 - **Technological.** Knowledge, guidance, skills and suitable machinery are often lacking.
 - **Legal.** Permitting, unclear rules and administrative burden hinder action.
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Country and background differences

Germany is most restoration-oriented; Latvia is more cautious. Experience shifts concerns from technical and economic barriers toward legal ones.

Four priorities can turn support into restoration action

1

Build on environmental motivation

Most citizens and landowners hold positive attitudes toward restoration.

2

Make participation economically viable

Costs and opportunity costs dominate barriers; compensation requirements needs vary greatly.

3

Design for heterogeneous preferences

National and local context, landowner profiles and opportunity costs rule out one average solution.

4

Remove practical and institutional friction

Clear rules, technical guidance, advisory support and trusted local coordination can convert interest into action.

THANK YOU

More results and detailed analysis will
soon be available on the ALFAwetlands
website

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