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1) Basic information

Title	National peatland strategies and peatland restoration opportunities for climate action
Date	15 November 2023
Place	Online
Main organiser	CEEweb for Biodiversity
Duration	1 day
Number of participants	47
Aim of the meeting	Activity III.2 Multi-stakeholder workshop Activity III.1 will be supported by one multi-stakeholder workshop which aims to collect critical feedback and suggestions on the assessed national peatland strategies from the representatives of relevant stakeholder groups. The workshop can help in the identification of bottlenecks, weak points and best practices that will feed into the resulting evaluation report and the collection of exemplary policy measures.
Representatives of the EUKI Peatlands project	CEEweb, Eurosite, MSF-GMC

2) General outline and aim of the event

This multi-stakeholder workshop was organised under the framework of the project **“Building the European Peatlands Initiative: A strong alliance for peatland climate protection in Europe”**. The project is implemented by four partners: Eurosite — The European Land Conservation Network (Lead Partner), the Michael Succow Foundation - Partner in the Greifswald Mire Centre, the European Landowners’ Organization, and CEEweb for Biodiversity. We aim to support the building of a long-lasting European network for peatland climate action led by European national governments and based on up-to-date data, national policies and best-practice land management.

The aim of the event was to collect critical feedback and suggestions on the assessed national peatland strategies from the representatives of relevant stakeholder groups, as well to identify bottlenecks, weak points and best practices that will feed into the resulting evaluation report and the collection of exemplary policy measures.

Activity III.2 was organised in two parts: on 20 June 2023 in person and online (hybrid) together with a field visit AND online on 15 November 2023.

3) Target groups

The workshop primarily targeted peatland protection and restoration experts, as well as other interested stakeholders from the Central and Eastern European region, with the aim to, on the one hand, provide insight into the relevant policy measures and future opportunities of the European Union and selected Member States and, on the other hand, to provide an opportunity for discussing



emerging questions and formulating recommendations on the protection and restoration of peatlands.

Target groups:

- Central and Eastern European peatland experts
- nature conservationists
- representatives of national ministries
- representatives of research institutes
- representatives of NGOs
- site managers, farmers/landowners

In order to reach these groups, targeted invitations have been sent via email to 46 direct addresses, moreover, to various mailing lists (CEEweb Member's Newsletter, CEEweb Policy Mailing List, the European Habitats Forum, the Carpathian Wetland Initiative Network. It has also been promoted on Social Media through CEEweb's, Eurosite's and EUKI's pages (LinkedIn, Facebook).

4) Agenda

National peatland strategies and peatland restoration opportunities for climate action

Multi-stakeholder workshop in the frame of the *Building the European Peatlands Initiative: a strong alliance for peatland climate protection in Europe* project organised by CEEweb for Biodiversity

15 November 2023

Supported by:



Federal Ministry
for Economic Affairs
and Climate Action



European
Climate Initiative
EUKI

on the basis of a decision
by the German Bundestag

The project "Building the European Peatlands Initiative: a strong alliance for peatland climate protection in Europe" is part of the [European Climate Initiative \(EUKI\)](#) of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action (BMWK).



Moderator: Orsolya Nyárai (CEEweb for Biodiversity)

- 10.00 **Welcome & short introduction of CEEweb** - Csaba Mezei - General Secretary (CEEweb for Biodiversity)
- 10.05 **Introducing the event and the agenda** - Orsolya Nyárai - Head of Policy & Agricultural Policy Officer (CEEweb for Biodiversity)
- 10.10 **Introducing the EUKI Peatlands project** - Marina Škunca - Project Officer (Eurosita - the European Land Conservation Network)
- 10.20 **Introducing the European Peatlands Initiative** - Lisa Wiatschka - Innovation Consultant - Wetlands, Agriculture & Climate Change (Bax & Company)
- 10.35 **Word cloud, voting on relevant questions, presenting results**
- 10.45 **Presenting the preliminary results of Central and Eastern European peatland strategies assessment** - Orsolya Nyárai - Head of Policy & Agricultural Policy Officer (CEEweb for Biodiversity)
- 11.00 **Coffee break**
- 11.10 **A Green Deal for European Peatlands: discussing enabling factors and challenges** - Elise Vitali - Peatlands Policy Officer (Wetlands International Europe)
- 11.30 **Hungary's current approach, policies and future plans towards protecting and restoring peatlands** - Gábor Takács - Nature Conservation Officer (Fertő-Hanság National Park Directorate)
- 11.45 **National policies for peatland protection and restoration in Estonia** - Martin Küttim - Researcher in peatland ecology and restoration (Tallinn University, Estonia)
- 12.00 **Questions & Answers**
- 12.10 **Lunch break**
- 13.00 **Introducing the afternoon sessions**
- 13.05 **From policy to practice to policy: Experiences from Germany** - Jan Peters - Managing Director (Michael Succow Foundation, Partner in the Greifswald Mire Centre)
- 13.20 **Breakout rooms for formulating recommendations**
 - Room 1: Gaps and weaknesses in national peatland strategies
 - Room 2: The use of participatory methods in national policymaking for peatlands
 - Room 3: The potential of the EU Nature Restoration Law and national restoration projects for peatlands
- 13.50 **Reporting back from the breakout session**
- 14.05 **Coffee break**
- 14.15 **Panel discussion - Challenges and opportunities in EU and national policymaking and action for peatlands**
- 14.45 **Questions & Answers**
- 14.55 **Conclusions, next steps & closing of the workshop**



5) Word cloud and polls

As a warm up game, *two word cloud questions* were asked:



Mentimeter

Where are you from?

31 responses



Mentimeter

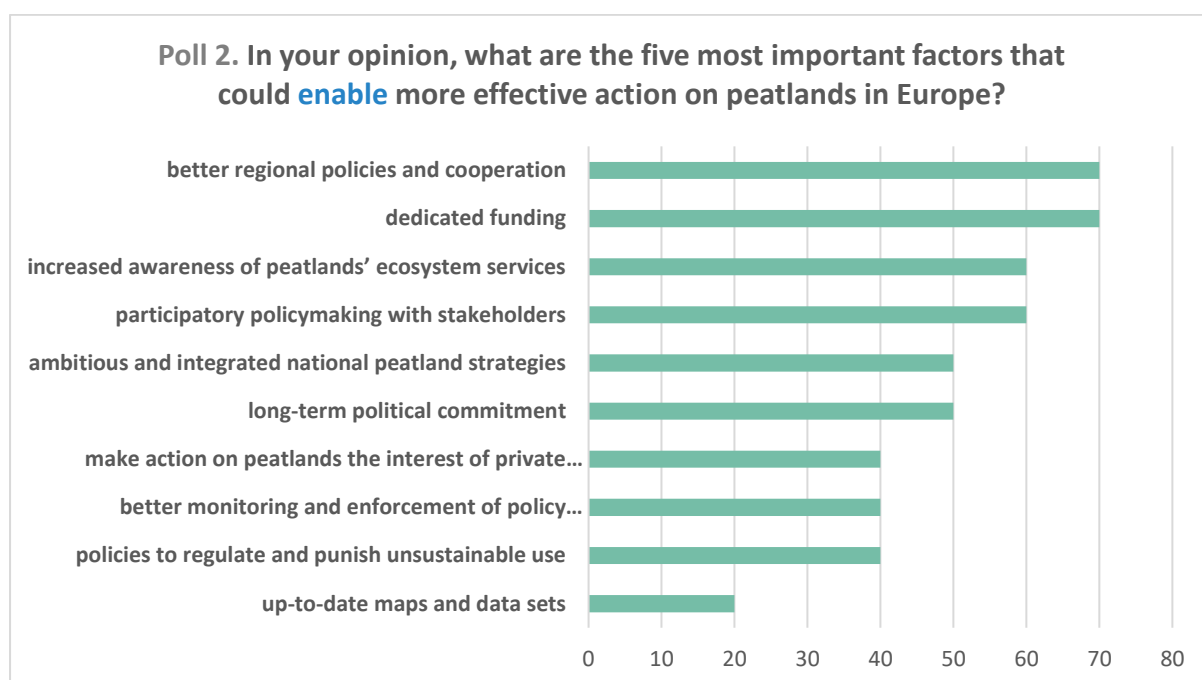
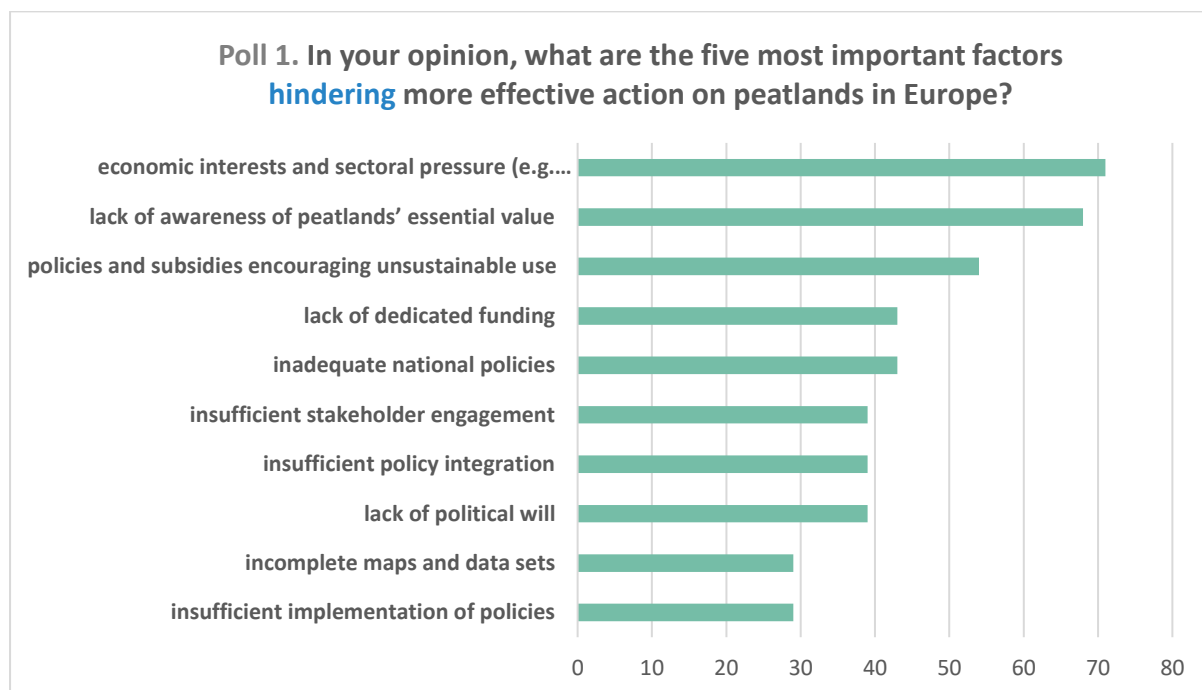
In maximum 2 words: why are peatlands important?

47 responses





During the workshop two **multiple-choice polls** (with max. 5 choices allowed) were carried out to receive impressions from the participants on the most important factors hindering (Poll 1) /enabling (Poll 2) more effective action on peatlands:





6) Presentations

Csaba Mezei, General Secretary of CEEweb for Biodiversity opened the event with introducing CEEweb for Biodiversity, its role in Central and Eastern Europe and its contribution to the Building the European Peatlands Initiative EUKI project.

Orsolya Nyárai, Head of Policy & Agricultural Policy Officer at CEEweb for Biodiversity, the moderator of the event summarized the housekeeping rules.

Marina Škunca, Project Officer at Eurosite - the European Land Conservation Network presented the project “*Building the European Peatlands Initiative: a strong alliance for peatland climate protection in Europe*” funded by the European Climate Initiative (EUKI) and led by Eurosite, which aims to build a robust alliance for peatland climate protection in Europe. Running from November 2022 to April 2025, which involves key partners like the Michael Succow Foundation, the European Landowners’ Organization, and CEEweb for Biodiversity. The initiative's vision is to create an effective European network of national governments and stakeholders to restore and conserve all peatlands in Europe. This effort is expected to yield rich biodiversity, clean water, sustainable livelihoods, net zero CO2 emissions, and aid in climate change adaptation.

Target groups for this initiative include national governments, ministries, European Commission Directorates, the Council of Europe, research institutes, conservationists, community forums, private landowners, foresters, and farmers. The project's scope includes establishing the European Peatlands Initiative formally, collaborating with the Global Peatlands Initiative and UNEP, conducting workshops, and networking.

Key activities involve updating the peatland map of Europe, creating sectoral manuals on peatland and soil management, organizing regional workshops, and disseminating knowledge through stakeholder community creation and video tutorials. These efforts are geared towards fostering a strong alliance for peatland climate protection across Europe.

Lisa Wiatschka, Innovation Consultant in Wetlands, Agriculture & Climate Change at Bax & Company highlighted the journey of the European Peatlands Initiative so far and the critical role of peatlands in Europe's ecological landscape. The initiative gained momentum following the COP26 conference in Glasgow, where the exploratory phase began with dialogues and workshops focusing on peatland conservation. Key figures from Ireland, Germany, and Iceland emphasized the necessity of protecting these vital ecosystems, citing their cultural and environmental significance.

The exploratory study conducted in early 2023 underscored the need for a unified European approach to peatland conservation. It called for a government-supported network, harmonized efforts across nations, and viable solutions for landowners and farmers. The Initiative calls for collaboration among European countries to overcome policy barriers and accelerate conservation actions, urging awareness and concerted efforts towards preserving Europe's peatlands, a crucial step in addressing climate change and biodiversity loss.

Orsolya Nyárai, Head of Policy & Agricultural Policy Officer at CEEweb for Biodiversity, discussed the significant momentum peatlands are gaining in the context of climate action. The presentation outlined the critical role of peatlands, which contain a third of the world's soil carbon and cover approximately 58 million hectares in Europe. However, nearly half of these peatlands are drained or degraded, despite being home to unique biodiversity and playing a crucial role in climate mitigation. CEEweb's involvement in the EUKI Peatlands project is pivotal. The presentation highlighted the preliminary results of the peatland strategies assessment and the takeaways from the multi-stakeholder workshop held in Tata in June. Key activities of CEEweb in the project include assessing national peatland strategies, identifying best practices, organizing multi-stakeholder workshops, and providing guidance on science-based emission reduction pathways for peatlands and soils. The



initiative aims to support national action plans for peatland management and their funding, offering country overviews and policy briefs, and conducting capacity-building workshops.

The presentation highlighted the preliminary results of the peatlands strategies assessment in six countries from Lithuania, Poland, Latvia, Germany, Estonia, and Hungary. Finally, recommendations were provided for more effective action on peatlands as well as next steps were presented.

Elise Vitali, Peatlands Policy Officer at Wetlands International Europe discussed the role of Wetlands International Europe in advocating for the sustainable use of wetlands for both people and nature. The organization, comprising 12 European NGO members from 8 countries, works to raise awareness about wetland ecosystems. The presentation emphasized the importance of peatlands in Europe, which cover approximately 350,000 square kilometers. Peatlands are crucial for water cycles, climate mitigation and adaptation, biodiversity, and disaster risk reduction. The European Green Deal, initiated in 2019, aims to preserve and restore ecosystems and biodiversity. It includes various strategies and plans such as the 2030 Climate Target Plan, Biodiversity Strategy, Farm to Fork Strategy, Zero Pollution Action Plan, EU Soil Strategy, and the upcoming Water Resilience Initiative. The Deal also encompasses existing and upcoming EU regulations and directives, including the Common Agricultural Policy, Nature Directives, Water Framework Directive, Land-Use Change and Forestry, EU Climate Regulation, Nature Restoration Regulation, Soil Monitoring and Resilience Directive, and the Carbon Removal Certification Framework. The presentation highlighted the intersection of peatland conservation with broader European environmental policies and the critical role of peatlands in achieving the goals of the European Green Deal.

Gábor Takács, Nature Conservation Officer at Fertő-Hanság National Park Directorate discussed Hungary's approach to peatland protection. Historically, about 1.1% (1,023 km²) of Hungary was covered by fens or bogs. However, due to drainage and river regulation, around 97% of these peatlands have been lost over the last 200 years, leading to significant losses of peatland-associated species like the English Sundew, European Mud-minnow, and Marsh Fritillary.

Hungary has implemented legal protections for peatlands under Act LIII of 1996 on the Protection of Nature. This act defines peatlands as areas either permanently or periodically exposed to water, with significant fen biotic communities or soils with variable peat content. Over the last 20 years, Hungary has legally protected 1,193 peatlands, covering 62,344 hectares. Specialist species of peatlands are also protected, and authorities have various options to restrict activities on wetlands.

This presentation provided a comprehensive overview of Hungary's strategies and legal frameworks for peatland conservation, reflecting the country's commitment to protecting these vital ecosystems for climate action and biodiversity conservation.

Martin Küttim, Researcher in peatland ecology and restoration at Tallinn University detailed the extent of peatlands in Estonia, which cover 22.3% of the territory, amounting to over 1 million hectares. This includes various types of peatlands such as natural peatlands (mires), natural peatland forests, drained peatland forests, active and abandoned peat extraction areas, and other land covers on peat soils. Estonia's approach to peatland protection and restoration is governed by a range of laws and regulations. These include the Constitution, Nature Conservation Law, Geological Resources Law, Forest Law, Water Law, Amelioration Law, Sustainable Development Law, Environmental Impact Assessment and Environmental Management System Law, among others.

Relevant authorities and organizations involved in peatland management in Estonia encompass the Ministry of the Climate, Environmental Board, State Forest Management Centre, local municipalities, universities, environmental NGOs, peat producers, local communities, and a roundtable.

The presentation outlined the regional policy and planning framework for peatlands, which follows a hierarchical structure from nationwide planning to county, general, and detailed planning.



The presentation highlighted, that 74% of mires are protected in the country, and that mires in Estonia form 11,3% of all protected areas. All mires exceeding 0,5 ha are inventoried and assessed.

An in-depth look at Estonia's legislative and organizational framework for managing its significant peatland resources was provided, highlighting the country's commitment to sustainable peatland management and restoration.

Jan Peters, Managing Director at Michael Succow Foundation, Partner in the Greifswald Mire Centre, showcased Germany's richness in peatlands in the North and in the South (1,8 Mio. ha organic soils, which covers 5% of the total land surface). 94% of these are drained, 2% are in near natural state. 4% have been rewetted. The climate impact of peatlands in Germany are significant: organic soils on agricultural land have 7% share in the country, but these are responsible for more than 40% of GHG emissions in Germany (which is the biggest share in the emissions in the agricultural sector). This is representing 7% of the *total* GHG emissions in the country. Peatland emissions are counted in the LULUCF sector, as such its emission are hidden together with the forests. Overarching political frameworks are coming forward in the country: Germany adopted its National Peatland Conservation Strategy in 2022, which targets the reduction of 5 million t CO₂-eq from peatlands until 2030 as well as to bring together all relevant stakeholders to create successful cooperation for the protection and restoration of peatlands. Germany's Federal Climate Protection Act (2021) has ambitious goals towards climate neutrality and reduction of CO₂ emissions by 2024 (-40 million t CO₂-eq by 2045 in the LULUCF sector). Besides, Germany dedicated 4 billion for nature-based solutions, from which 1,2 billion Euros are secured for peatlands in its National programme for nature-based climate protection. Nevertheless, implementation is still lacking behind. 50,000 hectares should be rewetted yearly to reach climate targets, however, currently this number reaches only 2000 hectares.

Greifswald Mire Centre is urging policy changes by bringing together stakeholders (decision-makers, land users, researchers) on the field (e.g. guided visits to paludiculture sites for members of EU and German parliament), as well as on conferences. The presentation highlighted, that local policymaking should also be supported by participatory methods (involving citizens, farmers associations), e.g. "landscape-walks" proved to be very successful.

7) Questions and Answers

1. Are you aware of already started conservation about designating areas for the national restoration plans if the NRL becomes reality?
 - a. Estonia (Martin Küttim): continuing current plans. agricultural areas are degraded, due to climate change agricultural land becomes more important for food security
2. Nature Restoration Law: when is the time for countries to work on their national restoration plans?
 - a. Elise Vitali: next steps for NRL: formal adoption (in December 2023), 2-6 month translation and legal review, entry into force: approx. in 2 years, first nature restoration plans: approx. in 3 years. Working on it will be in progress sooner.



8) Breakout rooms for formulating recommendations

To receive critical feedback from participants as well to identify bottlenecks, weak points and best practices in peatland policies, three breakout rooms were offered for formulating recommendations. Participants were given the option to choose a breakout room, where 1-1 moderator facilitated the discussions.

Room 1: Gaps and weaknesses in national peatland strategies (Facilitator: Eliza Óhegyi, CEEweb)

Room 2: The use of participatory methods in national policymaking for peatlands (Facilitator: Orsolya Nyárai, CEEweb)

Room 3: The potential of the EU Nature Restoration Law and national restoration projects for peatlands (Facilitator: Luna Milatovic, CEEweb)

8.1. Results of Breakout Room 1: Gaps and weaknesses in national peatland strategies

The objectives of the breakout room were:

- To highlight strengths and success factors in national peatland-related policies
- To identify common gaps, weaknesses and failures in policies
- To formulate recommendations to improve national policies and action for peatlands
- To specify what is needed for more effective policies and action for peatlands on a national level

Question No. 1.1. What strengths, success factors and innovative approaches can you mention in your country's current policies on peatlands?

Germany

- Emissions reduction goals (5 Mt CO₂ from drained peatlands by 2030)
- Public investment for peatland restoration and paludiculture specifically (2 billion Euros by 2026)

Slovakia

- law (nature protection - incl. peatlands), Natura 2000 sites and national Protected Areas protection
- existing Slovak Wetland Policy,
- preparation of the new National Biodiversity Strategy in connection with climate change adaptation,
- climate change adaptation strategy + Action Plan based on ecosystems (1 chapter of strategy)
- financing of projects from different funds,
- support of nature restoration regulation, preparation of GAEC (good agricultural and environmental conditions) 2 of CAP - cooperation between MoE SR and MoARD SR - from 2025

Hungary

- Strong legal nature protection for peatlands (ex lege protection) -
- From 2025 wetlands and peatlands will be supported in the national CAP
- Rewetted areas are functioning well (former peat extraction areas) - result of local action of national parks
- Existing map of peatlands

Question No. 1.2. What are the bottlenecks, weaknesses and gaps in your country's current policy approach towards peatlands?

European level

- No alignment between agricultural/energy (land use) policies and peatland/ecosystem restoration policies - leading to strong incentives to drain peatlands (and also disincentivizing rewetting practices)



- Different definitions of peatlands and peat depth (e.g. 10 vs 30cm depth), leading to misaligned policies between countries
- Transboundary peatland policy also present challenges, with different policies at national scales, and different mixes of state vs private land ownership

Slovakia

- lack of information, understanding and cooperation of cross-sectoral approach and synergies (climate change, agriculture, biodiversity) - carbon credits, sequestration, carbon farming, importance of peatlands restoration
- common approach to stimulate focus on peatlands + not clear incentives, subsidies, compensations for peatlands

Hungary

- No dedicated peatland strategy
- Peatlands are assessed
- National CAP doesn't mention the role of remaining peatlands (but its planned to include them by 2025)

Question No. 1.3. What is needed to make your country's national policies on peatlands more impactful?

Slovakia

- capacity building, projects, nature restoration law approved

Hungary

- Better governmental structure with more focus on nature conservation

Question No. 1.4. What is needed to make your country's actions and policy implementation (e.g. for peatland restoration) more effective?

Germany

- Involvement of private sector investment and blended finance
- Multi-stakeholder landscape approach initiatives
- Innovative financial and market instruments for carbon markets involving peatlands and green finance mechanisms

Slovakia

- sharing info, capacity building, projects, nature restoration law approved
- cooperation of stakeholders

Hungary

- Prioritization of long-term visions in land use sector
- Awareness raising on peatlands' role in climate change
- Identification of peatlands/organic soils in agricultural land

8.2. Results of Breakout Room 2: The use of participatory methods in national policymaking for peatlands

The objectives of the breakout room were:

- To identify existing forms of participatory policymaking on peatlands (= co-designing policies with different stakeholder groups)
- To evaluate the success of existing participatory methods in national policy-making
- To specify what is needed to make participatory governance for peatlands more effective
- To identify best practices from other policy areas that could be utilised for peatlands



Question No. 2.1. What participatory methods do you know in your country that have been used for peatland-related policymaking?

Croatia

- public consultation

Question No. 2.2. What factors led to the success or failure of the participatory methods you mentioned earlier?

Factors of success

- Personal connection to the site / topic
- Finding a common ground
- Common vision
- Trust
- Personal networks (meeting interested people, often ready to compromise, i.e. work together)
- Neutral body
- Interaction between people on the ground, scientists and policy makers
- Building upon other projects, initiatives
- Involvement of several sectors
- Transparency

Factors of failure

- Not having the same goals
- Short deadlines to consultations
- Lack of transparency in the context of earlier mistakes, uncertainties
- Uneven pace of work
- Changes on government

Question No. 2.3. What is needed to make participatory methods for peatlands more successful?

- Good facilitation
- Neutral body
- And neutral ground :)
- Aligning pace and vision
- Perhaps exploring / explaining the different ecosystem services they provide for different target groups / sectors
- Be equally aware of peatlands' value
- Finding local (sectoral) champions

Question No. 2.4. What successful participatory methods have you seen in other countries or in other policy areas?

- Study tours
- Multi-stakeholder workshops

8.3. Results of Room 3: The potential of the EU Nature Restoration Law and national restoration projects for peatlands

The objectives of the breakout rooms were:

- To rate Member State and stakeholder positions on the EU Nature Restoration Law's (currently agreed) targets for rewetting and restoring drained peatlands
- To identify ongoing national efforts and future plans for restoring drained peatlands



- To specify what is needed to make national peatland restoration policies and action more effective

Question No. 3.1. How would you rate your national government's/responsible ministry's and relevant stakeholder groups' level of support for the EU Nature Restoration Law's targets for rewetting and restoring peatlands?

Strongly supportive

- Germany (Science)
- France
- environmental NGOs throughout Europe #RestoreNature
- Germany (NGOs)
- Germany (Federal gov.)
- Estonia Science, Government
- Estonia NGOs

Strongly against

- Estonia Peat producers
- Belgium
- Germany (Farmers)
- Estonia Farmers
- Germany (conservatives)
- Hungary
- farmers organisation (EU level - national too?)
- conservatives, EPP, strong comms campaign against, influencing MEPs

Question No. 3.2. What national programmes, projects, private sector initiatives and plans do you know of for the restoration of drained peatlands?

Germany

- National Peatland strategy
- Peatland strategies on peatland-rich federal states
- Federal-state target agreement
- Large-scale 10 year paludiculture projects funded by federal ministries
- Review of CAP National strategic plans
- ANK funding with specific funding programmes
- toMOORow Initiative business involvement
- Development of National Water Strategy and soil legislation
- Development of National Biodiversity strategy incl. peatlands

Estonia

- Areas among the Waterlands project
- State Forest Management Centre with EU cohesion fund funding
- Peat Producers Association restoration initiative
- LIFE IP project for swamp forest restoration

Hungary

- National Conservation Plan, several restoration projects funded by EU budgets
- setting up and maintaining lists of peatlands

Belgium

- EU funded projects: Rewet, ALFA Wetlands open lab

France

- several scientific restoration projects (Jura, Guette, etc)
- ALFA wetland open lab



- recent update of peatlands mapping
- EU funded project involving farming and communities around peatland rewetting

Question No. 3.3. What is needed to make national peatland restoration policies and action more effective in your country or in general?

- area availability → incentives for land owners
- New narratives and visions for peatlands → involving art and culture
- “overarching public interest” in land consolidation processes
- Business models to create demand for paludiculture, value chains from companies & Start-ups
- Peatlands need to be streamlined into legislation, at the moment they are often contradicting each other
- In general: strong legislation background, incentives for land owners, new models for use of peatlands (conservation objectives are not enough), integration into the regional water management system
- Bring water boards more into the discussion
- Civil society pressure on governments to act! Inspiring decision makers (field trips and concrete applications of paludiculture)
- Needed specific knowledge of creating new peatlands
- DEPolarise peatlands rewetting - more nuanced conversation, showing peatlands restoration is not a threat to food security but on the contrary
- Make use of the counter argument to food security narrative developed at EU level (see notably #RestoreNature campaign)
- Showing finance opportunities of rewetting (voluntary carbon markets, blended finance)
- Opposing exemptions raised by Member States to not achieve the Art. 9.4 targets! (they have a lot of leeway for raising exemptions)

9) Panel discussion

Key points from the discussion include:

1, How do you see the future role of EU projects on restoration of peatlands?

Experience with several EU-funded projects (ALFA Wetlands, WetHorizon, Rewet Horizon) was shared, highlighting the **importance of pilot sites**, open labs, and knowledge sites for on-ground restoration and data collection.

The panelists acknowledged the **success** of large EU and international projects in peatland protection and restoration. They discussed the potential of these projects to kickstart large-scale restoration missions.

Despite successes, the panelists noted some **shortcomings** of these projects, such as a lack of landscape vision, focus on specific sites rather than broad-scale restoration, and the **short duration** of projects, typically around five years.

A significant project under the Recovery and Resilience Facility program was shared, which is a large-scale project, targeting the Hanság area. The challenges are financing due to time limitations in projects (usually 5 years), which is short for planning, gaining permits and implementing the restoration. He mentioned an example, where sometimes restoration needs 50 years. Hungary needs more research, experience collection, and sharing in the field of peatland restoration.

The current stage of having separate projects (covering approx. 100 to max 200 hectares) for peatland restoration was highlighted. Although, 1 million hectares would need to be rewetted in Germany until 2045 to reach the goals of the climate law.



Today, unfortunately, **drainage** is still a much more known concept than **rewetting**. The administration path of drainage on a land is a developed routine. Paradigm shift is needed to consider the wet use of the land as a usual practice.

There are good restoration examples from Finland, Indonesia to raise water levels on huge areas.

The panelists agreed that climate neutrality is not possible without rewetting peatlands.

2, Is scientific evidence not reaching politicians, to commit themselves for restoration, or is it something else that is hindering it?

Pushing decision makers in the right direction is the biggest challenge. Nature conservation should be seen as an opportunity, not as a barrier of development. In current times of economic crisis (inflation), the demand from the society on nature conservation is rather limited. Currently, in Hungary there is a reluctance when it comes to wetlands, mostly due to misconceptions.

3, Aren't awareness raising efforts on the promotion of ecosystem services wetlands provide not reaching/not taken up by decision makers and by the general public?

Communication, explanation to local people is very important. *Water* is a sensitive topic in times of climate change.

In Estonia peatlands are known and valued more by the general public, compared to other CEE countries. However, when it comes to restoration, resistance from the general public may arise, as restoration of peatlands often comes with eliminating trees. The discussion touched upon inspiring LIFE projects from Estonia, addressing challenges like the monitoring of closed projects and their effectiveness.

Natural disasters (fires, droughts) are often the triggers of realising the need for a paradigm shift.

Peatlands' economic value are still underestimated.

4, How could peatlands be brought to a higher political agenda? What will be the upcoming priority topics in the EU?

Water related issues (water resilience) will be a priority topic, where ecosystem restoration, and hopefully peatland protection and restoration could have greater a role as well.

Streamlining peatlands in **Water policies** and the **Common Agricultural Policy** is needed, discussions are already ongoing for the next CAP.

5, How could private funding be attracted for the restoration of peatlands?

EU-level supported initiatives: 'Certification of carbon removal' bears a great potential for financing the rewetting of peatlands. Landowners need to see economic benefits behind, but strict criteria still needs to be developed.

The momentum of peatlands needs to be utilised also for gaining financing for peatlands. Paludiculture was mentioned as a potential of generating revenue.

Social pressure on policymakers: In **Germany**, due to **public pressure** (farmers, nature conservation NGOs) more funding has been dedicated for peatlands (1,2 billion Euros) to reach climate goals.

6, Should NGOs initiate collaboration with the private sector, for the sake of investing in/financing peatland restoration?



In **Hungary** it is difficult to imagine, as most cases result in 'green washing'. An exception could be the *carbon-dioxide quota*. Peatlands' *carbon-dioxide quotas are high*, thus private companies who invest in peatland restoration could make good money.

7, Final recommendations for more effective peatland restoration and protection

- Fight for a better Nature Restoration Law
- Mobilisation (bringing others in)
- Mobilising the private sector (an alliance of pioneers is already set up in Germany). The *demand* for biomass from rewetted peatlands needs to be built
- Restoration needs to be less project-based and more systematic, continuous monitoring is important even after the project
- Restoration of all the abandoned former peat extraction sites
- Organising workshops for sharing experiences and enabling dialogue between experts *and* the general public is equally important, as literature and guides in this topic are not enough

The discussion concluded with a call for a longer-term approach to restoration projects, considering the extensive time needed for effective restoration of peatlands.

10) Recording

The recording of the workshop is available online: <https://youtu.be/LgeqliKXoD4>

An article on the workshop is available here: <https://www.ceeweb.org/article.php?id=736> and here: <https://www.euki.de/en/news/a-growing-momentum-for-peatland-conservation-and-restoration/>

11) Participants

47 participants from 17 countries attended the workshop with a majority from Central and Eastern Europe, with some representing the EU/CEE level. Stakeholders were represented from governmental-, private-, NGO sectors, and research institutions.