MEETING OF MACRO-REGIONAL STRATEGIES COORDINATORS

Building common cross-MRS collaboration platform on biodiversity with specific focus on ecological connectivity

Zagreb, 4-5 December 2019

EU framework for biodiversity and ecological connectivity: focus on Green Infrastructure

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Environment

SCENE SETTER

Environment

The framework for a Green Infrastructure Policy (1)

- The **EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020** (COM(2011) 244 of 8.9.2011) includes a commitment for the Commission to develop a GI strategy which "underscores the importance of Green Infrastructure also as a contribution to further integrating biodiversity considerations into other EU policies"
- The **Resource Efficiency Roadmap** (COM(2011) 571 of 10.2.2012) identifies investing in GI as an important step towards protecting natural capital and states that the Commission will draft a Communication on GI

The framework for a Green Infrastructure Policy (2)

- The **7th Environment Action Programme** (1386/2013/EU of 20 November 2013: **'Living well, within the limits of our planet'**) aims at guiding European environment policy until 2020 along with 9 priority objectives with related measures and actions to be implemented also at national and regional level
- The **Action Plan for Nature, People and the Economy** (COM(2017) 198) provides for additional measures such as the establishment of guidance to support the deployment of GI projects at EU level for better connectivity of Natura 2000 areas to help achieve the objectives of the Nature Directives, while also contributing to other EU biodiversity targets

The Communication "Green Infrastructure - Enhancing Europe's Natural Capital"

- The Communication from the EC to the Parliament, the Council, the EESC and the CoR: **Green Infrastructure (GI) — Enhancing Europe's Natural Capital** (COM(2013) 249) is answering to the requests
- **Human society depends on the benefits provided by nature**: food, materials, clean water, clean air, climate regulation, flood prevention, pollination and recreation (benefits, frequently referred to as **ecosystem services: provisioning**, **regulating** or **cultural**)
- GI are a tool to enhance the **"natural capital"** and build the latter around 4 elements: **air** (including CO2 sequestration/climate); **water** (quality and quantity); **land** (food, raw materials, protection from floods…); **biodiversity** (ecosystem services, pollination…)

GI as a tool to enhance Natural Capital

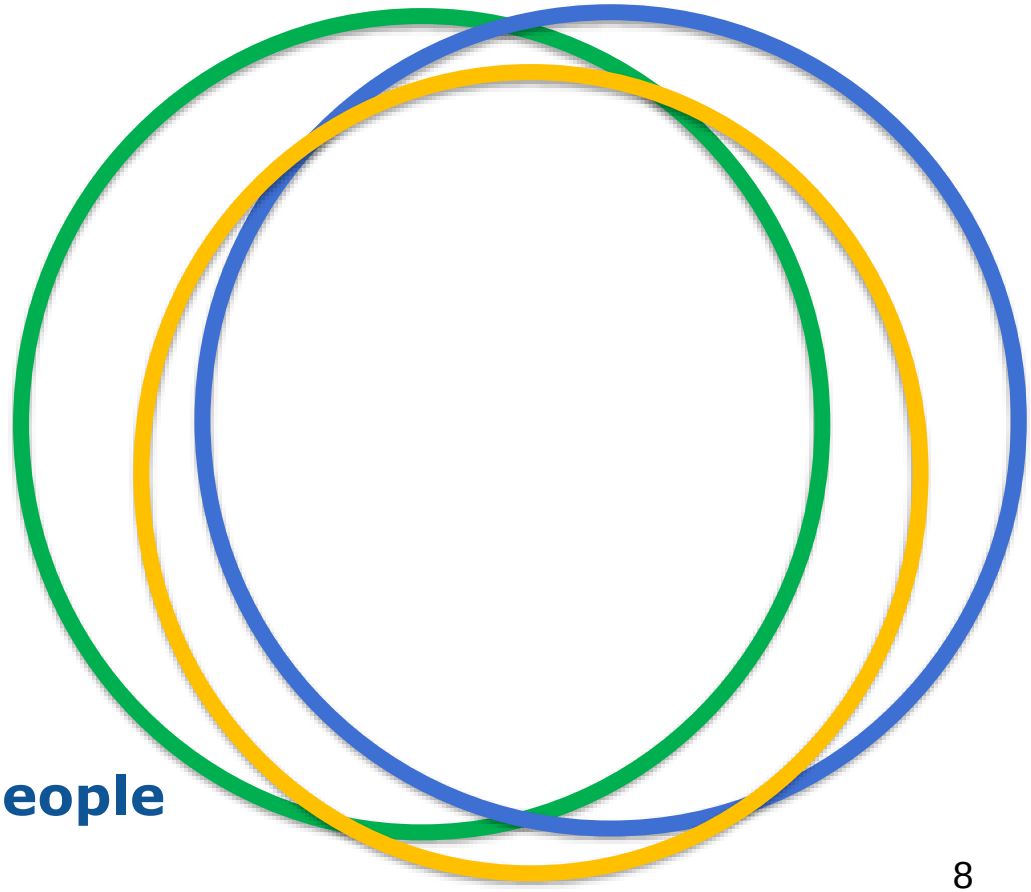
The definition of Green Infrastructures

- Range and flow of benefits that **natural ecosystems** can provide simultaneously depend on biodiversity and ecosystem condition

- **A network of healthy ecosystems often provides cost-effective alternatives to traditional 'grey' infrastructure** → the EU promotes the use of nature-based green and blue infrastructure solutions

- **GI**: *a **strategically planned network of natural and semi-natural areas** with other environmental features **designed and managed to deliver a wide range of ecosystem services**. It incorporates green spaces (or blue if aquatic ecosystems are concerned) and other physical features in terrestrial (including coastal) and marine areas. On land, GI is present in rural and urban settings*

The Rosetta Stone EBA – NBS – GI eco-DRR- NWRM



working with nature for people

Conclusions of the Communication "Green Infrastructure (GI) — Enhancing Europe's Natural Capital" (1)

- Over the last years, more and more GI projects have been carried → **the approach demonstrated to be flexible, sound and cost-effective**.
- However, to optimise the functioning of GI and maximise its benefits, **work on the different scales of GI should be interconnected and interdependent**: benefits are significantly enhanced when a minimum degree of consistency and coherence is achieved across the different scales
- **GI** can make a **significant contribution in the areas of regional development, climate change, disaster risk management, agriculture/forestry and the environment**
- **Consistent, reliable data are essential for effectively deploying GI**: about the extent and condition of ecosystems, the services they provide and the value of these services → ecosystem services can be correctly valued, priced and compared in their cost-effectiveness to grey infrastructures

Conclusions of the Communication "Green Infrastructure (GI) — Enhancing Europe's Natural Capital" (2)

- **encourages Member States and Regions to seize the opportunities for developing GI in a cross-border/transnational context** through the macro-regional strategies, with a particular reference to transboundary mountain ranges, river basins and forests
- **The GI Strategy can be implemented within the context of existing legislation, policy instruments and funding mechanisms**, mainly by:

1. integrating and promoting GI in the main policy areas;
2. improving information, enhancing innovation, strenghtening the knowledge base;
3. improving access to funding;
4. developing GI projects at the EU level

REVIEW OF PROGRESS ON IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EU GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGY

Environment

Assessment of progress and challenges: some figures

- EU Green Infrastructures include the **Natura 2000** network as its backbone, as well as natural and semi-natural spaces outside Natura 2000
- The annual **benefits of eco-system services provided by the Natura 2000 network** alone have been estimated at **EUR 300 billion**, with the benefits of GI going well beyond
- Member States have generally not yet adopted **national strategies** specifically **dedicated to GI**. Nevertheless, some national strategies are being developed, and other policies and legislative instruments address the concept of GI

Assessment of progress and challenges: GI in EU policies

- **Ecosystem-based solutions and GI** are recognised as **relevant approaches to addressing climate change** in the EU strategy on adaptation to climate change
- The review of the **EU Adaptation Strategy** provided an opportunity to consider how to encourage further the uptake of GI to deliver cost-effectively climate-resilient societies, likewise does the review of EU water policies
- The **EU Action Plan on the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction** 2015-2030 explicitly recognises the **positive contribution that GI can bring to disaster risk reduction and management**
- The **two pillars of the current CAP provide a set of instruments** for addressing the sustainable management of natural resources and climate action, which can contribute to GI depending on their design and implementation

Assessment of progress and challenges: the EU water policy

- **NWRM** help to slow down the flow of storm water, increase infiltration and reduce pollution through natural processes → **cost-effective solutions to reach the objectives of the WFD and the Floods Directive** while also contributing to **biodiversity protection** and **adaptation to climate change**
- **Implementation of NWRM via EU structural and agricultural funds** has been encouraged (*EC 2014, EU Water Policy Document on Natural Water Retention Measures*)
- An ex-post assessment (2017) of the operational programmes has suggested that more needs to be done to promote strategic and integrated programmes → **planning opportunities can be informed through** the **MAES**, **River Basin Management Plans** and **PAFs** to identify multifunctional spaces that offer the highest opportunity for ecosystem service delivery

Assessment of progress and challenges: access to funding

- **EU funding for GI in 2007-2013** period has been estimated to around **EUR 6.579 million** → highest contribution from the **European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development**; also **LIFE programme** provides specific funding for biodiversity, including green infrastructure
- **2014-2020** period: **GI further supported as part of European Regional Development Fund and Cohesion Fund** direct allocations to biodiversity, nature and green infrastructure with **EUR 3.700 million + investments in several related areas** (flood protection, water purification, renovation of buildings, etc.)
- Investing in GI also brings substantial **returns to the private sector** (increased land value thanks i.e. to protected assets from erosion and floods)

Assessment of progress and challenges: EU Macro-Regional Strategies

The EU macro-regional strategies are **useful platforms for designing and implementing GI projects** and bringing together countries (EU and non-EU), regions and stakeholders.

GI can become the **structural and functional backbone for the sustainable development of those regions**.

As a good example, in the context of the EU macro-regional strategy for the Alpine Region, a **ministerial joint declaration on Alpine GI was adopted in October 2017**

Reading tips… (1)

- **Commission Staff Working Document** (SWD(2019) 193 final): **Guidance on a strategic framework for further supporting the deployment of EU-level green and blue infrastructure**
- Extensive information on **current financing instruments** to support strategic investments in EU-level green infrastructure projects, as well as specific **case studies** and helpful **scientific and technical tools**

Reading tips… (2)

- **Commission Staff Working Document** (SWD(2019) 305 final): **EU guidance on integrating ecosystems and their services into decision-making**
- Basic concepts and the rationale for **'mainstreaming' the impacts of policy and planning decisions on ecosystems and their services**
- Guiding principles for the **successful integration of ecosystems and their services into different stages of decision-making processes** (including available instruments)
- Elaborates on the **integration of ecosystems and their services in the context of specific EU policy areas**, also offering **insights for businesses** willing to take into consideration their impacts and dependencies on natural capital
- Presents indicative **tables of the ecosystem services provided by the main ecosystem types** as per the EU **MAES methodology**
- **Examples of the socioeconomic benefits** that can result from protecting and restoring ecosystems and their services

FUTURE PERSPECTIVES

Environment

Political Guidelines for the new European Commission 2019-24

- Proposal for a European Green Deal
- Europe to be the first climate-neutral continent
- A just transition
- A Sustainable Europe Investment Plan
- Ambitious climate targets for 2030
- Cross-cutting strategy to protect citizens' health from environmental degradation and pollution

Towards a European Green Deal: the Biodiversity Strategy 2030

Global ambition
• Global target(s) • National commitments • Funding • Monitoring/review mechanisms

EU leading by example

• Acting on the key areas affecting biodiversity loss:
  • (1) changes in land and ocean use;
  • (2) exploiting directly from organisms;
  • (3) climate change;
  • (4) pollution and
  • (5) exotic invasive species
• Protect
• Restore
• Mainstream
• + Financing

Towards a European Green Deal: the 8th Environment Action Programme

- Council approved (October 4th) the conclusions encompassing political guidance for the EU's environment and climate change policies for the period 2021-2030
- Latest by early 2020 the EC will present an ambitious proposal for an **8th Environment Action Programme (EAP)**
- Urgent need to build a **climate-neutral, green, fair and social Europe**
- Climate change, pollution, loss of biodiversity and accelerating demands on natural resources are jeopardising current and future generations' wellbeing and prospects → need for additional action to **protect and restore biodiversity** (ambitious biodiversity targets envisaged for the 8th EAP)

2021-2027: access to funding for GI projects

Some preliminary hints on LIFE

Compromise text adopted in April 2019

Budget: 5.45 billion EUR (EC); 7.27 (EP)

Environment (3.5bn/5.32 bn - 73,2%):

- ➢ Nature & Biodiversity (44,9%)
- ➢ Circular Economy and Quality of Life

Climate Action

- ➢ Climate Adaptation and Mitigation
- ➢ Clean Energy Transition

Max co-financing rates up to 60% and up to 75% in the case of projects funded under the sub-programme Nature and Biodiversity

Types of project

- ❑Traditional
- ❑Integrated – including strategic nature projects (SNPs) to implement PAFs
- ❑Technical assistance

Eligible countries

- EU Member States
- EFTA and EEA countries
- acceding countries, candidate countries and potential candidates
- countries covered by the European Neighbourhood Policy
- third countries in accordance with the conditions laid down in a specific agreement

SNAPs in the future LIFE regulation

- Projects that support the achievement of Union nature and biodiversity objectives by implementing coherent programmes of action in member states,
- To mainstream these objectives and priorities into other policies and financing instruments,
- Including through a coordinated implementation of the PAFs established pursuant to Directive 92/43/EEC

SNAPs and MAWP

- *first call for SNAPs as soon as LIFE Regulation and first Multi-annual work programme are adopted*
- *still many open questions about modalities:*
- *competitive calls or not?*
- *grant agreement for entire SNAP period?*
- *how much overlap with IPs allowed? etc.*
- *indicative allocations, to be established in the MAWPs*
- *criteria still to be established (possibly based on financing needs identified in the PAFs)*
- *how to deal with national allocations, given that:*
  - *SNAPs can be submitted by individual regions/groups of regions*
  - *region-level SNAPs from one MS may be submitted in different years*
  - *not all MS and region may be interested in submitting SNAP proposals*

Transnational SNAPs

- *<u>aim</u>: implement transnational strategies and translate them into concrete programmes of actions*
- *<u>budget</u>: allocate fixed % of SNAP budget to transnational SNAPs?*
- *<u>questions</u>: feasibility, added value, project size, potential applicants, complementarity with national SNAPs, link with PAFs, etc.*

CONCLUSIONS

Environment

Conclusions

- The EU GI strategy has highlighted the benefits of GI and built some momentum for the deployment of GI in the EU

- There has been progress at various levels but challenges remain and the deployment of GI needs to be further scaled up

- GI deployment is often only implemented at a small scale, not giving due recognition to the potential economic and social benefits of using green instead of grey infrastructure solutions

- It will be important to ensure a more strategic approach and make the best use of the future EU funding instruments to support green infrastructure, also looking at the next programming period 2021-2027

Thank you

For questions:

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