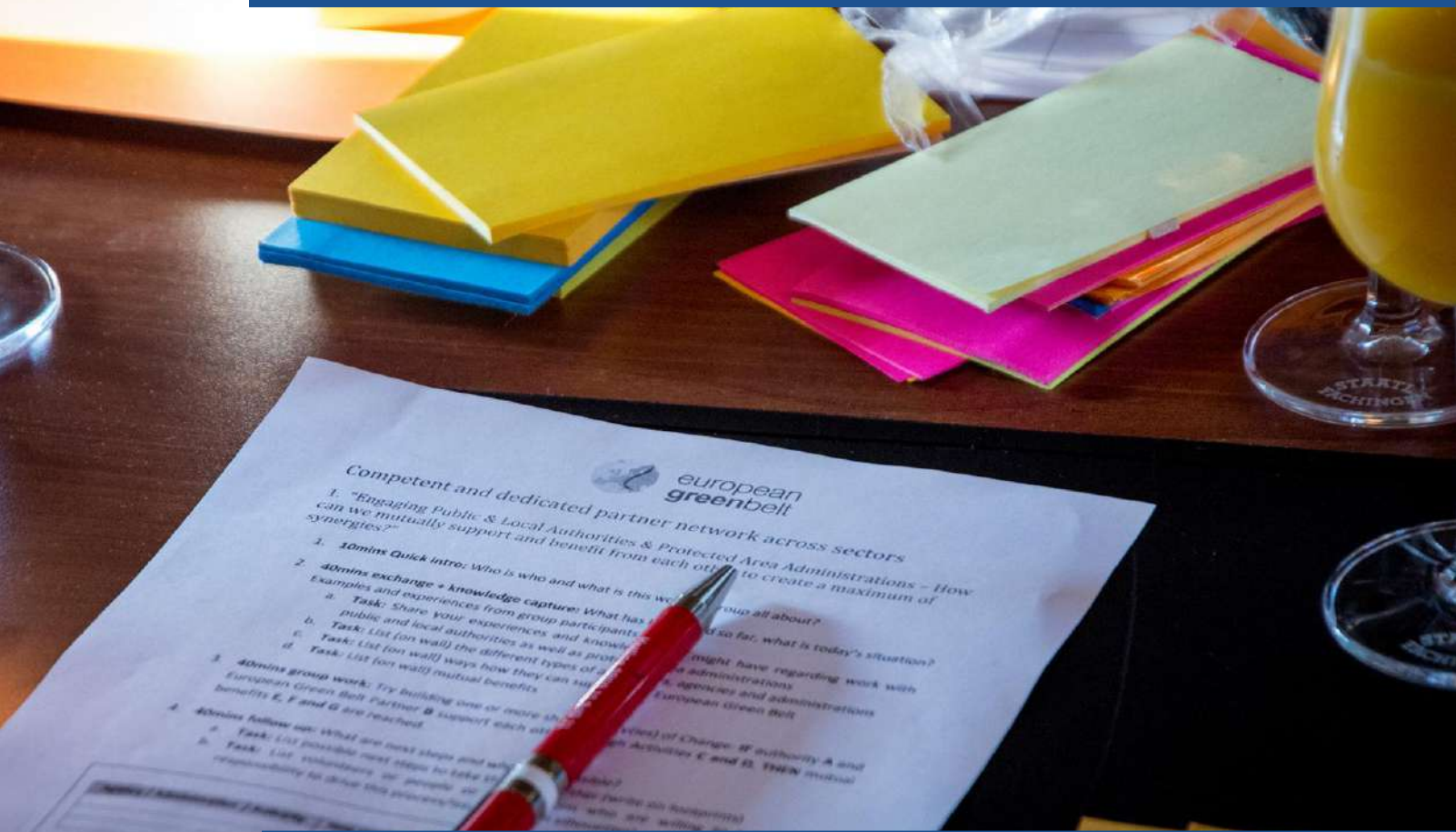


10th Pan-European Green Belt Conference 2018 | Working Group Report



Eisenach/Germany – October 2018
Lead Facilitator: Felix Cybulla





**Report on the results of the working group session
“The European Green Belt – today, tomorrow and beyond”**

10th Pan-European Green Belt Conference 2018

Eisenach / Germany (Venue: Wartburg)

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6th session – parallel working groups: The European Green Belt – today, tomorrow and beyond

Introduction to Working Groups

Main objectives of the working group session were to define and further elaborate joint fields of cooperation on the Pan-European level to drive further and bring forward the European Green Belt Initiative and to offer the opportunity for concrete planning of (joint) activities throughout the European Green Belt. Another important objective was the facilitation of exchange and knowledge sharing of conference participants. Eventually, the working session was also intended to define key tasks for the Programme of Work (PoW) of the European Green Belt Association for the period 2019-20.

The topics for the working groups were selected by the Board of the European Green Belt Association, based basically on the results of the Balkan Green Belt Regional Conference. During the Balkan Green Belt Regional Conference enabling conditions for strengthening cooperation in the frame of the European Green Belt Initiative were identified. The results have shown that a strategic framework is required to provide a basis for further cooperation and to improve effectiveness. This strategic framework should refer to several closely interrelated elements (see Figure 1) and is considered to be of equal significance for the cooperation in other regions and on the Pan-European level. Accordingly, the working groups addressing individual elements of the strategic framework were a first step to elaborate contributions for a strategic framework of the European Green Belt.

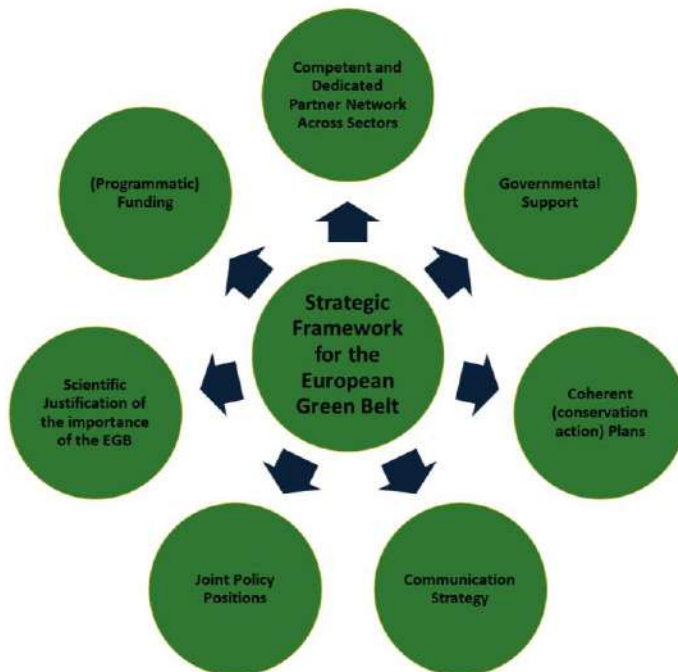


Figure 1: Elements of a strategic Framework for the European Green Belt

The three-hour session was facilitated by an external consultant, Felix Cybulla. Facilitation during group work was supported by Board members and participants.

The concept was elaborated by the facilitator in close cooperation with EuroNatur Foundation and the Board of the European Green Belt Association. Detailed concepts for each of the working groups, including methods of moderation, tasks and questions have been developed. The given tasks were specific so that results were concrete and tangible and suitable to be transferred to the PoW, if needed. All groups were asked to follow a similar knowledge capture structure to streamline the result format and facilitate easy presentation of results.

Participants were able to decide for one of the following six working groups:

- Competent and dedicated Partner Network Across Sectors
 - 1 Engaging Public & Local Authorities & Protected Area Administrations
 - 2 Synergies of Nature Conservation & Historic Preservation
- Communication Strategy
 - 3 Stepping up European Green Belt Communications
 - 4 30 years after the Iron Curtain
- Scientific Justification of the importance of the European Green Belt
 - 5 Calling the Science Community
- Programmatic Funding
 - 6 What if we were rich?

Results Working Groups

Group 1: Competent and dedicated partner network across sectors - Engaging Public & Local Authorities & Protected Area Administrations

Group Moderators: Aimo Saano (Metsähallitus) and André Maslo (Ecological educational institution Upper Franconia)

Guiding Question: “How can we mutually support and benefit from each other to create a maximum of synergies?”

In a first step the moderators gave a short introduction into the working group as well as time for an introduction round. After that an exchange about examples and experiences took place in order to get a picture of what has happened so far and what is today’s situation. During the exchange different types of authorities, agencies and administrations were collected in order to better understand relevant stakeholders.

Local Authority	State	Protected areas including Cultural Heritage Management
Municipality	Water Ministry	Church (Serbia)
Competent Authority	Forest Ministry	Forestry Company
County Authority	Border Guards	State Organisations
Public Enterprises	State Foundation (2 in Russia)	NGOs
“land owner groups”	International Conservation Agreements	Military Institutions
		Religious organizations
		Culture
		Municipality

In a next step the group collected ways of how the different stakeholders can support the European Green Belt as well as mutual benefits:

Actors	Activity	Benefit (for Authorities etc.)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PA Managers • Municipalities • NGOs • Tourism Companies • Educators 	Spreading knowledge on EGB	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • economic benefits • easier work • better quality of media work • educational goals
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural Institutions • Municipalities • Forestry • Land owners • Farmers • PA Managers • Fishing and Hunting Organizations • Reindeer Herders • Volunteers • Scientific Institutions 	Managing EGB and species	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better Standards • Best Practices • Cheaper Sustainable Management
	Enhancement of competences	
	Monitoring species	

As possible next steps two activities were defined:

Next Steps	Who volunteers to guide / lead?
Approaching municipalities in EGB periphery – find the appropriate platform first	Engaged local EGB actor
Propose management and investment projects together with municipalities	EGB Partner who are already connected with local stakeholders

Conclusion

The participants had a lively and valuable exchange to better understand the different settings of engaging public and local authorities as well as protected area administrations. It became obvious that the topic is relevant in all regions and that stakeholders vary between countries, e.g. role of the church in Serbia. The list of relevant institutions on the different levels is rather long. Municipalities were seen as important partners. The elaborated results will be helpful for all partners who are currently active in this field of work or who intend to be more active.

From this working group no tasks were addressed to the European Green Belt Association as the results are more relevant on the local level.



Figure 2: Group 1 immersed in discussions © Felix Cybulla

Group 2: Competent and dedicated partner network across sectors - Synergies of Nature Conservation & Historic Preservation

Group Moderators: Melanie Kreutz and Martin Kuba (BUND Department Green Belt)

Guiding Question: “How can we protect the European Green Belt as common natural and cultural heritage, taking into account today's political and social context and perspectives?”

In a first step the moderators gave a short introduction into the working group as well as time for an introduction round. After that an exchange about examples and experiences took place in order to better understand what has happened so far and what the situation is. During this exchange existing projects and relevant topics as well as related challenges and opportunities were collected.

Topics & Projects		Challenges	Opportunities
Local specific knowledge (to get it from locals)	Traditional Cultural Landscapes	New borders & new border fortifications	Special Funds (Tourism Fund; Rural Development Fund)
Collecting data on nature monuments	Italy: Discussion of spatial relevance	Demographic problems in border regions	Cultural Heritage = Emotions -> your history
Regional Specific Situations	Guided tours on nature including historical aspects	Keep it narrow? Widen up?	New use of old structures
Promotion of local products	Visibility through landscape preservation	Gap of knowledge?	Include annual festivities in nature conservation activities?
Structural Changes	Bridge meetings (TK-BG)	How to raise awareness?	Nature helps history – history helps nature
Material vs. immaterial heritage	30 th Anniversary Activities	Politics	Nature conservation as history preservation
	Older borders along the European Green Belt	Funds	UNESCO World Heritage
		Competition	
		Responsibilities	

In the following section the participants of the working group were asked to list concrete target groups, potential new cooperation partners as well as topics that are needed to be dealt with to combine nature conservation and cultural heritage.

Target Groups	New Partners	Future Topics
Sustainable Tourism	Time witnesses	Interconnection “Nature helping history – history helping nature”
“Helping” Tourism (landscape protection measures) -> Educative	Institutions on national memory (SK, CZ, HH)	Protected nature as agent for history
Future Generations	Old/Traditional generations (Knowledge Preservation)	Material vs. immaterial level of European Green Belt
Locals	Institutions on history	Knowledge preservation
Authorities	Institutions on Iron Curtain Victims	

As possible next steps two activities were defined:

Next Steps	Who Volunteers to guide / lead?
Project development with cultural focus (Interreg Europe)	All, EGBA
Long term (10-20 years) -> UNESCO World Heritage	



Figure 3: Group 2 engaged in the knowledge capture phase © Felix Cybulla



Figure 4: Results of Group 2 © Felix Cybulla

Conclusion

In this working group a valuable and interesting exchange between participants from different regions and countries took place. It became obvious that the topic is relevant for all regions, despite the different circumstances now and during Cold War times.

New ideas and partners were identified. This can help partners of the initiative, which are currently active in this field or intend to be more active. In addition, the group also recommended including a task on strengthening of synergies between nature conservation and historic preservation into the Programme of Work of the European Green Belt Association (e.g. Initiate Interreg Europe project on Nature and Culture).

Group 3: Communication Strategy - Stepping up European Green Belt Communications

Group Moderators: Robert Dürhager and Lotte Harlan (WIGWAM)

Guiding Question: “What is the current status of the communication strategy and what has yet to come?”

Background of this working group was an assignment given by EuroNatur as current chair of the European Green Belt Association to the communication agency [WIGWAM](#). Objective of the cooperation was an assessment of current communication as well as the development of recommendations for improvement and practical support in formulating messages and statements.

Prior to the Eisenach conference WIGWAM drafted a first analysis of the communication about the European Green Belt on the pan-European level. Based on the analysis four main narratives used in the current communication were elaborated. In addition, WIGWAM developed three “Why are we here”-Statements to describe what the European Green Belt Initiative is doing. The conference was an important platform to collect feedback on the narratives and the statements and generally on the current communication efforts. For this purpose, WIGWAM was conducting interviews with the participants of the conference.

In addition, the working group offered the opportunity to get more involved into European Green Belt communication and to contribute to the further work of WIGWAM. Content and process of the working group have been developed by WIGWAM. It had a creative and inspirational character so that here only a short summary of main aspects is given.

In a first step different attributes associated to the European Green Belt were collected and the most important ones were ranked:

Feelings	Overall impression	Be famous for...
Love	Successful cooperation between states	Learning from history for the future
Enthusiasm	Connects people	Connecting people
Curiosity	Learning from history for the future	Wilderness
Responsibility	Be aware of history	Ecological networking
Freedom to walk	Connects culture, history, and nature	Connecting Europe, nature and history
History of our region	Experience of nature	
Pride	Passion for nature	
	Unique	
	A call for action	
	Participate	



Figure 5: Part of the process and results of group 3 © Felix Cybulla

A finding of the exchange was that currently the communication is too technical and not very emotional.

In the following the group concentrated on the narratives which have been elaborated by WIGWAM as currently used main narratives:

1. **Natural treasures:** *Like pearls on a string. An enchanted nature with unique wildlife and landscapes. This has to be conserved and restored.*
2. **Living memorial:** *The former border zone of the Iron Curtain granted us with an extraordinary ecological network and a living memorial landscape. This has to be conserved and restored.*
3. **Border-crossing activism:** *Conservationists from 24 countries are working together to preserve and restore the EGB. Borders separate. nature unites!*
4. **Europe's largest nature conservation initiative:** *24 countries, 12 500 kilometres, more than 3000 protected areas with thousands of endangered species. Almost 150 GOs and NGOs are working together to close the remaining gaps in the EGB, whose importance has been confirmed by institutions such as the European Commission and the International Union for Conservation of Nature.*

The participants were asked to create collages for each of the four narratives. For this purpose, four small groups were formed and equipped with different materials to be used for the collages. Each group contributed to each narrative.



The results were surprising – the collages and the feelings and pictures each of them were evoking were completely different. This approach underlined in an impressive way the different character and power of the four narratives.

Based on this experience the group concentrated on the four “why are we here” statements of the European Green Belt Initiative which have been developed by WIGWAM prior to the conference. In a joint process the group tried to decide for one of the statements:

1. Protecting Europe's Largest Ecological Network
2. We Let Life Flourish In The Iron Curtain's Death Zone
3. Connecting East and West With A Haven For Wildlife

The process was very emotional and complex and showed that the understanding of what the European Green Belt Initiative is actually doing is rather diverse. The aspect of history and remembering and the strong relation to the Iron Curtain and its precise spatial delineation once again turned out to be more important for the representatives of the Central European Green Belt and especially of the German part than for others.

Conclusion

This group work was more creative and intended to offer an opportunity to support the work of WIGWAM. In addition, it allowed WIGWAM to better understand the Initiative and its diversity. The group work also showed the complexity of developing a joint communication strategy for the European Green Belt which acknowledges the diversity of partners and opinions and at the same time formulates strong messages which are short and precise enough to be convincing. The participants of this working group addressed an important request to the European Green Belt Association and the entire Initiative – to improve communication to be more emotional and personal in order to touch people.

Group 4: Communication Strategy - 30 years after the Iron Curtain

Group Moderators: Uwe Riecken (BfN) and Christine Pühringer (Austrian League for Nature Conservation)

Guiding Question: “How can we make use of the anniversary and increase the visibility of the European Green Belt?”

This group work also started with a short introduction into the working group and time for an introduction round. In the following the participants collected existing plans for projects or events especially around the 30-year anniversary in 2019 as well as additional ideas for the anniversary.

Happy New European Green Belt Year 2019

First step: Definition of what is being celebrated, consider special situation of Fennoscandia

List of ideas:

- Family Day at the European Green Belt
- International Youth Camp in Probstzella, maybe exchange with Stanka
- Multivision show in schools and counties
- Thuringian meeting with different actors along the Green Belt
- Start Project on Connectivity (DE)
- Hiking Trips (DE)
- Hiking App (DE) (Providing hiking routes digital, possibly via [Komoot](#))
- Press Trip (DE) (Press trip along the inner German Green Belt)
- Baumkreuz (Tree Cross) 2.11.
- Green Belt Camps (invitation to former participants (AT))
- Local Events “Move 4 Green Belt” (AT)
- 30 years’ event at Neusiedler See (AT)
- Illmitz Declaration (AT, Austrian Federal Government and the Austrian Federal States on the Green Belt jointly committing themselves to the European Green Belt)
- Action School Day
- Facebook Campaign
- Regional Green Belt fairs

Possibly dates to make use of:

- 20 May: Bee Day
- 21 May: Day of Natura 2000
- 22 May: Day of Biodiversity
- 23-26 May: European elections
- 24 May: Day of Nature Parks

In a next step the group elaborated proposals for the upcoming 30 years anniversary as well as responsibilities:

Strengthen European Green Belt Days

Target Group: Broad Public

What	Who
Fix the date/span of time → time is already defined on 18-24 September each year	European Green Belt Association
Definition of joint activity	European Green Belt Association
Implementation of joint activity (on low level, e.g. stapling gathered stones on public places near the border)	National Focal Points, Partners
Joint press work	European Green Belt Association, Regional Coordinators, National Focal Points, Partners
One European Green Belt award per region, awarded during European Green Belt Days	European Green Belt Association, Regional Coordinators, National Focal Points, Partners
Planting trees / give small tree to awarded municipality (combined with awarding of municipalities)	European Green Belt Association, Regional Coordinators, National Focal Points, Partners

General communication measures dedicated to 30 years anniversary

What	Who
find proper name of “what are we celebrating”	European Green Belt Association
Modification of logo → 30 years anniversary	European Green Belt Association
All activities in 2019 shall be connected to 30 years anniversary	Partners
Early motivation of European Green Belt community and partners	Regional Coordinators, European Green Belt Association
General press text in all languages (short!) explaining the anniversary	European Green Belt Association
Event Calendar on Website	European Green Belt Association, Partners
Joint letter to Finnish EU Presidency (June)	European Green Belt Association
Joint letter to the new European Parliament (19.08.)	European Green Belt Association
Joint letter to the new European Commission (09.11.)	European Green Belt Association



Figure 7: Group 4 capturing ideas ©Felix Cybulla

Conclusion

In this working group the focus was on exchange in order to get a better picture of what is being planned where and by whom. This is the basis for a joint approach and an increased visibility of the European Green Belt in the year of the anniversary. Next to exchanging ideas and plans the group also developed concrete tasks to be implemented by different actors. The group recommended to include several tasks related to the celebration of the 30 years anniversary into the Programme of Work of the European Green Belt Association 2019-2020 (e.g. motivation of the European Green Belt community, development of specific communication material for anniversary (modified logo, text; translation by national partners if needed), joint concept for European Green Belt Days in 2019 (implemented as joint/coherent activity)).



Figure 8: Group 4 discussing ideas © Felix Cybulla

Group 5: Scientific justification of the importance of the European Green Belt - Calling the Science Community

Group Moderator: Jörg Schmiedel (BUND Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania)

Guiding Question: “Defining our main scientific fields of interests & research questions to provide evidence for our European Green Belt Vision!”

This group work also started with a short introduction into the working group as well as time for an introduction round. In the following the participants reviewed the vision of the European Green Belt. As a next step, the group was asked to identify scientific fields of interest that help prove the importance of the European Green Belt as well as scientific research questions that should be answered by the scientific community that help us to prove the importance of the European Green Belt.

Scientific disciplines/fields of interest	Research topics
Natural sciences/ecology/biodiversity	River protection (and relation to biodiversity)
	Lynx population
	More data on connectivity
	Definition of common umbrella species
	Importance of cultural landscape for nature conservation
	Extensive land use
	Data base on rare species
	Importance of European Green Belt for adaptation to climate change” – Dies war nicht gemeint oder ist nicht zusätzlich adressiert worden?
	European Green Belt as area for reference ecosystems (pristine areas)
	Introducing testing areas with regards to different management practices
	Impact of new fences
Cultural/historical sciences	Scientific data about history
Tourism sciences	Socio-economic value of tourism
	Negative impacts of tourism
	Comparative studies on soft and commercial tourism
	Opportunities of Eco-tourism
	Tourism strategies

In the following the participants identified most important fields for cooperation with the scientific community:

- a) Mapping ecosystem services
- b) Habitat mapping
- c) Sharing scientific data and experience

Fortunately, there are currently ongoing activities along the European Green Belt which are supporting to find answers in most important fields for cooperation. The Interreg project “D2C - DaRe to Connect” at the Central European and Balkan Green Belt is mapping ecosystem services and sharing scientific data and experience. In the Prespa Region in Albania, Greece and North Macedonia habitat mapping activities are ongoing.

As common challenges in regard to their work the group identified bad standards of nature protection and lack of capacities (staff etc.). Important tasks are the mapping of potential projects and tracking tourism.

In the following the group listed possible next steps:

Next Steps / Tasks	Who is responsible
<p>For defined fields for cooperation the following questions need to be answered in order to define methods and expected results:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • which sub-topics do we want to target (e.g. umbrella species, fish migration, relations between climate change and connectivity)? • what is the purpose, which results do we want to reach? • spatial localization of planned activities? • which scientists can we approach? <p>After that detailed planning and establishment of relevant contacts can start.</p>	?
<p>Workshops to be held at future European or Regional Green Belt conferences for the development of further necessary steps and the clarification of methods, expected results and the establishment of contacts and cooperations. Selected experts and scientists should preferably be invited to these workshops.</p>	<p>Organisation teams of Regional and Pan-European Green Belt Conferences</p>
<p>Development of a project focusing on scientific exchange</p>	?

Conclusion

The exchange in this working group showed that the suggested approach is new to most actors in the European Green Belt network. It also seemed rather difficult for most participants to approach the issue on a meta level, e.g. by tying in with the vision and thinking of how we can “provide evidence for our EGB vision”. Most participants focused more on the local level and relevant topics in their daily work. So the focus was especially on applied field research.

Accordingly, the actual anticipated activities and topics varied widely between actors and sites, depending mainly on the current on-site problems and activities. Most of the activities which were relevant for the participants are strongly connected to the EGB vision, though not necessarily in providing evidence, but rather mainly in transposing it. Quite a few of the EGB actors are already engaged in scientific work and many seem to be missing scientific exchange and common data repositories.

As the Board of the European Green Belt Association considers the topic of intensifying cooperation with experts and the scientific community to be relevant, the PoW already included the task to identify and promote research on topics of relevance for the EGB in order to improve scientific justification of the EGB. The group did not address any further tasks to the European Green Belt Association.

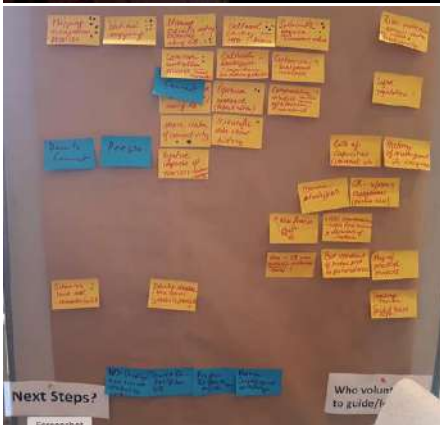


Figure 9: Group discussion and results of group 5 © Felix Cybulla

Group 6: (Programmatic) Funding - What if we were rich?

Group Moderators: Gabriel Schwaderer (EuroNatur) and Petko Tzvetkov (Bulgarian Biodiversity Foundation)

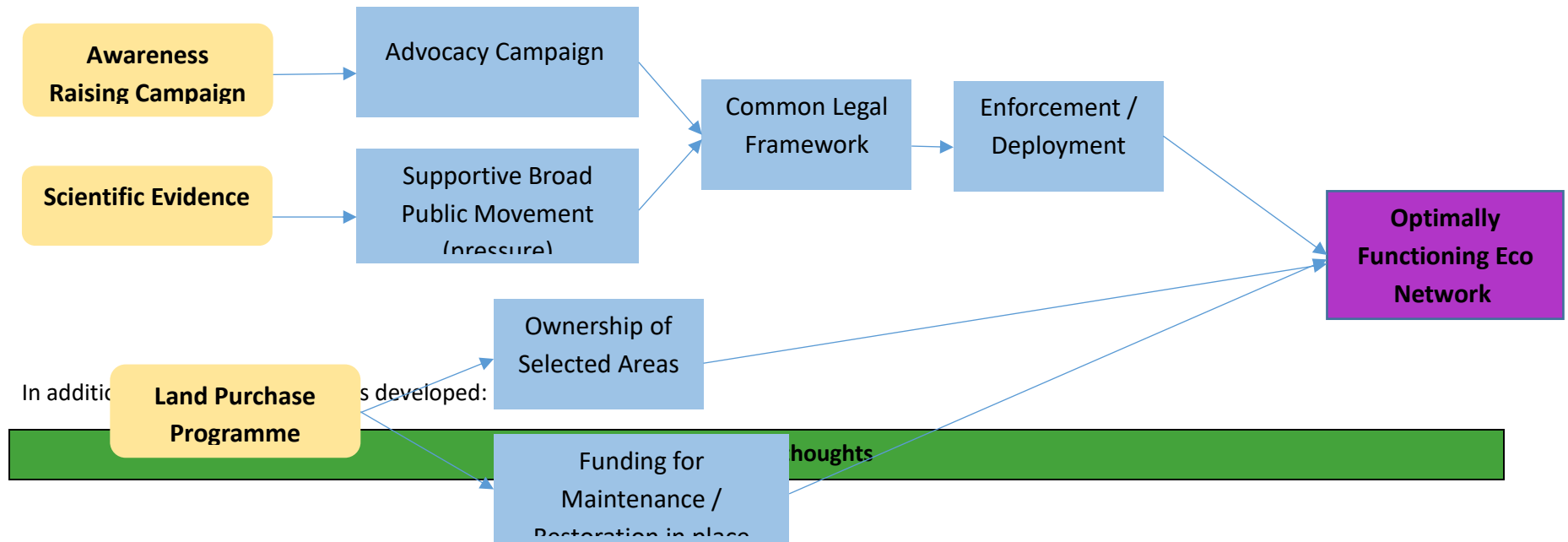
Guiding Question: *“Brainstorming and Prioritizing to build strategies for programmatic fundraising!”*

The group work started with a short introduction into the working group as well as time for an introduction round. In the following the participants had the task to imagine that the European Green Belt Initiative had 10 Million € - and to think what they would do with the money. Three of the selected ideas were elaborated into a “Theory of Change” in order to explain the process of change by outlining causal linkages between results. The question here was “If we implemented that specific idea, THEN what would we get from it”?

The following three ideas were followed for the Theory of Change:

- Awareness Raising Campaign
- Scientific Evidence
- Land Purchase Programme

Theories of Change



Advocacy Campaign for EU legal improvement	European Nature Monument
EGB Convention	EGB Youth hike
Model Projects for rural development -> to show benefits	EGB Art Contest
Scientific natural programme	Monitoring of Habitats
EGB Solidarity Corps	EGB Photo Contest
History Research	Develop a long term funding strategy
Pilote restoration projects	Payments for Ecosystem Services
Copy the Goldstein Show	Fund for maintaining the EGB
Education	Re-introduction of big 3 (each region)

Conclusion

The elaborated Theories of Change are a first start to better understand which change we can expect if we implement specific approaches or strategies. At the same time, it becomes obvious that the Theories of Change are not yet complete and that causal linkages between the identified results are missing (e.g. if we own selected areas we do not automatically reach an optimally functioning eco-network as several steps on the way are missing).

In this respect the advantage of formulating a Theory of Change becomes obvious: it helps to be clear about how we think that a specific strategy will help us to achieve our goals. This means that with the Theory of Change we make explicit the assumptions of how we believe our strategies will contribute to achieving our goals. By doing this, we explicitly test how our strategy intends to affect our goals – and are able to identify gaps in logic.

Therefore, the group recommended to the European Green Belt Association to strengthen strategic approaches in planning by including this aspect into the Programme of Work.



Figure 10: Group 6 working on Theory of Change logic ©Felix Cybulla

Conclusion Working Groups

Main objectives of the working group session were to define and further elaborate joint fields of cooperation on the pan-European level, to drive further and bring forward the European Green Belt Initiative and to offer the opportunity for concrete planning of (joint) activities throughout the European Green Belt. Another important objective was the facilitation of exchange and knowledge sharing between conference participants. Eventually, the working session was also intended to define key tasks for the Programme of Work (PoW) of the European Green Belt Association for the period 2019-20.

The Working Group Session supported all intended objectives whereas the different working groups set quite different foci. In all groups the aspect of getting to know active partners from other countries and exchanging and sharing knowledge was taking place. This was an important objective of the bi-annual pan-European Green Belt Conferences. The interactive working session allowed all participants to get active and contribute with their experiences, whereby also the establishment of individual contacts was supported.

At the same time the working groups also offered space to develop joint ideas to drive further and bring forward the European Green Belt Initiative, e.g. by developing and initiating new project ideas and cooperation in general in relevant fields of interest. Looking at the results of the working groups this aspect was not the most important though. It seems that all participants happily contributed their ideas but when it came to the question of who is driving further the topic mostly the spaces stayed blank or the European Green Belt Association or well-known partners of the Initiative, such as Regional Coordinators were filled in. None of the working group participants expressed interest to take over responsibility for one of the defined tasks.

On the one hand, this is understandable as everybody has manifold tasks and demands which need to be fulfilled. On the other hand, this is a major conflict in a network which is alive only through participation and initiative of all members. Since the establishment of the European Green Belt Association the tendency to claim this official body responsible for all identified tasks seems to be even easier. In this context it is important to remember, though, that the activities are jointly performed by all members of the European Green Belt Association (if possible supported by actors of the European Green Belt Initiative who are not members of the Association).

Nevertheless, the Board of the European Green Belt Association welcomed additional key tasks for the Programme of Work of the European Green Belt Association for the period 2019-20 as a result of the working session. Several aspects elaborated during the working group session were added in the PoW as they had not been reflected before and were considered as relevant. In this respect the working group session was an important platform to collect ideas from partners of the Initiative and members of the Association. This reflects the principles of democracy and participation, an important basis for our collaboration.