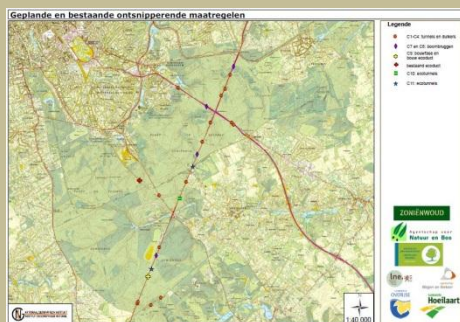


# LIFE+ OZON project tackles the fragmentation of the Sonian forest

The Sonian Forest consists of more than 5.000 hectares top European nature and is connected to Brussels. It is the destination of several million visitors each year and the habitat of several Natura 2000 species. However, different busy transport routes such as the ring road (R0), E411 and the railway from Brussels to Namen divide the forest in different parts. These roads are harsh barriers which are insurmountable for most animals. Therefore, they oblige the animals to live in separate populations.



LIFE+ OZON project map



In order to tackle this fragmentation, the LIFE+ OZON project ('Defragmentation of the Sonian forest') was launched. This project officially started on October 11, 2013 and will reconnect the habitats of the animals in the Sonian forest by July 2017 with different ecological infrastructures. Moreover, an adapted forest management and the redirection of recreation to less sensitive areas is planned. As a consequence, the animals in the Sonian forest will be able to migrate without having to cross the existing transport routes. This is not only positive for the threatened species in the forest, but also for traffic safety,

## Ecological infrastructures

In order to reduce the fragmentation in the Sonian forest, the OZON project will build different ecological infrastructures: a wildlife crossing of up to 60 meters wide, four tree bridges and three ecotunnels. Already one ecoduct was constructed over railway 161 in 2011. The structures will be used by many species, including European pine marten, palmate newt, ground beetle and several species of bats and amphibians. Moreover, existing tunnels and culverts are being cleaned and adapted for the animals. In addition, the edges of the forest and pond complexes are arranged more nature friendly by creating additional open areas and edge vegetation. Finally, the future management will be anchored in a sustainable management plan.



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## Cross-boundary cooperation across boundaries

A budget of 6.716.040 million euros was made available for the OZON project, of which the European Union is contributing half. Besides the Agency for Nature and Forest, the Agency for Roads and Transport and Environment Brussels, also the municipalities Hoeilaart and Overijse and the Department of Environment, Nature and Energy of the Flemish government are contributing to the project.

## We keep you informed

Curious about the upcoming OZON activities or do you want to stay informed on the project? Visit the Forest Museum Jan van Ruusbroec in Groenendaal (free entrance) or visit the project website:

<http://www.zonienwoud.be/lifeozon/>

