

Green Network in Estonia: From Spatial Concept to Binding Planning Tool



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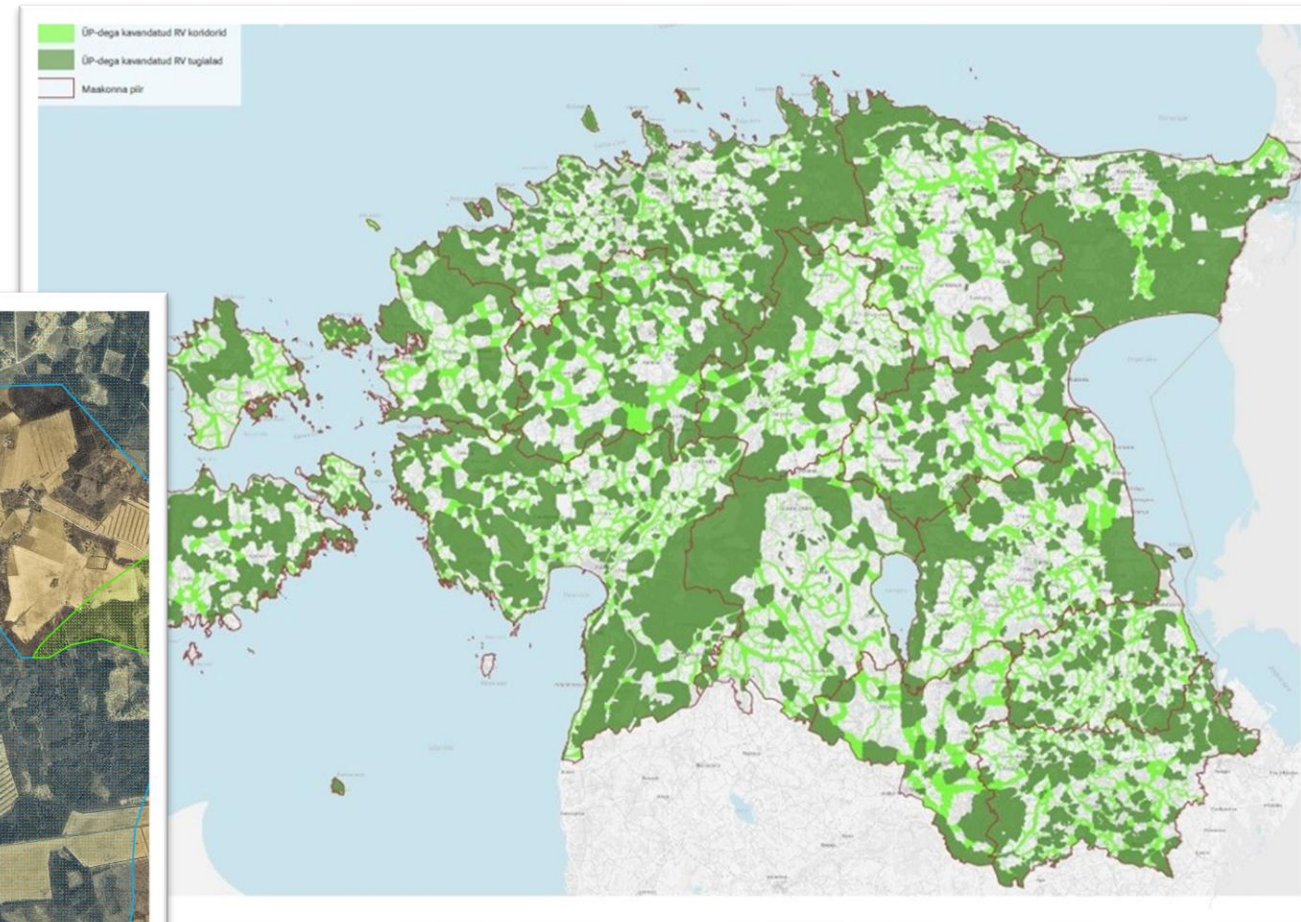
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What is the Estonian green network?

- Nationwide network
- Core areas & corridors
- A tool for planning land use



Green Network Objectives

- Protect biodiversity
- Support climate adaptation and mitigation
- Enable recreation and green lifestyle



The 2025 study: Objectives and functioning of the green and blue network

Main objective: *define the green and blue network Estonia needs by 2050 to meet climate and biodiversity goals*

Key questions of the study

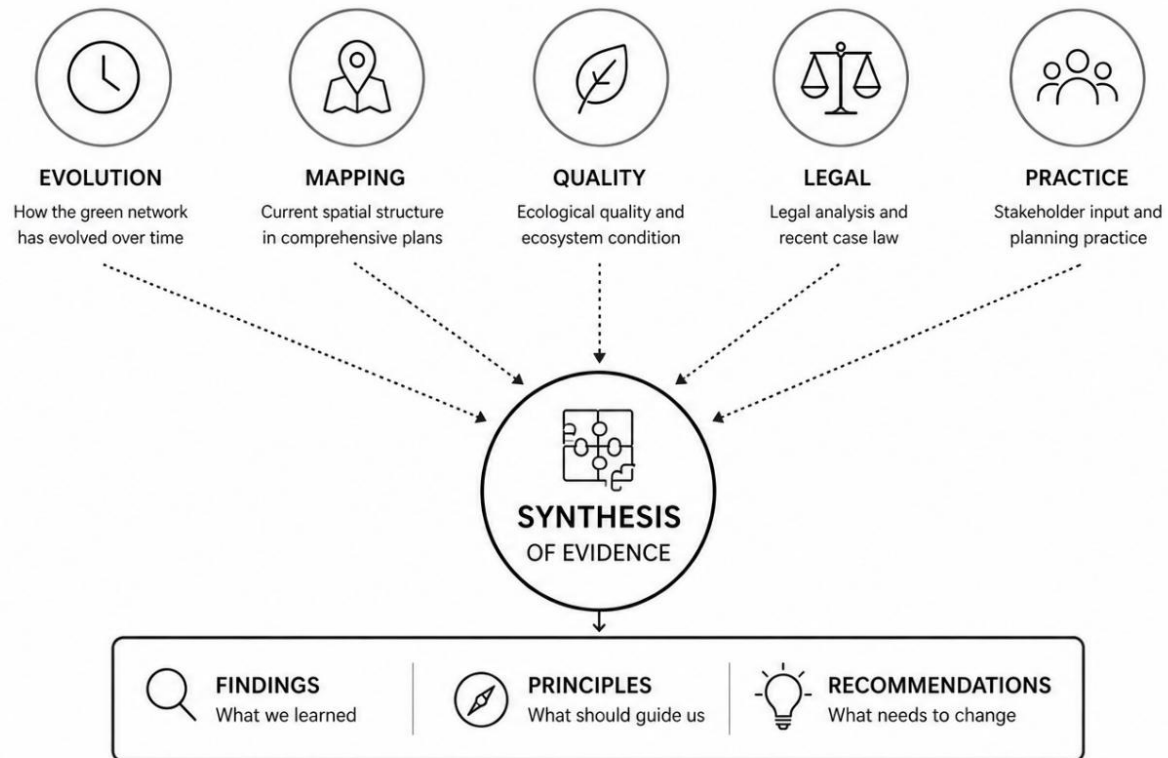
- What is the role of the green network in today's planning system?
- What should count as a green network element — and why?
- How should the network be structured across national and local levels?
- What responsibilities belong to the state and to municipalities?
- How should urban areas and blue networks be addressed?
- What kind of planning and land-use rules are actually needed?



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How did we approach the study?



Finding no 1: strong on maps, weak in ecological functioning

One network expected to serve all ecological functions simultaneously



Finding no 2: too generic to guide real decisions

ECOLOGICAL OBJECTIVE	OPERATIONAL THRESHOLD / RULE
 Avoid fragmentation	?
 Maintain connectivity	?
 Protect ecological functioning	?
 Preserve corridor function	?

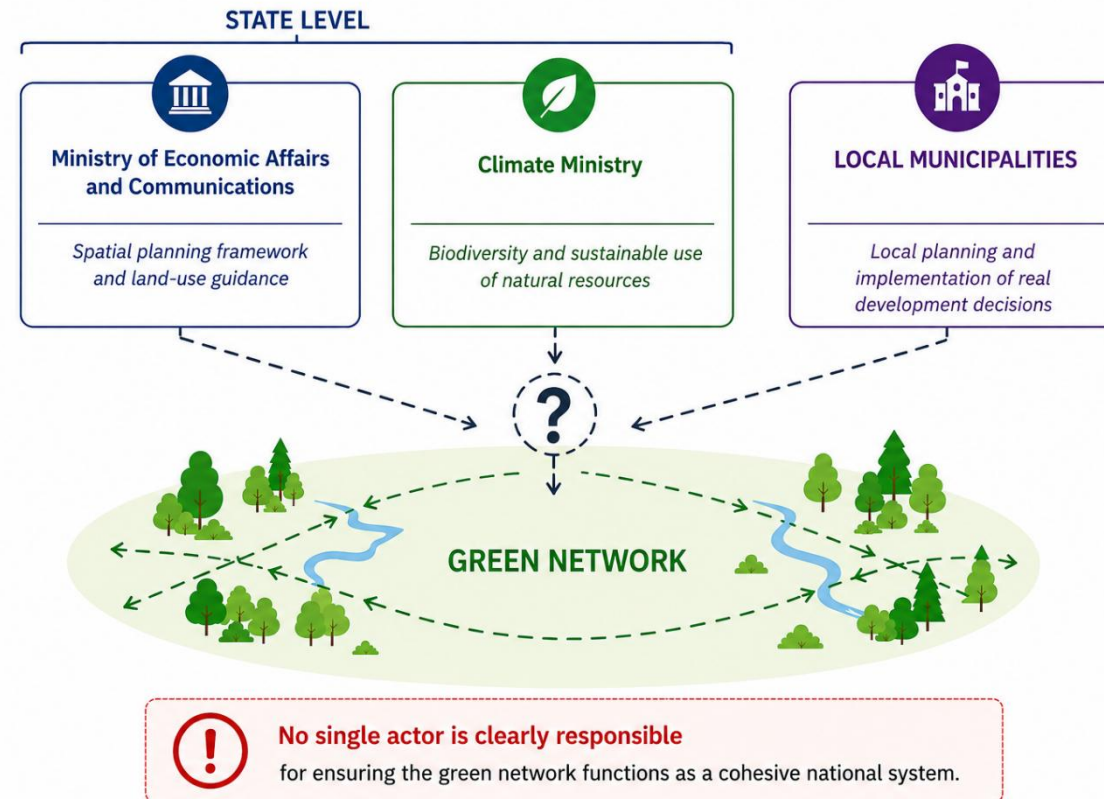


The illustration shows a person in silhouette sitting at a desk, looking at a laptop. The laptop screen displays a landscape with a river and trees. A thought bubble above the person's head contains a question mark. In front of the person is a document titled 'PERMIT DECISION' with two checkboxes: 'APPROVE' and 'REJECT'. A pen is resting on the document.



Ecological goals are often not translated into measurable decision criteria

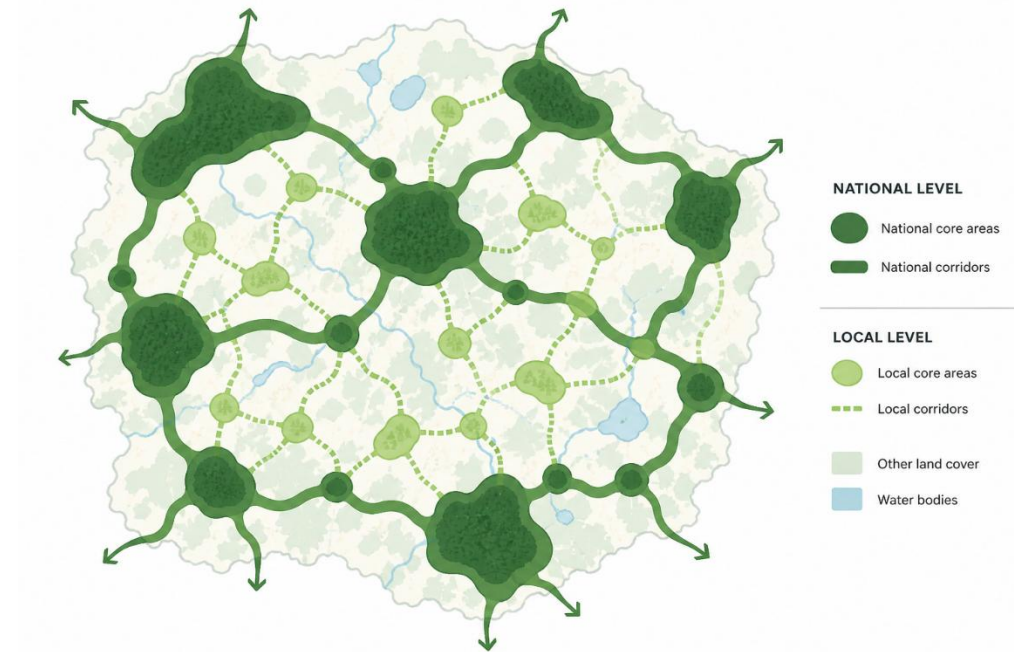
Finding no 3: no clear ownership of the system



A national network needs national responsibility

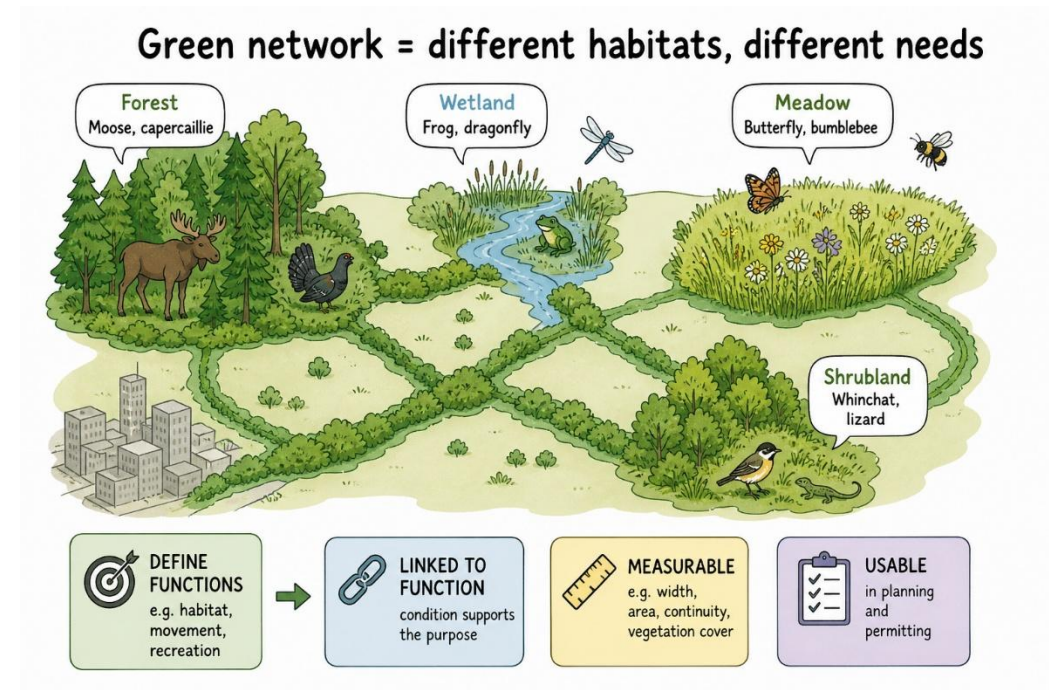
- Identify nationally important green network elements
- National level:
 - Define the backbone (Natura 2000?)
 - Set minimum requirements
- Local level:
 - Adapt to local context
 - Add local elements

Local planning alone cannot ensure national coherence and connectivity!



Function-based and enforceable conditions

- Define functions for each element before setting conditions
- Conditions must be:
 - Clearly linked to function
 - Measurable
 - Usable in planning and permitting



Use ecological data systematically

- Move from assumptions to evidence-based planning
- Use ecosystem condition and connectivity data consistently
- Apply the same logic in planning, permitting and monitoring
- Monitor whether the network actually works over time



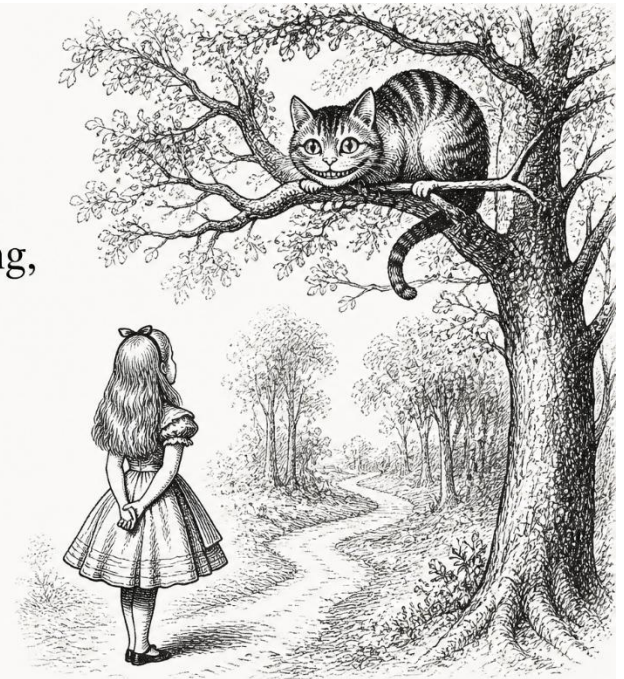
Where are we heading?

- National spatial plan still under preparation
- Different visions for the green network remain unresolved
- Most likely outcome: a compromise

One thing is clear: green network debates, studies and court cases are not going away anytime soon

“If you don’t know
where you are going,
any road will take
you there.”

— Cheshire Cat,
Alice in Wonderland





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Let's continue the conversation!

Message me your questions or comments in the IAIA26 app.

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