Towards green Infrastructure for Europe: European Commission Workshop 25-26 March 2009

Defining how Europe could combat biodiversity loss and ecosystem services degradation through Green Infrastructure.

In the context of recognition as to the need for healthy ecosystems, not just to halt the loss of biodiversity but also to derive benefits from the valuable ecosystems, the main objective of the workshop was to identify an appropriate Community response to these concerns and to define how a Green Infrastructure for the EU should be shaped.

Important issues raised during the workshop concerned the understanding of the term green infrastructure, the reduction of fragmentation, new ways of strengthening the ecological connectivity and Green Infrastructure priorities at EU level. The discussions were based on examples and good practices across Europe, including both trans-boundary and national/regional projects. Regarding the key outcomes, it was generally agreed that political support and stakeholders' engagement from an early stage were essential for the implementation of Green Infrastructure. There is also need for financing, which can be strengthened through assessment of ecosystem services. One critical point for Green Infrastructure implementation is the integration into other policy areas (climate change, agriculture, forestry, water management, spatial planning, transport etc.). Furthermore, better communication is required, focusing on how to make green infrastructure more attractive than grey infrastructure to decision makers. Additionally, better scientific information, data and timescale are necessary to ensure adequate land use planning as well as common Guidelines at EU level.

For further information see also the proceedings of the workshop.

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European Commission Conference on Green Infrastructure implementation, 19 November 2010

Pursuing the discussions and supporting the further work on Green Infrastructure in view of its contribution to the EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020

This highly attended Conference aimed to assess the implementation status of Green Infrastructure, while identifying existing gaps and highlighting linkages to other relevant policies, such as climate change adaptation and mitigation. In that view, good practices were shared and lessons were learned in order to work towards a common understanding and guidelines to go forward.
The conference found that overall, good knowledge of Green Infrastructure exists and many projects have been implemented on the ground. However, efforts to move from grey to green infrastructure need to be accelerated in order to ensure the health of ecosystems and their services and maximise their multiple benefits. This includes long-term commitment, stakeholder involvement, integration into other sectorial policies, as well as good management practices. There is also a clear need for guidelines for implementation as well as indicators to measure progress. Financing is a key issue to achieve these goals and therefore, existing financing opportunities should be used more effectively, while considering innovative financing mechanisms and the future role of the private sector. More efforts should also be put into communication, stakeholder relations and awareness raising activities.

Further information:
Conference Proceedings
Background note
The agenda, including the presentations given

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DG ENV's Green Week sessions dedicated to Green Infrastructure

Green Week is the biggest conference on European environment policy, taking place every year in Brussels with many different sessions and exhibitions under each year’s theme. The conference is generally attended by thousands of participants from EU institutions, business and industry, non-governmental organisations, public authorities, the scientific community and academia. Sessions dedicated to Green Infrastructure have been organised in 2010, 2012 and 2015.

3 June 2010 "1.9 Green infrastructure": In view of the development of the EU Strategy on Green Infrastructure, the session provided an exchange of best practices and presentation of existing initiatives, focusing on funding opportunities and the role of society’s contribution.

Click here for further information.

23 May 2012 "3.3 Nature works for us... water and Green Infrastructure": This session focused on the benefits of Green Infrastructure for water-related ecosystems, increasing flood retention and better integrating water and biodiversity policies. Real-world examples showed that green infrastructure can be more cost-efficient than grey solutions, and provide important economic benefits.

Click here for further information.
3 June 2015 "2.2 Jobs and growth through green infrastructure": The session showcased how green infrastructure contributes to economic development and job creation, with examples presenting the opportunities and challenges of moving from grey to green infrastructure regarding employment, innovation, new markets and low-carbon economy.

Click here for further information. See also the flyer on Green Infrastructure that was distributed to the participants.

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EESC and CoR conferences on Green Infrastructure

Green Infrastructure: Engaging regions, cities and civil society, 4 November 2013

This Conference, co-organised by the European Committee of the Regions (CoR) and the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) in association with the European Commission DG Environment, presented best practices on how local and regional authorities as well as participative planning processes can help deploy green infrastructure on the ground. Discussions were also held regarding the use of the Multiannual Financing Framework as financing tool for green infrastructure projects.

Green Infrastructure: A European success story, 5 May 2015

Green Infrastructure has a big potential for environmental and socio-economic benefits; however it requires a strategic approach and financial support. In that view the Conference aimed at renewing the political commitment, with an emphasis on implementation needs at national level. Success stories were showcased from around Europe and it was concluded that financing instruments exist and it is Members States' responsibility to establish strategic national frameworks to maximise their benefits from these opportunities. Better communication and integration into other policies remain key components for successful implementation.

See also the article "Natural investments" in Environment for Europeans, May 2015/No 57.