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European Biodiversity Partnership



BiodivRestore Knowledge Hub

Webinar – Stakeholder Conflicts and Conflict Management in Nature Restoration

16.10.2026

Stakeholder Conflicts and Conflict Management in Nature Restoration

Recording

● REC

- **This webinar is being recorded**
- **Recording & slides:** will be posted on Biodiversa+ website after the event

BIODIVRESTORE KNOWLEDGE HUB WEBINAR · Friday 16 October 2026 · 14:00–15:00 CEST

Stakeholder Conflicts and Conflict Management in Nature Restoration

PROGRAMME

14:00–14:05

Welcome & the BiodivRestore Knowledge Hub

Who we are and how we support Member States in implementing the NRR

14:05–14:40

Presenting the report

“Stakeholder conflicts and conflict management in Nature Restoration”

14:40–15:00

Questions & answers

Put your questions in the Zoom Q&A box at any time

SPEAKERS · Knowledge Hub experts

MS — **Dr. Metodi Sotirov**
University of Freiburg

RV — **Dr. Rik De Vreese**
European Forest Institute, UNPplus project

biodiversa+ European Biodiversity Partnership

BiodivRestore ERA-NET COFUND
Conservation and restoration of degraded ecosystems and their biodiversity, including a focus on aquatic systems

Water JPI

www.biodiversa.eu

BIODIVRESTORE KNOWLEDGE HUB

Who we are – and why now

OUR GOAL

Support Member States in implementing the **Nature Restoration Regulation** and feed the research & innovation agenda on restoration.

Experts from BiodivRestore-funded projects, Horizon Europe projects and EU initiatives & networks, supported by a Secretariat.

50
experts

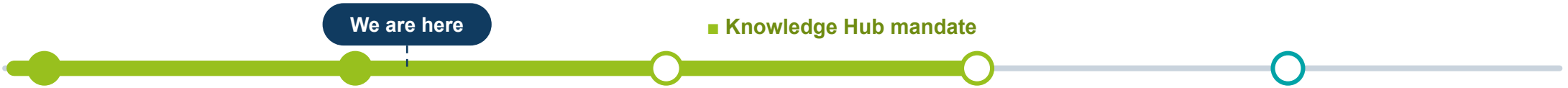
4
co-chairs

2024–27
mandate · May 2024 – Sep 2027

INTERDISCIPLINARY EXPERTISE

Terrestrial ecology | Freshwater ecology | Marine ecology | Environmental law | Political sciences | Land management | Urban planning

NATURE RESTORATION REGULATION – KEY MILESTONES



Aug 2024
Adoption of the NRR

Sep 2026
Member States submit draft National Restoration Plans (to 2050)

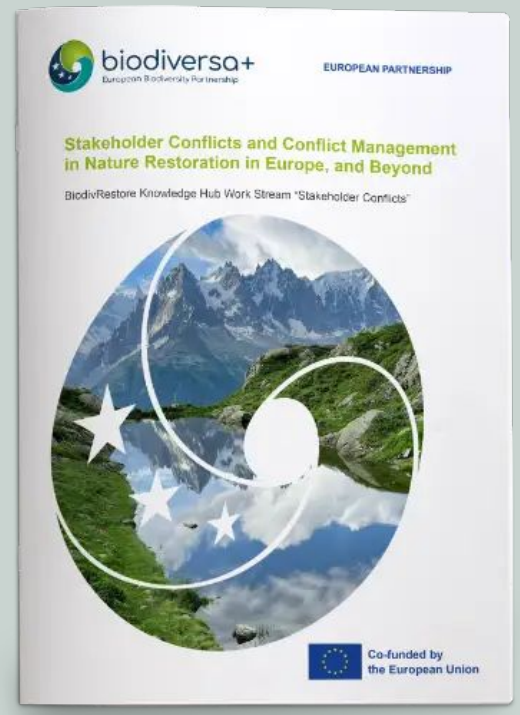
Mar 2027
Commission assesses the draft plans with each Member State

Sep 2027
Final plans published, within 6 months of the Commission's observations

Jun 2028
Member States report on progress – then every 3 years

Access the full document!

CONFLICTS REPORT **PUBLISHED 29.09.2026**



Stakeholder Conflicts and Conflict Management in Nature Restoration

SCAN TO ACCESS

Why stakeholder conflicts – and why conflict management?

- **Stakeholder conflict** becomes particularly important for restoration when it produces opposition, non-compliance, litigation, delay, withdrawal, polarisation, institutional blockage or another behaviour that affects implementation.
- We expect to see stakeholder conflicts directed at the **whole EU's Nature Restoration Regulation** and **all National Restoration Plans stages**.
- What lessons can we learn from the conflicts around **Natura 2000 and the EU Nature Directives**?

25 case studies

in the final report, with direct relevance for:

Art. 4	Habitat types / Natura 2000
Art. 5 & 9	Marine ecosystems; rivers and floodplains
Art. 11–13	Agricultural and forest ecosystems; tree planting
Art. 8	Urban ecosystems
Art. 14–17	National Restoration Plans

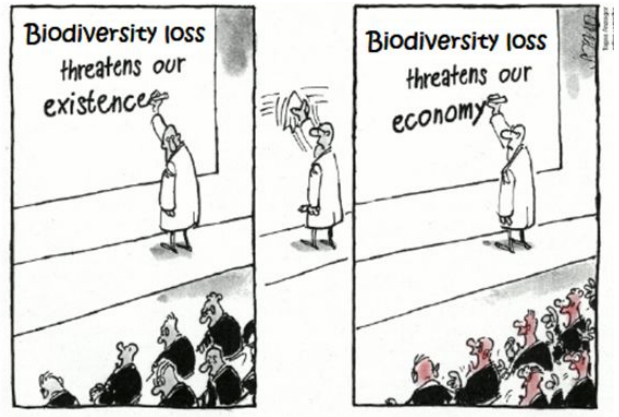
Primary users of the report

User group	Policymaking	Implementation	Monitoring	Policy advocacy
EU institutions (COM, EP, CEU, ECJ) and Member State authorities	●			
Member State authorities – environment, agriculture, forest, fisheries, water, climate, energy		●	●	
Restoration practitioners, project managers, consultants and think-tanks		●	●	●
Landowners, land-users and natural resource managers		●		●
Extractive industries and businesses (e.g. mining, agriculture, forestry, fisheries)		●		●
Environmental NGOs, social rights CSOs and citizens' groups		●	●	●
Researchers and educators, think-tanks, mediators, journalists, mass media		○	●	

● main use ○ secondary use

What types of stakeholder conflict and of conflict management?

Conflict type	Decision-making logic	Central diagnostic question	Typical restoration manifestation	Primary management pathway
Interest-based	Consequences	***What do actors gain or lose?***	Income loss, opportunity costs, unequal benefits or risks	Economic incentives, compensation, benefit sharing
Rules-based	Formal / legal appropriateness	***What are actors required, permitted or prohibited to do?***	Conflicting legislation, policy incoherence, unclear rights or mandates	Legal clarification, enforcement, policy change or integration
Norms-based	Social appropriateness	***Is the process or outcome regarded as fair and legitimate?***	Lack of recognition, procedural injustice, contested legitimacy	Participation, mediation, procedural reform, recognition
Ideological / knowledge-based	Cognition and interpretation	***What is true, valuable and desirable?***	Competing restoration paradigms, beliefs, knowledge or problem definitions	Dialogue, joint learning, knowledge exchange, reframing
Power-based	Authority and control	***Who decides and who can influence outcomes?***	Exclusion, unequal authority, resource control, institutional dominance	Governance reform, empowerment, redistribution of authority





From historical experience to contemporary restoration conflict

Nature conflicts have accompanied European history for **more than a century.**

- **Societal conflicts** over competing land uses and livelihoods, contradictory policies, established cultural practices, competing ideas about appropriate management, and unequal control of land and decision-making.
- **Public environmental benefits** on actors who bear concentrated private costs can generate sustained opposition; contradictory sectoral rules can frustrate environmental objectives; centralised implementation without sufficient local recognition can produce resistance even where ecological objectives are widely supported.
- **Countries have responded** through economic incentives, regulation, specialised institutions, education and advisory services, contractual arrangements and shared governance.

History shows that restoration has repeatedly succeeded or become more manageable when governance arrangements were able to **adapt the relationship between ecological objectives and the social institutions through which land, water and resources are governed.**

Different ecosystems, recurring conflict types

Ecosystem / setting	Recurrent conflict types	Typical manifestation	Conflict management pathways illustrated
Agricultural	**Interest; norms; ideological/knowledge; rules as interacting dimension**	Opportunity costs, competing agricultural/biodiversity narratives, different meanings of “good farming”, administrative burdens	Payments and incentives; policy adaptation; co-design; communication and reframing; knowledge exchange
Forest	**Ideological/knowledge; interest; rules; power**	Timber production vs biodiversity; competing restoration paradigms; climate adaptation; national/EU policy incoherence; unequal influence	Policy learning; dialogue; incentives; legal enforcement; joint decision-making; mediation
Freshwater / peatland	**Ideological/knowledge; rules; interest; power**	Barrier removal, heritage protection, flood risk, rewetting, species restoration, legal disputes	Legal clarification; scientific assessment; dialogue; mediation; adaptive management; judicial processes
Coastal / marine	**Interest; rules; power; norms**	Competing land/sea uses, pollution, tourism, fisheries, offshore wind energy, development pressure	Legal reform; spatial planning; restoration funding; partnerships; participation; scientific monitoring
Urban	**Norms, with interest and power dimensions**	Urban–rural legitimacy, agricultural land conversion, procedural justice	Negotiation; participation; compensation; land swaps; adjustment of timing and spatial plans
Multi-ecosystem	**Rules and power, with knowledge and interest interactions**	Policy incoherence, litigation, cross-sectoral mandates	Courts; legal clarification; policy integration; institutional reform; scientific expertise

Source: Stakeholder Conflicts report, Table 3 – cross-ecosystem synthesis of recurrent conflict patterns

Matching conflict-management pathways to conflict causes

Dominant conflict type	What primarily needs to change?	Primary conflict management pathway	Important complementary measures
Interest-based	Distribution of costs, benefits, risks or opportunities	**Compensation, incentives, benefit sharing, contracts, market mechanisms**	Participation, policy simplification, spatial coordination, advisory support
Rules-based	Inconsistent, ambiguous or contested formal rules	**Legal clarification, policy integration, regulatory change, enforcement, judicial decision**	Scientific expertise, institutional coordination, participation
Norms-based	Perceived fairness, legitimacy, recognition or social acceptability	**Meaningful participation, negotiation, mediation, procedural reform, recognition**	Compensation where material costs exist; communication; trust-building
Ideological / knowledge-based	Interpretations, beliefs, problem definitions or knowledge claims	**Dialogue, learning, joint fact-finding, knowledge exchange, reframing**	Mediation, experimentation, long-term engagement
Power-based	Distribution of authority, resources and effective influence	**Co-governance, empowerment, institutional reform, redistribution/clarification of authority**	Capacity-building, accessible information, procedural safeguards

Recurring failure mechanisms

1. Conflict management fails when the intervention does not address the dominant cause.
2. Addressing one conflict type may expose rather than eliminate another.
3. Engagement can come too late.
4. Structural power asymmetries can undermine formally participatory processes.
5. Conflict can be displaced rather than resolved.
6. Different conflict types and resolution pathways operate at different temporal scales.

Recurring failure mechanisms

1

Conflict management fails when the intervention does not address the dominant cause

LIFE GRACE: restoring semi-natural grasslands in Natura 2000 sites in Lazio Region (IT)

- Sites and interventions selected based on scientific evidence and approach
- BUT: implementation hindered by constraints in the regional governance and legal system
  (no habitat baselines, no clear procedure for Appropriate Assessment)
- **Rules-based conflict**
- Response: **cooperative agreements, adaptive governance and technical support**
  => some local progress
  => underlying regulatory and procedural problems remain & restoration not implemented



Picture by LIFE GRACE – Layman's Report

Recurring failure mechanisms

2 Addressing one conflict type may expose rather than eliminate another

- Removing river barriers in the Deba Catchment (Basque Country, Spain)
- Initial, **Rules-based conflict** between cultural heritage protection and ecologoical restoration

  -> clarified by Basque Parliament
- **Ideological/knowledge conflicts** and **norm-based conflicts** persisted (local identity, risk management)



Demolition works of the CH Matxiategi Dam at River Deba, Gipuzkoa Province, Basque Country, Spain (photo by Gipuzkoa Provincial Council)

Recurring failure mechanisms

3 Engagement can come too late

- Forest restoration in SUPERB
- Need for early, informal interpersonal exchange before formal decision-making and restoration begins
- Once positions have become publicly entrenched, participation may contain conflict rather than support collaborative problem-solving



Discussing forest restoration (photo: Gesche Schifferdecker)

Recurring failure mechanisms

4 Structural power asymmetries can undermine formally participatory processes

- Gulf of Roses offshore wind farm development versus marine restoration (Catalonia, Spain)
- Offshore wind-industry has **high interests and high power**
- Versus fisheries, eNGOs, local authorities, natural parks and recreation have **less power**
- Consultation and participation do not (necessarily) correct such inequalities
- Power can be exerted via **legal action** (Estonia's Kikepera wet forest and peat mire restoration, Ireland's Abbeyleix peatland restoration)



Middelgrunden offshore wind farm (40 MW) in Øresund. Photo by Kim Hansen. CC BY-SA 3.0

Recurring failure mechanisms

5 Conflict can be displaced rather than resolved

- Climate-adapted forest restoration of disturbed Natura 2000 forest (SUPERB, NRW, Germany)
- Conflict between forestry actors and conservation actors on climate-based forest restoration in municipal forest (knowledge-based conflict, interest-based conflict)
- “Resolution”: selecting alternative private forest site
  -> conflict displacement



Discussing climate-adapted forest restoration after disturbance (photo: Rahel Könen)

Recurring failure mechanisms

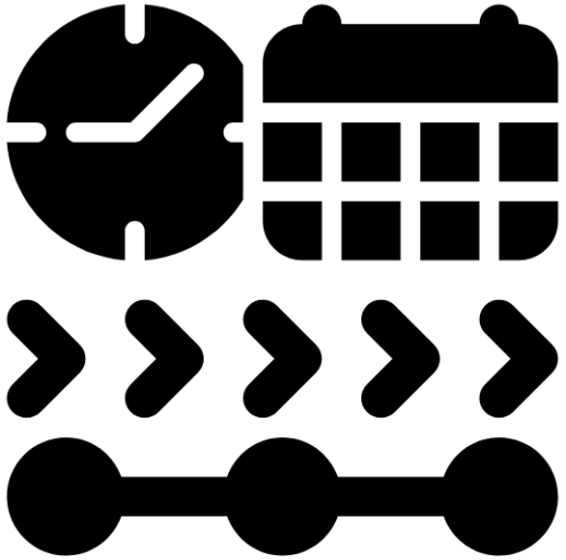
6 Different conflict types and resolution pathways operate at different temporal scale

Shorter timeframes for resolution possible for:

- **Interest-based conflicts** (e.g., through compensation)
- **Rules-based conflicts** (e.g., through amending policies, laws or regulations)

Longer time needed for:

- **Knowledge-based conflicts** (e.g., through knowledge exchange and mutual learning)
- **Norm-based conflicts** (e.g., through trust-building and socialisation)
- Restoration project and funding timelines do not allow for long-term conflict resolution



Created by M. Oki Orlando from Noun Project

Key messages

1. Nature Restoration is an **ecological intervention AND a process of societal choice and governance**.

2. **Conflict-sensitive governance is an integral part** of Nature Restoration Planning and implementation.

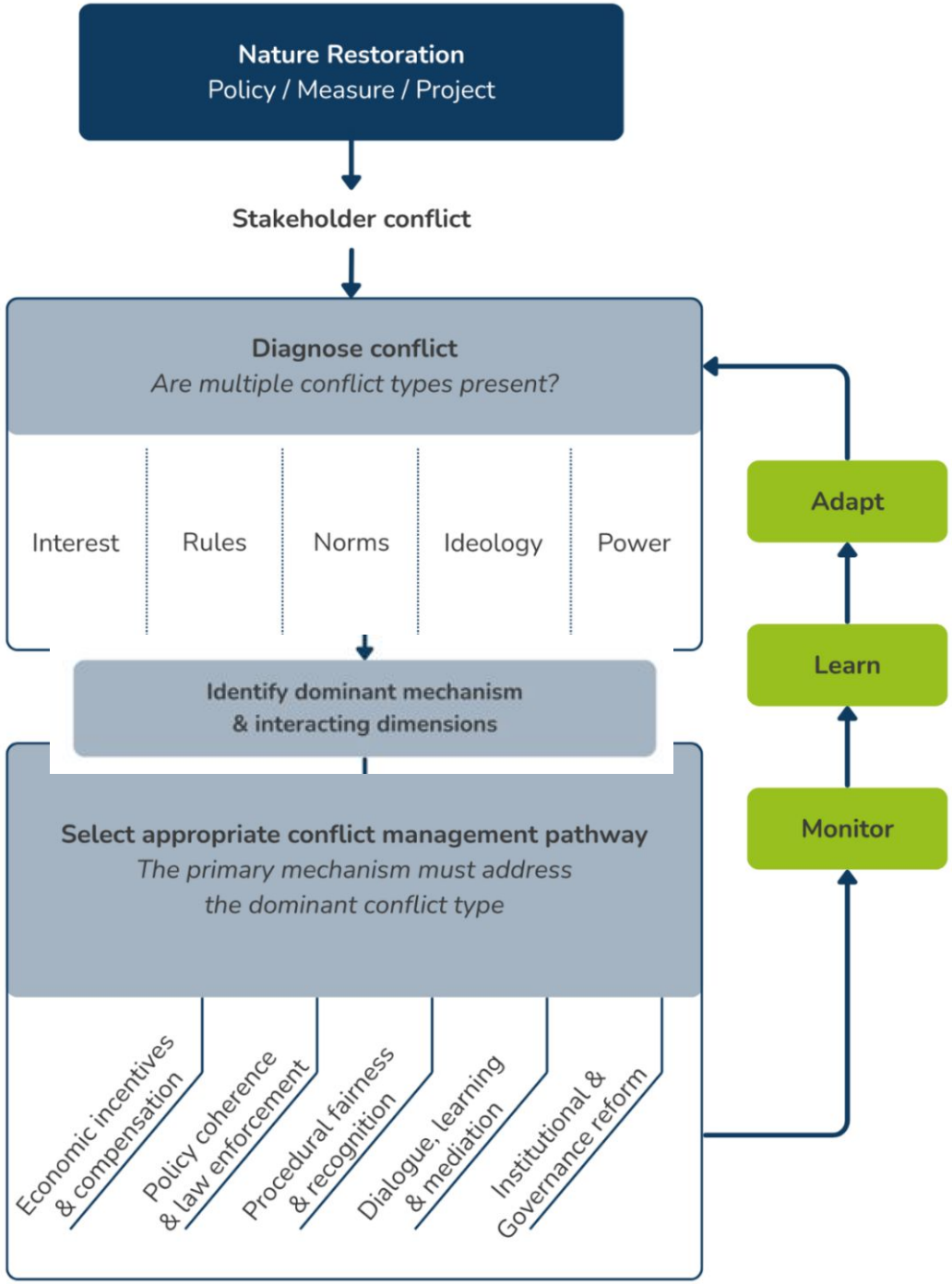
3. **Conflict management strategies** need to correspond to the dominant and interacting causes.

4. Conflict management aims not necessarily at eliminating the conflict, but at **resolution, mitigation, understanding and transforming** the underlying conditions.

Key messages

5 Diagnose before prescribing, and allow for learning and adaptation

1. Identify the **subject and parties** to the conflict: what is contested, which actors are involved and what claims or demands they advance.
2. Diagnose the **underlying cause(s)** of the opposition.
3. Identify the **dominant and interacting conflict cause**.
4. **Match conflict management pathways and instruments** to the dominant and interaction conflict causes.
5. **Monitor the outcomes and re-diagnose.**
6. **Adapt** the conflict management strategy if needed.



9. Implications for Nature Restoration Planning

1

Anticipate conflict early

Undertake stakeholder and conflict analysis before restoration measures and locations become fixed and before conflicts emerge. Guiding questions include:

- Who is likely to bear costs and who receives benefits?
- Which EU, national, regional or sectoral rules may conflict?
- Do affected stakeholders consider procedures and outcomes legitimate?
- Which competing values, knowledge claims and understandings of restoration are present?
- How are authority, resources and effective influence distributed among the actors involved?

2

Diagnose causes, not only positions

Distinguish material interests, conflicting rules, legitimacy concerns, knowledge/value disagreements and power inequalities.

3

Match conflict management instruments to conflict types

Use compensation for material losses, legal coordination for rule conflicts, meaningful participation for legitimacy problems, dialogue and learning for knowledge/value conflicts, and institutional reform where power is central.

4

Combine and sequence conflict management instruments

Most real conflicts require economic, legal, procedural, informational and institutional measures in combination rather than a single intervention.

5

Monitor and re-diagnose

Include social and governance indicators alongside ecological monitoring because conflicts can evolve during implementation.

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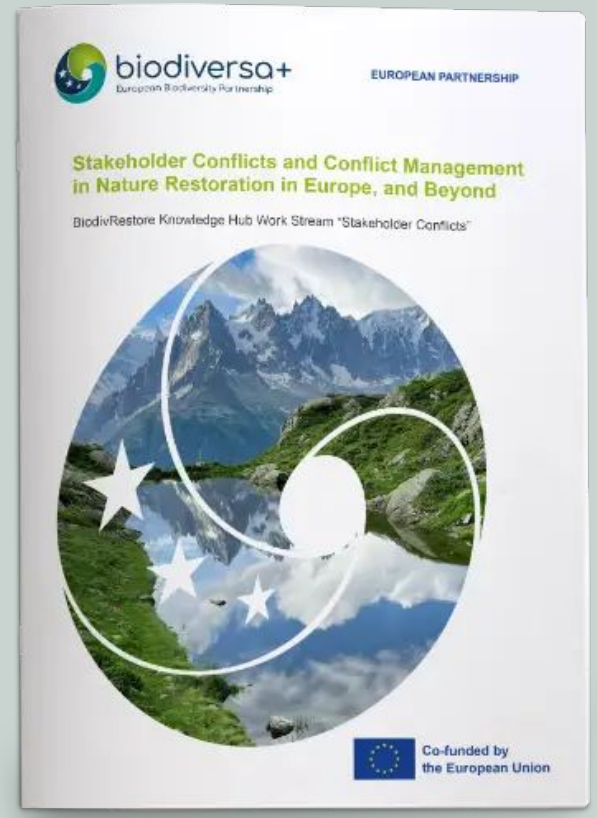
Thank you!

Time for Q&A

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