Citizens’ summary
Promoting green infrastructure in the EU

WHAT IS BEING PROPOSED?
The European Commission has published a new policy paper putting forward ways in which the EU can protect and improve Europe’s natural capital.

WHAT’S THE ISSUE?
• Humanity depends on nature for its survival - food, clean water, clean air and climate regulation are some examples.
• In European society these fundamental resources ('ecosystem services') tend to be treated (and depleted) as free commodities, unlimited in supply, whose true value is not fully appreciated.
• We must find better ways to ensure that this natural capital is protected, enhanced and continues to provide these benefits.
• ‘Green infrastructure’ is recognised as an effective approach based on and inspired by the way nature works. An example might be a healthy, unfragmented floodplain: whereas a dike provides only flood prevention, a floodplain would also provide water filtration and maintenance of the water table, opportunities for recreation, carbon storage, timber and interconnected wildlife habitats.
• The EU is proposing to apply this approach more systematically throughout Europe.

WHO WILL BENEFIT AND HOW?
• European society – by ensuring that the benefits that nature gives to human society are taken into consideration in spatial planning, green infrastructure offers cost-effective nature-based solutions to many of the challenges facing our society.
• European citizens – urban environmental features like green roofs, parks and greenways contribute to human health, help address social problems, save energy, ease water run-off, etc.
• Biodiversity – green infrastructure seeks to reverse some of the degradation and fragmentation done to Europe's ecosystems by unsustainable land use.
• The economy – small businesses, in particular, drive eco-innovation and provide economic opportunities and jobs.

WHY DOES ACTION HAVE TO BE TAKEN BY THE EU?
• The benefits of green infrastructure will be significantly augmented by coordinating national, regional and local initiatives across the EU. To achieve this, businesses, public authorities and civil society need an overarching, enabling framework at EU level.
• A clear commitment by the EU institutions to green infrastructure will enable planners, decision makers and project promoters to step up investments in Green Infrastructure projects.
• Policy areas where green infrastructure can deliver most are predominantly driven by the EU: regional development, climate change, building resilience to natural disasters, agriculture and forestry, eco-innovation and environment.

WHAT EXACTLY WILL CHANGE?
The Commission will:
• support and facilitate the further deployment of green infrastructure across the EU
• promote green infrastructure use and best practices, develop technical guidance and exchange platforms, facilitate information sharing, and encourage innovative technologies
• improve data and expertise to facilitate the deployment of green infrastructure
• explore innovative financing mechanisms to support investments in green infrastructure projects.

**WHEN IS THE PROPOSAL LIKELY TO COME INTO EFFECT?**

Immediately. The Commission will implement its follow-up measures gradually, with existing resources.

[More information on Green Infrastructure](#)