

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-002572/24
to the Commission
Giuseppe Antoci (The Left)
(18 November 2024)**

Subject: Monitoring NRRP targets and safeguarding urban green spaces in Italy: the case of the Metropolitan City of Catania

According to a recent study, Catania is the least green city in Italy ⁽¹⁾, a state of affairs that raises serious questions about urban environmental management and the implementation of afforestation plans. In the light of the targets set out by Italy's National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRRP), which include the planting of 1.65 million trees by the end of 2024, there are concerns about the true effectiveness and the long-term sustainability of the environmental measures that have been taken.

The importance of urban afforestation has also been highlighted by a study published by *Lancet*, which found that the availability of green spaces in cities was directly linked to both public health and climate resilience ⁽²⁾. However, concerns about the practical effectiveness and long-term sustainability of Catania's environmental measures ⁽³⁾ raise doubts as to the implementation and monitoring of EU-supported environmental policies.

In the light of the above:

1. What measures are in place to monitor and verify the implementation of Italian urban afforestation plans, particularly as regards cities which, like Catania, have a poor environmental record?
2. What measures are in place to ensure not only that the afforestation targets are achieved but that these efforts are maintained over the long term, in line with the targets outlined both by the NRRP and the European Green Deal?

Submitted: 18.11.2024

**Answer given by Ms Roswall on behalf of the European Commission
(8 January 2025)**

The Commission does not have any specific measures in place to monitor Italian urban afforestation plans. The Nature Restoration Regulation ⁽¹⁾, in force since August 2024, sets targets for urban tree cover, that will be monitored and measured in the future in line with the requirements of the regulation.

These targets are aimed at preventing the loss of trees in cities, towns and suburbs, before 2030, and then to set targets for a steady increase in urban trees after this date.

In the context of the Italian Recovery and Resilience Plan (RRP) ⁽²⁾, investment M2C4-I3.1 'Protection and enhancement of urban and peri-urban forests' focuses on reconstructing ecosystem on the basis of the 'right tree in the right place' principle.

The planting of 4.5 million trees is planned by end 2024, with 3.5 million plants to be transplanted in their final destination by 2026. Investment M1C3-I2.3 'Programs to enhance the identity of places, parks and historic gardens' aims to requalify these green areas.

The Commission services assess the compliance of the measures implemented by Member States against the requirements of the relevant milestones and targets of the annex to the Council Implementing Decision on the approval of the assessment of Italy's RRP.

While national authorities are solely responsible for implementation, the Commission works closely with Italian authorities to ensure a smooth, timely and proper implementation of the plan.

The RRF Regulation ⁽³⁾ envisages an *ex post* global assessment of the Facility, including its impact in the long term.

¹ <https://www.rainews.it/tgr/sicilia/articoli/2024/10/classifica-sole-24-ore-ecosistema-urbano-catania-la-citta-meno-green-ditalia-7e77b067-6620-4723-8e50-21ab1b14ef1c.html>

² Green space and mortality in European cities: a health impact assessment study — Barboza, Evelise Pereira et al., *The Lancet Planetary Health*, Volume 5, Issue 10, e718 — e730.

³ <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1001322621721390>

⁽¹⁾ Regulation (EU) 2024/1991 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2024 on nature restoration and amending Regulation (EU) 2022/869, OJ L, 2024/1991, 29.7.2024.

⁽²⁾ https://commission.europa.eu/business-economy-euro/economic-recovery/recovery-and-resilience-facility/country-pages/italys-recovery-and-resilience-plan_en

⁽³⁾ Regulation (EU) 2021/241 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 12 February 2021 establishing the Recovery and Resilience Facility, OJ L 57, 18.2.2021, p. 17-75.