

'The message of urgency cannot be overstated,' EU environment body warns

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The EU is not on track to meeting the vast majority of environmental targets for 2020—and the outlook for 2030 and 2040 is even bleaker. This is the devastating verdict of the groundbreaking [State of the](#)

[Environment Report 2020](#) published today by the European Environment Agency (EEA).

According to the report, Europe is making insufficient progress across nearly all policy areas, from [nature conservation](#) to [climate action](#). It also emphasizes the tremendous harm to human health and well-being caused by environmental degradation and pollution, and warns of a "great acceleration" of [climate](#) change. For the Green Heart of Europe, this could have an irreversible negative impact on the biodiversity of the region, including [old-growth forests](#), [freshwater habitats](#) and high value farm lands, and disrupt their capacity to provide critical ecosystem services and sustain the needs of humans.

"The science is clearer than ever: We are in the process of destroying the very ecosystems that sustain humanity. At the EU level, the promised European Green Deal could help turn the tide, provided that the Commission makes bold proposals for far-reaching reforms and increases the EU's ambition on climate action and nature restoration—well beyond what is on the table right now" said Ester Asin, Director of the WWF European Policy Office.

"Central and Eastern governments must increase their level of ambition and endorse the European Commission's upcoming European Green Deal as an immense opportunity for speeding up action to protect the remaining biodiversity values in the region."—Ana Maria Seman, Regional Policy Lead, WWF Central and Eastern Europe

For WWF, the European Green Deal must pass five tests in order to provide an effective response to the biodiversity and climate crises. Notably, it should include strict and legally binding commitments on biodiversity to jump start the restoration of nature across Europe, as well as an ambitious climate law with an emissions reduction target of 65% by 2030 and climate neutrality by 2040—to be agreed well before

COP26 in November. Beyond new measures, existing laws must be used to their full potential, which is currently not the case. This is visible especially in the number of infringement cases that the European Commission is handling for the breach of EU nature commitments, where Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries have crucial open files on topics such as hydropower development, air pollution, and for lacking accurate field data that has led to poor reporting on the status of species and habitats under article 17 of the EU Habitats Directive. According to the EEA, full implementation of the existing EU policies would take Europe a long way towards to achieving its environmental goals up to 2030.

"Much of the legislation we need is already in place, but Member States are dragging their feet on implementing long-standing EU environmental laws such as the Birds and Habitats or the Water Framework Directive," said Ester Asin. "The Commission must apply a 'zero tolerance' stance by using all available tools to enforce EU legislation."

Provided by WWF

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