



6. Pan-European Green Belt Conference 2012

European Green Belt Borders separate. Nature unites!

Along the former Iron Curtain, which separated the European continent in East and West for nearly 40 years, an outstanding ecological network and living memorial landscape developed. Despite its inhumanity, the border zone granted nature a pause for breath along more than 12,500 kilometers from the Barents Sea at the Russian-Norwegian border, along the Baltic Coast, through Central Europe and the Balkans to the Black Sea. Unwittingly the once-divided Europe supported the conservation and development of valuable habitats. The border area served as a retreat for many endangered species. Already in the 1970ies conservationists in several areas of Europe drew their attention to the flourishing nature and wildlife proliferated undisturbed.

The establishment of the European Green Belt Initiative in 2003 was a merging of different existing regional initiatives to one European initiative. Today the Green Belt connects 24 countries, is a backbone of a Pan-European ecological network and renders a significant contribution to the European 'Green Infrastructure'. It is a symbol for transboundary cooperation and a common European natural and cultural heritage. The outstanding importance of the ecological corridor is apparent: 40 national parks are situated directly along the European Green Belt. More than 3,200 protected nature areas can be found within a 50 kilometers buffer on either side of the Green Belt. It crosses nearly all European bio-geographical regions.



Information on the Green Belt Europe can be obtained from:



Regional Coordinators

Fennoscandian Green Belt
Baltic Fund for Nature
bfn@bfn.org.ru • www.bfn.org.ru



Norway
Bjørn Arne Næss, Miljødirektoratet
bjorn.arne.nass@miljodir.no



Finland
Tapio Lindholm, Syke
Tapio.lindholm@ymparisto.fi

Aimo Saano, Metsähallitus
aimo.saano@metsa.fi



Baltic Green Belt
BUND Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania
coordinator@balticgreenbelt.de
www.balticgreenbelt.de

Central European Green Belt
BUND Project Office Green Belt
greenbelt@bund-naturschutz.de
www.gruenesband.info

Balkan Green Belt
EuroNatur
greenbelt@euronatur.org • www.euronatur.org

Supported by the German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation (BfN) / German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety
www.bfn.de

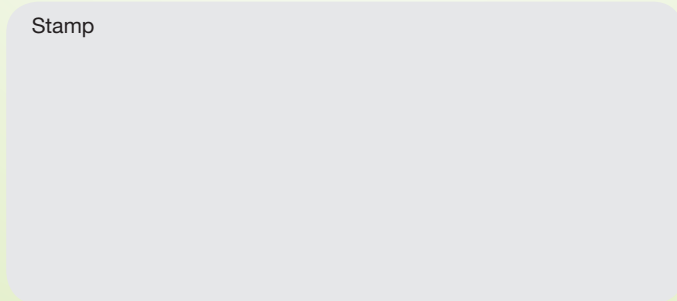
1st edition, 2013 • Printed on 100%-recycled paper

HGS5 gmbh, Fürth/Germany • www.hgs5.net
Z. Brajanoski, J. Flachs, F. Henkel, E. Körner, J. Peltomäki, Macedonian Ecological Society, Museum Mödlareuth/A. Schaffner, H. Schlumprecht, J. Schmiedel, W. Sollberger, Ch. Übl, W. Willner.



**Design
Photos**

Stamp



European Green Belt



European Green Belt

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www.europeangreenbelt.org

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Brown Bear, Finland-Russia



Baltic Sea Coast



Lilium albanicum, Macedonia-Albania

The European Green Belt includes four organizational regions: Fennoscandian, Baltic, Central European and Balkan. The overall steering is done by a coordination group with members from all regions. Each section is coordinated by a regional coordinator and in every country National Focal Points are persons in charge.

Green Belt of Fennoscandia – A million-hectare chain of nature reserves

The Green Belt of Fennoscandia is a strip of territory stretching 1,350 kilometers along the borders of Norway, Russia and Finland from the Barents to the Baltic Sea. It's a wild Belt. The northern part is dominated by lichens, mosses and dwarf shrubs. The central and southern part is made up of vast coniferous taiga forests. They have been serving as a refuge for large mammals such as the brown bear and the elk. Innumerable wetlands, mires and lakes characterize the landscape. They provide breeding habitats to Finland's national bird, the whooper swan.

A Memorandum of Understanding on cooperation on the development of the Green Belt of Fennoscandia has been signed in February 2010 by the ministers for environment of the three countries. It facilitates ecologically, economically and socially sustainable transboundary cooperation.

Baltic Green Belt – The seaside Belt

The Baltic Green Belt stretches along the Baltic Sea coastline. Diverse marine underwater habitats and a richly variegated coastline with large dune fields, long beaches, impressive cliffs and se-



Lynx



River Otter

cluded lagoons are unique for this part of the European Green Belt. Extensive military areas served as reserves for millions of migrating birds and many marine animals such as grey and ringed seals. But since the early 1990s the coasts have experienced heavy pressure for development and exploitation. Safeguarding the valuable natural and historical assets of this attractive and heavily sought-after landscape poses a major challenge for the Green Belt.

Central European Green Belt – Diverse landscapes

The Central European Green Belt crosses a variety of cultural landscapes, partly intensively used by agriculture. It passes the Bohemian massif with its well-wooded transboundary national parks such as the Bavarian Forest/Šumava, follows the courses of near-natural rivers such as in the floodplains of the Mura and Drava. It runs through the long mountain ridge of the Karavanke Mountains and the Julian Alps ending in the Adriatic Sea. Through the support of adjacent states on regional and national levels and funding by the EU, the stakeholders along the Green Belt have been implementing two multinational projects. The main aims are protecting the Green Belt as an ecological corridor and memorial landscape, developing transboundary cooperation and fostering sustainable regional development.



Green Belt youth camp „Maltš/Malše“, Austria-Czech Republic



Tree Frog

Green Belt Balkan – The mountainous Belt

The southernmost part of the European Green Belt hosts a hot spot of biodiversity and endemism. Predominantly located in the mountain ranges of the Balkan Peninsula it forms an extremely heterogeneous mosaic of natural landscapes including pristine alpine ecosystems, forests and steppe habitats as well as lakes and coastal zones. Besides extraordinary cultural landscapes developed with a multitude of threatened plant and animal species. Above the smooth hills of Sakar along the border between Bulgaria and Turkey the imperial eagle circles in the air. The remote border areas and huge forests are home to shy animals like the Balkan lynx.

Countries of the Green Belt regions

Fennoscandia:

Norway, Russia and Finland.

Baltic:

Russia (Baltic Coast), Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Germany (Baltic Coast).

Central Europe:

Germany (inner-German Green Belt), Czech Republic, Austria, Slovakia, Hungary, Italy, Slovenia and Croatia.

Balkan:

Serbia, Romania, Bulgaria, Kosovo*, Montenegro, Albania, FYR Macedonia, Greece, Turkey.

*in accordance with UNSCR 1244 and opinion of ICJ.