



European Ecological Networks

Shaping the European Ecological Network

The European Ecological Network is the backbone of Europe's blue and green nature.

- Connectivity allows the free movement of wildlife in a fragmented environment, and facilitates genetic exchange between different populations or parts of meta-populations, and thus increases the chances of survival of threatened species and ecosystems;
- Other benefits of the network include carbon sinks, water retention, touristic value, regional identity;
- The network accommodates the movement of species due to the effects of climate change;
- The network is an essential element in realizing the European 2010 biodiversity targets;
- The ecological network concept also provides a tool for ecological design and physical planning that facilitates interaction with other types of land use.

What is required to successfully establish functioning European Ecological Networks?

- Better understanding of the underlying natural processes, including the effects of climate change;
- Effective interaction of and communication between sectors affecting ecological connectivity, e.g. transport, tourism, agriculture, water management, spatial planning;
- Increased involvement of the finance sector and financial institutions in biodiversity relevant investments;
- Development of European, national and sub-national programmes for the practical implementation of measures to ensure ecological connectivity on the ground;
- Adequate management of core areas of the European Ecological Network.

In 1992, the EU established a European Ecological Network, called Natura 2000, as part of the EU Habitats Directive. In 1995, 53 European countries established the Pan-European Ecological Network (PEEN) as part of the Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy (PEBLDS). ECNC received a political mandate to coordinate the establishment of the PEEN together with the Council of Europe. It has developed, inter alia, the indicative map of the Pan-European Network for Central and Eastern Europe and for South-Eastern Europe. ECNC also supports the establishment of Natura 2000 via various activities in the new EU Member States and the EU Accession Countries.

What ECNC can offer

ECNC can:

- assist local authorities by stimulating regional cooperation and promoting involvement of other socio-economic sectors and the physical planning sector for the development of ecological networks;
- provide an interface between science and policy by analysing links between the nature conservation sector and other sectors involved in areas of biological interest, especially land use;
- coordinate the implementation of European Ecological Network pilot projects, like those in Białowieża and Duna Dráva – Kopacki Rit National Parks;
- mobilize a wide range of experts in the field of biodiversity, sustainable development and societal needs;
- provide access to information resources on biodiversity in a wider context and to related European and international policy.

Examples of activities as part of ECNC's 'European Ecological Network' programme

...ECNC coordinates the implementation of European ecological network pilot projects, like those in the renowned Białowieża Forest on the border of Poland and Belarus, and the Duna-Drava National Park – Kopacki Rit National Park area on the border of Croatia and Hungary. Both projects have resulted in increased cooperation between stakeholders and consensus about priority actions.

...ECNC coordinates the process of putting the European ecological network on the map and facilitates interregional cooperation, for instance for the South-East Europe and the Black Sea area.

...ECNC provides an interface between science and policy by analysing links between ecological networks and protected areas and economic and land use sectors. For instance, ECNC investigates the interaction between policy on spatial planning and ecological networks in Europe.

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