



# ENOS

European Network  
of Outdoor Sports

## ENOS POLICY POSITION PAPER ON THE EUROPEAN GREEN DEAL

### Important note

This document has been developed by a working group of members of ENOS. The consultation process is now opened to other organisations in order to improve the quality of the paper. Here a few guidelines:

- 1) Download the form and save it locally
- 2) Rename the document with the name of your organisation
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## **Statement**

The European Network of Outdoor Sports (ENOS) represents a very broad range of organisations who make use of the natural environment for sport and recreation.

**We are passionate about nature, the environment and have a very strong sense of connection to the places in which we do our activities. Therefore the natural environment is at the very heart of outdoors sports.**

**Climate change is already having significant impacts for a range of outdoor sports and associated businesses through increased temperatures, increased storm events, flooding and droughts etc. but we also recognise that it also presents an existential threat to humanity.**

**Within ENOS we believe that sustainability itself is untenable. As outdoor enthusiasts we have seen significant reductions in biodiversity, habitats and ecosystem quality through urbanisation, industrialisation (including farming and forestry) and pollution. We believe that sustaining the current depleted environment will not bring the changes required to meet the European Green Deal.**

**Therefore the principle of restoration must be included with sustainability. Re-developing habitats and ecosystems with their associated rich biodiversity must be a priority within the implementation of the European Green Deal. This can foster major benefits for the health and wellbeing of local communities as well as improving the environment and mitigating climate change.**

**Ecosystems are complex inter-connected webs of life whereby many species rely on a range of others for their survival. It should be noted that there is a similar level of inter-connectivity between the sections and recommendations within this paper and so none should be taken out of context or in isolation.**

## **1. Re-connecting people with nature to help to increase, improve and protect biodiversity**

The EU's biodiversity strategy for 2030 is a comprehensive, ambitious and long-term plan to protect nature and reverse the degradation of ecosystems. The strategy aims to put Europe's biodiversity on a path to recovery by 2030, and includes increasing protected areas to 30% of all European land and sea areas.

ENOS strongly supports this plan and acknowledges the importance of protecting special places from inappropriate development and degradation. The mountains, forests, rivers, lakes and seas that need such protection are also the very places where much outdoor sports activities take place.

The reason why biodiversity needs to be enhanced and protected is essential to mitigate climate challenges and absorb carbon effectively but the whole earth system (including our survival is based on the breadth of life on earth).

However, increasing the extent of protected areas in more rural and remote places will not be sufficient to mitigate the current decline in biodiversity and the impact of climate change. Currently the level of urbanisation in Europe is approximately 75% of the population and is expected to increase to approximately 83.7% by 2050<sup>1</sup>.

- **Therefore, we all need to act to increase biodiversity in urban settings and also on the urban fringe to ensure better air quality and “life quality” for the people living there.**

The creation of parks and outdoor sports facilities using existing brownfield sites, planting trees in urban streets, and creating traffic free routes with increased native species planting are all highly important. The creation of networks of cycle lanes and walking routes, climbing features, mountain bike and running trails, canoeing and Stand Up Paddle board facilities all with associated green “living buffer zones” of native trees and shrubs around them is essential to help progress the Green Deal ideals and encourage greater levels of health enhancing sport and physical activity.

- **ENOS recommends that by 2050 all citizens in Europe should be no more than 10 minutes' walk from accessible off-road green space for health and wellbeing purposes.**

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[https://knowledge4policy.ec.europa.eu/foresight/topic/continuing-urbanisation/developments-and-forecasts-on-continuing-urbanisation\\_en#:~:text=Urbanisation%20in%20Europe,to%20approximately%2083.7%25%20in%202050](https://knowledge4policy.ec.europa.eu/foresight/topic/continuing-urbanisation/developments-and-forecasts-on-continuing-urbanisation_en#:~:text=Urbanisation%20in%20Europe,to%20approximately%2083.7%25%20in%202050)

## **Education**

ENOS recognises that outdoor sports enthusiasts have the potential to have a negative impact on biodiversity through our activities such as erosion, wildlife disturbance, trampling, littering and exceeding the carrying capacity of certain areas. However they also can support environmental causes at a local, national and global scale.

- **ENOS is committed to supporting education of outdoor sports leaders, guides and instructors through federations and training organisations in best practice to mitigate environmental impacts.**
- **Outdoor sports enthusiasts should act as champions for the environment at a local level by partnering with environmental organisations to improve biodiversity by practical methods, engaging people with nature, promoting knowledge of the environment and helping with campaigns to reduce pollution including light and noise.**
- **We all need to act practically to help our local environments by removing trash from trails or beaches during activities, sharing sightings of wildlife or issues with environmental management organisations.**

A good example of this is the “take 3 for the Sea” project in Australia. <https://www.take3.org/>

## **2. Be green, eat green, and support sustainable agriculture**

Pesticides in agriculture contributes to pollution of soil, water and air. The excess of nutrients in the environment is a major source of air, soil and water pollution, negatively impacting biodiversity and climate. The Green Deal seeks to significantly reduce nutrients and pesticides going into soils and water systems. Agriculture across Europe has also become increasingly mechanised and industrialised and policies have promoted maximisation of yield through enrichment and drainage. Changing these policies to align with principles associated with regenerative organic agriculture could bring about the changes that are needed to tackle climate change. This approach aims to promote holistic agriculture practices that:

- Increases soil organic matter over time and sequesters carbon below and above ground
- Improves animal welfare;
- Provides economic stability and fairness for farmers and workers.

Many rivers have suffered from severe eutrophication and the drainage schemes has resulted in rapid run off and associated flooding and erosion. Our rivers and lakes are an extremely valuable resource for clean water that we rely on but also for health and well-being of those who participate in outdoor sports and physical activity on or beside them. There is significant evidence of the enhanced benefits (especially to mental well-being) from water based recreation.<sup>2</sup>

- ***ENOS would urge the European Commission to have more ambitious targets associated with farm to fork policy in relation to reductions in use of fertilisers and pesticides and that language should be focused on eradication rather than just reduction. The principles associated with Regenerative Organic Farming should be applied to all agricultural policies***
- ***Outdoor and activity tourism businesses and clubs should promote and engage with suppliers of local, seasonal, environmental-friendly and organic food for outdoor sports programmes and events to promote local and complimentary economic development.***

The creation of **mandatory buffer zones** on all waterways with appropriate native planting to reduce flooding, increase biodiversity, reduce and capture leachates, reduce erosion and silting and provide corridors for wildlife is a significant opportunity across Europe. Such corridors could also help to connect communities through off-road trails and infrastructure along river corridors. Most of our centres of urbanisation and towns and villages are located beside rivers or waterways and so the creation of these buffer zones could support human social connectivity via community type trails but also support much needed biodiversity and reduce pollution of our waterways.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://bluehealth2020.eu/>

Similarly, creating buffer zones along all agricultural fields with 15 – 20m uncultivated land would create opportunities for woodland corridor development and/or wildflower meadow corridors to support pollinators and create networks of places that people in rural communities could access to connect with nature and enjoy health enhancing physical activity.

This multi-faceted approach to increasing biodiversity aligned to protecting natural resources whilst at the same time also supporting human health is an example of how joined up thinking could make the genuine impacts imagined for the Green Deal. This is a “no-brainer” opportunity for providing significant change that is required to transition to a greener and healthier Europe.

- ***ENOS would strongly recommend that the European Commission to re-imagine agricultural policy to empower the creation of buffer zones for all waterways and along all field boundaries aligned with the development of appropriate trail infrastructure to enable and empower people to access such areas as appropriate for health enhancing physical activity.***

### **3. Clean energy for clean green sports**

Decarbonising the EU's energy system is critical to reach the EU climate objectives and this includes a plan to prioritise energy efficiency and develop a power sector based largely on renewable sources

ENOS supports this plan and acknowledges the importance of renewable energy sources but this needs to be caveated with considerations of the natural environment.

- ***ENOS recommends that the EU adopts a principle that renewable energy systems should not detract from landscape value or have harmful impacts on biodiversity or ecosystems. This should include considerations for:***
  - ***Sighting of wind turbines and solar panels***
  - ***Not damming natural flowing rivers or tidal lagoons/bays***
- ***Outdoor sports stakeholders should actively seek to be consulted when renewable energy systems are being developed at a regional or local level.***
- ***Outdoor and activity tourism businesses and clubs should convert their energy supply to green energy and seek to reduce consumption through use of low energy technologies and actively campaign for low cost green energy solutions.***



#### **4. Sustainable outdoor sports industries, resources and equipment.**

Achieving the EU's climate and environmental goals requires a new industrial policy based on the circular economy.

Outdoor sports use the natural environment, often in situations where having the right equipment can ensure safety and greater enjoyment of the activity. The manufacturing of this equipment has the potential to have a significant carbon footprint, from the processing of plastic based materials and textiles to the transporting of products via extensive supply chains. Furthermore, there are potential issues with unethical manufacturing processes potentially involving child labour or modern slavery.

- ***ENOS recommends that the EU should develop requirements for manufacturers to provide lifetime impact information for sports goods products and equipment.***
- ***The outdoor sports sector needs to act as champions and leaders in the promotion of sustainable practices in sustainable consumption, recycling and the circular economy.***
- ***Outdoor sports businesses should be focused on sustainable and ethical business to business transactions and partnerships.***

An example of how this works is the European Outdoor Group sustainability charter <https://www.europeanoutdoorgroup.com/knowledgehub/sustainability-charter>

Also certain outdoor sports make significant use of natural resources such as water release systems for white water activities or ski resorts that require the creation of artificial snow when the natural resources are limited.

- **ENOS recommends that sites requiring significant natural or artificial resources consider diversification of activities when the natural resources are limited or depleted rather than creating artificial infrastructure.**

## **5. Greening our outdoor infrastructure**

While in general outdoor sports use the natural environment there are often built facilities associated with outdoor sports. These include but are not limited to:

- Changing / toilet facilities and car parking at hubs for outdoor sports
- Constructed trails and associated infrastructure
- Shelters, huts, campsites and accommodation facilities
- Club houses for equipment and changing
- Pontoons, slipways, canoe steps and jetties for water access

It is important that the outdoor sports sector is at the forefront of sustainable design and construction and includes improvements in biodiversity as a key element of any developments.

- ***ENOS recommend that the European Commission includes a requirement for additional improvements in biodiversity as a critical element within any structural funds for sports facilities and infrastructure developments.***
- ***ENOS recommends that developers of infrastructure follow sustainable design and construction principles and methodologies and strive to use natural and locally sourced materials.***

Examples of sustainable design for trails can be found through the Ascent project<sup>3</sup> or the DIRT<sup>4</sup> project.

The new Bauhaus Movement aims to shape more beautiful, sustainable and inclusive forms of living together and ENOS strongly supports this principle.

- ***ENOS recommends that the European Commission recognises the significant demands for the outdoors following Covid-19 and as such develops policies and associated funding to support the creation of much needed multi-functional and multi user, inclusive and accessible green and blue infrastructure. This would be of significant help in ensuring that resources are developed that maximise opportunities for activity, enjoyment and biodiversity.***<sup>5</sup>
- ***Outdoor sports federations and clubs that develop facilities such as mountain huts and club houses should seek to keep to principles of simplicity and sustainable processes.***

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.ascent-project.eu/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.imba-europe.org/programs/dirtt-project-erasmus-strategic-partnerships>

<sup>5</sup> Link to Buffer zones and greening urban environments.

## **6. Be mobile, #beactive**

Sport in general involves a significant amount of mobility and transport and outdoor sports is no exception. Outdoor sports enthusiasts often are dedicated travellers to landscapes or water environments that are seen as remote or “special” to climb higher mountains, paddle exciting rivers or participate in competitions. Getting to such locations without using cars can be challenging as often they are in more remote or rural locations with minimal public transport connections.

- ***ENOS recommends that the European Commission develops new policies whereby the car and road networks are no longer the highest priority but that there is a much clearer focus on sustainable human powered transport (walking and cycling).***
- ***ENOS recommends that local and regional authorities should develop or improve public transport connections to key outdoor sport sites (improving existing infrastructure rather than necessarily building new)***
- ***ENOS recommends that local and regional authorities develop more near to home activities and opportunities through buffer zones opportunities and redevelopment of urban parks and facilities.***
- ***We all need to act to lower our travel impacts by:***
  - Travelling overland as much as possible
  - Offsetting all of our travel activities
  - Travelling together
  - Using public transport
  - Making the journey to the adventure part of the adventure!!

## **7. Zero pollution in our natural environment**

To protect Europe's citizens and ecosystems, the Commission has adopted the zero-pollution action plan to prevent pollution of air, water and soil. Within this action plan there are targets to significantly reduce single use and micro plastics and this is welcomed. However, many outdoor sports enthusiasts are concerned about the ongoing and increasing pollution especially of our waterways and marine environment. While the Marine Strategy Framework Directive and of the Water Framework Directive are strong legislative requirements, there has been a failure to effectively implement and enforce them which leaves our water systems very vulnerable.

- ***ENOS recommends a critical and urgent review of the requirements on and resources required by member states to enforce the directives much more rigorously.***
- ***ENOS recommends that the Single Use Plastic directive is fully implemented and rigorously enforced in member states and that a ban of micro-plastics in all industries and for all users is also implemented. Further, there is a need to develop ambitious legislation on mechanisms to reduce non-intentionally added microplastics to products (including outdoor sports goods).***

The EU has a regulatory framework in place to deal with air pollution but some EU air quality standards are less stringent than the standards the World Health Organisation recommends and so air pollution in Europe especially in urban environments remains a significant issue. This has very significant issues for those undertaking sport and physical activity in the outdoors especially in urban environments.

Whilst the EU needs to tackle emissions, it is also important that the recommendations that ENOS is making on increasing green infrastructure in urban environments (in line with the New Bauhaus Movement) can help to alleviate air quality issues.

## **8. Climate action**

The need to act to tackle climate change is now critical and urgent. The European Green Deal aims to make Europe climate neutral by 2050. To make this objective legally binding, the Commission proposed the European Climate Law, which also sets a new, more ambitious net greenhouse gas emissions reduction target of at least -55% by 2030, compared to 1990 levels

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change has developed a ‘Sports for Climate Action Framework’<sup>6</sup> that provides a mechanism for sports organisations to take action, review and report on what they are doing to mitigate their own impacts. At a European level, the European Climate Pact<sup>7</sup>, encourages individuals, communities and organisations to connect and collectively develop and implement climate solutions and build a greener Europe from the bottom up.

- ***ENOS recommends that all outdoor sports organisations sign up to sports for climate action framework and publish their reports on their websites and also encourage their members to sign up to the European Climate pact.***
- ***We all need to act in ways that reduce our emissions and impacts on the environment, and so reducing our consumption by living more simply and ecologically, making our equipment last and reducing and mitigating our travel will be essential.***

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<sup>6</sup> [https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/Sports\\_for\\_Climate\\_Action\\_Declaration\\_and\\_Framework\\_0.pdf](https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/Sports_for_Climate_Action_Declaration_and_Framework_0.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> [https://europa.eu/climate-pact/index\\_en](https://europa.eu/climate-pact/index_en)

## **9. Research and innovation**

Horizon Europe is the EU's next large scale funding programme for research and innovation with a budget of €95.5 billion. It aims to support innovative projects that tackle climate change, helping to achieve the UN's Sustainable Development Goals and boosting the EU's competitiveness and growth.

The programme facilitates collaboration and strengthens the impact of research and innovation in developing, supporting and implementing EU policies while tackling global challenges. It supports creating and better dispersing of excellent knowledge and technologies.

- ***ENOS recommends that academic institutions team up with other key stakeholders within the outdoor sports sector to further develop the concept of delivering buffer zones in both rural and urban situations as an innovative solution to support increased biodiversity, mitigate climate change impacts and to support health and well-being for local communities..***

## **10. Investing in a green future**

To achieve the goals set by the European Green Deal, the Commission has pledged to deliver €1 trillion in sustainable investments over the next decade.

30% of the EU's multiannual budget (2021-2028) and the EU's unique NextGenerationEU (NGEU) instrument to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, has been allocated for green investments. Cohesion funds also have a requirement that at least 37% must be spent in helping to achieve climate neutrality.

This presents a very significant opportunity for outdoor sports and required green infrastructure over the coming years. ENOS is involved with the SHARE initiative developed by the EU Sport Unit to raise awareness on the role of sport and physical activity in the context of regional and local development. The SHARE initiative has already produced some good guidance documentation on opportunities for sport through Cohesion funds and many examples are of outdoor sports.

- ***ENOS recommends that outdoor sports organisations liaise closely with local and regional authorities to help foster ways to invest in green infrastructure that will negate climate impacts but also support sport and physical activity in natural settings***

## **Conclusion**

As stated at the outset, ENOS supports the New European Green Deal and will ensure that we assist in its implementation.

As a network we will encourage and support our members to commit to new and innovative ways of working within their own local, regional or national setting to promote a more sustainable way of living and also developing and managing outdoor sports.

The aim of ENOS is too work together to promote outdoor sports in Europe, but we are committing to doing this in ways that can support and help implement the Green Deal.

The Green Deal provide opportunities for Europe to be a world leader in this area and this will provide both challenges and opportunities for member states and their citizens. Likewise, it provides challenges for those involved in outdoor sports to think more carefully about their activities and impacts. However, we believe that it provides great opportunities for outdoor sports and recreation for all citizens of Europe and the resulting health and community benefits that can be gained by being physically active in natural settings.