

PR 22/07/2023 The restoration of nature is fundamental for our quality of life

The proposals on the restoration of nature that were approved in the European Parliament a week ago are only the beginning of a long process but can lead to an improvement in the environmental situation over time. There is a serious lack of awareness about the importance of nature in our lives, that this is fundamental not only for the quality of life but also for our very existence. At a press conference near the diving area in Ponta taż-Żonqor, in Marsaskala, ADPD-The Green Party spokespersons insisted that we must take the necessary action before it is too late.

ADPD - The Green Party Public Relations Officer Brian Decelis said very little progress had been made with respect to the Diving Strategy announced in 2022 despite its objectives with a number of specific actions that had to be taken.

Most concerning is the fact that this sector still lacks an entity that takes responsibility for diving areas with a clear legal powers, that works together with all associations, both professional associations and NGOs with an interest in this sport and the environment of the coast and below the sea in diving areas.

No improvements have been made to ensure the year-round availability of diving infrastructure both at the diving sites accessed from the shore and by means of diving boats. The lack of moorings for dive boats in other dive areas also results in repeated anchoring leading to unnecessary damage to the seabed and wrecks. This lack of proper facilities means a disrespect of the marine environment.

It is useless to make strategies if the action they indicate is not taken, Decelis concluded.

ADPD - The Green Party Deputy Chairperson Carmel Cacopardo referred to the proposals for the restoration of nature that were approved by the European Parliament earlier this month. The main objective of the law is that ecological protection is no longer an academic exercise on paper but is actually carried out. As surveys over the years have shown us, despite the protection laid out in detailed legislation of the European Union, 81 per cent of the protected areas (on a European level) are in a state of dilapidation. It is necessary that this shortcoming be addressed seriously if we want the targets regarding climate change to be reached on time.

Thanks to these proposals, which are an integral part of the European Green Deal, targets will be established for the restoration of ecosystems both on land and at sea. They demand that there is no reduction of green spaces in urban areas.

There is a serious lack of awareness about the importance of nature in our lives and that it is fundamental to our existence. There is a need for the protection and appreciation of biodiversity in its natural environment and hobbies such as diving should be supported.

Environmental damage is having a cumulative impact on our quality of life - on the climate, air quality and food safety.

Where we have protected areas, both on land and at sea, they must not only be safeguarded, but where necessary also restored. This makes not only environmental sense but also economic sense. The European Commission has estimated that for every €8 spent on nature restoration the economic value increases by €38.

While the Government's project for the creation or restoration of existing green spaces at a cost of €700 million over a period of time is a step in the right direction, it will not solve anything on its own. This initiative will not compensate for the large swathes of agricultural land adjacent to urban areas that are being given for development as a result of the rationalization exercise. It will not even make up for the continuous attacks on Comino with the blessing of the authorities.

In Malta, if we want to implement in their real spirit the proposals approved by the European Parliament regarding the restoration of the ecosystem, we need to start being consistent between what we declare and what we do.

It is good that the Maltese Government in the Council of Ministers on the Environment supported this measure. It is also good the Maltese Members of the European Parliament all voted in favour of the nature restoration law. But now the support for this measure must be translated into concrete action including the protection of agricultural land from the rampant development encouraged by the rationalization exercise approved by the Maltese Parliament in 2006 - an exercise that needs to be struck off the books as soon as possible in order to start reducing the damage.

The proposals that have been approved are only the beginning but can lead to improvements over time. But we need to be consistent in what we say and take the necessary actions before it is too late, concluded Cacopardo.