



Fact sheet

European Green Belt – from Iron Curtain to Life Line

Introduction:

The European Green Belt forms a transcontinental axis of the European ecological network along the former 'Iron Curtain'. It has a total length of over 12.500 km. It passes through eight biogeographic regions and touches 24 states. Along the Green Belt a lot of valuable landscapes can be found. Additionally it serves as a refuge for numerous threatened species and habitats.

Finally the European Green Belt forms a historical memorial to the former division of Europe. Protecting and developing the Green Belt therefore also contributes to the process of Europe growing together.

Main target of the initiative 'European Green Belt' is to develop and to protect the Green Belt as one of the most important pan-European habitat axes in the long-run. For further information: www.europeangreenbelt.org



Milestones

19. June 2002	The idea of a European Green Belt was articulated by BUND and BfN for the first time during the opening of the West-Eastern Gate, a land art monument in the middle of the German Green Belt. Guest of honor was Michail Gorbachev, the former president of the USSR, who is now the patron of the Green Belt.
15. - 16. July 2003	Start of the Initiative by a first scientific meeting organized by the German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation (BfN) in Bonn. Guest of honor again was Michail Gorbachev, former president of the USSR.
9. October 2003	Establishment of Goričko Nature Park in Slovenia as part of the three country nature park Goričko-Raab-Őrség in the border triangle with Austria and Hungary.
9. - 12. August 2004	The first meeting of the working group of the European initiative was jointly organized by IUCN and BfN in the Hungarian part of the Fertő-Hanság/Lake Neusiedel National Park. The working group is formed by national focal points, which are named by the governments of the riparian states and the international active NGOs IUCN, BUND, EuroNatur and the Union of the Zapovednics and National Parks of Northwest Russia. Main topics were the preparation of a program of work and the future structure of the initiative. IUCN established a European Green Belt secretariat.
2005	The German Green Belt becomes part of the German National Heritage.



2005	<p>The Program of Work and the organizational structure came into force. A regional coordinator for each of the three sections was appointed:</p> <p>Fennoscandia: Union of the Zapovednics and National Parks of Northwest Russia.</p> <p>Central Europe: Friends of the Earth Germany (BUND)</p> <p>Balkan Green Belt: EuroNatur</p>
April 2005 – November 2006	<p>Project on the protection of the Balkan lynx (a subspecies of the European lynx) and to establish the trans-border national park Jablanica-Shebenik (Albania – FYR Macedonia) run by EuroNatur in cooperation with local partners.</p>
September 2005 – August 2007	<p>By means of a mapping project a large collection of geographical data on the European Green Belt was compiled by IUCN. This project was funded by BfN and the German Environmental Foundation (DBU).</p>
October 2005	<p>The first Central European Green Belt Conference took place in Mitwitz (Germany), organized by BUND and funded by BfN. Decisive steps were taken for the elaboration of the first application for a trans-national Interreg-project.</p>
June 2006 – May 2008	<p>The first EU-funded INTERREG III B-project on the European Green Belt with BUND and BfN as partners was established. 18 partners from eight countries worked together. Main objective of the project was the protection of the Green Belt as an ecological corridor by means of gap analysis, sustainable regional development, sensitive infrastructure development, public relation work, touristic marketing and the establishment of a trans-boundary network of stakeholders.</p>
2008	<p>The Albanian part of the Jablanica-Shebenik-Mountains was established as national park</p>
February 2009 – February 2012	<p>BUND initiated the INTERREG IV B-project 'baltic green belt'. 15 partners from all riparian states of the southern and eastern shore line of the Baltic Sea from Germany to the Finnish-Russian border worked together on the development of a functioning network for the Baltic Green Belt.</p>
2009	<p>The joint statement for the protection of the Prespa Park, which has been signed already in 2000 was confirmed by the prime ministers in the trilateral area of Albania, Greece and FYR Macedonia</p>
26. October 2009	<p>Coalition agreement of the German Federal Government, 26 October 2009: We are protecting the 'German Green Belt' along the former inner-German border as 'Natural Monument', and want to initiate the development of a 'European Green Belt'.</p>
2010	<p>The Ministers for Environment of Finland, Norway and Russia signed a Memorandum of Understanding for working jointly towards the conservation of the Fennoscandian Green Belt</p>



April 2011 – June 2014	The INTERREG -project 'GreenNet' (Central Europe Programme) with 22 project partners from six states along the Green Belt was conducted. The Thuringian Association for Rural Development (ThLG) took over the Lead Partnership and coordinated the project in close cooperation with BUND as regional coordinator. Within the GreenNet-project a 'Lunch Debate' to present the European Green Belt Initiative to Members of the European Parliament was conducted in Brussels in October 2011, a presentation at the EU Environmental Committee followed in December 2011.
2011	After IUCN had to close its secretariat in 2010 a new structure had to be discussed and was established during a meeting in Helsinki. Therefore a coordination group consisting of the three regional coordinators, selected National Focal Points and NGOs active at the Green Belt was launched. EuroNatur was asked to act as a speaker of the group.
2012	During the 6 th pan-European conference of the initiative in the Mavrovo National Park (FYR Macedonia) first steps towards a long term institutionalization were undertaken and the Baltic Green Belt (along the Baltic Sea coast) was established as 4th section of the European Green Belt. Representatives of this region were integrated into the coordination group.
2012	At the border between Hungary and Croatia a biosphere reserve of 6.310 km ² was established along the river Drava.
May 2013	Communication from the EU-Commission on Green Infrastructure (GI) (COM(2013) 249 final): European Green Belt Initiative is identified as model project for the implementation of pan-European GI.
15. May 2013	Celebration of the 10th anniversary of the European Green Belt initiative held by the German Ministry on Environment in Berlin.
15. May 2013 – July 2015	A ' Joint Declaration of Intent on the European Green Belt ' is signed by eleven states at the celebration of the anniversary of the European initiative in Berlin, later on followed by signatures of seven additional states and letters of support by two more states.
07.-12. October 2013	At a conference on the Fennoscandian Green Belt in Petrozavodsk, Russian Karelia, the Finnish Ministry for Environment announces a trilateral project intended to facilitate the implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding on the Fennoscandian Green Belt. Its aim is to develop the Fennoscandian Green Belt into a model area where sustainable development is supported through transboundary cooperation.
2014	25 th anniversary of the German Green Belt Initiative.
24.09.2014	The ' European Green Belt Association e.V. ' is founded at the 8 th pan-European Green Belt conference in Slavonice, Czech Republic. In June 2018 the European Green Belt Association counts 30 members.



December 2014 – October 2018	Project “Protecting Biodiversity in the Balkans – Strengthening cooperation along the Balkan Green Belt” is run by EuroNatur and IUCN and financially supported by the German Federal Environmental Foundation. The project implementation involves 10 NGO partners from the 9 countries along the Balkan Green Belt.
14. / 17. November 2014	Presentation of the European Green Belt at the World Parks Congress (WPC) in Sydney as side event and in two workshops.
December 2014	Presentation of the European Green Belt at the European Economic and Social Committee (EWSA)
03.-05. June 2015	Presentation of the European Green Belt in a side-event at the Green Week in Brussels with participation of the General Director of the DG Environment of the European Commission
November 2015 – July 2018	Project “The European Green Belt as part of Green Infrastructure” aims to strengthen the governance structure and to initiate a common strategical process for the European Green Belt Initiative and to elaborate a concept for the Green Belt as part of Green Infrastructure. It is run by BUND, EuroNatur and BUND Mecklenburg-Vorpommern and funded by BfN.
February 2016	The 10 years implementation period of the large scale nature conservation project “Grünes Band Rodachtal-Lange Berge-Steinachtal” started, financially supported by BfN, the states Thuringia and Bavaria, four rural districts, BUND and LBV (BirdLife). The project area includes 127 kilometer of the German Green Belt (Thuringia-Bavaria) and a core area of 8,206 hectares, where different nature conservation measures will be conducted.
June 2018 – May 2021	The INTERREG -project “DaRe to Connect” (D2C) (Danube Transnational Programme) with 11 project partners from 8 states aims at a further development of the connectivity of the Green Belt as backbone of a trans-national ecological corridor and EU Green Infrastructure whilst supporting the implementation of the EU Danube Strategy. Lead Partner is the BUND Department Green Belt (Regional Coordinator Green Belt Central Europe).
15.-19. October 2018	10 th pan-European Green Belt Conference in Eisenach (Wartburg-castle, Thuringia, Germany)