

Nature in the Netherlands deteriorating rapidly

March 24 2022, by K. W. Wesselink Msc (Kees)



Blokweerschekade 5, 2954 LA Alblasterdam, Netherlands. Credit: Unsplash/CC0 Public Domain

Nature in the Netherlands is deteriorating rapidly. According to the Council for the Environment and Infrastructure (Rli), the biodiversity crisis is just as serious as the climate crisis. UT researcher Prof. Dr.

Esther Turnhout (Science, Technology & Policy Studies; Faculty of BMS) was involved as an external committee member in compiling the advice that the Rli presented today to the Minister for Nature and Nitrogen Policy, the Minister of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality, the Minister for Housing and Spatial Planning, and the Presidents of the Dutch Senate and House of Representatives.

The council commission makes nineteen concrete recommendations to the Dutch governments on the regional and national levels. All recommendations are presented in four solution areas: "Ensure nature everywhere and for everyone," "link nature restoration to other social tasks," "work together area by area: governments and other stakeholders" and "weigh nature values fully in economic and political decision-making." The latter is very important, according to Turnhout: "Nature often comes last in Dutch decision-making, but it is actually very important for prosperity and well-being. That is why the central message 'nature everywhere and for everyone' is so important. If you connect nature and people, more attention will be paid to nature as a public value instead of as a nuisance or a cost item, as is often the case in political debate."

Revaluing nature

According to Turnhout, nature and economy should no longer be placed in opposition to each other. "Nature and economics need each other, that is what I really tried to bring out in the advice, but this also requires reforms," says Turnhout. In its final report, the Rli, therefore, emphasizes that there are still too many (financial) incentives that promote nature loss. The value of nature loss and restoration is still insufficiently appreciated and the importance of nature must be better appreciated.

Balanced report

In the end, Turnhout is pleased with the report: "It was important to me that the advisory report not only addressed protected areas and nature management but also included broader political and [economic aspects](#). We have to make hard choices. Policies and measures that harm nature really must be tackled, for example, we must stop harmful subsidies that result in the destruction of nature. But I think we have succeeded in delivering a balanced opinion. Now it's up to the authorities, both national and regional, to get to work on it."

More information

Prof. Dr. Esther Turnhout is chair of Science, Technology and Society at the Section of Science, Technology and Policy Studies at the University of Twente (STEPS; Faculty of BMS). She sat as an external committee member of the Council for the Environment and Infrastructure (Rli) that drew up the advice. The Rli is an independent advisory council for government and parliament. The council advises on solicited and unsolicited proposals for main policy lines in the field of sustainable development of the living environment and infrastructure.

The full report, entitled "Natuurinclusief Nederland," can be read in Dutch on the [Rli's website](#). The [summary of the advice](#) (also in Dutch) can also be viewed there.

Provided by University of Twente

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