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Draft

Title: **Nature Restoration Law vs. EU plan for critical raw materials - challenges to protect nature and food sovereignty**

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OVERVIEW AMENDMENTS

- **AS ADOPTED - Nature Restoration Law vs. EU plan for critical raw materials - challenges to protect nature and food sovereignty**

- for CAS 9 - Consolidated text R7 NRL vs EU plan for critical raw materials (7 December 23.59)

- for CAS 9 - Final PDF updated spreadsheet amendments (7 December 23.59)

- for CAS 4plus - PDF updated spreadsheets amendments (6 December PM)

- for CAS 4 - Pre-CAS proposals - PDF updated spreadsheet amendments NRL vs Critical Raw Materials (5 December PM)

- for CAS 2 - PDF updated spreadsheet amendments NRL vs Critical Raw Materials (3 December)

- PDF spreadsheet amendments NRL vs Critical Raw Materials (27 November)

Draft text

The European Greens have been spearheading policies to respond to climate challenges while putting people and the planet at the top of its priorities. In the European Parliament, at both national and local levels, EGP members have been proposing measures to mitigate such impacts and to politically address changes in production, distribution and consumption models to achieve more balanced ways of using essential resources, ensuring less impact on nature and human health.

For this reason, Greens all over Europe recognise the need to bring back nature and restore those precious ecosystems which are under threat today. At the same time, they are demanding
political action to reduce pollution, to ensure breathable air, clean water, and toxic-free consumer goods while significantly reducing the risk of contamination from pollutants and chemical contaminants and tackling climate challenges.

Nature Restoration Law

On 17 June 2024, nature protection was the subject of a very important resolution approved by the EU national environment ministers. The Nature Restoration Law (NRL) will contribute to the definition of binding goals for national implementation in order to restore degraded ecosystems, *stop the extinction of species and promote healthy ecosystems. The NRL provides important guidelines for restoring the health of fresh-water bodies while also improving biodiversity in agricultural ecosystems with the aim of improving organic carbon stock in cropland soils and promoting high-diversity landscapes.*

Despite the urgent need for action, restoring nature has not been consensual, largely because of the difficulty the EU faces in reconciling public interest

and environmental conservation with the pressure from and interests of the energy sector, agro-business, super-intensive forestry and agricultural production, the agrochemical sector and, most recently, mining industries.

Need for critical raw materials

The EU's demand for critical materials – mainly to reduce its dependence on China and to supply the electric vehicle industry – is forcing those European countries with identified lithium deposits to respond to EU pressure to ensure that at least 10% of such critical minerals are extracted in Europe by 2030.

Europe's green transition and digital transformation – associated with an unsustainable model of overconsumption and overexploitation of raw materials – are far removed from plans for the transition to place prevention and precaution at the forefront of productive and technological solutions.

Portuguese and Serbian conflicts

The governments of Portugal and Serbia have seen this as an opportunity for investment, in most cases creating a fast track for licensing and ignoring the precautionary principle concerning the environmental impact of lithium mining, while jeopardising national needs and goals regarding nature protection. In both cases, governments have not gone any further with the projects thanks to strong popular demonstrations and the persistence of civic movements and parties, including Partido Ecologista "Os Verdes" in Portugal, which have put these concerns on the political agenda.

Lithium mining industry, whose exploitation using open-pit models severely and irreversibly impact soils, water quality and availability, resulting in massive deforestation, soil destruction and increased carbon emissions, is far from consensual in these countries.

Governments have opened the way for exploitation to be carried out on productive farmlands, which is the case in Serbia´s Jadar Valley and in the Portuguese region of Barroso.

In Portugal, these projects overlap with ecologically sensitive areas and are close to protected and classified areas, such as Natura 2000 areas or the FAO's classified agricultural areas, thereby creating extreme impacts on the

landscape, the identity of rural regions, on food production and the economic sustainability of communities. Lithium extraction - the aim of which is for use in decarbonization solutions - is absolutely incompatible with regions suffering from severe drought, water scarcity and devastating forest fires, such as Portugal. Therefore, this option is not a solution to climate change in these territories. On the contrary, it is a problem and will soon become a huge burden for future generations, due to the environmental liabilities it will leave behind.

In Serbia, populations fear that the lithium mine will pollute water sources and endanger public health. After years of public protests, the Serbian government recently signed a memorandum of understanding with the EU which is seen as the first step in developing Serbia's lithium resources.

Extraction and processing of lithium in the Jadar Valley, planned by the Rio Tinto company, could significantly harm the environment, creating a devastating impact on the surrounding areas of farmland, forest groundwater and soil, leading to a loss of biodiversity and the accumulation of large amounts of hazardous waste.

These political options have been guided by subservience towards an economic imposition, conducting the energy transition without social and environmental justice, mainly due to the failure to make exploration sites compatible with areas of lower environmental and socio-economic impact.

We oppose both the EU's and governments' hasty granting of licences for lithium extractive projects that reduce environmental criteria while exempting mining companies from a thorough assessment of the environmental and socio-economic impacts in extractive areas.

These regions cannot be sacrificed and made to give up their agricultural livelihoods and, potentially, regional ecosystems. Thus, efforts must be made to protect nature – particularly water resources, fertile soils and biodiversity – as well as the food sovereignty of Member States.

The European Greens parties gathered in Dublin demand further and strengthened actions on processes involving lithium exploration projects:

- transparency and the democratic participation of local populations and

communities, NGOs and the scientific community

- governments must embrace the precautionary principle
- guaranteed rigorous environmental impact assessment processes
- safeguarding biodiversity
- stopping projects that jeopardise the contamination of drinking water aquifers and/or access to drinking water in the regions
- respecting integrity, livelihoods and the cultural heritage of rural regions.

Background

Since early in 2019, “Os Verdes” has been supporting the local populations of Barroso in Portugal and protesting against the open-pit mining of lithium in their region, not only among our MPs who were in parliament at the time (see parliamentary requests here and here), but also by participating in local and national demonstrations against these projects. EGP Co-Chair Thomas Waitz stated recently that the European Greens support Serbians’ protests against lithium mining in the Jadar Valley.

Supporters

Verdes Equo, Partido Ecologista Os Verdes