

Declaration of the Italian Network for Ecological Restoration

Ecological restoration is essential to combat the loss of biodiversity, mitigate the impact of climate change and promote the recovery of the functioning of natural and semi-natural ecosystems.

The Nature Restoration Regulation (EU) 2024/1991 is a critical step forward towards realising restoration on a broad scale. Its adoption was only possible thanks to the contribution of numerous experts and civil society organisations. The implementation of the Regulation now demands the full efforts of everyone involved in restoration—public authorities, civil society, entrepreneurs and businesses, and the scientific community.

In 2024, an informal group of experts in the field of ecological restoration was born, starting with researchers and persons from the public sector, business community and NGOs, in close contact with the Society for Ecological Restoration (SER) and the Società Italiana per il Restauro Forestale (SIRF). The objective of this group is to disseminate and promote the principles and standards of ecological restoration, in particular those developed by SER and SIRF. This group is driven by the common efforts of its members to improve ecological restoration in Italy and to secure the success of the implementation of the Nature Restoration Regulation in our country.

Our vision

The Italian Network for Ecological Restoration aims to integrate standards for ecological restoration in Italy through a participatory approach.

Our objectives

- Promote conservation and ecological restoration, understood as actions aimed at improving the conservation status of natural and semi-natural

habitats, in particular within the Italian peninsula, including coastal and marine areas;

- Improve the implementation of national and European laws protecting biodiversity by promoting the review of national and regional instruments currently in force;
- Create a structure for joint actions to encourage behaviour that is sustainable and protects biodiversity.

Our activities

I. Promote an interdisciplinary and collaborative approach to ecological restoration.

- Participate in the preparation and drafting of the National Restoration Plan for Italy, and in other national or regional policies related to the same;
- Promote networks for collaborating with the managing bodies of protected areas and Natura 2000 sites in order to promote ecological restoration actions within management and conservation plans;
- Promote networks among European restoration practitioners, leveraging public funding programs and other private initiatives to build a strong "restoration culture" in the European Union
- Contributing lessons learned from the experience of the Italian scientific community to national and international forums;
- Contribute to the development of appropriate practices and procedures to increase private investment in ecological restoration interventions, with respect for the impact mitigation hierarchy proposed by international initiatives such as the Science Based Targets Network.

II. Strengthening ecological restoration as a profession

- Bridge the knowledge gap between researchers, practitioners and policy makers through networking, collaboration and opportunities for transfer of knowledge;

- Promote the inclusion of courses related to ecological restoration in master's degree programmes;
- Promote the inclusion of professionals from the biological, natural and environmental sciences in restoration projects.

III. Transmit, adapt and standardise ecological restoration practices

- Gather and adapt existing best practices for ecological restoration and nature conservation developed within Italy, such as procedures for the collection and use of native plant material and the creation of seed banks for geographic zones;
- Translate international documents recognised as foundational for the practice of ecological restoration into Italian, including the International Principles and Standards for the Practice of Ecological Restoration of the SER, to facilitate their dissemination and use by practitioners at all levels;
- Review current forestry and agronomic practices in the light of ecological restoration objectives and the latest scientific evidence;
- Supporting research on marine ecological restoration to define protocols and spread knowledge of good practices developed in Italy;
- Develop mechanisms for the evaluation and certification of ecological restoration interventions and appropriate monitoring programs.

IV. Optimise ecological restoration efforts

- Promote standardised procedures that are as sustainable and efficient as possible and that maximise returns on investment;
- Define criteria for prioritising interventions that are based on objective and scientifically validated data;
- Map sources of the degradation and disturbance of habitats to identify mitigation interventions and ensure that restoration outcomes are maintained in the long-term.

V. *Promoting a culture of ecological restoration*

- Carry out activities that raise awareness of the urgency, the conditions and the benefits of ecological restoration.

Conclusion

We must work together to ensure the success of the Nature Restoration Regulation and to promote a culture of ecological restoration in Italy. This effort expresses our deep commitment to safeguarding our common future and the health of our ecosystems.

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