Better planning and methods needed to restore nature

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Biodiversity — Ecosystems Land use Sustainability transitions

Maintaining natural capital is vital for the function of our societies and people’s well-being. A new briefing from the European Environment Agency (EEA), published today, analyses how to plan for green infrastructure and ecosystem restoration, which in turn can enhance biodiversity, support green economy and create job opportunities.

The EEA briefing ‘Tools to support green infrastructure planning and ecosystem restoration’ looks at natural capital from the angle of building networks of natural and semi-natural areas that can help biodiversity to recover and deliver a wide range of ecosystem services. These include water purification, improving air quality, providing space for recreation and supporting climate mitigation and adaptation.

The key messages of the briefing suggest that national, regional and local authorities must improve coordination between sectors to ensure that green infrastructure and biodiversity become an integral part of spatial and territorial planning. This will require clear methodological guidelines, training and participation from different stakeholders. According to the briefing, EU Member States and other stakeholders can benefit from geospatial methods, data and maps in strategic deployment of green infrastructure and ecosystem restoration at different scales.

The Joint Research Centre (JRC), the EEA and the Directorate-General for Environment of the European Commission have recently published a joint report showing how these methods, data and maps can be used in real cases across Europe.

This work supports EU Member States in implementing and evaluating the EU's Biodiversity Strategy and, in particular, its second target to maintain and restore ecosystems and their services by including green infrastructure in spatial planning and restoring at least 15% of degraded ecosystems.