

IENE 2012 - Potsdam Declaration

“Overcome Barriers – Europe-wide and now”

Life Needs Mobility

Habitat fragmentation by artificial barriers is one of the most serious threats to European biodiversity. This is because life needs mobility to sustain viable populations as well as to withstand the challenges of landscape dynamics and climate change.

According to the EU Biodiversity Strategy, the loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services shall be halted by 2020. However, Europe is still a long way from reaching this goal. Significant additional efforts are required.

It is essential to make use of the many available possibilities to support biological diversity

- through appropriate localisation, adapted design and maintenance of transport infrastructure,
- through mitigation of barrier effects and traffic mortality and
- through introduction of sustainable compensation.

Regarding this and the EU Green Infrastructure Strategy, and the White Paper on Transport the IENE 2012 conference participants strongly recommend:

to develop an integrative European Defragmentation Programme

IENE urges immediate action for:

- Finding and using all possibilities to combine the aims of green infrastructure with the implementation or improvement of transport infrastructure and being aware of the many opportunities to find win-win situations for the benefit of both.
- Finding and improving solutions to build a coherent and efficient system of Green Infrastructure. This is necessary to fulfil the goals of the European Habitats Directive, the Birds Directive, and the Convention on Biological Diversity.
- Defining priorities to rebuild or maintain trans-European habitat corridors and identifying priority areas to overcome barriers at national and European transport network levels.
- Constructing 100 large fauna passages every year until 2025 at the most important conflict areas between transport infrastructure and habitat corridors of national and cross-border importance.

- Adopting a strict action plan including sufficient financial resources for the environmental improvement of the European transport network.
- Safeguarding unfragmented habitat networks and road-less areas, avoiding further fragmentation and securing remaining habitat and migration corridors of European or national importance by adoption as priority areas for wildlife.
- Rebuilding a coherent ecological network for humans and wildlife by re-creating 1000 km of functional habitat corridors every year until 2025.
- Improving impact assessment for new transport infrastructure by implementing the no net loss approach on an EU-wide scale. Using mitigation and compensation measures to strengthen existing and planned habitat corridors.
- Securing the already known habitat and migration corridors of European or national importance by adoption as priority areas for wildlife in the spatial planning systems and land use plans.
- Overcoming undue habitat fragmentation and mitigate further negative impacts of traffic infrastructure using the best achievable standards.
- Reducing traffic accidents involving wildlife for the benefit of people and nature, using best techniques and knowledge to increase road safety and permeability.

The first projects should begin in 2013, using existing ecological corridor schemes, even if preliminary, and focusing on their intersections with major transport routes. 2013 should also mark the start of the compilation and improvement of the “European Strategic Map for Defragmentation”. This must be paralleled by an application-oriented research programme and an updated handbook of best practice.

The IENE 2012 International Conference has shown that an alliance between infrastructure development and nature protection is possible and that the transport sector is able and willing to contribute substantially to nature conservation and development. Many innovative projects and methods as well as forward-looking proposals presented at IENE 2012 International Conference are awaiting implementation.

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