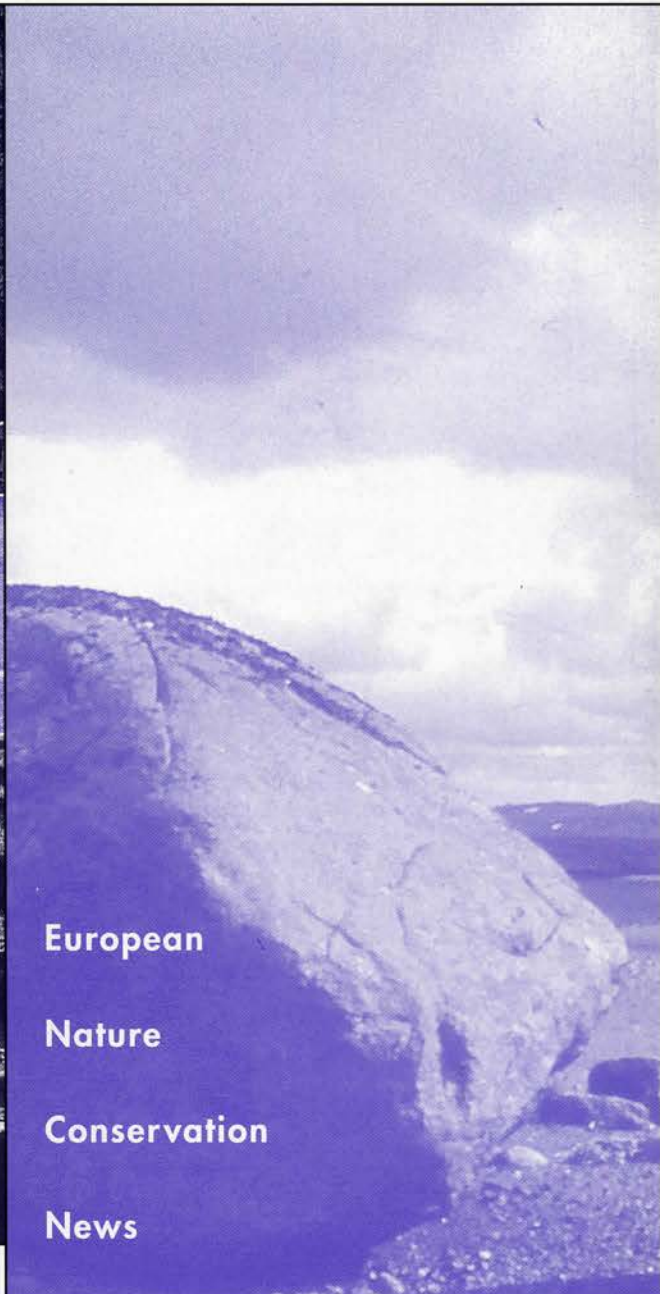
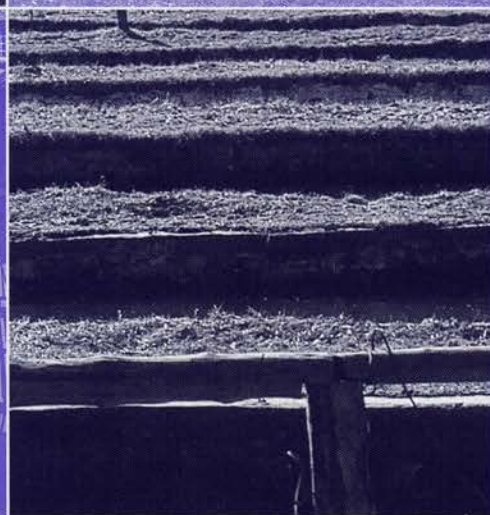
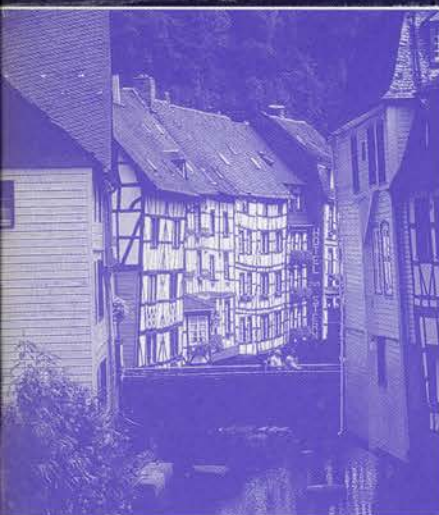
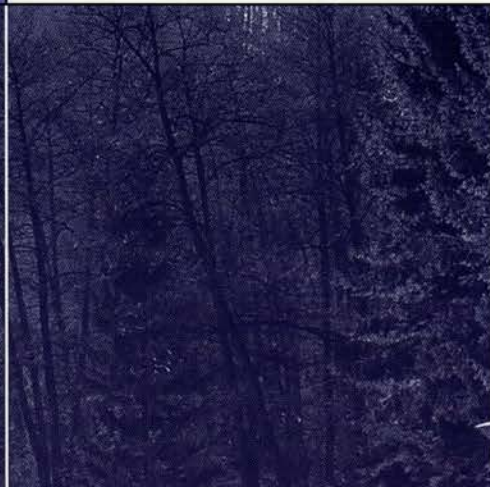


# EUROPEAN NATURE

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ROLE OF THE REGIONS



# Financial instruments

## the responsibility of the regions

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*Nature conservation authorities in the regions have a key role to play in the use of the different financial instruments for biodiversity conservation. However, to make this possible, biodiversity considerations must first be integrated into other sectoral policies.*

In recent years, environmental NGOs have complained that the Community financial instruments for regional development, especially the Structural Funds, have been responsible for important negative impacts on biodiversity. They have run numerous campaigns promoting the 'greening' of the Community Funds. Most of these campaigns have been directed at the European Commission.

It is true that the Structural Funds have been used to finance many projects that have damaged biodiversity in many areas. Such projects include land consolidation schemes, large infrastructure works, irrigation schemes and the intensification of agricultural production. However, the greatest responsibility for

these actions does not lie with the European Commission, nor with the existing regulations for these instruments; rather, it lies with the administrative bodies in charge of planning the projects, the European states and regional governments.

Not all the blame can be placed on the government departments responsible for managing the main funds: agriculture and fisheries (European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund - EAGGF and Financial Instrument for Fisheries Guidance - FIFG), economic affairs (European Regional Development Fund - ERDF, Cohesion Fund), etc. To an important degree, responsibility is shared with environment departments on national and regional level, which have generally

not made sufficient attempts to integrate environmental considerations into the planning and management of these instruments. The roots of the problem lie in the difficult situations which result from the integration of traditionally conflicting sectors, in the lack of information and knowledge, and in the hostility of fund managers who wish to retain control over the funds. All in all, the regions have a great deal of responsibility for the planning and use of the funds.

### Unused possibilities

The end result is that, although all these instruments have great potential for conserving biodiversity, they have so far been very poorly used (see Table 1).

Table 1: Opportunities for biodiversity conservation of the different Community financial instruments and their actual use for biodiversity conservation.

Instrument	Use mode of instrument for biodiversity conservation	Opportunities for biodiversity conservation	Reasons for actual use made of the instrument	Equivalent EU accession instruments
National Initiatives (regional development plans, operative programmes, SPD, etc.)	Very poorly used	Very important. Wide range of opportunities affecting the whole territory	Top-down planning process in which environmental authorities are poorly or not involved	SAPARD
Community Initiatives (INTERREG, LEADER, EQUAL, etc.)	Used to some extent	Important in projects	Bottom-up planning and implementation	PHARE
Cohesion Fund	Hardly used at all	Important in projects. Less flexible than Community Initiatives	Limited to environmental infrastructure for water, waste, atmosphere, etc	ISPA
LIFE Nature	Very popular	Specific for nature conservation	Does not need integration	LIFE



1-3: NEWLY ESTABLISHED WILD-FLOWER STRIPS AS WILDLIFE CORRIDORS FOR ECOLOGICAL LANDSCAPE ENHANCEMENT (PHOTO - SWISS NATIONAL PARK)

4-5: LANDSCAPE IN AARGAU, JURA, SWITZERLAND (PHOTO - SWISS NATIONAL PARK)

Nevertheless, a whole series of projects have already been initiated with this goal in mind:

- The federal Swiss Landscape Concept recognizes the significance of the regions, and numerous recommendations have been made and policy instruments have been designed to enhance regional functions, e.g. on the interface between agricultural and nature; conservation policy, for hydraulic engineering and flood protection, and in forestry policy.
- The Swiss National Park is being extended, and preliminary work has been undertaken by the private association Pro Natura to establish a second national park.
- Of regional significance is the programme to protect alluvial zones currently underway in Aargau canton; this is based on a new article in the Constitution of this Canton on the protection of alluvial zones.

### Regional ecological enhancement

There is a need for ecological enhancement concepts and innovative ways of combining land use with nature conservation. A substantial basis for such efforts was provided by the introduction in 1985 of model contracts with farmers, which contain precisely defined ecological performance targets, initially for individual parcels of land. This approach was significantly expanded with the introduction of comprehensive contracts, which include the total land of the farm. The model was tested in the Fricktal area of Aargau canton and was subsequently extended to other areas of the canton following a decision by the government included in the cantonal master plan. What is special about this approach - in contrast to plot-based enhancement - is the holistic perspective. A performance agreement between the canton and the

farmer not only specifies clear goals for nature conservation, but also includes overall ecological and economic components. At a time of uncertainty in agricultural policy, such agreements are acquiring a fundamentally new significance. At present, 13% of the agricultural land in Aargau is covered by comprehensive contracts of this type.

The regional approach has progressed even further with the new landscape development concepts: the direction that landscape policy is to take (enhancement or preservation) is defined at a regional level, aided by participatory democratic processes. Concepts of this type are becoming a requirement for the conclusion of performance agreements between the government authorities and farmers. They also ensure that the population is actively involved in the process and can therefore identify more closely with landscape issues. At the same time, investing resources in ecological performance leads to better quality results.

From an economic point of view, the use of public funds can only be justified where the objectives pursued are actually attainable. The model is to be introduced into federal agricultural policy. As a supporting measure, a 'toolkit for landscape development concepts' is to be made available. A new element to facilitate top-down control has been developed in Aargau, namely a 'regional target values for enhancement requirements' module, which provides specifications for planning at the regional level.

The development of regional approaches will be influenced by the phasing out of measures to support agricultural prices and production. The new law requires that regional ecological enhancement is made an integral objective for agricultural zones, which represents an opportunity for the future. ☺

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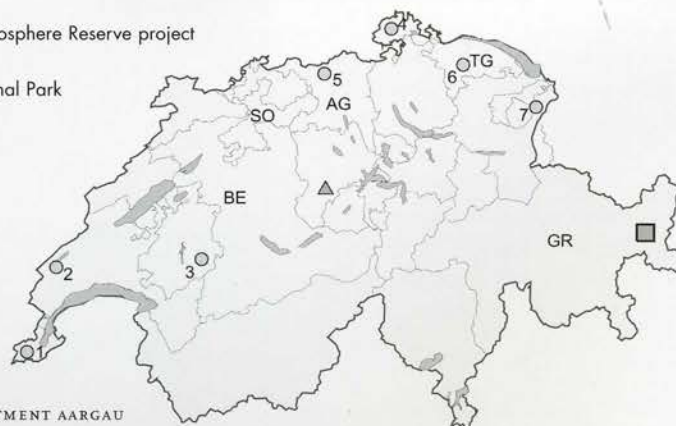
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### Important cultural landscape enhancement projects

- 1: Champagne genevoise 2: Parc jurassien vaudois (canton Vaud) 3: Pays d'Enhaut
- 4: Klettgau an Randen (canton Schaffhausen) 5: Fricktal (canton Aargau)
- 6: Immenberg (canton Thurgau) 7: Rhine Valley (canton St. Gallen)

▲ Entlebuch Biosphere Reserve project

■ Swiss National Park



SOURCE: BAUDEPARTMENT AARGAU