

Ecosystems in Europe could be strengthened by building a green infrastructure and connecting protected areas

Connecting nature sites with green infrastructure could boost ecosystem services by about 10 % within the protected network and in its surrounding areas. These benefits could be expanded by connecting EU sites with neighbouring regions, which could be done with little or very little management intervention — the EEA briefing states.

The EEA briefing 'Building a Trans-European Nature Network' analyses the potential of using green infrastructure to connect protected Natura 2000 sites with other natural and semi-natural landscapes. Green infrastructure networks consist of natural and man-made green structures, such as forests, parks, wildlife overpasses or hedgerows, and they are designed to deliver a wide range of ecosystem services, including as water and air purification, space for recreation and climate mitigation and adaptation.

According to the EEA briefing, about 80 % of the current Natura 2000 sites are already connected through natural or semi-natural areas. Around 15 % of the disconnected Natura 2000 sites are less than 1 kilometre apart but intersected by, for example, highways, agricultural land, or urban areas that limit species movement and the area's capacity to offer ecosystem services.

The EEA briefing is based on a technical report developed by the EEA and its European Topic Centre on Urban, Land and Soil Systems. This work contributes to approaches to extending the network of protected areas to meet the 30 % target of the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030, which calls for investments in green and blue infrastructure and cooperation across borders to set up ecological corridors.

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