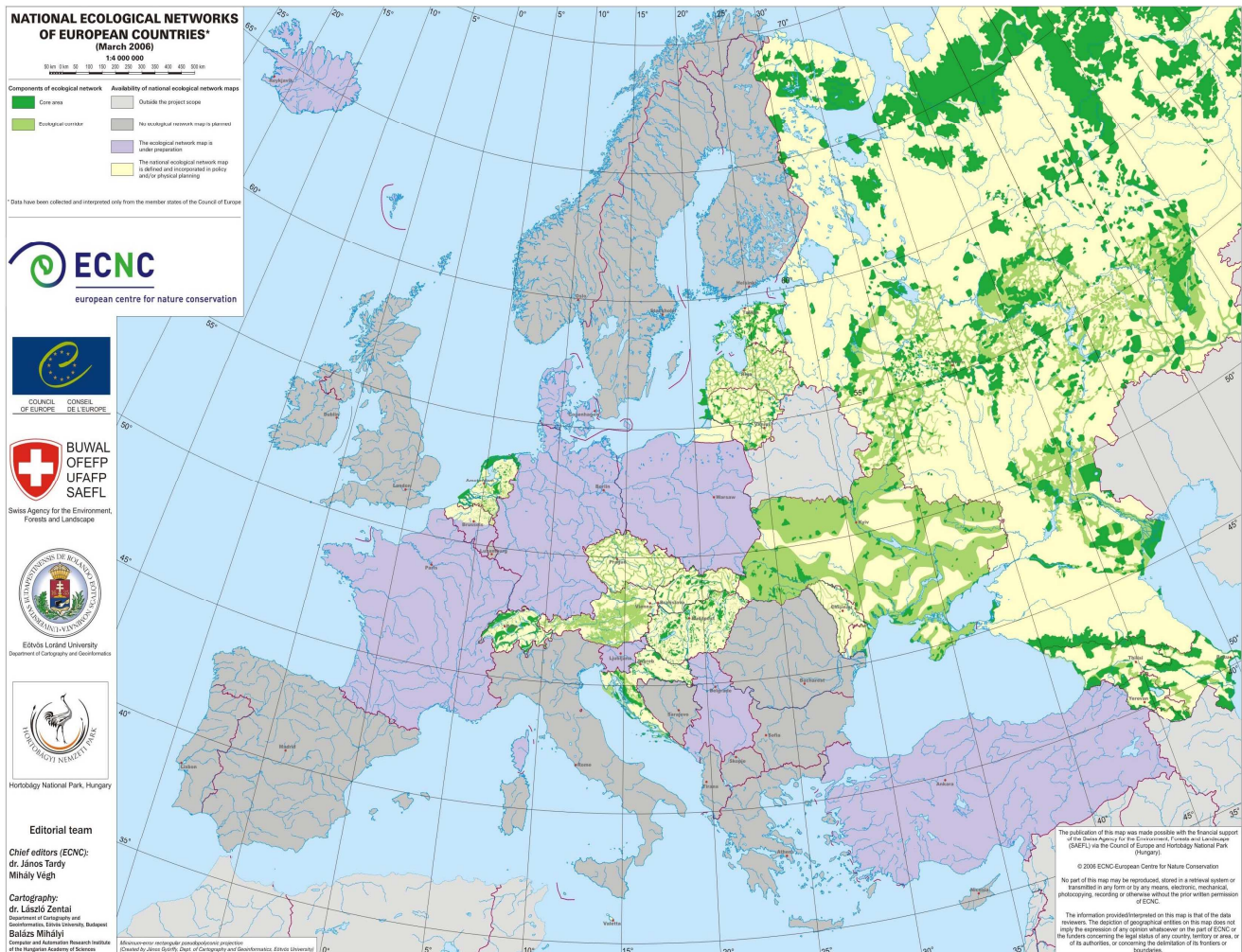


January 2007, Tilburg  
Pan-European Ecological Network  
Fact sheet IV – Development of ecological networks  
National and regional ecological networks in Europe

National and regional ecological networks in Europe Ecological networks are based on landscape ecological principles and consist of core areas, corridor zones, buffer zones and, if needed, nature rehabilitation areas for the reestablishment of nature.

In the early 1970s the first studies were carried out in Lithuania and Estonia to develop national ecological networks. Other initiatives are the ecological network plans developed in the Netherlands, Russia, Moldova, Hungary, Italy, United Kingdom and the region of Flanders in Belgium. Most network initiatives are still in a planning stage, only a small number have progressed to the point where implementation on the ground is relatively well advanced, like in the Netherlands, the Flanders region of Belgium and Hungary.

Currently around 100 national and regional ecological network initiatives are known in Europe.



Overview of existing national ecological networks (see enlarged at [www.seenet.info](http://www.seenet.info) under maps), © ECNC, 2006

Nature conservation in Europe developed from site protection in its early phase into planning systems for nature conservation in the present time. The content of the networks is a reflection of their objective, the phase of nature conservation and the planning system of a region or country.

Ecological networks are developed at several geographical and administrative levels and these levels should be integrated. The ecological network design provides a planning framework for sustainable spatial development and biodiversity protection in and beyond protected areas. The differences in the national and regional networks designed so far are the result of different geographical, biotic, climatic, cultural and political influences.

The large number of national ecological networks under development underpins the need for a coherent approach to link these projects together and to stimulate that the same principles are used. The national ecological networks under development in the various European countries will make a valuable contribution to the Pan-European Ecological Network.

*Further reading:*

1. National and regional approaches for ecological networks in Europe. Nature and environment, no. 110. Council of Europe Publishing, Strasbourg. Jongman R.H.G. & I. Kristiansen, 2000
2. The development and application of Ecological Networks. AID Environment/IUCN. Bennett G. & P. de Wit, 2001
3. The restoration of sites and ecological corridors in the framework of building up a Pan-European Ecological Network, with examples of best practices from European countries, Study by E. Kuijken and G. de Blust, Stra-REP (2001) 7, Council of Europe
4. Review of Experience with Ecological Networks: Corridors and Buffer Zones, G. Bennett & K. J. Mulongoy, 2006, Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, Montreal, Technical Series No. 23, 100 pages