#RESTORENATURE BRIEFING | **AUSTRIA**

Austria submitted its draft National Restoration Plan to the European Commission on 2 September 2026. The plan should explain how the country will meet the EU Nature Restoration Law's targets for restoring damaged habitats, rivers, farmland, forests and urban green spaces. This briefing summary assesses the draft's main strengths and shortcomings, and identifies what needs to improve before the plan is finalised.

MAJOR GAPS IN RESTORATION PLAN, RIVERS A POSITIVE EXCEPTION. The draft leaves out a core requirement of the Regulation: restoring degraded natural habitats and habitats needed by protected species. Plans for urban nature are also incomplete. For farmland, forests and pollinators, most measures continue existing programmes without showing what additional recovery they will deliver. River restoration is a positive exception, with clear targets and a process to define priority areas. However, long-term funding and responsibilities remain unclear.

WHAT THE DRAFT GETS RIGHT

1. **Clear river restoration targets:** 300 km of free-flowing rivers by 2030 and 2,000 km by 2050, supported by an inventory of barriers.
2. **Concrete farmland figures:** 13,000 km² identified as needing restoration, with regional maps and targets for rewetting drained agricultural peatlands.
3. **Identified river restoration priorities:** More than 10,000 hectares of floodplain habitats and potential restoration corridors along major rivers, including the Morava, Drava and Mura.

WHERE IT FALLS SHORT

1. **No restoration measures** for protected habitats and species habitats. The urban chapter omits Lower Austria and proposes excluding 304 of 330 urban areas from the calculation of green-space.
2. Most measures for farmland, forests and pollinators rely on existing programmes **without demonstrating additional restoration outcomes.**
3. Funding beyond 2027/28, costs for specific measures and **responsibilities remain unclear.** Harmful subsidies are not identified.

PRIORITIES FOR THE FINAL NRP

1: Define where and how habitats will be restored by completing the missing Art. 4, complete the urban chapter (Art. 8) on Lower Austria, provide evidence for exclusions and exceptions, and consult stakeholders on the missing material.

2: Secure long-term funding sources for each measure, commit national funding beyond 2027, identify subsidies that harm nature and publish a phase-out plan, and assign clear responsibilities, milestones and monitoring requirements.

3: Strengthen forest restoration measures and accountability. The draft lacks clear forest restoration priorities, mapped areas, measurable targets and implementation deadlines, while relying on voluntary measures. Austria should identify priority areas, provide compensation for taking forests permanently out of production, and assign clear responsibilities and milestones.

WHY RESTORATION MATTERS IN AUSTRIA

Austria's species-rich grasslands, wetlands, floodplain forests and rivers are under pressure. 77 percent of the country's protected habitats weren't in good conservation status in 2019–2025. Restoring these ecosystems also benefits people: healthy wetlands retain water, connected rivers and floodplains can reduce flood risks, and urban green spaces help cool towns and cities as the climate crisis drives up temperatures. Austria's restoration plan must set out concrete action, with clear priorities, measurable targets and secure funding.

Assessment date: 08.10.2026

Contact:
Joschka Brangs, WWF Österreich, joschka.brangs@wwf.at
Christof Kuhn, BirdLife Österreich, christof.kuhn@birdlife.at
Dominik Linhard, GLOBAL 2000, dominik.linhard@global2000.at
Marlene Schaffer, Ökobüro, marlene.schaffer@oekobuero.at