

The European green infrastructure (GI) strategy: A fortune or a failure for biodiversity conservation in wetlands? A qualitative study in Scania (Sweden) and Groningen (the Netherlands) – a summary

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Global biodiversity loss is an increasing problem. The European Union (EU) developed an overarching Green Infrastructure strategy (hereafter GI) aimed to support the implementation of more nature in both rural and urban areas through multisectoral collaboration in order to stop biodiversity loss and improve habitats such as wetlands. Wetlands are an important habitat for maintaining biodiversity, providing habitats for species of amphibians, fish and water birds. The conservation of wetlands also benefits humans. Wetlands provide services such as drinking water supply and flood prevention. Scania (Sweden) and Groningen (the Netherlands) are known for their biodiverse wetlands. There are no studies which compare the implementation of the GI between regions in different countries. Therefore, this study aims to identify what the implementation of the GI strategy in Scania and Groningen has achieved for wetland biodiversity conservation. The differences, similarities and success factors are identified by carrying out qualitative interviews with six experts in Groningen and four experts in Scania. Questions were asked about wetland types and functions, implications for biodiversity conservation, policy systems and stakeholder collaboration, success factors and future plans. The findings were that Groninger respondents mainly mentioned large multifunctional wetlands, while Scanian respondents focused on the construction of small wetlands for biodiversity and nutrient trapping. Groningen wetland policies are incorporated in the General Nature Law, while in Scania there is a specific wetland policy structure developed with funding for the creation of wetlands. Both regions identify similar characteristics needed for wetland biodiversity conservation. These include good dialogues between stakeholder groups, a bottom-up approach, and a positive viewpoint towards biodiversity and its benefits to the human environment. To conclude, comparing the implementation of legislation in these two regions is a complex task, however it is clear that EU legislation seems to support actions for biodiversity. Although many experts are not familiar with GI, there is a need for implementation of green and blue infrastructure which considers a broader landscape perspective. Future research should focus on the transition of a more a more nature-inclusive society and agricultural systems.