



# Greening the European Cohesion Policy

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## Why greening the Cohesion Policy?

Cohesion Policy will represent over one third of the Budget of the European Union between 2014-2020. The main goal of Cohesion Policy under this new budget is to contribute to the objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy, which is to develop smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. Investing in nature and ecosystems, our natural capital base, is indispensable to achieving these objectives.

Intelligently investing cohesion funds can help restore the environment, create employment and rejuvenate the local economy at the same time. EU Cohesion Policy (2007-2013) already provides a range of supportive measures to invest in green infrastructure. The examples outlined in this publication have been supported by the Cohesion Policy. Building on this experience, the future Cohesion Policy (2014-2020) should significantly increase the opportunity for regions to strategically spend on ecosystems, green infrastructure and Natura 2000.

## Investments in Green infrastructure

*Green infrastructure offers nature-based solutions to economic, environmental and societal challenges, by providing valuable and measurable services through the sustainable functioning of ecosystems, while also making a significant contribution to the restoration and preservation of biological diversity.*

Ecosystem-based solutions are often cheaper than man-made fixes, for example because their maintenance costs are lower. Also, developing green infrastructure can provide a wide range of additional benefits that grey infrastructure does not, such as biodiversity protection, recreation and tourism. This way it can effectively contribute to the implementation of EU environmental legislation, especially the Water Framework Directive and Natura 2000.

As green infrastructure projects require significant construction works to get them off the ground, they provide jobs and income for local and regional enterprises just as much as the grey infrastructure does.



# #1 Example: Natural flood protection and subsequent benefits

## The Scheldt River

The Scheldt River stretches over 350km, originating in France, crossing Belgium and flowing into the North Sea in the Netherlands. After the river flooded heavily in 1976, the Belgian authorities decided to act to prevent future flooding. A cost-benefit analysis of the different available alternatives showed that the payback period of floodplains combined with dykes is only 14 years. This is a much more cost-efficient option than regular storm surge barriers which would have had a payback period of 41 years. Floodplains work by allowing water to flow into a designated Flood Control Area (FCA) when the storm tide is high. A ring dyke around the FCA ensures that the water remains within the designated area. This decreases flood levels, protecting surrounding villages and cities further downstream. When the tide is low, water flows back to the river through locks, thus emptying the emergency basin. Authorities are now investing in restoring 5000 ha of floodplains along the river.

Info from:  
Website of Flood Control Area Kruikeke-Bazel-Rüpelmonde  
and the Sigmapijan. [http://www.gogkbr.be/index.php?page=gog-kbr&hl=en\\_US](http://www.gogkbr.be/index.php?page=gog-kbr&hl=en_US) <http://www.sigmapijan.be>

## Main Benefit

**Flood protection at low cost**

## Additional benefits

(not provided by grey infrastructure)

### Water purification

The enlarged wetland and tidal area in the FCAs increases the natural water-purification capacity of the river. This saves water treatment costs and helps to implement the EU Water Framework Directive.

### Recreation/Eco-tourism

Hiking, biking and fishing thrive in and around the newly created green areas. Income generated and jobs created from tourism and recreational opportunities for locals all contribute to the local economy.

### Job creation

Farmers who had to sell their farmland due to the designation of an FCA in their area can still use the area for grazing cattle and mowing the grasslands. Additionally, new jobs are created because of increasing tourism and infrastructure works.

### Climate change resilience

increased flood levels are anticipated as the effects of climate change accelerate. FCAs are expected to provide a solution where traditional dykes would fail.

## Establishment of flood control area along the Scheldt

1

### Before

Kruikeke, Bazel and Rupelmonde municipalities were not well protected from flood before



2

### After

The Flood Control Area Kruikeke-Bazel-Rupelmonde with emergency sluices and a ring-dyke was therefore established



3

### Flooded

This increases flood-security at high tide and provides many additional benefits.







## Interested? Further examples and information....

### See the EEB website

Building Green Infrastructure For Europe: Special report (EEB)  
Biodiversity investments a smart contribution to reach EU 2020  
objectives (BirdLife, EEB and WWF)  
Green Infrastructure: Sustainable Investments for the Benefit of  
Both People and Nature (Surf nature)

### Publications

Green Infrastructure: Sustainable Investments for the Benefit of  
Both People and Nature (Surf nature)  
Investment Tips for High Returns: Making the EU Budget Deliver  
for People and Nature (BirdLife, NABU)  
The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB) Study, The  
Bank of Natural Capital  
Commission Staff Working Paper SEC(2011) 1573 final Financing  
Natura 2000 Investing in Natura 2000: Delivering benefits for  
nature and people  
Investing for the future: more jobs out of a greener EU budget,  
Coalition of NGOs



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