

RIGHTS *for* NATURE

European Citizens to Represent and Protect Ecosystems

European Citizens' Initiative

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Imagine if a river, a forest or a wetland could stand up for itself. Today, nature is protected by environmental laws, but it is still treated mainly as property or a resource to be managed. Ecosystems themselves remain invisible in legal systems and nature itself has no legal voice. Rights for Nature would change that. This European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) seeks to give ecosystems legal personhood – just as companies have – and let citizens act as their representatives, so nature's interests can be represented directly in legal and political decision-making. Your signature could help make it happen.

On 19 May 2026, the European Commission officially registered our ECI, "Rights for Nature: Empower Citizens to Represent and Protect Ecosystems". The Commission confirmed that in principle, under the European treaties, the EU could pass a law to better protect and restore nature – including the possibility of giving ecosystems legal personality and allow citizens and communities to act on their behalf.

All of us behind this Initiative – and everyone who signs it – believe its success would open a rare and exciting opportunity for Europe: not only a political one, but an economic one too. Sooner or later, we are convinced, Rights of Nature will have to be recognised everywhere; more than 500 such initiatives are already under way and growing around the world. If nature, the very foundation of our survival, is to endure, this shift is not just likely – it is necessary.

Here lies the opportunity: the countries that embrace these ideas early will gain a real head start over those that follow later. Because nature knows no borders, its challenges always call for cross-border answers – and Europe is uniquely placed, some would say even responsible, to create that advantage for all of its Member States and for their economies and industries alike.

Best of all, Europe can do this while fully respecting its many cultures and legal traditions – through a single European law that works across national borders, directly or indirectly. That is the ultimate goal of the European Citizens' Initiative Rights for Nature, and the reason your voice counts in giving nature a voice.

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Objectives

This European Citizens' Initiative seeks to recognise Rights of Nature in European law via a legal act such as a Directive or a Regulation to strengthen the protection of ecosystems. Ecosystems across Europe are in crisis despite existing environmental law, demonstrating the need for an integrated legal and governance framework that complements existing protections while addressing their structural fragmentation.

This Initiative firstly seeks to move from treating nature as a property to recognising ecosystems as living entities with intrinsic value and rights such as the rights to exist, to regenerate their vital cycles and to be restored. Ecosystems should also be granted legal personality, similar to companies.

The aim is also to empower citizens and communities to act as stewards and representatives of ecosystems, both to prevent harm and to support protection, restoration and regeneration. These representatives should have legal standing and additional legal measures when defending ecosystems' rights, building on Mar Menor's example in Spain.

Let's give nature a voice together – join the movement!



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