

GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

With the Council of the EU endorsing the [EU Biodiversity Strategy 2020](#), the EU and its Member States are committed to maintaining and enhancing ecosystem services and restoring degraded ecosystems by developing a concept of [Green Infrastructure](#).

FACE urges the European Commission and Member States to consider the role of hunters for Green Infrastructure in the EU:

Europe is the most fragmented continent on our planet. Whilst protected areas such as Natura 2000 sites are an important backbone for conservation, the wider landscape is also crucially important for nature. Nature is in a constant state of flux and in the past has relied on spatial and temporal flexibility to manage periods of extreme weather instability, floods, drought etc. As development continues and the stock of nature is depleted, spatial flexibility is reduced. In addition continued high demand for resources reduces temporal flexibility. The conservation of the wider landscape is crucial for supporting ecosystems, providing connectivity, flexibility and resilience.

It is estimated that hunters contribute to the management of over 65% of the EU's countryside. The vast majority of this is managed in collaboration with landowners, farmers, foresters, local communities and other stakeholders. All of it is managed primarily for huntable species, yet this has positive effects for a wide range of other species and habitats. Whilst specific measures such as green bridges are important, it is the management of the wider countryside that is required for successful conservation. This is where hunters have a vital role to play.

More should therefore be done to identify and promote the role of hunters in the cooperative management of green infrastructure. This should be supported by incentive measures for hunters and their local organisations to ensure that these areas are managed as part of wider landscape management objectives. Positive incentives for hunters who manage wildlife areas will serve to increase flexibility in response to a changing environment.

The management of hunting areas in some countries is done according to plans that fit into the wider landscape planning and contributes to spatial and functional connectivity between natural areas and improves landscape permeability:

In Slovenia the state forest service adopts the management plans (long term plan of 10 years & yearly plan) for the hunting areas (covering 90% of the Slovenian surface area) which follow national management objectives. Hunters carry the costs and implement the management plans on a voluntary basis.

Hunters also have knowledge on movements of wildlife and hence can advise for functional connectivity of landscape features (eg. for planning green bridges and corridors):

The German Hunters' Association (DJV) has been active in various initiatives that promote building green bridges to counteract habitat fragmentation; in partnership with the government, the automobile club (ADAC) and conservation organisations. The DJV is now a partner in the national federal programme for re-connectivity (*Nationales Bundesprogramm Wiedervernetzung*) through which 18 green bridges have been built between 2010 and 2011.



Implementation of national conservation priorities is carried out by hunters and contributes to climate change mitigation and landscape connectivity:

The programme Green Shoots (launched by the British Association for Hunting and Conservation, BASC) involves UK hunters in the implementation of local or national biodiversity action plans. It generates biological audits of shooting land (over 7.700 km² of mainly privately owned land have been audited since 2000) and efforts on priority species and habitats with both statutory and voluntary conservation partners. Headline successes are for instance linking habitats to mitigate the effects of climate change in North Wales and other places.

Hunters connect, restore and conserve not only in areas with priority habitats and species, but in more ordinary landscapes (such as more intensive agricultural landscapes) where it is more difficult to obtain biodiversity-friendly grant schemes:

In Denmark, intensive farming has caused a decrease of many species; including traditional game species such as partridge and hare. The Danish Hunters' Association is developing a strategy to encourage better cooperation between local hunters and several farmers in order to cover bigger aggregated land areas (of eg. 2000 ha) for an integrated approach to habitat management. This cooperation is on a voluntary basis and involves a lot of field work and private spending by local hunters. Three projects (Interreg and national funding) are significantly contributing to the conceptualisation of this strategy.

WHAT IS FACE?

Established in 1977, FACE represents the interests of Europe's **7 million hunters** as an international non-profit-making nongovernmental organization (NGO).

FACE is made up of its **Members: national hunters' associations** from **36 European countries** including the EU-27. FACE also has 4 Associate Members and has its Secretariat in Brussels.

FACE upholds the principle of sustainable use, has been a member of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) since 1987, and more recently of Wetlands International. FACE works with its partners on a range of hunting-related issues, from international conservation agreements to local implementations with the aim of sustaining hunting across Europe. www.face.eu

