



Financial support for rivers as drivers of sustainable regional development

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The European Green Deal



LEADING THE TRANSITION TO A HEALTHY PLANET

- A **Climate Law** to lock in commitments and raise ambition
- **Earmarking** 30% of the EU budget for climate
- Greening the **European Semester**
- Comprehensive programme of legislation and strategies
- **Green investment needs** of around €470 billion per year

EU strategic framework for river restoration

- **Water Framework Directive**
The Directive requires Member States to protect, enhance and restore all water bodies to achieve good ecological and chemical status. Measures to achieve river restoration targets need to be embedded in the river basin management planning.
- **Floods Directive**
Flood risk management plans must focus on sustainable water management and measures which work with nature.
- **Nature Directives**
Freshwater ecosystems, comprise several habitats and species protected by the EU Birds and Habitats Directives. Many of these habitats depend directly on the river system being in conditions that are as close as possible to natural conditions
- **EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030**
Restoring river continuity by setting a target of "at least 25,000 km of rivers to be restored into free-flowing rivers by 2030 through the removal of primarily obsolete barriers and the restoration of floodplains and wetlands"
- **Zero Pollution Action Plan**
"Air, water and soil pollution is reduced to levels no longer considered harmful to health and natural ecosystems". Complements the EU chemicals strategy for sustainability.
- **EU Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change**
Europe needs to leverage more investments in nature-based solutions to generate gains for adaptation, mitigation, disaster risk reduction, biodiversity, and health. The strategy addresses the availability and sustainability of freshwater.

EU funding instruments for river restoration

Funds under direct management:

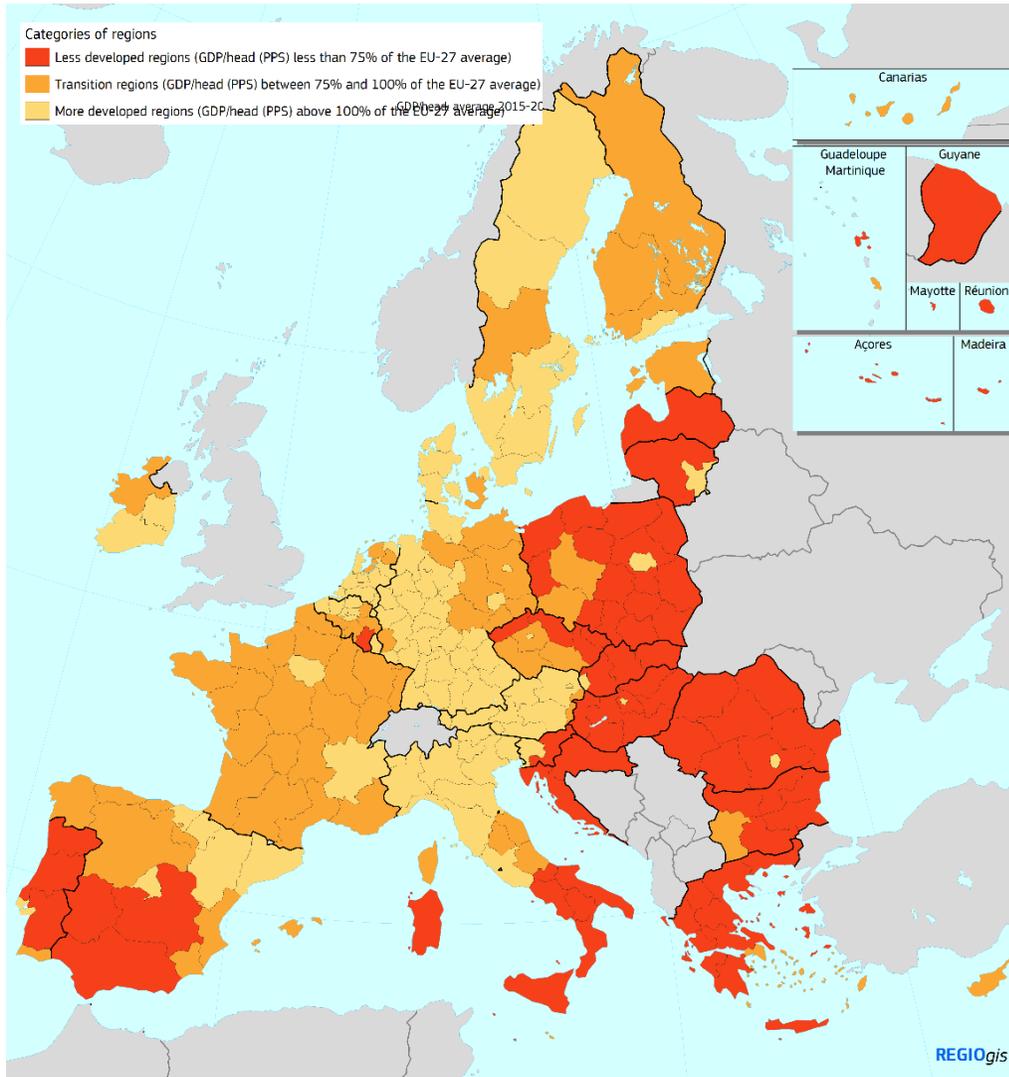
- **LIFE (EUR 5,1 billion)**
Two fields: environment and climate action.
Calls for proposals are published online once a year.
More info: [link](#)
- **Horizon Europe (EUR 95.5 billion)**
First strategic plan 2021-2024 with one of four strategic orientations “Restoring Europe's ecosystems and biodiversity, and managing sustainably natural resources”.
Calls for proposals are published online.
More information: [link](#)
- **InvestEU (€ 26 billion in budgetary guarantees)**
Areas of actions are divided into four windows, of which the “Sustainable Infrastructure” has the largest budget.
Implemented via selected financial partners (main partner is the EIB Group)
More info: [link](#)

EU funding instruments for river restoration

Funds under shared management (implemented by Member States):

- **Cohesion policy Funds (ERDF and Cohesion Fund, EUR 274.3 billion)**
Policy objective 2: greener Europe, with a dedicated specific objective for biodiversity, green infrastructure.
More info: [link](#)
- **European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD, EUR 95.5 billion)**
Funding is distributed according to six priorities, which include restoring, preserving and enhancing ecosystems related to agriculture and forestry.
More information: [link](#)
- **European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF, EUR 6.1 billion)**
Supports actions that contribute to, the effective management, restoration and monitoring of NATURA 2000 sites, and the rehabilitation of inland waters in accordance with the programme of measures established pursuant to the 'Water Framework Directive'.
More info: [link](#)

Cohesion policy 2021-2027



Investment for jobs and growth goal (ERDF and ESF+) eligibility, 2021-2027

1/3 of the EU budget (European Regional Development Fund, Cohesion Fund, European Social Fund +, Just Transition Fund) to:

- Reduce disparities between Europe's regions, strengthening economic, social and territorial cohesion
- Contribute to EU priorities

5 Policy Objectives:

1. A more competitive and smarter Europe
2. A greener, low-carbon transitioning towards a net zero carbon economy and resilient Europe
3. A more connected Europe
4. A more social and inclusive Europe
5. A Europe closer to citizens

Cohesion policy 2021-2027

- Specific Objective 2.7: “enhancing biodiversity, green infrastructure in the urban environment, and reducing pollution”
- This includes:
 - Biodiversity protection, ecosystem restoration, including through green infrastructure, especially in urban areas
 - Measures to improve air quality (incl. monitoring)
 - Decontamination and rehabilitation of industrial sites, contaminated land
 - Noise reduction
 - ...
- Recommendation to use **ecosystem-based approaches** as a priority

Multiple benefits, multiple entry points in cohesion policy

- For climate change adaptation and disaster (flood, draught) risk prevention, resilience → **SO 2.4**
- For water provision and purification → **SO 2.5**
- For reducing and managing waste → **SO 2.6**
- For biodiversity → **SO 2.7**
- For health, wellbeing and quality of life
 - Reducing air, soil and noise pollution → **SO 2.7**
 - Greening urban and social infrastructure → **PO 4, 5**
- For competitiveness and jobs in the tourism sector → **SO 1.3**
- For data monitoring, interconnection and modelling → **SO 1.2**
- For the preservation and development of natural heritage → **territorial development strategies under PO5**
- Integrated, territorially targeted support → **PO5**



Green and blue infrastructure in the Ruhr region

- 3 decades of cohesion policy support helped turning industrial region into green metropolis
- Several ERDF projects in the framework of long-term transition:
 - restoration of the river system
 - construction of a bicycle network
 - creation of landscape parks
 - conversion of former steel sites and railroads into lakes and green neighbourhoods
 - ...

A transformative agenda adapted to different starting points

This is what cohesion policy programmes need to do better:

- Develop a **vision** of a sustainable future, and formulate **pathways** for long-term transitions
- Put in place a system of proactive **governance** to manage the transition
- Support **innovation** to develop sustainable solutions
- Support **deployment** of innovation, and **phase-out** of unsustainable practices
- **Transformational change** instead of marginal efficiency gains
- Thinking **beyond 2027** to avoid lock-ins (e.g. energy sources, waste management)
- Ensure a **just transition** so that the transformation benefits everyone
- Apply specific **territorial approaches** to the delivery of the Green Deal (e.g. cities, rural areas, coal regions)
- Mainstream sustainability into programmes and projects (<https://europa.eu/!Tc67vw>)

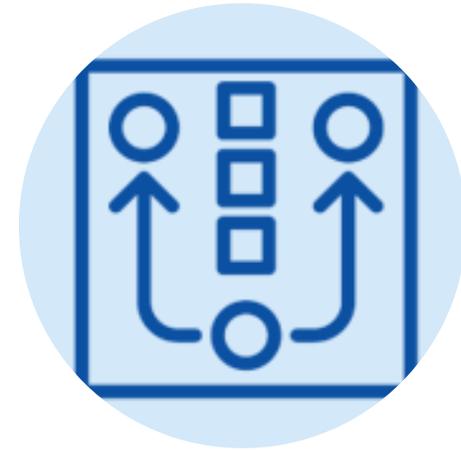
Next steps: working together to optimise impact



Strong partnership:
involvement of all relevant stakeholders in the preparation of cohesion policy programmes



Strong programmes:
objective setting, types of actions, synergies, funding, outputs and results



Awareness raising, coordination and cooperation between national and regional actors

Additional Resources

- **EU Guidance document on a strategic framework for further supporting the deployment of EU-level green and blue infrastructure [SWD\(2019\) 193 final](#)**: encourages a more strategic and integrated approach to scaling-up investments in EU-level GI projects. The aim is to improve the connectivity of Natura 2000 areas while also increasing the range and flow of multiple ecosystem services.
- **EU Guidance document on integrating ecosystems and their services in decision-making [SWD\(2019\) 305 final](#)** (in 3 parts): highlights the wide range of benefits that flow from nature to people, and possible ways to take better account of these benefits in policy, planning and business investment decisions.

Thank you



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