RESTORE-CONNECT - RESTORING CONNECTIVITY AND LANDSCAPE COHERENCE

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In June 2022, the European Commission published the proposal for a Nature Restoration Law. This legislation is a key element of the EU Biodiversity Strategy and sets legally binding targets for each Member State to restore 20% of all degraded ecosystems from a poor to a good condition by 2030, increasing to 60% by 2040, and 90% by 2050. A final agreement on the law text was reached in November 2023. A formal acceptance of the Nature Restoration Law in the European Parliament is expected in spring 2024, followed by its publication. Next, each EU-Member State will have to submit a Nature Restoration Plan within two years.

To examine how such a Nature Restoration Plan should be established, this study will look at the possibilities for restoration of two ecosystems: forests and grasslands. Two transboundary study areas were selected: the landscape of the Sint-Jansberg and the Reichswald (Dutch-German border), and the landscape of the Kalmthoutse Heide and the Brabantse Wal (Dutch-Belgian border). How are the habitat types and species from the Habitats Directive under pressure due to climate change and other environmental pressures? What restoration measures are possible in the study area and what are their impact on biodiversity, spatial connectivity and agricultural productivity? What are the different stakeholders' views on these measures and which ones are most feasible to implement? Both ecological models and stakeholder interviews will be used to formulate an answer to these questions and to develop a method that can be used to restore connectivity and improve biodiversity in landscapes.

This research project is carried out in collaboration with the University of Wageningen (The Netherlands).