

BirdLife Position on the Trans-European Network of Green Infrastructure

For external use. Adopted by the Birds and Habitats Directives Taskforce on 27 July 2016.

Summary

BirdLife asks for a Trans-European Network of Green Infrastructure (TEN-G) to be developed, with a separated budget line of at least 1 billion EUR annually and projects at least 75% co-funded by the EU. TEN-G should only support large scale projects. The European Commission should develop a TEN-G priority corridors map based on existing ecological networks and wilderness areas. TEN-G projects should be able to fund a wide range of activities, including land purchase and removal of barriers to migration.

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1. The concept of a **Trans-European Network for Green Infrastructure (TEN-G)** was developed as part of the European Commission's Green Infrastructure Strategy¹. According to the Strategy, the TEN-G should be equivalent to Trans-European Network for Energy (TEN-E), Transport (TEN-T) and the Connecting Europe Facility. It should consist of large scale green infrastructure projects along Trans-European priority axes.
2. In BirdLife's view the **TEN-G should be based on the TEN-E and TEN-T**. It should be governed by a new TEN-G Regulation and its funding integrated into the next Connecting Europe Facility Regulation².
3. Under the Regulation the TEN-G should have a **separate budget line of at least 1 billion EUR annually**. The **projects should be at least 75% co-funded by the EU**.
4. The **TEN-G should only fund projects which clearly and demonstrably contribute to the integrity of the Natura 2000 network**, with the possibility to fund projects which in addition contribute to other benefits such as carbon sequestration, flood protection, pollination etc.. The TEN-G network should therefore consist of core Natura 2000 areas, buffer zones and ecological corridors.
5. As such, the TEN-G should contribute to a co-ordinated, EU-wide implementation of **Article 10 of the Habitats Directive**.³

¹ COM(2013) 249 <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52013DC0249>

² Regulation 1316/2013 <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32013R1316&from=EN>

³ Directive 92/43/EEC <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:31992L0043>

6. The **TEN-G should be limited to large scale projects**, for which currently no adequate EU funding opportunities exist. Small-scale projects can be financed through other tools, such as the LIFE projects, the Natural Capital Financing Facility, the European Regional Development Funds etc.
7. The **TEN-G should be limited to projects of regional level and above**, with the aim of establishing an EU-wide Green Infrastructure network, connecting important ecological areas.
8. The European Commission needs to develop a **TEN-G priority corridors map**. The map should be **based on the existing European ecological networks and wilderness areas** such as the Pan-European Ecological Network, and the European Green Belt and regional ecological networks such as the “Trames Vertes et Bleues”, the Alpine Carpathian Corridor, the Alpine ecological network, the National Ecological Network of the Netherlands (Ecologische Hoofdstructuur) and others. The map should be underpinned by a scientific analysis of the threat of fragmentation to species protected under the Birds and Habitats Directives.
9. **A wide range of activities should be eligible for funding**. This includes ecological restoration and creation of wilderness areas, removal and bypass of key barriers such as hydro-electrical dams and roads, development of agri-environment mechanisms and land purchase.

Background

According to the Target 2 of the EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020, ecosystems and their services shall be maintained and enhanced by 2020, by establishing green infrastructure and restoring at least 15% of degraded ecosystems. Whilst the establishment of Green Infrastructure and the restoration goal are critical for the achievement of the Target 2, the way that they will be operationalized is unclear.

The BirdLife position on Target 2 of the EU Biodiversity Strategy, adopted by the BHDTF in 2013, welcomes the target 2 and its actions and sets out specific recommendations for the new policy initiatives. More particularly, the actions under Target 2 should be seen as complementary to existing EU legislation.

Green infrastructure should, according to our position on Target 2 aim to strengthen the Natura 2000 network and support the implementation of the Birds and Habitats Directives beyond the designated sites, by promoting a landscape scale conservation approach in site management. Green infrastructure should be highly integrated into other EU policies and funds. It should be explicitly linked to any implementation gaps identified during the Fitness Check of the Birds and Habitats Directives.