



Comprehensive analysis of the potential of sustainable jobs along the European Green Belt and its valorisation

Final Report

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Comprehensive analysis of the potential of sustainable jobs along the European Green Belt and its valorisation

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List of abbreviations

Abbreviation	Full name
BUND	Federation for the Environment and Nature Conservation Germany
B&B	Bed and breakfast
COAST	Community of Arran Seabed Trust
EEA	European Environment Agency
EGB	European Green Belt
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organisation
FTE	Full-time equivalent
GBF	Green Belt of Fennoscandia
GDP	Gross domestic product
GHG	Greenhouse gases
GIS	Geoinformation sciences
HNV	High Value Nature
ILO	International Labour Organisation
ITJ	Institute for the Just Transition
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
MPA	Marine protected area
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NP	National Park
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PES	Payment for Ecosystem Services
PoW	Programme of Work
R&D	Research and development
UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UK	United Kingdom

Executive Summary

Green job creation would be beneficial from a socio-economic perspective but also from an environmental one. Importantly, green jobs could be created in regions suffering from unemployment and/or where traditional industries have been declining. New job opportunities could arise (e.g., to maintain newly protected areas), but existing industries could also be greened, the most relevant example being tourism. In this context, the objectives of this study were to: (i) investigate existing potential of green jobs alongside and outside the European Green Belt (EGB); (ii) outline a potential for (further) creation of green jobs alongside the EGB; and (iii) provide recommendations on how these green jobs can be (further) created. This project is part of the BESTbelt initiative, which aims to provide further support for biodiversity action along the EGB, including for the creation of green jobs.

In the context of the EGB, green jobs have been defined in this study as jobs that *‘avert climate change and environmental degradation and, at the same time, contribute to social development and delivery of decent work for all’*. These can be further divided into direct and indirect green jobs:

- Direct green jobs *directly contribute to preserving and/or restoring the area of the EGB* (e.g. nature conservation jobs, jobs supporting protection and restoration of natural habitats along coasts or jobs within sustainable forestry / agriculture with positive impact on the EGB; and
- Indirect green jobs (to some extent) have been created thanks to the existence of the EGB and do not have a detrimental impact on the environment (e.g. eco-tourism or marketing/sale of local products).

A number of initiatives that led to the creation of green jobs can be found across Europe in sectors such as land and soil protection and restoration, wetlands and water protection and conservation, coastal conservation and restoration, sustainable forest management, sustainable agriculture and sustainable tourism. Some best practices also highlight that green jobs can create opportunities for disadvantaged groups, and that green jobs can be fostered by Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) schemes. Jobs in these sectors do not all fall in the definition of a green job, making it important to carefully assess how the activities impact climate and the environment before labelling them as “green”. Moreover, well-designed public policy is an important tool for public authorities to facilitate green job creation, notably by foster youth (green) employment and other important aspects such as skill development, entrepreneurship promotion and innovation.

Interesting examples of green jobs can be found in each region of the European Green Belt, demonstrating that this nature conservation initiative is helping to support green jobs, particularly in rural regions. Opportunities exist to create more employment along the European Green Belt, as well as to green existing jobs (e.g., in the tourism industry). Findings suggest that a strong potential exists in (i) creating employment in nature conservation and/or restoration activities by expanding protected areas or allocating more resources to existing protected areas; (ii) Developing nature tourism / sustainable tourism; and (iii) greening jobs in the agricultural and forestry sectors, and creating jobs in related industries.

Stemming from the analysis conducted, ten recommendations are presented, which are linked to the three main areas of future potential identified. Six of those are practical recommendations that can be directly implemented by the European Green Belt network, whereas the remaining four focus specifically on public authority lobbying / cooperation. Beyond these generic recommendations, the

next steps to be implemented by actors in charge of promoting the EGB in each region or country should focus on further examining which recommendations are most relevant to take forward at local or regional level, and to design and roll out plans to implement the most promising actions to create green jobs and green industries along the EGB.

1 Introduction

1.1 Objectives of the study

Jobs are highly important socio-economically speaking, by providing people with a way of subsistence and by ensuring that a country's economy can function. The creation of green jobs, i.e. of jobs of good quality that actively contribute to the preservation and restoration of wildlife¹, could be especially beneficial in countries alongside the European Green Belt which have a relatively high unemployment rate compared to the EU average (e.g., Montenegro, Greece, North Macedonia, Turkey, Italy, Lithuania and Latvia), or in countries with declining sectors which are likely to lay off significant numbers of workers in the future, as Europe transition towards climate neutrality and environmental sustainability (e.g., the mining and quarrying industry in Poland, Germany and Norway). There is evidence that activities such as restoration or rewilding (such as those of ecologists, wildlife guides, wardens, site managers, or those in education, preservation forestry, nature-based tourism, community engagement and communications) produces diversification of employment away from those more traditionally present in rural areas, such as agriculture or exploitive forestry. While investigating the potential for green jobs, it is important to ensure that the opportunities sought will provide safe jobs in the formal economy, and of acceptable quality.

Moreover, the creation of green jobs has environmental importance, as it would contribute to maintaining and enhancing the ecological health of the European Green Belt, with advantages for habitats and biodiversity, climate change mitigation and adaptation, but also recreational opportunities in nature, which enhance citizen's wellbeing and their awareness about the importance of nature.

The **objectives** of this assignment are threefold:

- Investigate existing potential of green jobs alongside and outside the European Green Belt;
- Outline a potential for (further) creation of green jobs alongside the European Green Belt; and
- Provide recommendations on how these green jobs can be (further) created.

The results of this study are expected to prepare further activities on green job creation to be undertaken within the BESTbelt project, and as such to increase the potential of green jobs along the European Green Belt and make green jobs more visible and attractive to the local stakeholders.

1.2 Scope

The geographic scope of the study includes the 24 countries in which parts of the European Green Belt are located, with a disclaimer in relation to the Russian Federation. Given the current situation of the Russian aggression war against Ukraine and the fact that cooperation with Russian counterparts within the context of the European Green Belt is currently on hold, the assessment has been approached differently. Namely, the nature protected areas in Russia have been considered, however no further research into the current green employment opportunities and their future potential has been carried out.

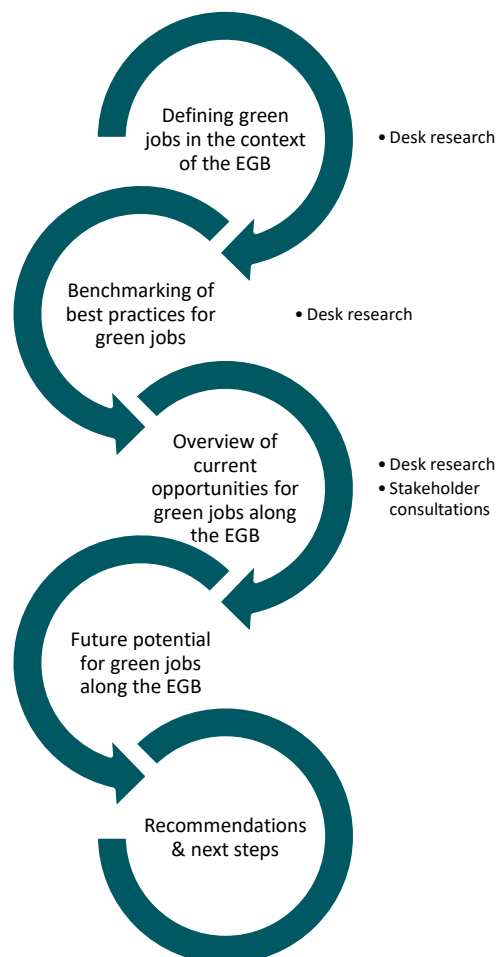
The thematic scope is in line with the definition of 'green jobs' developed for the purpose of the study - please refer to Chapter 2 (section 2.2).

¹ The complete definition of a 'green job' for the sake of this study is provided in § 2.2.2 below.

1.3 Methodology

The overall logic of the activities undertaken in this study is presented in the figure below.

Figure 1-1 Steps of the research process



The evidence used to prepare this report was collected via desk research as well as stakeholder engagement. The desk research took place in the first stage of the report drafting and focused on gathering both quantitative and qualitative information. Quantitative information was primarily extracted from Eurostat, with the caveats that information is not available for all countries of the EGB, that data is sometimes based on estimates, and that sub-national data is not available.

To qualitatively assess the current opportunities for green employment alongside the European Green Belt, the protected areas within the EGB were located with the support of a GIS-based map (see Annex 3). For the most prominent/largest protected areas (e.g. national parks), a research into their ecosystems and types of activities conducted within them was carried out. Based on these findings, a qualitative assessment of the current opportunities regarding green employment per region was prepared.

Case studies showcasing good practices on creating green jobs were also often identified during the desk research phase. The selection of the case studies was based on:

- Whether it fell within the scope of the definition of green jobs within the context of the EGB (see section 2.2);
- Its potential for replicability in other protected areas and/or EGB regions; and
- Tangible results in relation to creation of new / greening of existing employment opportunities.

Good practice examples outside of the EGB were included in the benchmarking, whereas examples from within the EGB were incorporated into the section on current opportunities.

During and following the European Green Belt Conference held between 1 and 4 November 2022, the process of engaging with stakeholders was initiated. During the conference itself, feedback on the draft findings as well as suggestions for additional examples of green jobs' best practices were collected. Following the conference, two interviews with stakeholders took place and one written contribution was received, the overview of which is provided in the table below.

Table 1-1 Overview of stakeholders consulted

Organisation consulted	Date	Method of engagement	Topics for discussion
Regional coordinator for the Baltic Green Belt	15 November 2022	Interview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Additional best practices examples in the Baltic Green Belt - Feedback on those already identified - Discussion on future potential for the Baltic Green Belt
Regional coordinator for the Central European Green Belt / BUND Naturschutz	17 November 2022	Interview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Additional best practices examples in the Central European Green Belt - Feedback on those already identified - Discussion on future potential for the Central European Green Belt
TEAM Association, Serbia	10 January 2023	Email exchange	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The project currently being implemented by TEAM Association in several small villages on Stara planina, Serbia
Bulgarian Biodiversity Foundation	23 January 2023	Email exchange	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Best practices in Bulgaria

What makes a project successful but also what prevents a project from being successful are equally interesting to understand how to set up and implement projects in the future. However, one main limitation of the desk research method used in the present project in this respect is that there is no trace of discontinued projects online, and most project websites are taken down after the project ends, sometimes after only a few months or years. This greatly limits researchers' capacity to understand what leads to project failure or to project discontinuation after the end of the relevant public funding. Online data availability was also a limitation more broadly speaking, for instance to find specific information about employment in the EGB as well as critical reflections on the success factors of implemented projects. Stakeholder consultations can be used to bridge this knowledge gap, but identifying and obtaining information from participants of past projects is also challenging, since their identity and contact details have equally disappeared from the public Internet (and may have become otherwise obsolete, e.g. if the e-mail address of the person is related to the URL of the project).

2 Setting the scene

The chapter at hand intends to set the scene to the report, with the purpose to introduce the reader to the context of the Green Belt and its relevance. It provides an introduction to the area and the initiative (its structure, commitments and goals) as well an overview of their most recent developments. The second part of the chapter focuses on defining the concept of green jobs, highlighting its importance and placing it into the context of the European Green Belt.

- The **European Green Belt (EGB)** is a unique pan-European **nature conservation initiative**. It currently covers a length of more than 12 500 km across 24 countries, 49 national parks, 9 geographical regions and 150 committed governmental and non-governmental organisations. It is divided into four regions (Fennoscandian, Baltic, Central and Balkan). Its three main **objectives** are to:
 - Support **nature conservation** by protecting wildlife and habitats;
 - **Influence policy making** to support nature protection and to highlight the importance of the EGB; and
 - **Bringing together relevant actors** to promote the EGB as a model for local communities.
- Since 2021 the EGB has been benefiting from the **BESTbelt project**, with the aim to provide further support for biodiversity action along the EGB. Activities under BESTbelt amount to small **grant schemes to finance local nature conservation projects, communications activities** to further promote the efforts of the EGB, **training activities and promotion of green jobs**.
- **Green jobs** for the EGB have been defined as jobs that *‘avert climate change and environmental degradation and, at the same time, contribute to social development and delivery of decent work for all’*. These can be further divided into direct and indirect green jobs:
 - Direct green jobs *directly contribute to preserving and/or restoring the area of the EGB* (e.g. nature conservation jobs, jobs supporting protection and restoration of natural habitats along coasts or jobs within sustainable forestry / agriculture with positive impact on the EGB);
 - Indirect green jobs (to some extent) have been created thanks to the existence of the EGB and do not have a detrimental impact on the environment (e.g. eco-tourism or marketing/sale of local products).

2.1 Introducing the European Green Belt

2.1.1 The European Green Belt

The European Green Belt (EGB) is a unique pan-European nature conservation initiative. It forms the backbone of a pan-European ecological network and is a unique living memorial landscape that has developed along the former Iron Curtain. As early as 1970, satellite images showed a dark green belt of old-growth forest on the Finnish-Russian border. In the early 1980s, nature conservationists observed many rare species within the restricted border area in Germany. Such findings resulted in a conclusion that the lack of human presence in the border zones alongside the Iron Curtain resulted in a minimal human effect on wildlife and biodiversity. Based on such (and many other similar) findings in all four regions, a vision to create a nature conservation area was initiated. First concrete action was taken in Germany, where nature and wildlife conservation projects were initiated to protect the inner German border. At a later stage this initiative was expanded to the European level. This was set in motion in 2003, during a first conference on the EGB.²

The European Green Belt stretches over more than 12,500 km across 24 countries. It also encompasses 49 national parks, 9 biogeographical regions, 47% covered by protected areas within 1 km corridor on both sides of the former east/west border and 150 committed governmental and non-governmental organisations.³ The European Green Belt is further divided into four regions:

- Fennoscandian (Russia [inland border], Norway and Finland);
- Baltic (Russia [Baltic coast], Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Germany [Baltic coast]);
- Central (Germany [former inner German border and DE-CZ border], Austria, Czechia, Slovakia, Hungary, Italy, Slovenia and Croatia); and
- Balkan (Albania, Bulgaria, Greece, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia and Turkey).

The location of the EGB within Europe, as well as the regions, can be observed in the figure below.

² Uwe Riecken, Karin Ullrich and Alois Lang (2006) A vision for the Green Belt in Europe. Available at: <https://portals.iucn.org/library/sites/library/files/documents/2006-049.pdf>

³ European Green Belt (n.d.) EGB: Borders Separate - Nature Unites. Available at: https://www.bund.net/fileadmin/user_upload_bund/publikationen/gruenes_band/European_Green_Belt_2020_Gesamt_Eng.pdf

Figure 2-2 The European Green Belt. Source europeangreenbelt.org.



As was established above, the area of the European Green Belt plays an important role in **wildlife and nature conservation**. In addition, it also has a **cultural and historical value**, serving as a reminder of the 40-year long divide within Europe and as a living monument of the Iron Curtain.

The **European Green Belt initiative** specifically is also committed to this mission, with the aim to bridge ecological, cultural and geographical borders along the former Iron Curtain to ensure a safe and sustainable future for the European Green Belt. The initiative commits itself to work towards three specific objectives⁴:

1. **Support to nature conservation by protecting wildlife and habitats**, such as wild animals, migrating birds and ancient forests and ensuring the value of the European Green Belt is reflected in decisions made by local communities, governments and businesses;
2. **Influencing policy makers** by collaborating with organisations, decision makers and governments to shape policies and create lasting protection and highlighting the importance of the European Green Belt and its direct contribution to preventing biodiversity loss in Europe; and
3. **Bringing together relevant actors** by exploring Europe's cultural and ecological history together and promoting the European Green Belt as a model for local communities and nature to grow together and collaborating with people, organisations and governments on creating impactful initiatives.

⁴ European Green Belt (n.d.) Route of the European Green Belt. Available at: <https://www.europeangreenbelt.org/european-green-belt/>

The **European Green Belt Association** e.V. is responsible for the governance of the European Green Belt Initiative. It was established during the 8th Pan-European Green Belt in September 2014 by 23 organisations from 14 countries. The Association was officially registered in February 2015. Nowadays, the Association counts 34 members from 17 countries. The Association is a legal body provided with a mandate and is legitimated to coordinate the transnational activities along the EGB. According to its statute, the Association contributes to implementing the vision of the European Green Belt to conserve and restore the European Green Belt as our shared natural heritage along the line of the former Iron Curtain as an ecological network connecting high-value natural and cultural landscapes while respecting the economic, social and cultural needs of local communities.⁵ The General Assembly of the Association takes place every 2 years.

The priorities of the Association are outlined in the **Programme of Work (PoW)**. Each PoW is adopted for the period of 2 years by the Members' Assembly. Their existence is crucial; given the diversity of partners, regions and conditions within the European Green Belt, there is a need for a single unifying set of goals that could guide activities in the coming years within a coherent plan.⁶ The current PoW has been adopted for the period of 2023 - 2024, the details of which are outlined in the section below.

2.1.2 Recent developments

As outlined above, the Programme of Work outlines the priorities of the EGB every 2 years. The current PoW was adopted in 2022 and applies to the period of 2023 - 2024 and sets out four main fields of action, with a number of objectives per field of action, which can be summarised as follows:

- *Capacity building and knowledge exchange:*
 - Improved knowledge exchange between the EGB members and its further promotion; and
 - Further research on the EGB, in cooperation with scientific experts and/or research institutions.
- *Lobbying:*
 - Promotion of the EGB and its values on EU-level.
- *Communication and awareness raising.*
 - Participation of members of the EGB in awareness raising events and activities, to further promote the European Green Belt; and
 - Strengthening the awareness of the EGB among the interested public and potential supporters.
- *Cooperation*
 - Stimulation of joint projects on European level

In addition, a number of milestones have taken place in relation to the EGB in the recent years, for example:

- 10th Pan-European Green Belt Conference (2018); or

⁵ European Green Belt Association e.V. (2015) Statute of the European Green Belt Association. Available at https://www.europeangreenbelt.org/fileadmin//user_upload/Statute_European_Green_Belt_Association_20150716.pdf

⁶ Uwe Riecken, Karin Ullrich and Alois Lang (2006) A vision for the Green Belt in Europe. Available at: <https://portals.iucn.org/library/sites/library/files/documents/2006-049.pdf>

- Thuringia's Green Belt becomes a national nature monument, being the longest contiguous protected area of the Green Belt in Europe (2018), with three additional federal states of Germany announcing the same, resulting of 81% of the German Green Belt is protected as a national nature monument; or
- Annual European Green Belt, introduced in 2016, to promote and increase the visibility and awareness of the EGB.

BESTbelt initiative

Since 2021 the EGB has been benefiting from the BESTbelt project, which is a project largely funded⁷ by the EU, to provide further **support for biodiversity action along the EGB**. The project covers all four regions of the EGB and its main **objectives** amount to:

- **Unlock and strengthen initiatives** and potentials on local level, in the fields of **biodiversity conservation and sustainable use of ecosystem services**;
- Increase capacity of local actors to **access and manage available EU funds**;
- Strengthen local capacities; and
- Increase visibility of the EGB and its contribution to biodiversity conservation.

Under BESTbelt a number of efforts are planned. First of all, small **grants schemes** have been made available to allow for projects with actions resulting in effective measures on the ground. Secondly, **communication activities** are planned to highlight the biodiversity along the EGB, to promote BESTbelt and to inform about the results of projects that have been funded under BESTbelt. Thirdly, a number of **training activities** will take place, for example workshops, seminars and capacity building activities, as well as regional conferences to foster exchange and knowledge transfer. Lastly, a new effort under the BESTbelt initiative is to **promote green jobs**. It has started with an analysis of potential of green jobs for the EGB and will continue with sharing of best practices and good examples for job creation in different regions. Lastly, a specific exploration of opportunities for green job creation on the ground through a number of local/transboundary workshops and fora in two countries of the EGB.⁸

2.2 Green jobs in the context of the European Green Belt

2.2.1 What are green jobs?

Generally speaking, green jobs address the two defining challenges of the 21st century:

- First of all, green jobs play a role in **averting environmental degradation and climate change**. Green jobs reduce the environmental impact of enterprises and economic sectors by improving the efficiency in the use of energy, raw materials and water; de-carbonizing the economy and bringing down emissions of greenhouse gases; minimizing or avoiding all forms of waste and pollution; protecting or restoring ecosystems and biodiversity; and supporting adaptation to the effects of climate change.⁹
- Secondly, green jobs also play a role in **delivering development in social aspects of the labour market** and contributing towards ensuring **decent work for all**.

⁷ A total budget approx. EUR 3,6 million.

⁸ Information on the BESTbelt initiative have been collected during the BESTbelt Conference in November 2022.

⁹ International Labour Organization (ILO) (n.d.) Frequently Asked Questions on Green Jobs. Available at https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/green-jobs/WCMS_214247_EN/lang--en/index.htm

Existing literature in the international context (e.g. from sources such as the International Labour Organisation (ILO), UN Environmental Programme (UNEP) or the OECD) already provides for a definition of the concept of green jobs. The United Nations defines green jobs as **sectors and jobs in which waste creation and pollution are minimised** (UNEP et al., 2008). They expanded on this definition in 2011 defining green jobs as: “work in agricultural, manufacturing, research and development (R&D), administrative, and service activities that contribute substantially to preserving or restoring environmental quality. Specifically, but not exclusively, this includes jobs that help to protect ecosystems and biodiversity; reduce energy, materials, and water consumption through high efficiency strategies; de-carbonize the economy; and minimize or altogether avoid generation of all forms of waste and pollution.”¹⁰. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) includes in its definition of green jobs **any sector that has a lower than average environmental footprint**, while statistical agencies across the world usually focus their definition of green jobs on the definition of the environmental goods and services sector.¹¹ Furthermore, in another study ILO provides another definition of green jobs (which appears to be the most recognized definition in general) as “**decent jobs that contribute to, preserve, or restore the environment, whether they are in traditional sectors such as manufacturing and construction, or in newer and quickly growing green sectors such as renewable energy and energy efficiency**”. According to another report put forward by ILO¹², the concept is further elaborated upon. The dimension of ‘decent work’ is the distinguishing feature that defines environmentally sound jobs as “green jobs”. In other terms, green jobs should be decent jobs. As such, green jobs can be understood in two ways: i) employment that contributes to produce an environmentally sustainable output or ii) employment that contributes to making the production process more environmentally friendly. Jobs in the restoration of wetlands, in the manufacture of windmills, in waste recycling or in the construction of green buildings are examples of the first category. Workers involved in organic agriculture, in cleaner production processes in industry or contributing to lowering water and electricity consumption in hotels are examples of the second category of tasks that can be performed within green jobs. In the European context, however, there appears to be no common definition.

Furthermore, as per the reviewed literature, the concept of green jobs is in some cases further differentiated between direct and indirect green jobs. As the name suggests, **direct green jobs** are those that contribute directly to reducing the environmental impacts of the economy. These are, for example, jobs in renewable energy, pollution control, waste management and/or recycling, sustainable forestry or eco-tourism. **Indirect green jobs**, on the other hand, are those jobs that contribute to a greener economy and can be found within many sectors or businesses (e.g., sustainable manufacturing or building climate resilient infrastructure). Indirect green jobs can also include cross-sectoral or generic roles that enable the greening of the economy.¹³

¹⁰ UNEP (2018) Green Jobs: Towards Sustainable Work in A low-Carbon World. Available at:

<https://www.unep.org/resources/report/green-jobs-towards-sustainable-work-low-carbon-world>

¹¹ OECD (n.d.) Greener Skills and Job: Highlights. Available at:

https://www.oecd.org/cfe/leed/Greener%20skills_Highlights%20WEB.pdf

¹² ILO (n.d.) Promoting green jobs for youth through national employment policies and programmes. Available at:

https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/documents/publication/wcms_732596.pdf

¹³ ILO (2011) Introduction to green jobs - key concepts. Available at: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/---ilo-jakarta/documents/presentation/wcms_164514.pdf

2.2.2 What do green jobs mean in the context of the European Green Belt?

The ILO's definition of 21st century green jobs remain applicable for the context of the European Green Belt, namely that **green jobs are those that avert climate change and environmental degradation and, at the same time, contribute to social development and delivery of decent work for all.**

Nevertheless, to tailor this definition further to the specificities of the EGB, the distinction and definition of the two categories of green jobs (direct and indirect) described in the section above can also be put in the context of the European Green Belt. In accordance with the ILO distinction between direct and indirect jobs, a definition of green jobs within the European Green Belt has been developed for the purpose of the study.

Textbox 2-1 Definition of green jobs in the context of the EGB

- **Direct green jobs** = those that *directly contribute to preserving and/or restoring the area of the ecosystems and wildlife of the European Green Belt*. As such, direct green jobs within the EGB can, for example, be:
 - Nature conservation jobs;
 - Jobs supporting the protection and restoration of natural habitats along coasts; or
 - Jobs within sustainable forest management and/or agriculture, though only those with positive impact on the environment of the EGB.
- **Indirect green jobs** = those that are (at least to some extent) *created as a result of the existence of the European Green Belt and of the high quality of its ecosystems, and do not have detrimental impacts on the environment*. Examples of such jobs would be:
 - Eco-tourism within the geographical area of the EGB and services associated with it (e.g. hospitality services, tour guides with special knowledge of historical/natural/cultural importance of the EGB); or
 - Marketing and sale of local products and/or services.

Whatever its type, direct or indirect, the concept of 'green' will be interpreted in the context of the European Green Belt at highest possible level of environmental and social ambition.

In relation to indirect green jobs, however, it is important to stress that the focus of this report is on jobs that are at least partially related to the European Green Belt, rather than those that are by definition indirect green jobs but are only taking place within the area of the EGB with no relationship to its existence nor to the quality of the ecosystem within.

3 Status quo and future potential

- **A number of initiatives that led to the creation of green jobs can be found across Europe** in sectors such as land and soil protection and restoration, wetlands and water protection and conservation, coastal conservation and restoration, sustainable forest management, sustainable agriculture and sustainable tourism. Some best practices also highlight that green jobs can create opportunities for disadvantaged groups, and that green jobs can be fostered by Payment for Ecosystem Services Schemes (PES). Jobs in these sectors do not all fall in the definition of a green job, making it important to carefully assess how the activities impact climate and the environment before labelling them as “green”.
- **Well-designed public policy is an important tool for public authorities to facilitate green job creation**, notably by fostering youth (green) employment and other important aspects such as skill development, entrepreneurship promotion and innovation.
- **Interesting examples of green jobs can be found in each region of the European Green Belt**, demonstrating that this nature conservation initiative is helping to support green jobs, particularly in rural regions.
- **Opportunities exist to create more employment along the European Green Belt, as well as to green existing jobs** (e.g., in the tourism industry). Findings suggest that a strong potential exists in (i) creating employment in nature conservation and/or restoration activities by expanding protected areas or allocating more resources to existing protected areas; (ii) Developing nature tourism / sustainable tourism; and (iii) greening jobs in the agricultural and forestry sectors, and creating jobs in related industries.

3.1 Benchmarking of best practices

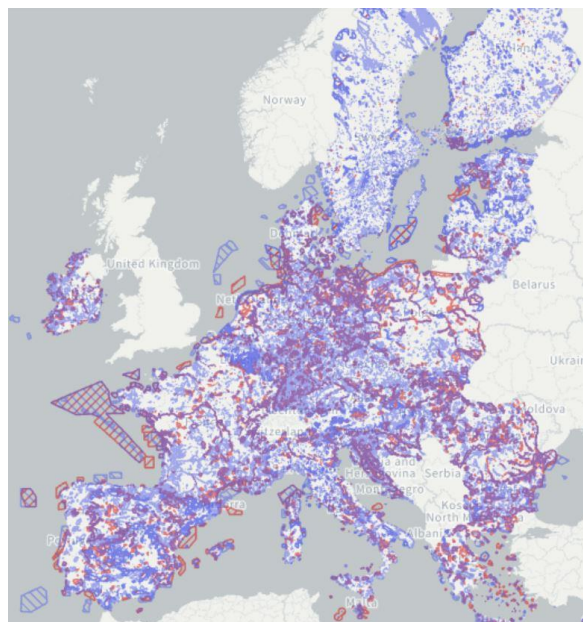
This section presents some examples of practices that have led to the creation of green jobs, as understood within the context of this study. In addition to this environmental sustainability dimension, the practices presented focus on creating jobs of good quality (i.e., with secure contracts, with good working conditions, etc.), and which ideally foster the integration of all segments of society (including women, youth, and people with disabilities). The best practices included in this section vary in terms of the stakeholder who initiated the practice (public authorities, businesses, NGOs, multi-stakeholder partnerships, etc.) and the sector concerned (sustainable tourism, resources management, etc.). Some practices listed are also cross-sectoral, which particularly relate to public policy.

3.1.1 *Best practices in relevant sectors*

A number of job-creating initiatives related to **nature conservation and habitat management** exist in Europe, in line with EU and European countries’ desire to increase the area of land and sea areas protected in Europe as well as to protect and restore habitats.

In Europe, the most ambitious nature conservation initiative of the past decades is the creation and expansion of the Natura 2000 network, which stretches over 18% of the EU's land area and more than 8% of its marine territory.¹⁴ In 2016, expenditure on conservation measures in the Natura 2000 network supported around 52,000 jobs directly and indirectly, and fully filling investment needs would have supported approximately 104,000 direct jobs in protected areas management and conservation activities and an additional 70,000 indirect jobs.¹⁵ More specifically, 2,904 full-time equivalent (FTE)

Figure 3-3 Screenshot from the Natura 2000 viewer showing protected areas under the Birds and Habitats Directives. Source: natura2000.eea.europa.eu



jobs were supported by a sample of 281 LIFE Nature and Biodiversity projects targeting Natura 2000 sites, representing about 10 jobs per project (annual average FTE) during the project duration. Notably, around half of these jobs are maintained for 5 years after the project ends.¹⁶ These numbers show that - even only in the scope of Natura 2000, which does not include all nature conservation and restoration initiatives in Europe - such activities support a significant number of jobs. Activities undertaken to conserve and restore habitats under Natura 2000 are therefore examples of good practices that create employment. The management and restoration of Natura 2000 sites can require to hire people with various expertise and skills, such as ecologists, foresters, conservation managers, ecological consultants, engineers, hydrologists etc.¹⁷

Land protection and restoration

One past LIFE project near Valencia (Spain) called 'BIOENERGY & FIRE PREV' initiative (LIFE09 ENV/ES/000450) focused on reducing forest fire risks by selective clearing and processing of biomass into wood pellets for renewable energy. Several direct jobs were created for the project's staff: 20 forestry workers, 3 forestry engineers and one administrator. Moreover, 10 other jobs were forecasted for a biomass plant, which represent an indirect outcome of the project. The forest engineers carried out a detailed inventory of the forest's biomass. This information was then fed into a computer software designed to calculate optimum forest thinning and management practices for different times and locations. This process guaranteed the correct biomass production of the forest, whilst also allowing commercial use to continue. The project also involved training local forest workers who learned about the long-term benefits from cutting older trees to encourage diversity and growth and thinning tree

¹⁴ European Commission (n.d.) Natura 2000. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/index_en.htm

¹⁵ ten Brink P., Mutafoglu K., Schweitzer J-P., Underwood E., Tucker G., Russi D., Howe M., Maréchal A., Olmeda C., Pantzar M., and Kettunen M. (2017) Natura 2000 and Jobs: Scoping Study - Executive Summary. Brussels. April 2017. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/pdf/Natura_2000_and%20jobs_executive_summary.pdf

¹⁶ ten Brink P., Mutafoglu K., Schweitzer J-P., Underwood E., Tucker G., Russi D., Howe M., Maréchal A., Olmeda C., Pantzar M., and Kettunen M. (2017) Natura 2000 and Jobs: Scoping Study - Executive Summary. Brussels. April 2017. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/pdf/Natura_2000_and%20jobs_executive_summary.pdf

¹⁷ ten Brink P., Mutafoglu K., Schweitzer J-P., Underwood E., Tucker G., Russi D., Howe M., Maréchal A., Olmeda C., Pantzar M., and Kettunen M. (2017) Natura 2000 and Jobs: Scoping Study - Executive Summary. Brussels. April 2017. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/pdf/Natura_2000_and%20jobs_executive_summary.pdf

populations in some areas to promote healthier growth, but also how to identify plant species that are protected or important for biodiversity, so that they are not removed needlessly.¹⁸

Even rewilding, which focuses on restoring and reinstating as wide a range of natural processes, habitats and missing species as possible, with minimal or no human impact or extraction of resources, can create employment. An analysis of 33 projects within the Rewilding Network in England in 2021, showed that jobs in countryside stewardships had increased, alongside a number of indirect jobs (e.g., wildlife guides, site managers to nature-based tourism, education, community engagement and communications, etc.). Overall, rewilding has resulted in a 54% increase in full-time equivalent jobs in these 33 projects over an average of 10 years, from 173 to 267 FTE.¹⁹

Coastal conservation and restoration

Some good practices regarding job creation also exist in **coastal conservation, coastal restoration and marine-based enterprises**. Coastal conservation is here understood as protecting coastal ecosystems, rather than protecting the land from water-related damages, as the latter involves grey infrastructure which negatively affects biodiversity and habitats. Protecting coastal and marine areas benefits a variety of species living in the sea or on land, as well as some bird species. In addition, it contributes to the recovery of fish stocks, thus enabling more diverse marine and coastal economies as these fish stocks become sustainably managed.

One example is the Community of Arran Seabed Trust (COAST) in Scotland, which was established by two residents in 1995 to reverse the decline of fish stocks and the destruction of marine habitats in Arran's seas. Thanks to the activism of COAST, a small no-take zone (i.e., where no fishing is permitted) was established, and a larger protected zone of 280km² was established (the South Arran Marine Protected Area) in which harmful fishing methods such as scallop dredging and prawn trawling are prohibited. This initiative led to job creation for fishermen as fish stocks improved, in addition to people being employed by COAST (4 FTEs and 2 freelancers), also with knock-off effects for the tourism industry (opening of a discovery centre, increase in diving and snorkeling).

Indirect jobs can also be created in innovative fields such as edible bivalve and seaweed harvesting. This type of restorative aquaculture can positively impact marine habitat for fish and invertebrates as well as providing business opportunities.²⁰ Examples include Zeewaar in the Netherlands (which has been recently purchased by The Seaweed Company)²¹ and Seagrown in the UK.²² In Scotland, the company Oceanium is using seaweed to create cosmetic products, plant-based foods and bio-based materials.²³

¹⁸ European Commission (2013) LIFE: creating green jobs and skills. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/environment/archives/life/publications/lifepublications/lifefocus/documents/jobs_skills.pdf

¹⁹ Rewilding Britain (2021) Rewilding and the rural economy. Available at: <https://s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/assets.rewildingbritain.org.uk/documents/nature-based-economies-rewilding-britain.pdf>

²⁰ Rewilding Britain (2021) Rewilding and the rural economy. Available at: <https://s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/assets.rewildingbritain.org.uk/documents/nature-based-economies-rewilding-britain.pdf>

²¹ The Seaweed Company (n.d.) Homepage. Available at: <https://www.theseaweedcompany.com/>

²² Seagrown (n.d.) Homepage. Available at: <https://www.seagrown.co.uk/>

²³ Oceanium (n.d.) Our products. Available at: <https://oceanium.world/our-products/>

Figure 3-4 Example of a product manufactured from seaweed: seaweed seasoning from Seagrown. Source: seagrown.co.uk²⁴



Sustainable forest management

In **forestry**, opportunities exist to develop local economies and create employment while enhancing nature restoration and having beneficial impacts on biodiversity. Such models contrast with large-scale plantations with few species, sometimes non-native to the area, and which may not sustainably manage the forest. Desirable, sustainable forestry practices can occur through native woodland expansion alongside a diversification into more regenerative and community-based forestry systems (e.g. that maintain tree cover and shade by thinning rather than clear-felling, and hence preserve soils), and aim to ensure that forests supply goods and services to meet both present-day and future needs and contribute to the sustainable development of communities²⁵ (i.e., trying to find balance between environmental and social objectives); however, commercial expansion should not occur on land where land conversion to forestry is inappropriate. Jobs can be created in timber harvesting, trade and related activities. One example reported by Rewilding Europe is that of local and mobile sawmills and tree nurseries. Local sawmills can create financial returns from high-nature value forestry systems, and local tree nurseries can thrive by diversifying into producing native trees species to support the combined needs of rewilding and commercial forestry replanting.²⁶ Other, more indirect jobs can also be created in timber manufacturing (e.g., furniture) and tourism.

Sustainable agriculture

Across the world but also specifically in Europe, the expansion and intensification of agriculture has led to significant pressure on climate and on the environment, leading for instance to: land use change leading to loss of natural habitats and to associated GHG emissions; pollution and eutrophication of land and waterways due to excessive application of manure, fertilizer and herbicides; negative impacts on soils (erosion, compaction, loss of soil organic matter, etc.). All of these impacts have had detrimental effects on biodiversity. However, some sustainable agricultural practices can contribute to addressing these negative impacts and reintroduce habitats and biodiversity in agricultural landscapes. In relation to nature and biodiversity conservation, the establishment of high nature value (HNV) farmland, where extensive farming systems are combined with semi-natural land and the conservation of high biodiversity in agricultural landscapes, can be especially beneficial as many species and habitats

²⁴ Seagrown (n.d.) Seaweed seasoning gift pack. Available at: <https://www.seagrown.co.uk/products/seaweed-seasoning-gift-pack>

²⁵ FAO (n.d.) Sustainable forest management. Available at: <https://www.fao.org/sustainable-forests-management/en/>

²⁶ Rewilding Britain (2021) Rewilding and the rural economy. Available at: <https://s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/assets.rewildingbritain.org.uk/documents/nature-based-economies-rewilding-britain.pdf>

listed in the Birds and Habitats Directives are dependent on the landscape characteristics of HNV farmland.²⁷

For example, one project in Denmark which began in 2018 and will run until 2026 aims to create and test the incentives required to develop nature management into a separate branch of farming, in order to make it financially attractive to include natural areas in farming. This project focuses on 11 Natura 2000 network sites in central and northern Jutland and includes activities such as agreements with farmers, training, set up of infrastructure (fences, hydrological features, etc.), habitat maintenance, etc.²⁸ In Estonia, the Ministry of the Environment launched a LIFE-Nature project (2001-2005) aimed at preserving 1,575 ha on 16 Natura 2000 sites, to address intensive agricultural practices and land abandonment (in certain instances, land abandonment can adversely affect semi-natural habitats).²⁹ To achieve this objective, land use agreements needed to be conducted with landowners and farmers, and help was offered via support for the necessary investment in fences and livestock.³⁰

Good practices in sustainable agriculture will not necessarily create new jobs; rather, it can consist in the conversion into green jobs of jobs that were not previously sustainable or prevent the decline in employment in the sector by introducing new sustainable activities that can complement more traditional farming income.

Creating opportunities for disadvantaged groups or regions

Nature conservation can foster employment for people with more difficult access to the labour market. In Austria, one project from Green Care WALD in association with the Federal Research Center for Forests entitled "Social Forest Work" seeks to provide employment for people who have been unemployed for a long period of time. As part of this project, people are trained and connected with companies to work on reforestation, forest maintenance work, path maintenance and clearing. The

Figure 3-5 Three trainees from the Social Forest Work project. Source: KFT.at



project is financed by the federal government, the federal states and the European Union.^{31,32} In Sweden, the Swedish Forestry Agency, in cooperation with several other authorities, are seeking to facilitate access to positions for newcomers in Sweden and people who have been unemployed for a long period of time, while also trying to bridge the gender gap in the forest sector. The people employed contribute to the maintenance of outdoor

²⁷ EEA (2022) High nature value (HNV) farmland. Available at: <https://www.eea.europa.eu/data-and-maps/data/high-nature-value-farmland-1#:~:text=The%20concept%20of%20High%20Nature.high%20biodiversity%20in%20agricultural%20landscapes>.

²⁸ European Commission (n.d.) The Farmer as a Manager of Nature: aiming at a favourable conservation status for Natura 2000 sites by making nature management a sound branch of farming. Available at: <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/life/publicWebsite/project/details/4815>

²⁹ European Parliament (2021) The challenge of land abandonment after 2020 and options for mitigating measures. Available at: [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2021/652241/IPOL_ATA\(2021\)652241_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2021/652241/IPOL_ATA(2021)652241_EN.pdf)

³⁰ European Commission (n.d.) Reviving extensive farming in the Baltic coastal meadows of Estonia. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/management/gp/farming/04case_meadows.html

³¹ KFV (2021) Green Care WALD: Soziale Waldarbeit schafft sinnvolle und sichere Arbeitsplätze. Available at: <https://www.kfv.at/green-care-wald-soziale-waldarbeit-schafft-sinnvolle-und-sichere-arbeitsplaetze/>

³² BFW (2021) Soziale Waldarbeit. Available at: <https://www.bfw.gv.at/gesellschaft-internationales/soziale-waldarbeit/>

forest areas in Sweden.³³ Another example is the Armenia Tree Project, which has been operating since 1994 with the mission to plant trees as a way to revitalize communities, notably those affected and impoverished by military conflicts. This NGO employs 74 full-time workers and 150 seasonal workers (including 35% of women) and has planted over 6.6M trees since 1994, with a focus on 50 varieties of indigenous trees and shrubs. The main activities of the NGO include community tree planting, reforestation, and education.³⁴

In addition, **nature conservation can provide employment opportunities in regions where employment in traditional sectors (e.g. mining) has been declining.** For example, the establishment of the Hoge Kempen National Park in a former coal-mining region in Belgium has led to the creation of 400 full-time jobs equivalents.³⁵ In Germany, the restoration of the Emscher Region, which was also a traditional coal mining and steel manufacturing area, has led to an average of 1,466 new jobs being created in the region over 30 years (the report lists 44,000 man years over the period). The project focused on the restoration of a 80-kilometre-long concrete riverbed to a near-natural state, and also includes over 400 green infrastructure projects. Investments of €4.5 billion led to the creation of 25,847 direct, indirect and induced jobs in the state of Nord Rhine Westphalia in the period 1991-2007 (i.e. an average investment of EUR 175k / job). In total, 48,884 direct, indirect and induced jobs were created across Germany for the same period.^{36,37}

Fostering employment via Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) schemes

Another example is the Revere Partnership between National Parks UK and the private firm Palladium. Palladium's expertise on sustainable private/public finance models helped secure £239 million to fund restoration work over 10 years across the UK.³⁸ Revere works with National Parks, ecologists, farmers, and land managers to design nature restoration models that can generate revenues, attract investment and create benefits for stakeholders. It then raises private capital to invest in these projects which pay for the ecosystem services created (carbon credits, biodiversity outcomes, natural flood risk management outcomes and water quality improvements).³⁹ These projects are expected to create direct employment to implement the restoration measures and maintain the condition of the land, as well as employment linked to the supporting activities needed for these restoration activities to take place (e.g. running the partnership, finding funding, monitoring outcomes, etc.).

A similar initiative, again in the UK, is called Forest Carbon. Operational since 2006, this organization finances woodland creation and peatland restoration projects via financial support from organisations which wish to offset their emissions. Over 13 million of trees have been planted since then, equivalent to a removal of about 3 million metric tonnes of CO₂ from the atmosphere, while providing other

³³ Skogsstyrelsen (2022) Naturnära job. Available at: <https://www.skogsstyrelsen.se/om-oss/var-verksamhet/regeringsuppdrag/naturnarajobb/>

³⁴ Armenia Tree Project (2019) ATP mission. Available at: <https://www.armeniatree.org/en/mission>

³⁵ ten Brink P., Mutafoglu K., Schweitzer J-P., Underwood E., Tucker G., Russi D., Howe M., Maréchal A., Olmeda C., Pantzar M., and Kettunen M. (2017) Natura 2000 and Jobs: Scoping Study - Executive Summary. Brussels. April 2017. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/pdf/Natura_2000_and%20jobs_executive_summary.pdf

³⁶ EIB (2022) Germany: EIB President Hoyer - Emscher River restoration supports the economy of Germany's Ruhr region. Available at: <https://www.eib.org/en/press/all/2022-350-eib-president-hoyer-emscher-river-restoration-supports-the-economy-of-germany-s-ruhr-region>

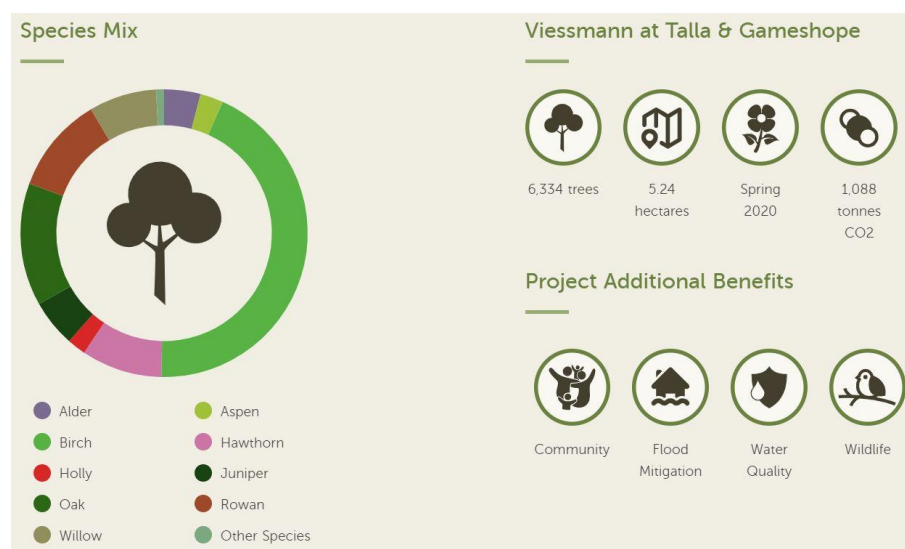
³⁷ ten Brink P., Mutafoglu K., Schweitzer J-P., Underwood E., Tucker G., Russi D., Howe M., Maréchal A., Olmeda C., Pantzar M., and Kettunen M. (2017) Natura 2000 and Jobs: Scoping Study - Executive Summary. Brussels. April 2017. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/pdf/Natura_2000_and%20jobs_executive_summary.pdf

³⁸ National Parks UK (2021) Press release: National Parks announce new nature restoration partnership. Available at: <https://www.nationalparks.uk/2021/04/22/press-release-national-parks-palladium-partnership/>

³⁹ Revere (n.d.) Homepage. Available at: <https://revere.eco/>

ecosystem services. Projects are verified regularly after planting, ensuring that the woodland is appropriately managed on the long-term.⁴⁰ This provides employment for those working at Forest Carbon, but also those involved in the management of the land. The results of a project implemented at Talla & Gameshope are presented in Figure 3-6, highlighting biodiversity, climate and social benefits.

Figure 3-6 Initial results of the Talla & Gameshope project overseen by Forest Carbon. Source: Forest Carbon.⁴¹



Employment in sustainable tourism

The tourism sector - as understood in the context of the present study - includes economic activity in hotels and other accommodations (B&Bs, campgrounds, etc.), restaurants, bars and cafés, agencies offering recreational services in the areas (e.g., tour guides including nature-focused ones related to the observation of wild life and of landscapes, sports equipment rental and lessons, etc.). More indirectly, tourism also supports the general economy of the local area (e.g., people purchase food from supermarket, clothes, etc.). Tourism is however not inherently sustainable, specifically if the total environmental pressure resulting from the number of tourists multiplied by the average impact of each individual tourist (stemming from his/her behaviour and consumption pattern, including the consumption resulting from his/her accommodation choice) exceeds the resilience capacity of the ecosystems. Thus care needs to be taken so that job creation in the sector is not be made at the expense of the surrounding natural environment.

Sustainable tourism is a major sector that can benefit from nature conservation activities, and in which jobs can be created as a result. Tourism employs 12 million people in Europe. Out of these, about one quarter (3.1 million) have links to protected areas,⁴² highlighting the importance of nature protection for the tourism sector. Supporting this claim, one study on Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) found that MPAs are linked to enhanced tourism income, with increases in visitor numbers being attributed to improvements in environmental quality, a stronger marketing position, and the role of

⁴⁰ Forest Carbon (n.d.) Homepage. Available at: <https://www.forestcarbon.co.uk/>

⁴¹ Forest Carbon (n.d.) Viessmann at Talla & Gameshope. Available at: <https://www.forestcarbon.co.uk/our-partners/viessmann/talla-gameshope-2>

⁴² ten Brink P., Mutafoglu K., Schweitzer J-P., Underwood E., Tucker G., Russi D., Howe M., Maréchal A., Olmeda C., Pantzar M., and Kettunen M. (2017) Natura 2000 and Jobs: Scoping Study - Executive Summary. Brussels. April 2017. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/pdf/Natura_2000_and%20jobs_executive_summary.pdf

MPAs in coordinating work across the tourism sector.⁴³ Moreover, tourism has a significant multiplier effect on employment in other sectors, in particular in rural areas, with tourism creating indirect jobs in related activities.⁴⁴

Indirect impacts on employment in tourism have already been presented in some of the best practices introduced above. A number of additional best practices highlight the positive impacts of nature conservation on employment. A study reviewing available evidence across Europe found that MPAs can be beneficial for tourism by increasing the number of visitors and providing additional livelihood opportunities. However, whether increased tourism results from changes in MPA-induced environmental improvements or to the so-called designation effect, i.e. the increased reputation due to designation was not possible to establish.⁴⁵ The creation of health and wellness centres in protected areas can also foster tourism and local employment. In Slovenia, the creation of a spa in the Secovlje Salina Nature Park which uses treatments derived from the park (saltpan mud and brine) creates 25 jobs every summer, including 20 therapists.

Another way to promote tourism in natural or semi-natural areas is to create hiking trails, which positively benefits some businesses in surrounding local communities, notably accommodation and food-related businesses.⁴⁶ In addition, some examples highlight that walking tourism is growing: the number

Figure 3-7 Routes of the Camino de Santiago. Source: wikipedia



of visitors walking the Camino de Santiago in Spain has grown from 55,000 in 2000 to 300,000 in 2017, and the numbers of visitors walking the Via Francigena has increased by 20% (to 50 000) during the same time period.⁴⁷ This trend continued, with over 400,000 visitors walking this path in 2022, as Covid-19 restrictions eased.⁴⁸ One study from Galicia found that the Camino de Santiago had positive socio-economic effects for the region, including on employment.⁴⁹ Although more niche than hiking, cycling trails can provide similar benefits. For instance, in France between 2010 and 2018 cycling tourism

generated an estimated 4.6 billion euros in turnover, and benefits have increased by 46% in this time period. Tourists spending was primarily for restaurants and food (36%), followed by housing (34%), and

⁴³ EEA (2015) Marine protected areas in Europe's seas: An overview and perspectives for the future. EEA Report No 3/2015. Available at: <https://www.eea.europa.eu/publications/marine-protected-areas-in-europes>

⁴⁴ ILO (2019) Promoting green jobs for youth through national employment policies and programmes. Youth Employment Programme (YEP) - TECHNICAL NOTES. Available at: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/documents/publication/wcms_732596.pdf

⁴⁵ European Commission (2018) Study on the economic benefits of Marine Protected Areas. Available at: https://maritime-spatial-planning.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/ea0318223enn_en_0.pdf

⁴⁶ UNWTO (2019) Walking Tourism - Promoting Regional Development. Available at: <https://www.e-unwto.org/doi/book/10.18111/9789284420346>

⁴⁷ CBI (2021) The European market potential for walking tourism. Available at: <https://www.cbi.eu/market-information/tourism/walking-tourism/market-potential>

⁴⁸ Hike the Way (2022) Record pilgrims on el Camino in 2022. Available at: <https://hiketheway.com/blog/record-pilgrims-el-camino-2022>

⁴⁹ Xunta de Galicia, Galicia & USC (2018) Analysis of the socio-economic impact of the Camino de Santiago: preliminary results. Interreg Europe. Available at: https://projects2014-2020.interregeurope.eu/fileadmin/user_upload/tx_tevprojects/library/file_1526904189.pdf

their spending was estimated to create 33 805 FTE.⁵⁰ This case study highlights how creating and maintaining cycling paths can be beneficial for employment.

Furthermore, in relation to sustainable tourism, **labels and logos** indicating that an accommodation and/or a service is committed to an environmentally friendly approach. Number of examples already exist. First of all, the EU Ecolabel for tourist accommodations has been in existence since 2003 and is recognised EU-wide. It is awarded to accommodations that meet ecological requirements (e.g. low energy consumption, low water consumption, waste management, selective sorting and appropriate disposal, the use of renewable energy, the use of appropriate substances for the respect of the environment, reliance on products labelled organic, raising customer awareness by offering them meals based on local or organic products, educational activities on respect for the environment, etc.). Another example is the Ecogîte label, created in 2003, is a global environmental quality of rural tourism structures. The accommodations concern, whether or not they are located in natural parks, rural gîtes, guest rooms, stopover gîtes and campsites, labelled Gîtes de France. This label calls upon notions of economy, ecosystem and bioconstruction. Indeed, the use of materials comes from renewable resources in order to allow everyone to understand the current environmental concerns as well as the existing techniques or materials.⁵¹

3.1.2 Best practice cross-sectoral policies

Public authorities can significantly facilitate green job creation via the adoption and implementation of specific and well-designed policies (action plans and strategies, programmes, projects) to foster youth (green) employment and other important aspects such as skill development, entrepreneurship promotion and innovation. Several types of policy instruments can foster green jobs, either on the demand-side (pro-employment macro-economic policies, sectoral policies in relevant fields, financial policies, trade and regional integration policies, private sector development policies, active labour market measures), the supply-side (human resources development and vocational and technical skills and active labour market measures), or via labour market institutions and intermediation (e.g., employment services, wage policies).⁵² Amongst the variety of policies that can be used to promote green employment, some European best practices which may be partly replicated in some countries and regions to promote employment along the EGB are presented below.

Just transition policies have been set up in some European countries to mitigate the negative impacts that declining economic sectors have on employment. In Spain, a 2021 law on Climate Change (Ley de cambio climático y transición energética)⁵³ mandates the adoption of 5-year just transition agreements between the central government and local authorities in fossil fuel-dependent regions (although it is not restricted to fossil fuel workers) to promote economic activity and diversification, as well as improve the employability of vulnerable workers and groups at risk of exclusion (Article 28). An Institute for the Just Transition (ITJ) was also created to provide technical, financial, and legal assistance for the drafting and implementation of the transition agreements. In addition, a ITJ Advisory

⁵⁰ INDDIGO - VERTIGOLAB (2020) Impact économique et potentiel de développement des usages du vélo en France. Available at: <https://www.entreprises.gouv.fr/files/files/en-pratique/etudes-et-statistiques/dossiers-de-la-DGE/impact-economique-et-potentiel-developpement-velo-en-france.pdf>

⁵¹ Ethink & trips (2022) Sustainable tourism labels: 9 logos to spot. Available at: <https://ethik-and-trips.com/en/blog/labels-and-approvals-for-accommodations-committed-to-sustainable-tourism-2>

⁵² ILO (2019) Promoting green jobs for youth through national employment policies and programmes. Youth Employment Programme (YEP) - TECHNICAL NOTES. Available at: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/documents/publication/wcms_732596.pdf

⁵³ Ley 7/2021, de 20 de mayo, de cambio climático y transición energética. Available at: <https://www.boe.es/eli/es/l/2021/05/20/7>

Board including representatives from the central government, Autonomous Communities, Local Entities, trade unions, and stakeholders (including youth), will coordinate and monitor the overall Just Transition Strategy. Under coal-specific closure agreements, the central government works with employers in each region to select projects for funding (Spain relies heavily on EU funding for just transition).⁵⁴

In Germany, a Structural Support for Coal Regions Act (Strukturstärkungsgesetz)⁵⁵ came into effect in 2020, in order to create economic opportunities in coal-dependent regions as this industry is gradually phased out. The act mandates financial aid for investments to deal with structural changes and to create new employment in the period to 2038 when coal will be phased out as per the Coal Phase-Out Act.⁵⁶

Regions which are not undergoing such drastic changes in the composition of their workforce can nevertheless develop **skills and employment policies** to seek to orient their workforce towards certain types of jobs, in order to foster economic development and employment. In Corsica (France), a regional investment pact for skills (2019-2022) was set up between the central government and the regional government, which includes components related to green jobs. Notably, their hotel, tourism and restaurant cursus includes a module on ecotourism, and their cross-cutting cursus focuses on activities in nature such as hiking and is specifically targeted at people with more difficult access to the job market. In addition, the cursus on agriculture is focused on improving biodiversity and developing sustainable farming practices.⁵⁷

Another example originates from Austria, where a Green Jobs Master Plan was initiated in 2010 with the main objective of creating Green Jobs focused on agriculture, forestry, environmental technology (e.g., renewable energy), tourism and leisure industries. The Master Plan, established by the Federal Ministry of Climate Action, Environment, Energy, Mobility, Innovation and Technology, aims to provide high level training and education for employees, stimulate research and development to ensure the constant improvement and innovation, promote networking and cooperation in the environmental management sector, stimulate demand for environmentally friendly products, advertise technologies and services and actively raise public awareness about the importance of achieving more sustainable growth and green Jobs.⁵⁸

Beyond action from public authorities, other stakeholders such as NGOs, associations or multi-stakeholder organisations and network can also set up programmes or platforms for learning, skill development and information sharing, which can contribute to providing information on existing green job opportunities as well as skills necessary to get employed in the sector. One example is the Rewilding Network in the UK, which helps to connect people who are rewilding, share knowledge and experiences, and access help and advice.⁵⁹

⁵⁴ IISD (2022) Making Good Green Jobs the Law: How Canada can build on international best practice to advance just transition for all. Available at: <https://www.iisd.org/system/files/2022-01/green-jobs-advance-canada-just-transition.pdf>

⁵⁵ Strukturstärkungsgesetz Kohleregionen Vom 8. August 2020. Available at: [https://www.bgbl.de/xaver/bgbl/start.xav?startbk=Bundesanzeiger_BGBL&start=//\[*\]\[attr_id=%27bgbl120s1795.pdf%27\]#_bgbl_%2F%2F%5B%40attr_id%3D%27bgbl120s1795.pdf%27%5D_1675081463395](https://www.bgbl.de/xaver/bgbl/start.xav?startbk=Bundesanzeiger_BGBL&start=//[*][attr_id=%27bgbl120s1795.pdf%27]#_bgbl_%2F%2F%5B%40attr_id%3D%27bgbl120s1795.pdf%27%5D_1675081463395)

⁵⁶ IISD (2022) Making Good Green Jobs the Law: How Canada can build on international best practice to advance just transition for all. Available at: <https://www.iisd.org/system/files/2022-01/green-jobs-advance-canada-just-transition.pdf>

⁵⁷ République française & Collectivité de Corse (2018) Pacte régional d'investissement dans les compétences corse 2019-2022. Available at: https://travail-emploi.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/pacte_corse_vf_vote-2.pdf

⁵⁸ BMK (n.d.) Green Jobs Master Plan. Available at: <https://www.bmk.gv.at/en/topics/climate-environment/sustainable-development/green-jobs-masterplan.html#:~:text=The%20Green%20Jobs%20Master%20Plan,200%2C000%20green%20jobs%20for%202009.>

⁵⁹ Rewilding Britain (n.d.) The rewilding network. Available at: <https://www.rewildingbritain.org.uk/rewilding-network>

3.2 Current opportunities for green jobs along the European Green Belt

In the section at hand the current opportunities for green jobs alongside the European Green Belt are being explored. For each region a separate analysis has been carried out and includes the following elements:

- Introduction of the European Green Belt area (e.g., type of ecosystems, presence of protected areas and other relevant features, main activities undertaken by the European Green Belt actors)
- Overview of the current job opportunities in this context; from a quantitative perspective relying mostly upon data sets from Eurostat⁶⁰ and from a qualitative perspective based on the assessment of the main activities undertaken within the identified nature protected areas; and
- Overview of best practices examples of green jobs within each specific area.

It is important to note that this qualitative analysis of job opportunities is based on publicly available information on the parks; if some activities are not mentioned on the websites they are not mentioned in the table overview. This means that the list of activities is not exhaustive, especially for the parks that have no or little developed websites. This point is relevant to the analysis undertaken for the four EGB regions.

3.2.1 Fennoscandian Green Belt

Introduction to the Fennoscandian Green Belt

The Fennoscandian Green Belt forms the northernmost part of the European Green Belt. It includes a small area in Norway, and then stretches south along the border between Finland and Russia. The region's climate is predominantly boreal, and it is characterised by vast natural areas and a low population density. The northern part is dominated by lichens, mosses and dwarf shrubs, whereas the central and southern parts are made up of vast coniferous taiga forests, including some of the last remaining old-growth boreal forests. These serve as a refuge for large mammals such as the brown bear and the elk. Wetlands, mires and lakes are also iconic landscape features of the Fennoscandian Green Belt that provide breeding habitats to Finland's national bird, the whooper swan.⁶¹ At least 9 National Parks and protected areas are present in the area (see Annex 2 for an overview).

Quantitative information on green employment

Quantitative information on the number of jobs in certain sub-sectors⁶² exists for Finland (Figure 3-8). Almost all jobs reported in the environmental goods and services sector relate to nature management, and especially to the management of wild flora and fauna. Conversely, few jobs are reported in protection and remediation of soil, groundwater and surface water, or in minimization of the intake of forestry resources. As shown in the second graph (Figure 3-9), the total employment in these sectors has been rising steadily since 2015 (around 1.4% annual increase), and reached almost 65,000 FTE in 2019. This numbers corresponds to 11,725 green jobs per inhabitant (see Annex 1).

⁶⁰ The data on green jobs are aligned with the definition of green jobs established for the purpose of this study.

⁶¹ European Green Belt (n.d.) Fennoscandia. Available at: <https://www.europeangreenbelt.org/european-green-belt/fennoscandia/>

⁶² The relevant sectors included in the statistics presented (when data is available) are: Protection and remediation of soil, groundwater and surface water; Protection of biodiversity and landscapes; Management of waters; Management of forest resources; Management of forest areas; Minimisation of the intake of forest resources; Management of wild flora and fauna

According to a study undertaken by Metsähallitus - a Finnish state-owned enterprise which is responsible for the management of most of the country’s protected areas - Finnish national parks supported a total of 2,452 full-time-equivalent (FTE) positions in 2021, and led to 310.3 million euros in earned income. The four national parks within the EGB identified (see Annex 2) supported 854 FTEs and brought 110.9 million euros in income.⁶³ On average, a one euro investment of taxpayers’ money in the hiking services of national parks leads to over 10 euros of benefits to the local economy.⁶⁴

Figure 3-8 Total employment in relevant sectors in FTE, Finland, 2019. Source: Eurostat (2022) Employment in the environmental goods and services sector [env_ac_egss1]

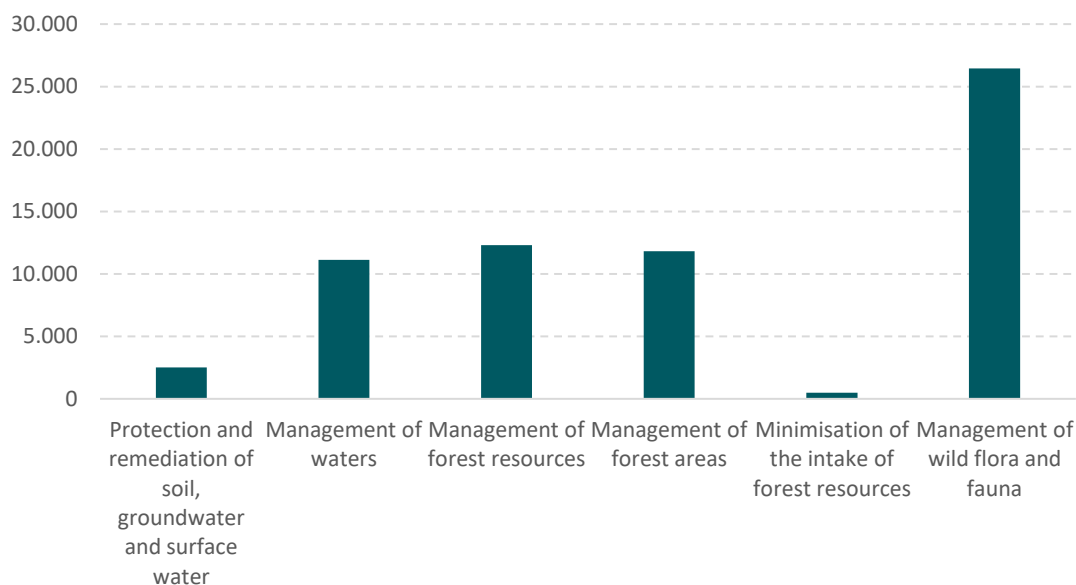
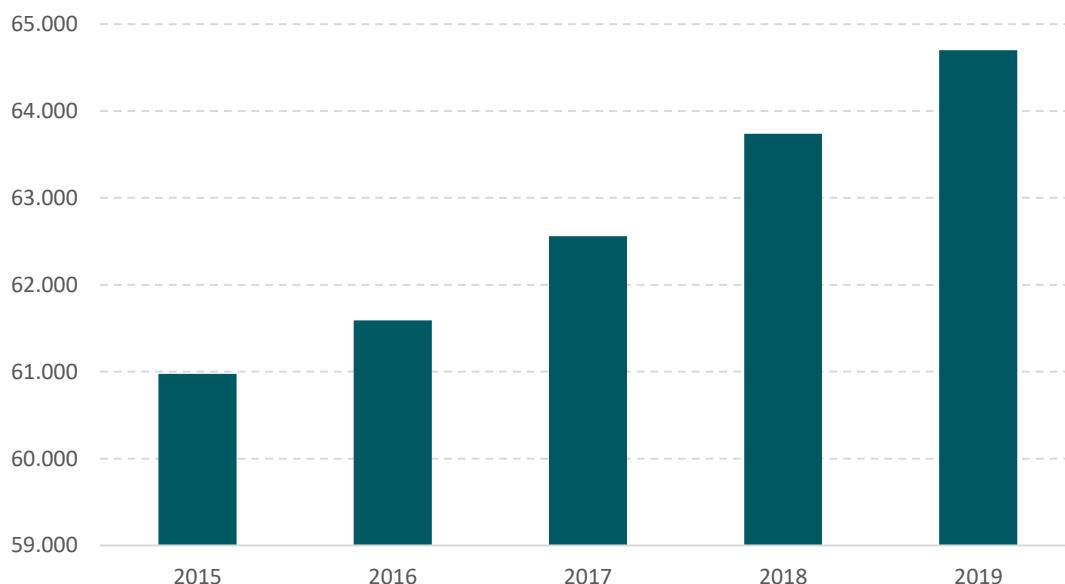


Figure 3-9 Total employment in relevant sectors in FTE, Finland, 2015-2019. Source: Eurostat (2022) Employment in the environmental goods and services sector [env_ac_egss1]



⁶³ Metsähallitus, Parks & Wildlife Finland (2021) Local Economy Impacts of Visitors’ Spending in 2021 in Finland’s National Parks, National Hiking Areas and Other Protected and Recreational Areas. Available at: https://www.metsa.fi/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/LocalEconomyImpacts_2021.pdf

⁶⁴ Metsähallitus (n.d.) Economic Benefits from National Parks. Available at: <https://www.metsa.fi/en/economic-benefits-of-national-parks/>

Current job opportunities within the Fennoscandian Green Belt

A qualitative analysis of the main activities undertaken in the parks identified, as well as a short description, is presented in Annex 2. The official websites of parks tend to list many activities related to the management of their natural areas, but also in the services available to tourists (visitor centres, restaurants, accommodation, guided tours, etc.). In addition, several parks mention the importance of ecotourism/responsible tourism, as well as activities they undertake to educate / raise awareness about the natural environment.

Until recently, the development of the Fennoscandian Green Belt was guided by the Strategy for the development of the Green Belt of Fennoscandia (GBF) to 2020,⁶⁵ which included several goals and targets, amongst which GBF-based nature tourism and other environmentally sustainable services are developed (target 3.2 of this strategy). An evaluation of this strategy⁶⁶ completed in 2022 reports that several Finnish stakeholders believed that protected areas are beneficial to the regional economy, since visiting tourists spend money for accommodation, food, different kinds of activities and services provided in the area. Stakeholders also noted that infrastructure and services for tourism have been developed, although these development were seen as independent from the Strategy. In addition, the Fennoscandian Green Belt is sometimes used as a marketing tool to attract tourists, although this marketing angle remains little developed so far. Aligning with this assessment, Metsähallitus reports that Finnish nature attracts an increasing number of Finnish and international visitors, and that this leads to an increasing need of tourism services to these areas.⁶⁷ With this come opportunities for economic development and employment in these areas.

The examples of the Patvinsuo National Park and the North Karelia Biosphere Reserve are showcased here as best practice on how to create local green employment in National Parks. The Patvinsuo National Park⁶⁸ cover over 100 km² of marshland, mires and boreal forest north of the lake Koitere, in eastern Finland (for a map of the park, see Figure 3-11). Some staff is employed to protect and maintain this natural area (i.e., nature conservation), but there has also been some activities undertaken to restore the ecosystem and monitor biodiversity. In the western part of Patvinsuo National Park, wetlands had been drained before the protection areas had been set up. Some work has been undertaken over 10 years ago to fill the ditches, in an attempt to restore the mires. Restored swamps do not immediately return to their former state, but the water surface immediately rises to a higher level than in a drained swamp. Eventually, the area is expected to be restored to the point that signs of drainage are no longer visible in several decades. In addition to mire restoration, some monitoring activities take place at regular intervals. BirdLife Finland monitors the changes in the bird population of internationally Important Bird and biodiversity Areas, the Hietajärvi area of the northern part of Patvinsuo being the second of two integrated monitoring research areas of the Finnish environment.⁶⁹

⁶⁵ Green Belt of Fennoscandia (2017) Strategy for the development of the Green Belt of Fennoscandia until 2020. Available at: http://resources.krc.karelia.ru/greenbelt/doc/Green_Belt_English_21_3_2017.pdf

⁶⁶ Mikkola et al. (2022) Evaluation of the Cooperation on Green Belt of Fennoscandia: Final report (Document shared with us by EuroNatur)

⁶⁷ Metsähallitus (n.d.) Cooperation with nature tourism business. Available at: <https://www.metsa.fi/en/responsible-business/nature-tourism-and-sustainability/nature-tourism-entrepreneurs/>

⁶⁸ National Parks (n.d.) Patvinsuo National Park. Available at: <https://www.nationalparks.fi/patvinsuonp>

⁶⁹ National Parks (n.d.) Natural Features of Patvinsuo National Park. Available at: <https://www.nationalparks.fi/patvinsuonp/nature#programmes>

The park offers several opportunities for tourism, including hiking, birdwatching, canoeing, guided tours, several types of accommodation, skiing, fishing, mushroom and berry picking, cycling, and swimming.⁷⁰ Some of these activities create direct employment, including for tour guides (several businesses offer such services, including for fishing, bird watching, hiking, cycling, etc.), staff at the information hut, and equipment rental companies.⁷¹ Tourism influx also create revenues for surrounding businesses (hotels and other accommodation services, restaurants, wellness centres, etc.).

Figure 3-10 Hiking in Patvinsuo National Park. Source: National Parks.fi



It is important to note that business operations are regulated in Finland, to ensure that these activities do not harm the natural environment. Notably, when a company uses state-owned lands or hiking structures maintained by Metsähallitus in its business activities, it usually has to sign an agreement on cooperation or rights of use. Moreover, Metsähallitus carries out sustainability monitoring at the most popular nature destinations to ensure that recreational use does not put their ecological and cultural values at risk.⁷²

Increases in visitation can boost tourism income and employment. In 2020, Metsähallitus registered 24,800 visitors⁷³ to Patvinsuo National Park, which accounts for less than 1% of park visitation traffic in Finland, but nonetheless represents an increase of 49% compared to the number of visits in 2019 (16,600).⁷⁴ In 2021, the park supported 4 FTE positions. (Larger or more frequented parks support more jobs. For instance, Oulanka National Park, which is also along the EGB, supported 281 FTE in 2021).⁷⁵

⁷⁰ National Parks (n.d.) Activities in Patvinsuo National Park. Available at: <https://www.nationalparks.fi/patvinsuonp/activities>

⁷¹ National Parks (n.d.) Services Offered by Enterprises and Organisations in Patvinsuo National Park. Available at: <https://www.nationalparks.fi/patvinsuonp/services/partners>

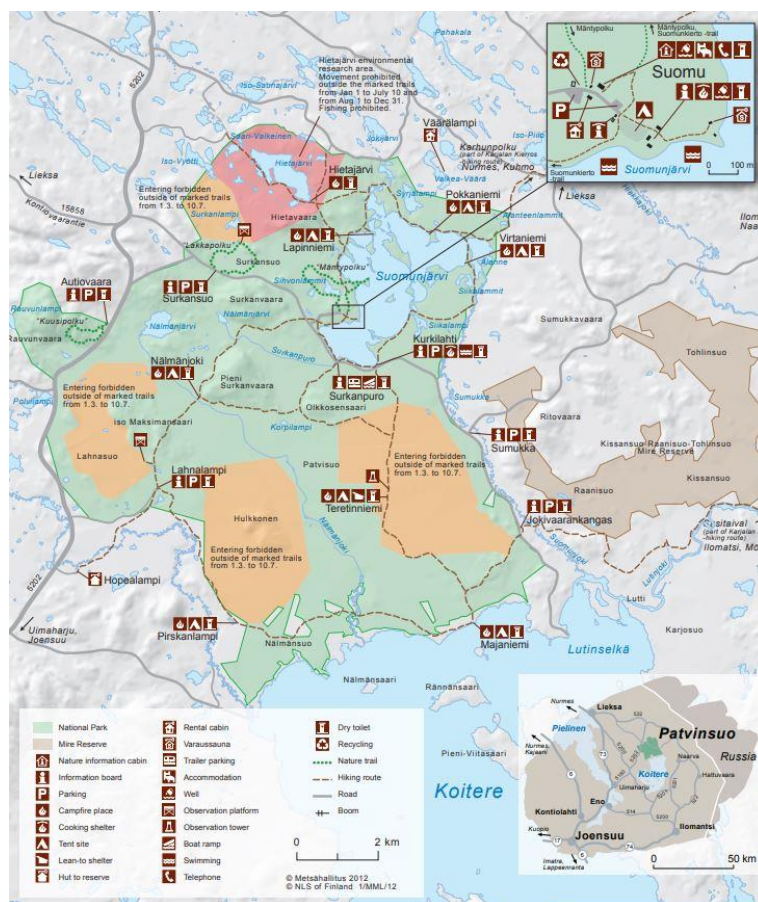
⁷² Metsähallitus (n.d.) Cooperation with nature tourism business. Available at: <https://www.metsa.fi/en/responsible-business/nature-tourism-and-sustainability/nature-tourism-entrepreneurs/>

⁷³ Metsähallitus, Parks & Wildlife Finland (2020) The Visitation Numbers in 2020 of National Parks, National Hiking Areas and Other Protected and Hiking Areas of Recreational Importance. All Areas Managed by Metsähallitus. Available at: https://www.metsa.fi/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Visitationnumbers_2020.pdf

⁷⁴ Metsähallitus, Parks & Wildlife Finland (2019) The Visitation Numbers in 2019 of National Parks, National Hiking Areas and Other Protected and Hiking Areas of Recreational Importance. All Areas Managed by Metsähallitus. Available at: https://www.metsa.fi/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/visitationnumbers_2019.pdf

⁷⁵ Metsähallitus, Parks & Wildlife Finland (2021) Local Economy Impacts of Visitors' Spending in 2021 in Finland's National Parks, National Hiking Areas and Other Protected and Recreational Areas. Available at: https://www.metsa.fi/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Localeconomyimpacts_2021.pdf

Figure 3-11 Map of the Patvinsuo National Park.⁷⁶



The Patvinsuo National Park is part of the larger North Karelia Biosphere Reserve, a part of the UNESCO Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme since 2005, which covers 440 km².⁷⁷ The Reserve includes other natural areas (notably the Koli National Park) as well as several districts (Liekka, Ilomantsi and the Tuupovaara district of the city of Joensuu). The biosphere reserve aims to promote the preservation of natural diversity and to develop social, economic, and ecological sustainability. It is managed by the Ministry of the Environment and the local business, transport and environment centre (North Karelia ELY Center). A working committee and an advisory board-type steering group are responsible for steering the activities of the North Karelia biosphere reserve, and the operation takes place through cooperation, a partnership network and projects.

Notably, the partnership network aims to promote the opportunities for operators in the region to develop their operations more sustainably (e.g., hotels, tour operators, restaurants, farms, environmental and cultural organisations, etc.). The partners all create their own sustainable development goals and commit to complying with them. The network also enables the sharing of good practices and the creation of common projects.

⁷⁶ Metsähallitus (n.d.) National Park Patvinsuo. Available at: <https://julkaisut.metsa.fi/assets/pdf/lp/Esitteet/patvinsuoeng.pdf>

⁷⁷ UNESCO (2019) North Karelian Biosphere Reserve, Finland. Available at: <https://en.unesco.org/biosphere/eu-na/north-karelian>

Moreover, the North Karelia Biosphere Reserve implements several projects, including the LIFE project “Towards integrated management of freshwater Nature 2000 sites and habitats” which ran from 2016 to 2022. Koitajoli is one of the eight target area of this national-scale project, where activities have focused on catchment area renovations, improving plankton spawning conditions and developing a sustainable use of natural resources.⁷⁸

The examples of the Patvinsuo National Park and the North Karelia Biosphere Reserve highlight how green employment can be created and fostered in and around protected areas. In addition to the direct green jobs which exist in the national park (nature conservation, nature restoration, monitoring), indirect green jobs in surrounding industries (tourism, accommodation services etc.) are actively fostered via a partnership network of businesses that is facilitated via a public-private partnership, and by good stewardship contracts closely monitored by the public authority in charge (Metsähallitus). By doing so, the North Karelia Biosphere Reserve supports businesses which are active in industries not green per se (tourism, hotels, etc.) in developing more sustainably, and hence be considered as sustainable employers.

3.2.2 Baltic Green Belt

Introduction to the Baltic Green Belt

As indicated in the introductory chapter to the European Green Belt, the Baltic Green Belt stretches along the Baltic Sea coastline of six countries, namely Russia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, and Germany, therefore it is often referred to as the ‘coastal European Green Belt’. It can be recognised by diverse marine underwater habitats and a richly variegated coastline with large dune fields, long beaches, impressive cliffs and secluded lagoons, which are unique for this part of the European Green Belt. Extensive military areas served as refuges for millions of migrating birds and many marine animals such as grey and ringed seals. Since the early 1990s, however, the coastline has 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 Baltic Green Belt.⁷⁹

Quantitative information on green employment within the countries of the Baltic Green Belt

The two figures below provide an insight into the employment in the sector of environmental goods and services in the countries relevant (only⁸⁰) to the Baltic Green Belt. The first figure shows the evolution of the total employment in the sector between years 2015 and 2019 (last available year in Eurostat). It shows that the employment levels in the sector remain relatively stable in Estonia and Latvia (though with a slight growth), while noticeable growth of the sector can be observed in Lithuania and Poland. Despite the fact that on the figure Poland appears to have the highest number of green jobs, when

Figure 3-12 Renovation works as part of the LIFE IP Koitajoli sub-project. Source: kareliabiosphere.fi



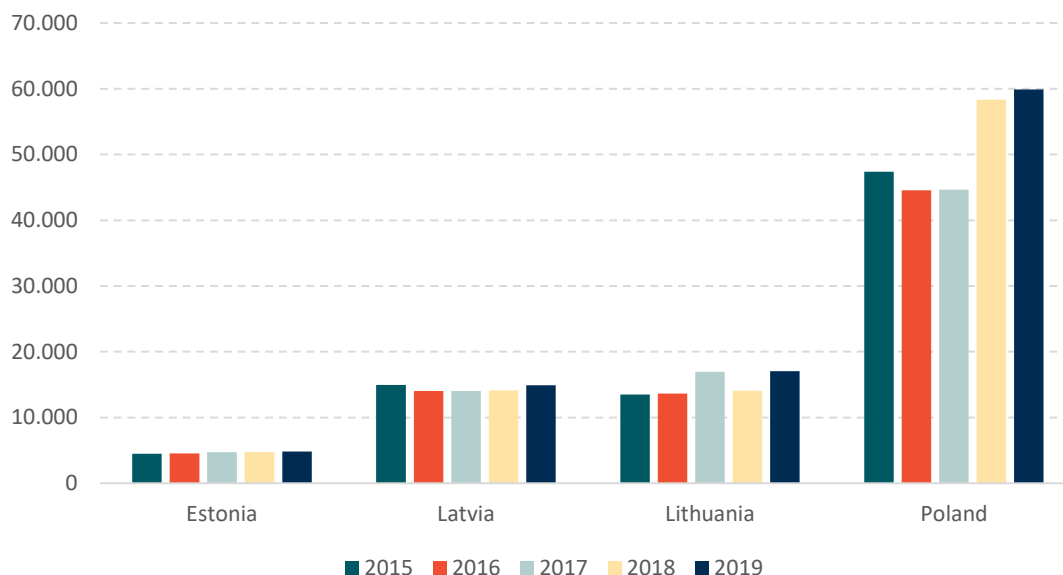
⁷⁸ Karelia biosphere (n.d.) Freshabit Life IP Koitajoki. Available at: <https://kareliabiosphere.fi/freshabit-life-ip-koitajoki/>

⁷⁹ European Green Belt (n.d.) Baltic Green Belt - The Coastal Belt. Available at: <https://www.europeangreenbelt.org/european-green-belt/baltic/>

⁸⁰ Employment levels in Germany (which overlaps between the Baltic and Central European Green Belt) are being considered under Central European Green Belt section.

compared to its number of inhabitants (per million, in 2019), it amounts to approx. 1,500 jobs. On the other hand, Latvia and Lithuania each have approx. 7,700 and 6,100 jobs, respectively.

Figure 3-13 Total employment in relevant⁸¹ sectors in FTE, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland, 2015-2019.
 Source: Eurostat (2022) Employment in the environmental goods and services sector [env_ac_egss1]



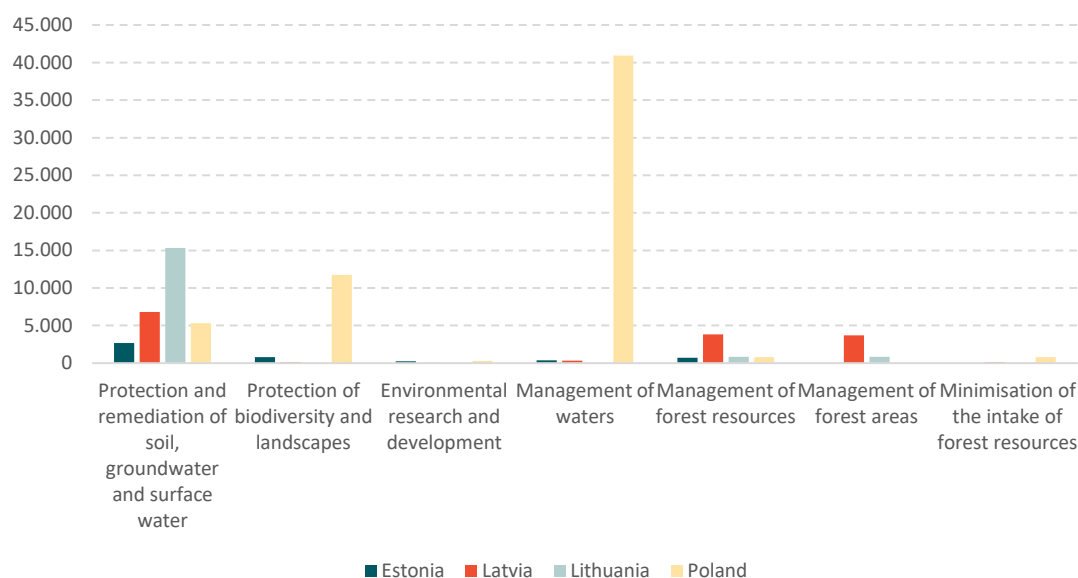
The next figure shows the types of employment within the relevant sub-sector⁸² and their share. Unsurprisingly, the most prominent activity in the ‘coastal Green Belt’ within this sector relates to water protection and its management⁸³. Employment exists also under other sectors, for example protection of biodiversity or forest management. Similarly to the figure above, the data shown is reflecting the countries shown as a whole (thus also areas outside of the EGB). As such it ought to be noted that, for example, the high levels of employment in water management in Poland is also likely relevant for areas outside of the EGB.

⁸¹ The relevant sectors included in the statistics presented (when data is available) are: Protection and remediation of soil, groundwater and surface water; Protection of biodiversity and landscapes; Management of waters; Management of forest resources; Management of forest areas; Minimisation of the intake of forest resources; Management of wild flora and fauna

⁸² Protection and remediation of soil, groundwater and surface water; Protection of biodiversity and landscapes; Management of waters; Management of forest resources; Management of forest areas; Minimisation of the intake of forest resources; and Management of wild flora and fauna

⁸³ As per the inputs of the regional coordinator, it ought to be noted that some of these jobs (specifically in Poland) relate to river management, and thus mainly fall outside of the EGB area. Among the ‘water management’ jobs accounted for in the Eurostat data, the jobs related to coastal management, and hence within the geographic scope of the EGB, are mainly to be found in Germany and Denmark.

Figure 3-14 Total employment in relevant⁸⁴ sectors in Baltic counties FTE, 2019. Source: Eurostat (2022)
Employment in the environmental goods and services sector [env_ac_egss1]



It ought to be noted, however, that while both the graphs show that there is a significantly higher share of employment in the sector in Poland than in the other countries, this does not necessarily reflect the reality applicable directly to the context of the Baltic Green Belt. Namely, the area of the Baltic Green Belt represents a much smaller share of the entire area of Poland, in comparison to the other three Baltic countries.

Current job opportunities within the Baltic Green Belt and best practices among those

Given that the quantitative data specifically applicable to the Baltic Green Belt cannot be disaggregated for the purpose of the study, a qualitative assessment of the types of jobs and employment opportunities within the Baltic Green Belt has been carried out. During the research carried out for the purpose of this study a number of national parks, nature preserves, or protected areas have been selected in the area of the Baltic Green Belt. Each of the most prominent protected areas have been reviewed, in terms of their ecosystems and main activities carried out. For an overview of these protected areas, their ecosystems and main activities, please refer to Annex 2.

Based on the qualitative review of the above outlined national parks and protected areas we made a qualitative assessment of job opportunities in the Baltic Green Belt. First of all, we see a great level of employment opportunities in the management of nature areas, their flora and fauna but also the tourist facilities (such as hiking/biking paths, rest stops, etc.), bringing together relevant stakeholders or promoting the nature area and securing finances for further improvements of the areas. Secondly, another large source of employment appears to be the field of services being provided to tourists. In many of the protected areas there are information centres and museums, which often employ locals to inform about the history and ecosystems of the given nature area. Furthermore, in many cases the existence of the nature parks⁸⁵ also creates employment in accommodations and restaurants for tourists. In some cases shops and workshops with local folk art have been established or enclosures with

⁸⁴ The relevant sectors included in the statistics presented (when data is available) are: Protection and remediation of soil, groundwater and surface water; Protection of biodiversity and landscapes; Management of waters; Management of forest resources; Management of forest areas; Minimisation of the intake of forest resources; Management of wild flora and fauna

⁸⁵ Throughout the chapter 3.2 the term 'nature park' has been used to encompass both, national parks and protected areas. According to the IUCN, a 'protected area' is defined as any area of sea, lakes, rivers or land that has been identified as important for conservation of nature and managed for this purpose.

animals native to the nature park, both of which also creates employment. Thirdly, in some of the nature parks services that are directly benefiting from the resources of the nature area have been created. These are mainly healing facilities established within the nature parks that also directly benefit from the resources the nature park has to offer, e.g. mineral waters, muds, etc. such facilities also create a reasonable rate of employment, employing both general as well as medical staff. Lastly, jobs in education and research regarding the ecosystems of the nature areas have also been identified, for example, providing resources to the information centres and museums.

When reviewing the current job opportunities within the Baltic Green Belt, a number of examples of best practices of green jobs have been identified. In the following sections we will outline each best practice as a case study, with a description of how and what types of jobs were created as a benefit of the existence of the EGB.

The Kemerī National Park (Latvia) can be listed as one of the best practices case studies. The Kemerī National Park Foundation⁸⁶, an NGO, was established in 2000 to provide support to the state institution that managed the park's territory. Nowadays, the Foundation deals with nature protection and nature education and research in the territory of Kemerī National Park. Specifically, the Foundation does the following:

- Manages natural grasslands, both by mowing and grazing (using large herbivores - Konik horses and Taurgovis cattle);
- Buys small amounts of land for nature protection;
- Attracts project financing for solving various current problems of the national park; and
- Prepare and provide information about Kemerī National Park on the Internet and in printed publications.

Figure 3-15 Hiking in the Kemerī National Park.
Source: kemerunacionalaisparks.lv.



Currently, the Foundation is managed by its board members, and brings together several cooperation partners, namely the Nature Protection Administration, the municipal council of Jurmala (town the NP is located in), the Latvian Environmental Protection Fund, and the Gražutes regional park administration. The Foundation also brings together similar management bodies of other national parks, in order to cooperate in projects for meadow management, educational events, etc. in the area of the Kemerī National Park.

The Kemerī National Park is also currently benefiting from a Strategy and Action Plan for Sustainable Tourism⁸⁷. The Strategy was developed in 2011 by the staff of the managing authority of the NP. The main actions include:

- Restoration of wetlands and improvement of tourism infrastructure using EU funds;

⁸⁶ Kemerī National Park (n.d.) Kemerī National Park Foundation. Available at: http://www.kemerunacionalaisparks.lv/?r=27&n_par-%C4%B6np-fondu

⁸⁷ Kemerī National Park (2011) Strategy and Action Plan for Sustainable Tourism in Kemerī National Park. Available at: <https://www.daba.gov.lv/en/media/3049/download>

- Creation of new authentic tourism products (e.g. bicycle routes, guided nature tours) and events and involving visitors in nature management activities (e.g. counting corn crakes and migrating geese) to prolong visitor stays especially in the low season;
- Identifying and including more intangible cultural heritage, local producers, traditional craftsmen in tourism products both - to preserve the heritage and increase the economic benefits to local people;
- Improved visitor monitoring by setting up digital visitor counters, improving data bases and creating a common visitor questionnaire for all tourism stakeholders;
- Cooperation with local population and NGOs by continuous communication and common activities; and
- Nature school activities; and
- Provision of more interpretation on sensitive topics like growing population of cormorants, dead wood in the forest, changes of ground water level.

Furthermore, the ecosystem of the Ķemeri National Park allows for an additional case study of best practices of green jobs. Namely, sulfur-containing mineral waters that form under the marshes around Ķemeri and flow to the surface in more than 30 sources in the vicinity of Ķemeri. The healing properties of the mineral waters are used in therapeutical and healing treatments, which has also benefited from being located within the Ķemeri NP.⁸⁸ Currently, for example, the

Jaunķemeri Rehabilitation Centre⁸⁹ is operating within the Ķemeri NP, situated in a unique location in a pine forest in Ķemeri National Park between a lake and the sea. In the facility they perform traditional natural treatments using mud and mineral water for rehabilitation care.

Figure 3-16 Building of the Jaunķemeri Rehabilitation Centre. Source: jaunķemeri.lv,



Currently, this specific healing facility provides employment for over 300 people and is one of the largest sources of employment in the region of the city of Jūrmala. Specifically, it provides the following job opportunities:

- Over 40 medical doctors;
- Over 40 functional medical specialists, nurses, aides and attendants caring for our patients; and
- Multiple technical staff ensuring daily work of the health centre.

Furthermore, the facility prides itself on providing long-term employment, with many of their employees being with them for 10+ and more years.

⁸⁸ Ķemeri National Park (n.d.) Introduction. Available at: http://www.kemerunacionalaisparks.lv/?r=99&n_ievads

⁸⁹ Jaunķemeri Rehabilitation Centre (n.d.) About us. Available at: <http://www.jaunķemeri.lv/en/about-us>

Figure 3-17 Bog walking with the Baltic Country Holiday tour guides. Source: celotajs.lv.

As a next best practices' example we have selected Lauku Celotajs⁹⁰ (**Baltic Country Holidays**), which is a country tourism association (NGO) based in Latvia. Its purpose is to unite small, rural and family-run accommodation and service providers in the Latvian countryside and organised tours. The main goal for the association is to develop well balanced and environmentally friendly tourism in the

countryside of Latvia and other Baltic states.

The association currently provides direct employment to 10 members of staff. It is governed by an elected president and the board which includes seven rural tourism accommodation owners. The staff prides itself on being passionate outdoor and nature enthusiasts. All their hiking trails routes and offers have been tried and tested by people connected to the association. They also know all their suppliers personally and have established great relationships with them during many years of cooperation. The association is focused on small businesses providing a personal touch and detailed local expertise. They also cooperate with local birdwatching and nature experts.

The existence of the Baltic Country Holidays NGO has also led to a number of success stories, where green jobs were created. For example, an innovative project of a group of students resulted in a creation of bog shoes adapted to the local conditions, which created a handful of jobs and also allows for local hiking both during winter and summer periods. Other jobs created that benefit from the EGB area in Latvia include nature guides, rental of boats, camping and holiday cottages (with green label certificates) or turning waste collected from sea / shores and turning those into souvenirs.⁹¹

Under the chapeau of the Matsalu National Park (Estonia), the **Matsalu International Nature Film Festival** takes place. It is an annual nature film event held in Estonia. The film festival is organised by the Matsalu Nature Film Festival non-profit organisation in cooperation with the local municipal government. The festival promotes nature-oriented and sustainable ways of life and respect for the nature-connected traditions of indigenous people. It showcases a variety of new international documentaries about wildlife, conservation and the environment that inspire, inform and ignite change. On top of that there is an exhibition by the winners of Estonia's biggest nature photo competition - Nature Year Photo. With regards to job creation, the organisation of the festival annually creates 7 direct job positions. 12 additional colleagues from partner organisations are closely connected to the organisation of the festival.

In addition to promoting nature-oriented and sustainable ways for living and tourism, the film festival also promotes the Matsalu National Park itself. Given its close proximity, visitors of the festival often choose to travel to the National Park, which further promotes its eco-tourism, and the employment

⁹⁰ Lauku celotajs (n.d.) Baltic Country Holidays - Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia. Available at: <https://www.celotajs.lv/en>

⁹¹ As per the inputs collected during the BESTbelt conference in November 2022.

within it. In conclusion, the organisation of cultural events connected to protected areas throughout the EGB can generate employment directly related to the events themselves but can also contribute to increased eco-tourism.

3.2.3 Central European Green Belt

Introduction to the Central European Green Belt

The Central European Green Belt stretches across Germany, Austria, Czechia, Slovakia, Hungary, . Italy, Slovenia and Croatia. This part of the European Green Belt crosses a variety of cultural landscapes, some of which are intensively used by agriculture. It begins in inner Germany, then passes the Bohemian massif with its well-wooded transboundary national parks such as the Bavarian Forest/Šumava and follows the courses of near-natural rivers such as in the floodplains of the Mura and Drava. After passing through the long mountain ridge of the Karavanke Mountains and the Julian Alps, the Green Belt ends in the Adriatic Sea. In the intensively used cultural landscape of Central Europe, the Green Belt is a last retreat and structural element for many endangered species. It forms a bridging element between open grasslands and wetlands, between dry grassland and stands of mature woodland, swamps and heathland.

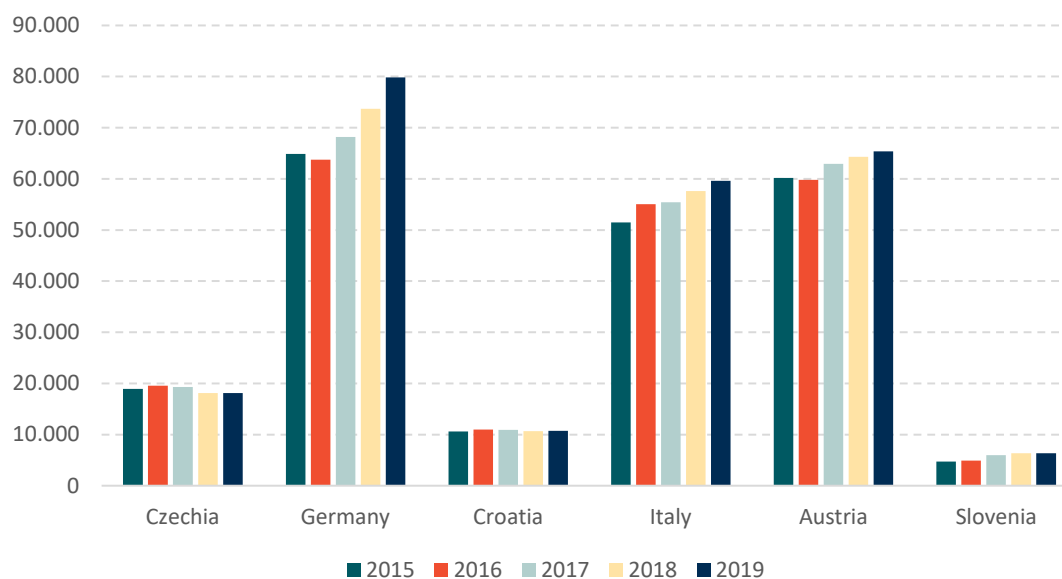
Green employment within the countries of the Central European Green Belt

The two figures below provide an insight into the **employment** in the sector of environmental goods and services in the countries relevant to the Central European Green Belt. The figures show data available from Eurostat, for which data for Slovakia and Hungary were not available. It also ought to be noted that the data shows the level of environmental employment for the countries as a whole, not disaggregated for the areas of the European Green Belt.

The first figure shows the evolution of the total employment in the sector⁹² between years 2015 and 2019 (last available year in Eurostat). It shows that the employment levels in the sector remain relatively stable in Czechia and Croatia, with a slight but constant growth in Germany, Italy, Austria and Slovenia. When compared the values to the number of inhabitants (per million, in 2019), the highest number of green jobs can be found in Austria (approx. 7,300 jobs), followed by Slovenia (approx. 3,000). The lowest number of green jobs per million of inhabits can be found in Germany and Italy (approx. 961 and 996 jobs).

⁹² Only those sectors identified as relevant to the EGB, see footnote below.

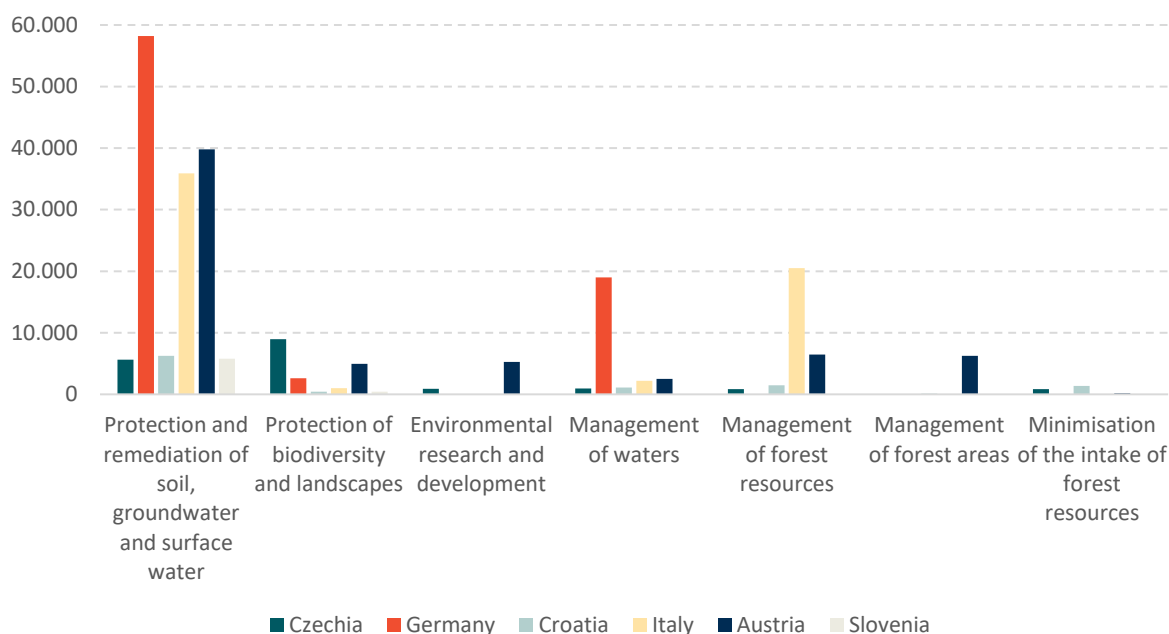
Figure 3-18 Total employment in relevant⁹³ sectors in Central European Green Belt counties FTE, 2015 - 2019.
 Source: Eurostat (2022) Employment in the environmental goods and services sector [env_ac_egss1]



The next figure shows the types of employment within the sector and their share, namely protection of water, biodiversity, forestry and flora and fauna. The most prominent sector within these is ‘protection and remediation of soil, groundwater and surface water, with Germany, Italy and Austria being most active in those sectors. Furthermore, it can also be observed that in some countries (e.g. Czechia and Austria) efforts are being made for protection of biodiversity and landscapes, whereas Germany concentrates more on the management of waters, and Italy and Austria dedicate more effort on the management of forest resources.

⁹³ The relevant sectors included in the statistics presented (when data is available) are: Protection and remediation of soil, groundwater and surface water; Protection of biodiversity and landscapes; Management of waters; Management of forest resources; Management of forest areas; Minimisation of the intake of forest resources; Management of wild flora and fauna

Figure 3-19 Total employment in relevant sectors in Central European Green Belt counties FTE, 2019. Source: Eurostat (2022) Employment in the environmental goods and services sector [env_ac_egss1]



Current job opportunities within the Central European Green Belt and best practices among those

Given that the quantitative data specifically applicable to the Central European Green Belt cannot be disaggregated for the purpose of the study, a qualitative assessment of the types of jobs and employment opportunities within the Central Green Belt has been carried out. During the research carried out for the purpose of this study at least 13 national parks, nature preserves, or protected areas have been selected in the area of the Central European Green Belt. Similarly as for the Baltic EGB, a qualitative assessment has been carried out for each NP and/or protected area and the main activities within. For a full review of the protected areas please refer to Annex 2.

Based on the overview of the activities being undertaken within the selected protected areas of the Central European Green Belt, a qualitative assessment of current green job opportunities within the area has been carried out. Green employment opportunities in a number of areas have been identified. First of all, green job opportunity exists in the field of management of the protected areas. As a specific example of a nature area with an elaborate management the Lake Neusiedl - Seewinkel National Park can be named. In this case the NP has a directorate and employees for the fields of finances, HR, monitoring, public relations, rangers, etc. In addition, the NP also has a list of open job opportunities published on their official website. Another important activity that can generate employment in the Central European Green Belt is eco-tourism and services related to it. Employment exists in accommodations, restaurants, local museums or information centres, guide services. Furthermore, employment also exists in services directly benefiting from the nature area. For example, there are a number of spas within the Central European Green Belt benefiting from local thermal water, muds or others. Another example is Órség National Park in Hungary, where, for example, pumpkin seed oil is locally produced within the area of the NP. Lastly, in majority of the protected areas there are also employment opportunities regarding nature conservation of the natural resources of the protected areas and education and research regarding the ecosystem of the park.

In addition to the qualitative assessment of the fields of green employment opportunities, a number of best practices case studies of existing green jobs within the Central European Green Belt have been identified.

As a first example of efforts that result in creation of green jobs within the EGB is Friends of the Earth Germany (BUND) Department Green Belt⁹⁴. It is part of the BUND Naturschutz in Bayern e.V., which is the Bavarian branch of Friends of the Earth Germany⁹⁵ and the oldest and largest environmental protection association in Bavaria. The goal of the association is to protect and preserve the natural habitats, species and biotopes. The BUND Department Green Belt employs 6 full-time employees who are directly involved in the management related to the EGB. In addition, the Bavarian branch of BUND as a whole brings together 675,000 members and sponsors, organised in a network of 76 district groups and over 500 local groups. There are also a large number of children's and youth groups, which are looked after by their own youth organization.

Figure 3-20 Border of the EGB between Bavaria (Germany) and Czechia. Source: BUND.net.



Examples of best practice case studies can be identified in other parts of the Central European Green Belt. For example, in the Triglav National Park (Slovenia) there are efforts to ensure that **transport of tourists within the NP is made more sustainable**. The effort is creating new public transport infrastructure reducing negative impact on the NP and involving local communities and increasing their quality of life.⁹⁶

⁹⁴ BUND Naturschutz (n.d.) Green Belt: Noah's Arch for Animals and Plants. Available at: <https://www.bund-naturschutz.de/natur-und-landschaft/gruenes-band>

⁹⁵ In addition to Bavaria, BUND (Friends of the Earth Germany) is active in several other federal states, with specific local branches.

⁹⁶ Triglav National Park (n.d.) Sustainable Mobility. Available at: <https://www.tnp.si/en/visit/sustainable-mobility/>

Figure 3-21 Example of sustainable transport in the Triglav National Park. Source: tnp.si.

The EEA Grants funded a project on this topic. The project was needed to address the issue of excessive pressure from motorised traffic on natural assets. In the scope of the project, investments were made to regulate stationary traffic. The goal of the project was to expand accessibility of both natural values (Lake Bohinj

and Krn - moraine) included for all groups of visitors, enhance the attraction of their experiencing and by reducing load of individual motor traffic contribute to the preservation of nature. The results of the studies will be used to establish good communication with target groups concerning the introduction of sustainable mobility.⁹⁷

Another example is the expansion of positions at the Stiftung Naturschutz Thüringen (Germany). The **Thuringia Nature Conservation Foundation** is an independent foundation under public law that was set up in 1995 by the Free State of Thuringia. It promotes efforts and measures that serve nature conservation in Thuringia and implements projects itself. These measures include, among other things, the protection, restoration and development of biotopes, environmental education and research in the field of nature conservation.⁹⁸

As a result of the designation of the German Green Belt Thuringia as National Nature Monument in 2018 within the Thuringia Nature Conservation Foundation 11 positions were created for the area management at the Green Belt in Thuringia. Furthermore, in addition to these full-time employees, there are a number of additional people working full and/or part-time on the ground (e.g. in management of the nature monument).⁹⁹

Figure 3-22 Employees of the Thuringia Foundation in relation to the National Nature Monument. Source: stiftung-naturschutz-thueringen.de

Furthermore, as a result of the designation of the National Nature Monument has created new job opportunities for local tour / nature guides. A great many freelance Green Belt landscape guides were also trained, among others in the Rhön Biosphere Reserve (certified nature and landscape guides

⁹⁷ EEA Grants (n.d.) Comprehensive introduction of environmentally friendly mobility in Triglav National Park for the preservation and real experiencing of nature. Available at: <https://eeagrants.org/archive/2009-2014/projects/SI02-0005>

⁹⁸ Stiftung Naturschutz Thüringen (n.d.) Advancing nature conservation in Thuringia. Available at: <https://www.stiftung-naturschutz-thueringen.de/>

⁹⁹ As per inputs received during the interview with BUND representatives.

specializing in Green Belt).¹⁰⁰ Several tour guides have also been trained in the Pilsen area of Czechia.¹⁰¹

As mentioned above, the nature resources of the Central European Green Belt has also created a number of employment opportunities. The spa in **Secovlje Salina Nature Park** (Slovenia) - Lepa Vida Thalasso Spa- is using treatments derived from the park (saltpan mud and brine). It creates 25 jobs every summer, including 20 therapists.

Figure 3-23 Saltpan mud, produced by the local spa of the Secovlje Salina Nature Park. Source: thalasso-lepavida.si.



Another example of how green jobs can be created within the EGB is to centre those around those green jobs that benefit from the cultural and historical heritage of the area. For example, on the German side of the EGB approx. 30 ‘border museums’ exist, which address the history and the nature aspects of the region.¹⁰²

Lastly, in Germany the **agricultural sector is also being utilised to green the environment**. An example of this exists in Rhön-Grabfeld (along the inner-German Green Belt) and Bavarian Forest (Green Belt Germany - Czechia) on ‘flowering energy crops instead of maize’. The effort has been carried out by above-mentioned BUND Department Green Belt, together with the Bavarian farmers association and amounts to farmers planting flowering energy plants instead of maize in monoculture (increase of biodiversity and of ecosystem services). Since 2017, approx. 40 farmers plant flowering energy crops (instead of maize) for biogas plants, utilising approx. 100 ha of fields in Rhön-Grabfeld. These flowering fields and lines serve as steppingstone habitats for an enhanced ecological connectivity in intensive agricultural landscapes along to the Green Belt.¹⁰³ This method has also been further transferred to the Bavarian Forest to explicitly enhance the quality of ecological corridors from the Green Belt into the landscape for species of open areas (insects and birds etc.). Since 2020, 4 farmers have been involved, with approx. 5 ha plant these crops.¹⁰⁴

3.2.4 Balkan Green Belt

Introduction to the Balkan Green Belt

The Balkan area of the European Green Belt is predominantly located in the mountain ranges of the Balkan Peninsula and stretches across the following countries: Romania, Serbia, Bulgaria, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Albania, Greece and Turkey. It is composed of a heterogeneous mosaic of natural landscapes, including pristine alpine ecosystems, forests and steppe habitats, as well as lakes

¹⁰⁰ ZNL Thüringen (2018) National Natural Monument Green Belt - handing over of the certificate for the acquisition of the additional qualification. Available at: <https://www.znl-thueringen.de/details/nationales-naturmonument-gruenes-band-zertifikatsuebergabe-fuer-erwerb-der-zusatzqualifikation/>

¹⁰¹ Revis Tachov (n.d.) 2014 - 2015 Training of guides through the local landscape of the Pilsen Region. Available at: <https://www.revis-tachov.cz/vzdelavani-pruvodcu-mistni-krajiny-plzenskeho-kraje.html>

¹⁰² As per inputs received during the interview with BUND representatives.

¹⁰³ Agrokraft (n.d.) BiogasBluhfelder. Available at: <https://agrokraft.de/projekte/biogasbluhfelder/>

¹⁰⁴ As per contributions collected during and after the BESTbelt conference in November 2022.

and coastal zones. The region is a biodiversity hotspot, hosting many endemic species but also many threatened plants and animals (e.g., the Balkan lynx, the Balkan Zingel, the Black Vulture, etc.).¹⁰⁵ Its climate is Mediterranean in the south and west, and alpine or continental in its other parts.

At least 27 National Parks and protected areas are present in the area (see Annex 2 for an overview). EU Member States are obliged to establish protected areas within the Natura 2000 network according to the Birds and Habitats Directives, which resulted in 34.9% of the total land being covered in Bulgaria, 22.7% in Romania, and 27.3% in Greece (as a means of comparison, the EU intends that 30% of its surface is protected by 2030).¹⁰⁶ Overall, protection is higher in the EGB areas of these countries, with over a third of the area of the Balkan Green Belt (36%) being protected under the Natura 2000 or the Emerald networks. The Natura 2000 network is under identification in EU candidate/associate member countries like Serbia, North Macedonia, etc.

Quantitative information on green employment

Little aggregated data exists on employment in protected areas, especially with regards to indirect jobs in the tourism sector. Eurostat data on employment in a number of sectors related to environmental protection and management is presented in Figure 3-24. The Figure shows employment for only three countries (Bulgaria, Romania and Serbia) due to the absence of data for the others. Moreover, data presented is at country-level, not specific to the European Green Belt areas of these countries. Available data shows that protection and remediation of soil, groundwater and surface water comparatively employs more people than the other job categories in the three countries. On the other hand, the protection of biodiversity and landscapes employs less people than the other categories. The total employment from the categories shown in Figure 3-24 is presented for the years 2015-2019 in Figure 3-25. An overall increase can be observed in the number of green jobs in Bulgaria and Romania, whereas it has been stagnating in Serbia. Romania still hosts more green jobs when considering the number of green jobs in sectors relevant to the EGB relative to the number of inhabitants in each country (5,279/million people), whereas Bulgaria and Serbia have less green jobs relative to population (respectively 2,463 and 359/million people) (Annex 1)

¹⁰⁵ European Green Belt (n.d.) Balkan. Available at: <https://www.europeangreenbelt.org/european-green-belt/balkan/>

¹⁰⁶ European Commission (n.d.) Biodiversity strategy to 2030. Available at: https://environment.ec.europa.eu/strategy/biodiversity-strategy-2030_en

Figure 3-24 Total employment in relevant sectors in FTE, 2019. Source: Eurostat (2022) Employment in the environmental goods and services sector [env_ac_egss1]

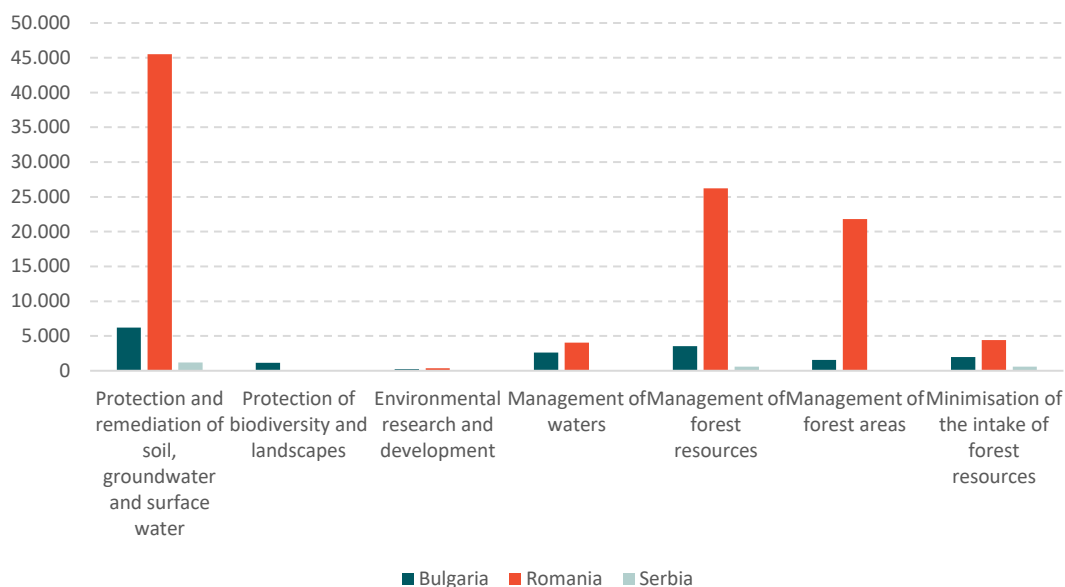
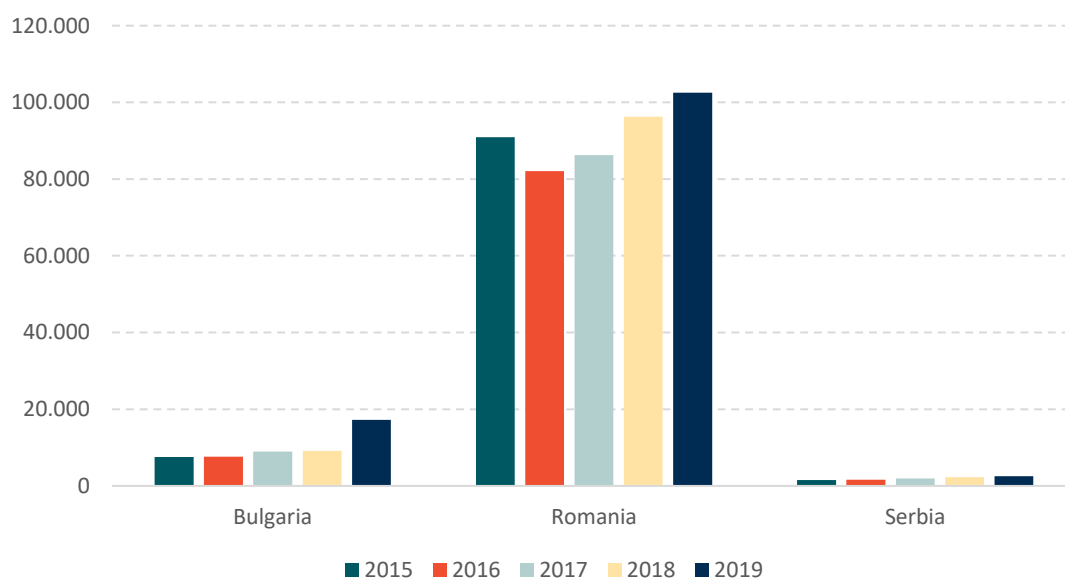


Figure 3-25 Total employment in relevant sectors in FTE, 2015-2019. Source: Eurostat (2022) Employment in the environmental goods and services sector [env_ac_egss1]



Current job opportunities within the Balkan Green Belt

A qualitative analysis of the main activities undertaken in the parks identified, as well as a short description, is available in Annex 2. Based on this assessment, several types of jobs are expected, notably some associated with the protection or management of mountainous / forest habitats and their species (including several iconic species such as lynx, bears, etc.) as well as some employment associated with tourists visiting the area (notably guided tours and winter sports, but also lodges and food services). However, several of the protected areas appear free of extended tourism infrastructure (e.g., few large tourist centres or campsite / accommodation within the parks, few businesses such as sports equipment rentals, etc.), although some winter sport infrastructure is present in a limited

number of parks. In addition, for some of the parks, it is unclear what management activities take place because they do not even have official websites.

Best practices

Numerous good practices related to green employment exist alongside the Balkan section of the EGB. A few of those have been synthesized in this report.

Figure 3-26 Local residents reached by the project in Kalna, Serbia. Source: TEAM Association



In Serbia, one project related to raising awareness on circular economy in the tourism sector has recently been launched by TEAM association, with a focus on the region of Stara Planina. The objective of this project is to create sustainable models of tourism and empower small rural tourism providers and local public utility companies in six villages. By providing local stakeholders with knowledge and basic circular infrastructure to embed CE practices in their daily life, their activities can be less environmentally harmful

while diversifying business opportunities, raising eco-awareness among tourists and growing the local tourism in a sustainable way. To do so, they are adopting a partnership-based approach with local stakeholders (notably food and accommodation services). There has been a strong collaboration with them since before the start of the project and the project team undertakes trainings, meetings and other networking activities. The project will also initiate transboundary cooperation and create a network of Stara planina communities with small mountain communities in Bulgaria and North Macedonia located on the EGB that share similar background and issues and which are interested to benefit from tourism development and to safeguard nature through CE practices. Ultimately, the project team hopes that the area can become a pilot place and that its successes and lessons learnt can be replicated in other areas.

In North Macedonia, one project focused on awareness raising to enhance public support for the protection of a protected area in Jablanica. One finding from the project was that although some local residents initially mostly saw the downsides of having protected areas, awareness raising contributed to making them understand the economic benefits of nature protection. Overall, there was a high level of support for the establishment of the protected area (92% support). Residents believed that the protected area could provide opportunities for local economic development, employment, tourism development, and the branding of products from Jablanica. Notably, some local residents said they would rent rooms to tourists, work as tourist guides or sell local products if the opportunity arises, highlighting the readiness of the local rural population to harness the business opportunities that would arise from the establishment of the protected area.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁷ Brajanoska et al. (2022) Opportunities and challenges in sustainable development and nature protection on site: 'The opinion of those left behind - Jablanica Mt'. Poster presented at the 2022 BESTbelt Conference, Ulcinj.

In the Dadia Forest in Greece, WWF Impact Ventures implemented a project which aimed to explore new business models which support vulture habitat restoration in this region. This forest is a key feeding and breeding ground for European raptor birds, including the only remaining colony of the endangered Black vulture in the Balkan peninsula. The vultures need open space to locate dead animals to

Figure 3-27 Dadia Forest, Greece. Source: Visit Greece.gr



feed on, but with the decrease in free-grazing livestock and the abandonment of small scale agriculture, the openings in the forest become lesser and smaller contributing to the decrease of food availability for vultures. This is a specific instance in which fauna is supported by human intervention to prevent forest expansion. Several business ventures were supported, including for nut production, educational tours, manufacture of bee products and herbs, etc.¹⁰⁸

On Lake Atanasovsko, located in Bulgaria close to the Black Sea, maintenance of the traditional salt production and restoration of suitable habitats and species was conducted under a LIFE project. Environmentally friendly business was also supported to create new products, for instance chocolate with sea salt from the Atanasovsko Lake Coastal Lagoon, soap with lye, Fleur de sel, etc. All products associate the origin of the salt with the protected area. (LIFE11 NAT/BG/000362, abbreviated as “The Salt of Life”).¹⁰⁹

Another example in Bulgaria relates to the promotion of alternative uses of forests is found in Kosti State Forestry Unit in Strandzha Mnts. A total of 130 beehives located in open forest spaces produce honey, and the production of wax foundation sheets from their own wax (a necessary requirement for organic beekeeping) and bee pollen has also been developed. The honey of Strandzha has been granted a certificate of geographical origin and five beekeepers are producing honey according to the EU standards. Further, they are applying for a certification of bee pollen product from Strandzha region. This is one of the approaches for diversifying the sources of income of the forest farms and changing the way of forest management.^{110,111}

Spotlight best practice: the new Greek tourism strategy to 2030

The example of the new Greek tourism strategy to 2030 is a best practice of how to develop a tourism strategy with sustainable tourism as a central component, and which by doing so seeks to reap the economic benefits of tourism while seeking to address or prevent its negative environmental impacts.

Tourism accounts for 21% of Greece’s GDP and 20% of its total employment, making tourism a central sector of its economy. Notably, tourism is heavily concentrated along the coastline and on its islands,

¹⁰⁸ WWF (n.d.) Conservation business challenge in Greece. Available at: <https://wwf-impact.ventures/greece>

¹⁰⁹ Salf of Life (2018) Layman's report of the Salt of Life project. Available at: https://saltoflife.biodiversity.bg/en/Layman_s_report_of_the_Salt_of_Life_project-p943

¹¹⁰ Bulgarian Biodiversity Foundation (n.d.) ДГС - Кости за производството на мед и други пчелни продукти. Available at: <https://biodiversity.bg/bg/DGS-Kosti-za-proizvodstvoto-na-med-i-drugi-pchelni-produkti.p1882>

¹¹¹ Zlateva, D (2017) Приходи от манов мед реализира Горското стопанство в Кости. Available at: <https://bnr.bg/burgas/post/100888221/prihodi-ot-manov-med-realizira-gorskoto-stapanstvo-v-kosti>

whereas the EGB area of the country is almost exclusively inland. Due to its strong popularity with tourists, Greece faces environmental issues linked to mass tourism, and lots of jobs in its tourism industry cannot be considered as green jobs. Being aware of this issue, working towards sustainable tourism while improving natural and cultural resources is one of the top policy priorities of the government, which recently developed a new Greek tourism strategy to 2030.¹¹²

The strategy includes 10 objectives, amongst which is the development of a sustainable tourism model in line with the principles of sustainability, viability and circular economy, but also the objective of creating high-level jobs, a skilled workforce and competitive education and training programmes at international level. Regarding the objective of ensuring that tourism becomes sustainable, several actions are listed to address over-tourism while promoting sustainable tourism, as well as to preserve, protect, promote and develop the natural and cultural heritage of Greece. Regarding the objective of enhancing jobs and skills, the strategy mentions upgrading the education and training system for tourism professionals (including sustainable tourism management of the destination and resources) and strengthening/supporting entrepreneurship and the creation of innovative businesses in tourism.

The Strategy breaks down the country into 36 destinations, for which it individually presents where different types of tourism exist and its potential for development, including for agritourism, ecotourism, sports tourism. The results of this analysis for the four Greek regions which contain parts of the European Green Belt are presented in Table 3-2 below. Notably, the strategy intends to focus ecotourism on enhancing, safeguarding and protecting natural resources and providing integrated, authentic and high-quality ecotourism experiences by targeting the enrichment of the wider tourism product, the expansion of the tourist season and the development of tourism activity in non-established destinations through the attraction of niche customer segments. With regards to sports, some relevant activities focus on the creation of networks of mountaineering routes on existing forest roads and mountaineering trails (especially in mountainous areas without ski resorts and near mountain settlements which have adequate accommodation and catering facilities), and on improving the sustainability and environmental management of sports infrastructure and events and protecting the natural environment.

Table 3-2 Analysis of current types of tourism and its potential for the four Greek regions part of the European Green Belt. Source: Greek Tourism Strategy to 2030

Region	Agritourism	Ecotourism	Sports & activities	Gastronomic tourism	Wellness tourism
Eastern Macedonia & Thrace					
Thrace					
Thassos, Kavala & Drama					
Central Macedonia					
Thessaloniki					
Halkidiki					
Olympus & the coast of Pieria					
Western Macedonia					
Western Macedonia					

¹¹² INSETE (n.d.) Greek Tourism 2030. Available at: <https://insete.gr/greektourism2030/>

Region	Agritourism	Ecotourism	Sports & activities	Gastronomic tourism	Wellness tourism
Mountains and lakes of the West Macedonia					
Epirus					
Ioannina & nearby mountainous area					
Continental coast					

Established / highly developed product	Potential to grow / emerge into an established / highly developed product	Existing or to be developed supporting / secondary product	Product with low importance and growth potential
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Following the analysis presented in the above Table 3-2, the strategy lists specific actions to be undertaken for each of its thematic areas. Here, we will showcase the example of West Macedonia, in which the Prespa National Park is located. In this region, the aim is to develop ecotourism, agritourism, gastro tourism, sports and activities, as well as cultural and religious tourism. Specific actions proposed that could foster green tourism and/or green employment include, for example:

- Infrastructure work: upgrading trails and paths with information and direction, creation of hiking trails for disabled people, upgrade and extend rail connectivity, development of eco-museums around the lakes and mountains of the region, etc.;
- Nature restoration work: design of a strategy and legislative framework for the creation of environmentally friendly accommodation and the promotion of an ecotourism product with economic benefits; strategy for the protection of the natural and cultural heritage from the effects of climate change and pollutants, aiming at the preservation of rare fauna and flora;
- Education and awareness raising: educational programmes and information campaigns for visitors to raise awareness / mobilise environmental awareness and information on flora and fauna species and biodiversity conservation; design and implementation of targeted training programmes according to market needs and gaining professional experience in the tourism sector;
- Promotional work: Creation of an integrated digital ecotourism portal in multiple languages which will be part of the single online tourist portal for the destination.

While these activities do not explicitly mention the creation of jobs, their implementation will require hiring contractors or staff (e.g., to extend the railway network, to design the online platform) or will provided continued work for existing staff. In addition, these activities will indirectly support jobs in surrounding businesses, by developing tourism in the region.

This best practice is an example of how plans can be made to seek to ensure that economic gains in the tourism sector are not made at the expense of environmental sustainability. The Greek strategy is based on an assessment that takes into account the current situation and future potential of its different regions, while having a general vision to ensure a sustainable development of the sector that benefits the environment and society in addition to economic profitability and regional development.

3.2.5 Cross-regional best practices

Some best practices also exist cross-regionally. The most notable example is the the Iron Curtain Trail, also known as EuroVelo 13, a cycling trail (part of which already operational, part of which still under development) spanning 10,400 km and 20 countries, from Norway to Turkey. As implied in its name, this cycling route follows the former Iron Curtain, and as such greatly overlaps with the European Green Belt.¹¹³ In 2014, the European Commission funded a project which aimed to diversify the European tourism offer and to contribute to economic regeneration and job creation in declining (post-) industrial regions through the promotion of a touristic product based on this cycling route.¹¹⁴

To conclude on best practices found across the EGB and beyond in Europe (presented in sections 3.1 and 3.2, some reflections on challenges and success factors are presented in the textbox below. Notably, the challenges and success factors likely to be faced by actors along the EGB are similar to those that could be faced in other regions.

Textbox 3-1 Challenges and success factors for creating green jobs along the EGB

Our assessment of green job creation examples along the EGB and in Europe more broadly suggests that having **the financial capacity to maintain a job in the medium- to long-term** is both a challenge and a key factor of success.

We observe that many green jobs that we reported along the EGB were created and are sustained via a form of public funding, and cease to exist or are threatened when that public funding ends. This situation is in no way specific to the EGB, and is on the opposite common to many green jobs. The fundamental reason for this is that green jobs, specifically those fulfilling demanding environmental requirements such as those specified in § 2.2 above, provide ecosystem services, which are ‘public goods’ as defined by economic theory. ‘Public goods’ are goods that are both non-excludable and non-rivalrous. For such goods, users cannot be barred from accessing or using them for failing to pay for them (= non-excludable). Also, use by one person neither prevents access of other people nor does it reduce availability to others (= non-rivalrous). As such, there is no easy or low-cost technical nor institutional means to generate income from restricting access to that good only to those people or institutions that have paid for it. There is hence no simple means to generate a private business based on the selling of the ecosystem services generated by the green jobs being discussed in this report.

One of the few means to generate a persistent income from the generation of ecosystem services in a given region would be to establish a **toll** to enter and remain in the area in which these ecosystem services are provided. For the sake of social fairness and local acceptability, such a toll should have very different rates according to the income of the persons concerned, and of their usual place of residence, with local inhabitants being essentially free from any payment. Such a solution however only works if the number of access routes to the area is limited, so that toll gates be limited in numbers (and hence in cost) and fraud opportunities similarly restricted. In practice, this is hardly possible.

If a project is publicly funded, the jobs directly associated with the implementation of the project will cease to exist when the project ends, with only the jobs indirectly created standing a chance of

¹¹³ EuroVelo (n.d.) EuroVelo 13: Iron Curtain Trail. Available at: <https://en.eurovelo.com/ev13>

¹¹⁴ EuroVelo for professionals (2020) EuroVelo 13: Iron Curtain Trail (ICT). Available at: <https://pro.eurovelo.com/projects/2020-03-eurovelo-13---iron-curtain-trail-ict>

being sustained for longer (e.g., increased tourism revenues stemming from a nature restoration project). Showcasing how and the extent to which a project has contributed to the provision of ecosystem services and regional employment may in certain instances help in ensuring a continued public financial support. The examples presented in this report have highlighted that private funding can be obtained in certain instances: the development of eco-tourism, the sale of products containing natural resource present in the region, or by securing private finance for the project (Payments for Ecosystem Services). While in the case of PES funding is also dependent on the continued support of a donor, in the case of eco-tourism and the sale of products, green jobs can be maintained as long as the businesses remain financially viable.

Partly linked to the question of financing is the challenge of **balancing the environmental sustainability of a project and job creation**. To a certain degree, there is always a trade off between the protection of natural habitats for wildlife and economic activity in these areas, which always involves human disturbance even in industries considered greener (e.g. promoting cycling tourism still involved creating cycling path and providing services along the way). Creating green jobs beyond the protection, restoration or management of natural areas (e.g., in sustainable agriculture, sustainable forestry or sustainable tourism) can overall be considered a suitable way to boost regional employment in a way that is the least harmful as possible to the environment and not reliant on public funding, and could improve environmental performance if it involves a shift from more environmentally-harmful jobs. Nevertheless, all impacts should be taken into account during the design of a project to ensure that the objectives of long-term job creation and environmental sustainability can be mutually pursued. Similarly, the quantitative limits to human activities in a given area, even of those rated as ‘green’, need to be considered in the planning of such economic activities, because of their environmental impacts. As a rule, the **total** environmental impacts of economic activities in the area should not exceed the regenerating capacities of that area. This goes in the direction of limiting the environmental impact **per person.day** of economic activity (and hence of ‘greening’ the activity and its lifecycle impacts), but also of limiting the **total number of person.days** of economic activity in the area per year (and even per day during particularly sensitive moments of the year, such as that of the breeding of specific animal species). The limitation of the environmental impact per person.day goes in the direction of social fairness, as it opens the enjoyment of the area to the largest possible number of people.

Finally, **sound project design is of crucial importance for a successful project implementation**. This point is true for all projects, not only those with green job creation as an objective. Nevertheless, some elements are especially important to take into account when seeking to create green jobs or green existing employment. Assessing the opportunities and constraints linked to green job creation in a specific location (existing enterprises, knowledge and skills, political support or opposition to specific initiatives, etc.), including via stakeholder consultation, would be needed. For this reason, we recommend a step-by-step approach including a status quo analysis in the recommendation section (4.2). The future potential (3.3) and practical recommendations (4.1) should be used as a starting point by EGB actors, to start reflecting on what type of activities could be undertaken to foster green jobs in their parts of the EGB.

3.3 Future potential

Based on the assessment of the current situation along the EGB and the desk research conducted on best practices, several ways in which green jobs could be created in the regions of the EGB have been identified:

- Creating employment in nature conservation and/or restoration activities by expanding protected areas or allocating more resources to existing protected areas;
- Developing nature tourism / sustainable tourism; and
- Greening jobs in the agricultural and forestry sectors, and creating jobs in related industries.

3.3.1 Employment opportunities in nature conservation and/or restoration activities

Some opportunities exist to create employment in nature conservation and/or restoration by expanding protected areas or by allocating more funding to the protection and/or restoration of already protected areas. At EU level, it is estimated that restoring 15% of degraded ecosystems in the EU would create between 20,000 and 70,000 jobs.^{115,116} The examples of Belgium and Germany introduced in the benchmarking (section 3.1) also highlighted that many jobs can be created by doing so (also see Textbox 3-2 below for a broad estimate of the potential along the EGB). The jobs created would typically be for positions such as ecologists, foresters, conservation managers, ecological consultants, engineers, hydrologists, etc. In addition, the benchmarking showed that protected areas can contribute to sustain existing jobs (e.g., sustaining fishing activities by enabling fish stocks to recover).

Expanding protected areas would be especially relevant in countries of the European Green Belt where little of the national European Green Belt area is designated as protected, for instance in Romania and Turkey. But expanding protected areas or allocating more resources to the protection of existing ones is also relevant for all EU countries in the context of the new ambitious EU policies in the field of nature protection and restoration (the Biodiversity Strategy to 2030,¹¹⁷ and - linked to that - the Nature Restoration Law, although it is still being negotiated¹¹⁸). For instance, one stakeholder from the German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation¹¹⁹ explained that due to the development and forthcoming implementation of the German action program for natural climate protection, the federal budget for nature conservation will increase twenty-fold, thereby also increasing demand for the following types of experts: (1) professionals in permitting agencies at all levels of responsibility; (2) practitioners in engineering, planning or ecological offices; (3) land users who need specific knowledge; and (4) professionals in educational and consulting institutions who can provide relevant knowledge. This stakeholder however framed this recent development as a challenge, stressing a lack of competent experts and a general decline observed in the number of applicants for advertised positions in the field.

Similarly, the Biodiversity Strategy to 2030 touches upon the need to improve knowledge, education and skills. Some of its pledged actions in that respect focus on encouraging cooperation in education for

¹¹⁵ Dickie, I (2017) Technical support in relation to the promotion of ecosystem restoration in the context of the EU biodiversity strategy to 2020. Report prepared by Eftec for the European Commission, DG Environment.

¹¹⁶ Jobs created to deliver Target 2 of the EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020.

¹¹⁷ European Commission (2020) EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 Bringing nature back into our lives. COM/2020/380 final. Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1590574123338&uri=CELEX:52020DC0380>

¹¹⁸ European Commission (2022) Proposal for a Nature Restoration Law. Available at: https://environment.ec.europa.eu/publications/nature-restoration-law_en

¹¹⁹ Written feedback received in the context of this study

environmental sustainability via guidance and knowledge exchange as well as on training and re-training the workforce across a wide range of sectors via the new Skills Agenda.¹²⁰

Textbox 3-2 Potential for jobs in national parks along the EGB

As mentioned in the section on the Fennoscandian Green Belt, four Finnish national parks located within the EGB supported 854 FTE in 2021, which represent 3.1 FTE / km² of national park. Assuming that the EGB is 12,500 km long and 10 km wide (which is likely to be a conservative estimate as some protected areas along the EGB are much wider), the extrapolation of the Finnish numbers give an estimate of **387,500 FTE**. This number gives a broad indication of the jobs in national parks and other protected areas that could exist along the EGB, if its whole length was protected. It is important to note, however, that the number of jobs per km² could vary based on the type of ecosystem (e.g., less jobs in steep and high mountain ranges where access is limited), the type of services provided (e.g., more jobs where there are visitor centres, paths to maintain, etc.) and also on the type of ecosystem maintenance or restoration activities, if any. Nevertheless, this estimate shows that protecting areas along the EGB could support numerous jobs, especially in rural and more remote areas of the countries it crosses.

3.3.2 Employment opportunities in nature tourism & sustainable tourism

Future potential has been identified in creating new green jobs in tourism (e.g., adventure tourism, nature tourism) as well as in greening existing jobs in the sector. Alongside a development in green tourism, it remains essential to ensure that an unsustainable tourism industry does not grow alongside green tourism as some destinations become increasingly popular, and that existing jobs are greened (i.e., that the existing tourism sector transitions towards a sustainable model).

European countries contribute the most to the global adventure tourism market, which overlaps to a large extent with nature tourism (e.g., caving, climbing, cycling, hiking, hunting, rafting, etc.), and this market is expected to grow further in the next few years.¹²¹ Of relevance to what the regions of the EGB could offer, the demand for staying in remote/off-the-grid areas with basic facilities, for ecological tours focused on educating and informing walkers, for wellness tourism and for sustainable travel experiences is expected to grow in the future.¹²² This type of tourism will likely benefit SMEs - and especially in rural areas, as opposed to large corporations more focused on large-scale tourism (typically in resorts).

In the EGB countries, hiking tends to be either already popular (e.g., in Germany) or becoming increasingly so (e.g., in Eastern European countries), with the Covid-19 pandemic identified as one of the factors that influenced the increased interest in outdoor activities. Hiking is mentioned in almost all of the websites of parks along the EGB. However, these websites offer information to varying extent, from just informing that walking is possible to providing detailed information on routes, information centres, and accommodations and other services. Regions or parks should consider whether they can improve the information and infrastructure (specifically: on the ground marking and maintenance of trails, signaling posts, adapted accommodation) they provide, considering that

¹²⁰ European Commission (2020) EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 Bringing nature back into our lives. COM/2020/380 final. Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1590574123338&uri=CELEX:52020DC0380>

¹²¹ Allied Market Research (2021) Adventure Tourism Market. Available at: <https://www.alliedmarketresearch.com/adventure-tourism-market>

¹²² CBI (2021) The European market potential for walking tourism. Available at: <https://www.cbi.eu/market-information/tourism/walking-tourism/market-potential>

European tourists have been found to like having detailed information about the trip they are planning before going on holidays.¹²³ Moreover, market research in the European context stresses that focusing on the sustainability and naturalness aspect of walking is important to attract tourists, for instance by investing a part of the revenues generated in nature conservation or by presenting walking as a low-carbon-footprint activity.¹²⁴ This should therefore also be taken into account to capitalise on the opportunities hiking offers for regional development and employment.

With regards to cycling tourism (road cycling, mountain biking, family cycling and touring/expeditions), market research in Europe finds that tourists often seek nature-rich destinations, including scenic routes, mountainous areas, lakes and forests. The recent growth in the availability, performance, range, quality and reliability of electrically-assisted bicycles has the effect of increasing the readiness of even moderately-fit cycling tourists to engage in the mountainous / hilly regions that are very frequent along the EGB. In addition, cyclists tend to be interested in sustainability and want to know about the route beforehand (pictures and accurate descriptions).¹²⁵ Cycling tourism could therefore be developed in regions across the whole EGB. Cycle paths are already well-developed in some of them (e.g., Germany, Finland, Estonia, Germany or Czechia) but it could be an opportunity to develop cycling tourism in others (e.g., parks in Romania, Kosovo, Montenegro or Albania) did not mention cycling often on their websites), specifically along the EuroVelo 13 cycling route promoted by the European Cycling Federation (cf. § 3.2.5 above), the course and the purpose of which (to follow the former Iron Curtain) match for a great part those of the EGB. This cycling route could thus be an interesting federating project along a great part of the EGB, connecting not only the nature conservation areas, but also those of lesser natural interest, into a common infrastructure valorising the concept of the EGB, with a low-impact mode of tourism.

To benefit more from adventure tourism opportunities in the future, some countries alongside the EGB should invest in infrastructure and services, and should better communicate the services available in parks. Adventure tourists tend to demand specific services and infrastructures such as cycling/hiking routes or tracks and facilities along the way (hotels, restaurants, etc.).¹²⁶ Lack of information being available online - as observed in some of the Balkan's protected areas - is likely to affect parks' ability to attract tourism, and as such to make the most of the economic and job opportunities linked to extending nature tourism. Importantly, some of this income (e.g., park entrance fees, income from visitor centre) could be invested in increased nature protection or management.

One specific area of effort would consist in the quality labelling of accommodation, along criteria relevant for hikers or cyclists (namely to have a safe place to dry wet clothes and to store the bicycles, to the access to basic cycle repair tools and air pumps, the acceptance of one-night stays, the provision of a healthy and energy-rich breakfast, of lunch sandwiches and of a dinner within walking distance). The German cyclist federation ADFC already has developed such a label for the German market, called 'Bett & Bike' and expands it abroad in Europe, including to some countries along the EGB (Italy,

¹²³ CBI (2021) The European market potential for walking tourism. Available at: <https://www.cbi.eu/market-information/tourism/walking-tourism/market-potential>

¹²⁴ CBI (2021) The European market potential for walking tourism. Available at: <https://www.cbi.eu/market-information/tourism/walking-tourism/market-potential>

¹²⁵ CBI (2022) The European market potential for cycling tourism. Available at: <https://www.cbi.eu/market-information/tourism/cycling-tourism/market-potential>

¹²⁶ CBI (2022) The European market potential for cycling tourism. Available at: <https://www.cbi.eu/market-information/tourism/cycling-tourism/market-potential>

Croatia, Poland and Austria)¹²⁷. A similar label exists in France (Accueil Vélo¹²⁸) and in Belgium - Wallonia (Bienvenue Vélo)¹²⁹.

Similarly, the quality of the hiking or cycling trails along the EGB could be officially certified, respectively using the 'Leading Quality Trails - Best of Europe' label¹³⁰ promoted by the European Ramblers' Federation¹³¹ for hiking, or by adapting the quality certification schemes of the German cycling federation ADFC for trails ('Qualitätsradrouten')¹³² or for whole regions ('RadReiseRegionen'),¹³³ or by relying on the European Certification standard used to certify EuroVelo routes.¹³⁴ These certifications consider the quality of marking, the information available online, the continuity of the trail and its safety vs. motorised traffic, the quality of the trail cover and others.

Good communication about tourism activities is also important, notably online (websites, social media platforms). Doing so will result in employment in fields such as construction, communication and marketing, and website development in the short-term, and in employment for guides, equipment rental companies, food and accommodation services in surrounding areas in the longer-term.

Besides active tourism, activities such as birdwatching tours, photography tours or wellness centres could create employment and benefit the surrounding rural economy by attracting visitors. The desk research conducted did not identify many parks in which such activities take place (or perhaps these were not advertised online); nevertheless, the potential exists in many - if not most - parks along the EGB.

Finally, in complement to creating new employment, there exists a large potential to green existing jobs in tourism. A specific care should be taken here, as actors such as hotels, restaurants, tour operators, etc. can and often have a detrimental impact on the environment (e.g., generation of unrecycled or improperly recycled waste and wastewater, noise, light at night), including via the consumption of a significant amount of natural resources (water, energy, soil). A quantitative analysis must therefore be performed beforehand, in order to assess the level of environmental pressure that the environment in each specific region of interest is able to sustain over the long term (also factoring in the expected impacts of climate change, specifically on the water resource), on average over the year, at specifically sensitive moments in the year (e.g. the reproduction period of specific species) and as short-term peaks. In a second step of the process, the total number of visitors at any given moment in time, and the average environmental pressure per visitor (determined in particular by the surface of the rooms and the equipment level of the accommodation, e.g. air conditioning, swimming pool, spa) should be set under the threshold values coherent with the maximum acceptable total environmental pressure determined in the previous step. Ideally, these quantitative limits should be legally-binding for each region considered along the EGB. Finally, raising awareness in the industry about its environmental impacts and circular solutions - as what is being done in the project in Serbia mentioned in the benchmarking, is crucial to accompany regulatory constraints.

¹²⁷ Bettundbike (n.d.) Homepage. Available at: <https://www.bettundbike.de/en/>

¹²⁸ <https://en.francevelotourisme.com/tips-and-advice/accueil-velo>

¹²⁹ <https://www.tourismewallonie.be/label-bienvenue-velo>

¹³⁰ ERA (n.d.) LQT-BE. Available at: <https://www.era-ewv-ferp.org/lqt-be/>

¹³¹ ERA (n.d.) Homepage. Available at: <https://www.era-ewv-ferp.org/>

¹³² ADFC (n.d.) ADFC-Qualitätsradrouten. Available at: <https://www.adfc.de/artikel/adfc-qualitaetsradrouten>

¹³³ ADFC (n.d.) ADFC-RadReiseRegionen. Available at: <https://www.adfc-radtourismus.de/radtouren/radreiseregionen>

¹³⁴ EuroVelo for professionals (2022) The European Certification Standard: A tool for improving the quality of EuroVelo routes. Available at: https://pro.eurovelo.com/news/2022-01-21_the-european-certification-standard-a-tool-for-improving-the-quality-of-eurovelo-routes

3.3.3 *Greening jobs in agriculture and forestry, and creating jobs in related industries*

As aforementioned, agriculture and forestry are sectors that can adversely affect the natural environment; however, in some instances these activities can be greened so that their impacts are minimised, or even become beneficial. What constitutes a green job in these instances has to be carefully defined. Some activities such as paying farmers to grow certain plants and keep some of their land for nature protection, or the adoption of strict sustainable forestry management practices in areas where large monoculture plantations are currently located would constitute a greening of jobs. A specific mention of such example in the European Green Belt is mentioned in the section above on Central European Green Belt, under which in Germany specific plants are being grown for biogas plants to prevent monoculture and support native biodiversity.

In addition, new jobs could be created in related industries. For instance, in coastal areas of the Baltic countries, industries related to edible bivalve and seaweed harvesting could offer promising potential (as introduced in the benchmarking). The manufacture of other products could be fostered in other regions, for instance those derived from sustainable beekeeping (e.g., honey, beauty products, etc.).

In forestry, and in areas of the European Green Belt where the designation of a protected area cannot be granted (e.g., due to an absence of political support), tree nurseries or the manufacture of wood-based products could be fostered, as long as this is done in accordance to strict sustainable forest management practices, to ensure that ecosystems are not adversely affected. Some Guidelines on the Promotion of Green Jobs in Forestry have been written by the UNECE, in collaboration with FAO and Forest Europe, which could be useful for actors to consider.¹³⁵ These partly focus on how to train and re-skill workforce in sustainable forest management and on taking measures to seize expanding, new economic and job opportunities for forestry beyond timber production arising in a green economy.

¹³⁵ UNECE/FAO/Forest Europe (2021) Guidelines on the Promotion of Green Jobs in Forestry. Available at: <https://foresteurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/guidelines-promotion-green-jobs-forestry.pdf>

4 Creating green jobs along the European Green Belt

- **Six practical recommendations that can be directly implemented by the European Green Belt network have been identified:**
 1. Communication activities targeted at relevant stakeholders
 2. Assistance for the development of sustainable tourism
 3. Support the greening of agriculture and forestry jobs
 4. Labelling of trails and services around them
 5. Use the EGB logo as a quality label
 6. Obtaining more financing for projects that benefit green jobs
- **Four additional recommendations focus specifically on public authority lobbying / cooperation:**
 1. Advocate for the creation of additional protected areas along the EGB
 2. Advocate for limitations on mass tourism
 3. Advocate for policies to attract workers to relevant sectors
 4. Advocate for a strategic shift towards green jobs to support rural employment
- Beyond these generic recommendations, the next steps to be implemented by people in charge of promoting the EGB in each region or country should focus on further examining which recommendations are most relevant to take forward at local or regional level, and to design and roll out plans to implement the most promising actions to create green jobs and green industries along the EGB. Beyond these generic recommendations, the **next steps** to be implemented by actors in charge of promoting the EGB in each region or country **should focus on further examining which recommendations are most relevant to take forward at local or regional level, and to design and roll out plans to implement the most promising actions to create green jobs and green industries along the EGB.**

4.1 Practical recommendations on how to promote the creation of green jobs in the European Green Belt area

4.1.1 *Recommendations that can be directly implemented by the European Green Belt network*

Stemming from the results of this study, some recommendations focusing on actions, projects and policies to be implemented directly by organisations that are members of the European Green Belt network are presented below, and then summarized in a visual. Each recommendation is linked to one or more of the three types of future potentials identified in section 3.3.

Communication activities targeted at relevant stakeholders

Stakeholders within the European Green Belt network could undertake communication activities to explain to relevant stakeholders (e.g., local businesses, residents of the area, managing authorities of parks, etc.) the benefits that could derive from more nature protection and associated spending, in terms of employment and rural development. This action would therefore increase support for nature conservation and nature restoration, as people would better understand the job-related benefits that can derive from this (in rural areas). This report can be used as a tool to showcase good practices of how to foster green jobs or green existing jobs (e.g., by protecting more areas, developing paths, improving visibility online by ensuring that visitor websites exist and are up-to-date, etc.). Activities could include in-person events such as workshops, meetings, cultural events (e.g., film festivals), etc., but also dissemination of online material (e.g., briefings, guidance documents, etc.).

This recommendation is relevant to:

- Employment opportunities in nature conservation and/or restoration
- Employment opportunities in nature tourism & sustainable tourism

Assistance for the development of sustainable tourism

Another recommended activity is to provide guidance and assistance regarding how to ensure that the development of tourism does not adversely impact the environment (e.g., minimal disruption of ecosystems and wildlife, ensuring new businesses created are respectful of the environment). This assistance can extend to public utility providers (e.g., see case of Serbia). This could also entail facilitating the creation of a network of businesses adhering to sustainable practices like in the Finnish example, with a system of monitored stewardship agreements ensuring that participants design sustainability plans and implement related actions. This action would contribute to helping businesses increase the circularity of their practices and reduce their environmental impacts, which is essential to make the tourism industry transition to more environmentally responsible practices, considering the detrimental impacts of mass tourism on environmental sustainability. Moreover, green tourism could benefit entrepreneurs and SMEs in rural areas where unemployment tends to be higher. More projects could especially seek to target this group of people.

This recommendation is relevant to:

- Employment opportunities in nature tourism & sustainable tourism

Support the greening of agriculture and forestry jobs

Guidance and assistance can also aim to green jobs in agriculture and forestry (e.g., projects, awareness raising, etc.). Some Guidelines on the Promotion of Green Jobs in Forestry have been written by the UNECE, in collaboration with FAO and Forest Europe.¹³⁶ These partly focus on how to train and re-skill workforce in sustainable forest management and on taking measures to seize expanding, new economic and job opportunities for forestry beyond timber production arising in a green economy. These guidelines could be used as a starting point to engage with local stakeholders in the agriculture and forestry sectors. Such activities would be important to ensure that areas of the EGB which are not formally protected, and are unlikely to be in the foreseeable future, are still managed in a way that is as little harmful to biodiversity as possible.

¹³⁶ UNECE/FAO/Forest Europe (2021) Guidelines on the Promotion of Green Jobs in Forestry. Available at: <https://foresteurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/guidelines-promotion-green-jobs-forestry.pdf>

This recommendation is relevant to:

- Greening jobs in agriculture and forestry, and creating jobs in related industries

Expanding labelling of trails and services around them & developing quality labelling

Promoting the installation of sufficient trail labelling contributes to the development of nature-friendly tourism, as proven by best practices presented in this report. In addition to labelling necessary to follow trails, this should include information on what can be found in the surrounding areas via direction / explanation board (e.g., restaurants, shops, accommodation, sights and monuments, etc.), which would increase visitation of nearby sites / businesses. This action should also be accompanied by online promotion (importantly websites, but also social media), so that potential tourists know beforehand that hiking is made accessible in the specific area targeted by this action.

In addition, obtaining a quality label to hiking trails or cycling routes based on pre-defined criteria could be an effective way to showcase the quality of the routes, and by doing so attract more tourism to these areas. For hiking, as aforementioned there is the option to obtain the 'Leading Quality Trails - Best of Europe' label¹³⁷ promoted by the European Ramblers' Federation.¹³⁸ For cycling, a country or even the whole EGB (as part of the EGB quality label described below) could develop a certification system inspired from existing methodologies, for instance those used by the German cycling federation ADFC for trails ('Qualitätsradrouten')¹³⁹ or for whole regions ('RadReiseRegionen')¹⁴⁰, or by relying on the European Certification standard used to certify EuroVelo routes.¹⁴¹

This recommendation is relevant to:

- Employment opportunities in nature tourism & sustainable tourism

Use the EGB logo as a quality label

The logo of the European Green Belt could be used as award to companies and other organizations which undertake sustainable activities, with a definition to be aligned with scope of green jobs of this study. This system would reward green companies and - by doing so - may help their businesses thrive (e.g., by attracting more clients). It may also push other companies to invest in green activities in order to get the logo and reap similar benefits as their competitors, hence greening jobs in the area. To succeed, this action would therefore require time and resources to set up a system including criteria for obtaining the label, but also a monitoring, reporting and verification system to ensure that participating organisations do comply with the requirements set.

This recommendation is relevant to:

- Employment opportunities in nature tourism & sustainable tourism

Obtaining more financing for projects that benefit green jobs

Financing opportunities for relevant projects exist either at EU level, at national or even at sub-national level. Tapping into available financing channels could bring resources to members of the EGB network to directly or indirectly support job creation along the EGB, notably by implementing some of

¹³⁷ ERA (n.d.) LQT-BE. Available at: <https://www.era-ewv-ferp.org/lqt-be/>

¹³⁸ ERA (n.d.) Homepage. Available at: <https://www.era-ewv-ferp.org/>

¹³⁹ ADFC (n.d.) ADFC-Qualitätsradrouten. Available at: <https://www.adfc.de/artikel/adfc-qualitaetsradrouten>

¹⁴⁰ ADFC (n.d.) ADFC-RadReiseRegionen. Available at: <https://www.adfc-radtourismus.de/radtouren/radreiseregionen>

¹⁴¹ EuroVelo for professionals (2022) The European Certification Standard: A tool for improving the quality of EuroVelo routes. Available at: https://pro.eurovelo.com/news/2022-01-21_the-european-certification-standard-a-tool-for-improving-the-quality-of-eurovelo-routes

the recommendations of this report. This action is important considering that sufficient financial capabilities are necessary to launch (ambitious) projects, yet sometimes difficult to obtain. Opportunities for funding could arise from policies and funds in a variety of sectors, for instance the just transition, the post-Covid recovery, nature conservation and restoration in the scope of the implementation of the Biodiversity Strategy and Nature Restoration Law, skill development, etc.

Regarding EU funding, a guide has recently been published by the European Commission on funding to support zero pollution, which is targeted at public and private project promoters who wish to implement projects supporting the EU Green Deal and who seek EU funding.¹⁴² Specifically regarding opportunities linked to the Biodiversity Strategy to 2030, several instruments to support biodiversity-friendly business and finance will be set up.¹⁴³ Here, EGB members could assist stakeholders along the EGB to reap the opportunities linked to these instruments, once they are put in place.

Beyond public funding, the benchmarking has highlighted how Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) schemes can also be used to create or expand protected areas, with ripple effects on green employment. Beyond forests and grasslands, this presents opportunities for other carbon-rich ecosystems such as wetlands.¹⁴⁴ In addition, funding opportunities from private philanthropic organisations could also be explored (e.g., the European Climate Foundation).¹⁴⁵

This recommendation is relevant to:

- Employment opportunities in nature conservation and/or restoration
- Employment opportunities in nature tourism & sustainable tourism
- Greening jobs in agriculture and forestry, and creating jobs in related industries

¹⁴² European Commission (2022) New European green funding guide to support zero pollution. Available at: https://environment.ec.europa.eu/news/new-guide-eu-funding-programmes-environment-2022-08-17_en

¹⁴³ IEEP (2022) The socio-economic benefits of nature restoration in Greece. Policy brief. Available at: https://environment.ec.europa.eu/news/new-guide-eu-funding-programmes-environment-2022-08-17_en

¹⁴⁴ IEEP (2022) The socio-economic benefits of nature restoration in Greece. Policy brief. Available at: https://environment.ec.europa.eu/news/new-guide-eu-funding-programmes-environment-2022-08-17_en

¹⁴⁵ European Climate Foundation (n.d.) Homepage. Available at: <https://europeanclimate.org/>

Figure 4-28 Recommendations that can be directly implemented by the European Green Belt network



4.1.2 Recommendations pertaining to public authority lobbying / cooperation

In addition to actions that can be directly implemented by members of the EGB, influencing policy-making by collaborating with public authorities at various levels is a key way in which these organisations can more indirectly influence the creation of green jobs or the greening of existing jobs along the EGB. In each case, the relevant public authority should be identified, based on their political roles and responsibilities. The relevant authorities are most likely to operate at the national or regional level.

Advocate for the creation of additional protected areas along the EGB

Decisions to create new publicly protected areas are made by public authorities. Members of the EGB could advocate for the creation of additional protected areas along the EGB by highlighting their benefits for rural employment (economic and social benefits) in addition to the environmental ones. In some cases, it may also be important to advocate for the reinforcement of capabilities to better protect and/or manage protected areas, or restore degraded habitats. One way to find out if this may be needed could be to study the status of the Natura 2000 areas in terms of habitat quality and species and investigate the reasons why specific protected areas have poor conservation status.

This recommendation is relevant to:

- Employment opportunities in nature conservation and/or restoration

Advocate for limitations on mass tourism

As aforementioned in various parts of this report, while nature-friendly tourism represents an opportunity for boosting rural jobs and local economies, tourism is not inherently sustainable. On the contrary, mass tourism has had serious environmental impacts and is often based on unsustainable levels of resource consumption. To transition to sustainable models of tourism, EGB members should advocate for the establishment of clear public strategies on sustainable tourism. One way to ensure that tourism does not have adverse impacts would be to advocate for quantitative limitations to the total environmental footprint of tourism activities in the EGB regions of high natural interest. In addition, public authorities could establish contracts of good stewardship with businesses settled in the nature protected areas (as in the Finnish example), with clear limitations on their average and peak environmental footprint, and adequate control and sanction mechanisms in case of non-compliance. Making people pay for access to protected areas is another way to gain funding from tourism that can be channeled into the protection of these areas and would limit mass tourism, but this solution raises questions related to equitable access to nature. One way to address this problem could be to make access cheaper or free for local residents, meaning that only tourists would need to pay.

This recommendation is relevant to:

- Employment opportunities in nature tourism & sustainable tourism

Advocate for policies to attract workers to relevant sectors

Public policy has a strong role to play in ensuring that demand for workers is matched by a sufficient supply. Members of the EGB could lobby public authorities so that: (i) green jobs are properly integrated into policies for inclusive employment (i.e., targeted at young people, people with disabilities, people who face difficulties finding employment, etc.); (ii) opportunities for green jobs and green skills are properly integrated in key sectoral policies (e.g., strategies on sustainable tourism, strategies on nature restoration); and (iii) policies related to education and training are formulated based on which types of jobs are most expected to grow in the future (e.g., job opportunities linked to nature restoration are expected to spike).

This recommendation is relevant to:

- Employment opportunities in nature conservation and/or restoration
- Employment opportunities in nature tourism & sustainable tourism
- Greening jobs in agriculture and forestry, and creating jobs in related industries

Advocate for a strategic shift towards green jobs to support rural employment

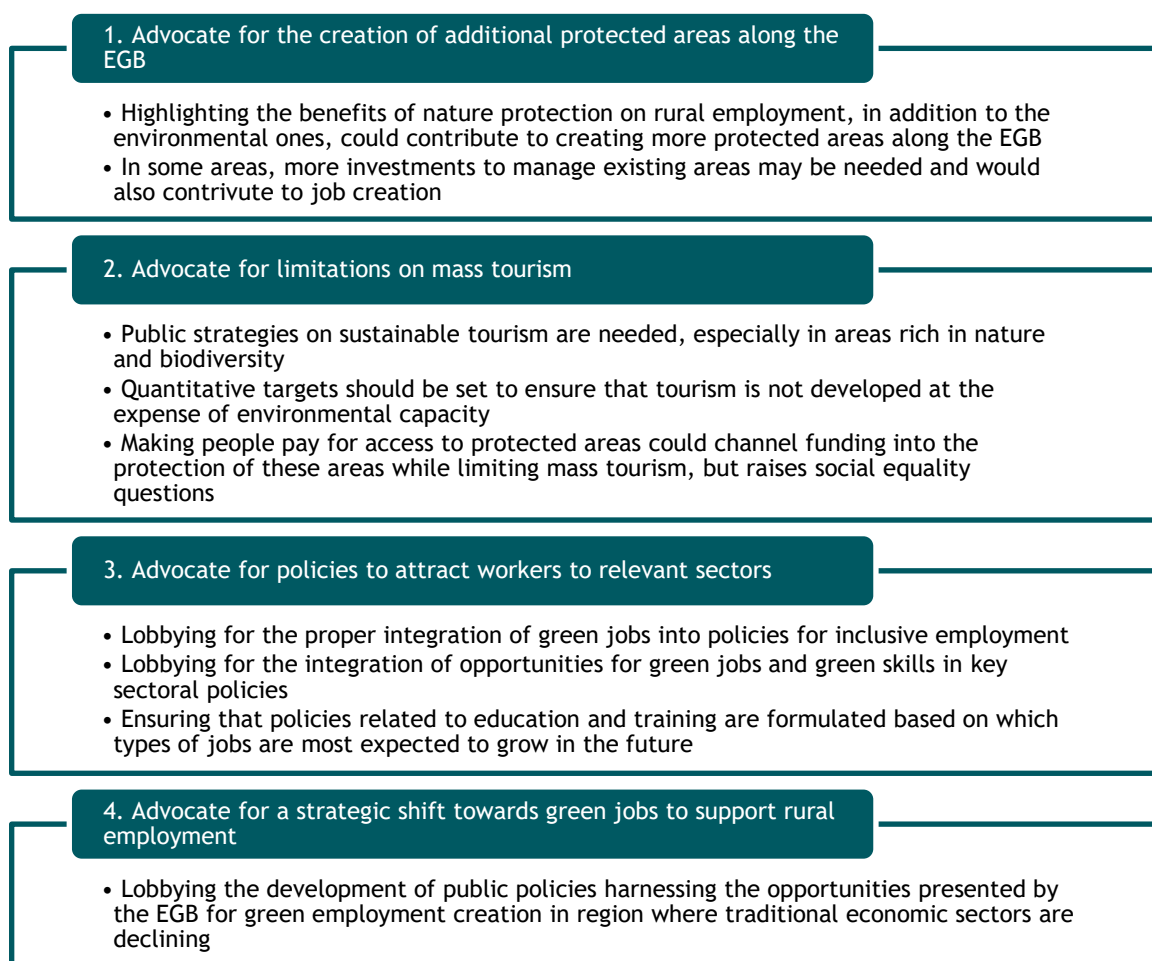
Public policy can also play a role in facilitating the economic transition of geographical areas. This is especially relevant when traditional industries are declining (e.g., coal-mining regions). In such cases, members of the EGB could advocate for the development of public policies harnessing the opportunities presented by the EGB for green employment creation. Examples from Belgium and Germany in benchmarking show that doing so can create a lot of employment in affected regions. The example of the EuroVelo 13 is another good practice in this respect, although no quantification of its job impact has been found.

This recommendation is relevant to:

- Employment opportunities in nature conservation and/or restoration

- Employment opportunities in nature tourism & sustainable tourism
- Greening jobs in agriculture and forestry, and creating jobs in related industries

Figure 4-29 Recommendations pertaining to public authority lobbying / cooperation



4.2 Recommendations on potential next steps

This section is focused on the **process** leading to the implementation of the practical recommendations listed above (in § 4.1). This process applies to any of the content listed above. This section lists recommendations on potential next steps on the short-, medium- and long-term, based on the analysis presented in the previous sections of this report. The steps to follow are described, but decisions related to the specific content of the action (e.g. from the list of § 4.1) will need to be made on a case-by-case basis by actors involved in the design of a project/initiative, based on a local analysis of context and potential.

4.2.1 Short-term

The scope of this study was somewhat high-level: it focused on examining the current and future opportunities along the EGB but did not allow the project team to delve into the specificities of each of the many countries of the EGB. Countries along the EGB are diverse in terms of natural but also socio-economic and political characteristics, meaning that the steps needed to create green jobs in one country may not apply to another. This report identified a number of practical recommendations

(§ 4.1), and the first step for actors wishing to either create green jobs or to green existing jobs in their respective country or region is to further examine whether what is suggested in this report as recommendation is already in place, whether it is something lacking or to be improved, and whether it would be feasible to implement in the given location (e.g., there may be some constraints relating to geography, political will, stakeholder opinions, conflict with other initiatives being developed, etc.).

4.2.2 Medium- and long-term

Once a more local analysis of what is already in place, what is lacking and what is in need of improvement is completed, stakeholders should reflect on: what actions should be prioritized and at what level they should be implemented, securing funding necessary to implement actions, and agree on specific steps and timeline. The outcomes of this reflection should be incorporated into a guiding document (i.e., a roadmap), ideally also incorporating indicators to track progress in implementing action. This focus on green jobs could be incorporated to existing strategies or roadmaps.

4.2.3 Synthesis

A synthesis of recommended steps, as introduced in sections 4.2.1 and 4.2.2, is presented below.

Short-term actions: status quo analysis

1. Context assessment

- Investigate if actions listed in section 4.1 are already in place, whether it is something lacking or something to be improved. This can be done by undertaking a desk research and stakeholder consultations (e.g., with relevant business actors, public authorities, park and nature areas managers, etc.).

2. Feasibility assessment

- Investigate the feasibility to implement the action(s) in the given location (e.g., assess relevance of constraints relating to geography, political will/opposition, existing enterprises, knowledge and skills, stakeholder opinions, conflict with other initiatives being developed, etc.) via a desk research on existing policies and stakeholder consultations.

Medium- to long-term actions: Prepare action plan based on status quo analysis

3. Identify priority actions and the level at which they should be implemented

- Priority actions should be feasible and with relatively high potential for green job creation, compared to other options. The number of actions will depend on internal capacity of the implementing organization(s) (e.g., time, network, capacity to fund, etc.)
- The level at which the action should be implemented will depend on what the action is and what resources are available. For instance:
 - Actions related to public authority lobbying should be targeted at the most relevant public authority:
 - Creation of protected areas is usually regulated at the national level
 - Employment policy is often national, with some degree of regional leeway for implementation
 - Tourism policy can be set at national or regional level. However, more local strategies could also be envisaged.
 - Actions related to developing sustainable tourism could be very localized or broader, depending on the local needs and capacity of the implementing organization. It may be

preferable to start at a small scale and then broaden the scope of an initiative, in order to minimize risks and ensure that the project can develop based on progress and lessons learnt from early implementation.

4. Identify relevant stakeholders

- Stakeholders can be divided into two types: those who will be involved in the implementation of the project, and those that will not be directly involved but who will be affected (target audience or more indirectly). Roles and responsibilities for each actor involved in the implementation of the project should be well defined and agreed upon before it starts.
- Stakeholders potentially affected should be identified via a stakeholder mapping exercise. Based on how they will be affected, the project team may decide to engage with them prior or during the project. This step is especially important if the project has a target audience (e.g., engaging local residents and businesses if you wish to promote sustainable tourism at a specific location) or if opposition may be expected from some stakeholders. To involve businesses, communicating how environmental sustainability can benefit the long-term profitability of their business is key.

5. Securing funding to implement actions

- This step should be conducted partly in parallel with the two steps above as funding is often a key limitation to project scope.
- A form of public funding is often necessary to fund public goods such as the provision of ecosystem services, nature spaces or biodiversity protection, which renders such project and associated jobs dependent on continued public funding. Conversely, the more private funding, the more long-term a job will be, on condition that the business is financially profitable. Private funding can derive from:
 - Eco-tourism and sale of products containing natural resource present in the region (with the caveat of not overloading the ecosystem resilience): in such cases, project may be reliant on public funding but salaries for jobs created would be paid by the employers.
 - PES or private philanthropic institutions: this type of funding is especially interesting for the creation of jobs primarily focused on nature protection and restoration, but with the caveat that the funding structure is similar to publicly-funded projects (i.e., the jobs are dependent on a sustained external funding source)
- For recommendations on more specific funding avenues (both public and private), see recommendation 6 in section 4.1.1.

6. Agree on specific steps and timeline and prepare guiding document

- Based on the previous points, a guiding document should be prepared and agreed upon, describing at least: project objectives, expected results, list of specific actions to be undertaken roles and responsibilities, affected stakeholders, timeline for actions, budget and financing plan, method and process for follow-up and evaluation of outputs and outcomes.

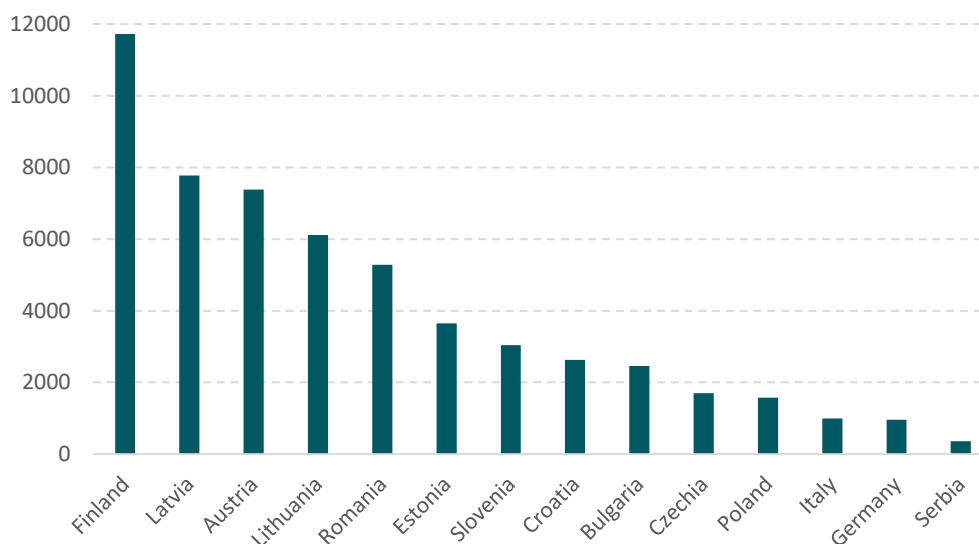
5 Annexes

Annex 1 Employment in relevant green jobs relative to population size (Eurostat data)

Table 5-3 Number of relevant green jobs, population and green job / million inhabitant, 2019 [for EGB countries with available data]. Source: Eurostat [ENV_AC_EGSS1] and [DEMO_GIND]

Country	Number of green jobs	Number inhabitants 2019	Green job/mln inhabitant
Austria	65,404	8,858,775	7,383
Bulgaria	17,239	7,000,039	2,463
Croatia	10,731	4,076,246	2,633
Czechia	18,126	10,649,800	1,702
Estonia	4,829	1,324,820	3,645
Finland	64,699	5,517,919	11725
Germany	79,856	83,019,213	962
Italy	59,609	59,816,673	997
Latvia	14,928	1,919,968	7,775
Lithuania	17,069	2,794,184	6,109
Poland	59,911	37,972,812	1,578
Romania	102,498	19,414,458	5,279
Serbia	2,502	6,963,764	359
Slovenia	6,323	2,080,908	3,039

Figure 5-30 Employment in relevant green job per million inhabitant, 2019 [for EGB countries with available data]. Source: Eurostat [ENV_AC_EGSS1] and [DEMO_GIND]



Annex 2 Qualitative analysis of the main National Parks and other protected areas in the European Green Belt (non-exhaustive list)

For each of the four parts of the EGB, the below tables list major parks present and include a description of the park as well as a summary of the main activities undertaken in the parks and which are likely to support jobs (e.g., park management, tourism opportunities, cultural sights, etc.).

5.1.1 Fennoscandian Green Belt

Table 5-4 Description and main activities undertaken in the main National Parks and protected areas within the Fennoscandian Green Belt

Name of park	Description	Main activities
Koli National Park (Finland) ¹⁴⁶	30 km ² ; lake surrounded by forests and meadows	Forest management, restoration of forests and mires, tourism opportunities (hiking, snowshoeing, alpine skiing, horse riding, fishing, bird watching, mushroom and berry picking, canoeing, rowing, sailing, cycling, swimming, guided tours, rental of huts, camping and other accommodations)
Ulvinsalo Strict Nature Reserve (Finland) ¹⁴⁷	25 km ² ; forest with streams and small marches	Conservation and nature research
Patvinsuo National Park (Finland) ¹⁴⁸	105 km ² ; marshland area including a lake, sandy beach, mires and boreal forest	Nature conservation and restoration, tourism opportunities (hiking, birdwatching, canoeing, guided tours, several types of accommodation, skiing, fishing, mushroom and berry picking, cycling, swimming)
Oulanka National Park (Finland) ¹⁴⁹	270 km ² ; pine forests, river valleys with sandy banks and rapids, vast mires.	Nature conservation and monitoring, tourism opportunities (hiking, snowshoeing, skiing, birdwatching, kayaking, guided tours, fishing, mushroom and berry picking, cycling, camping)
Urho Kekkonen National Park (Finland) ¹⁵⁰	2,550 km ² ; source and pine forests, mires and wetlands	Nature conservation and management, education via volunteering opportunities (Junior Ranger camps, events), tourism opportunities (hiking, cross-country skiing, trekking, cycling, fishing, bird watching, hunting, mushroom and berry picking, canoeing, horseback riding)
Tsarmitunturi Wilderness Area (Finland) ¹⁵¹	153 km ² ; Finland's northernmost uniform spruce forest, with ridges and small rivers	Tourism opportunities (hiking, cross-country skiing, fishing, hunting, mushroom and berry picking, stays in wilderness huts, guided tours, equipment rental)

¹⁴⁶ National Parks (n.d.) Koli National Park. Available at: <https://www.nationalparks.fi/kolinp>

¹⁴⁷ Ymparisto (2020) Ulvinsalon alue. Available at: [https://www.ymparisto.fi/fi-FI/Luonto/Suojelualueet/Natura_2000_alueet/Ulvinsalon_alue\(5360\)](https://www.ymparisto.fi/fi-FI/Luonto/Suojelualueet/Natura_2000_alueet/Ulvinsalon_alue(5360))

¹⁴⁸ National Parks (n.d.) Patvinsuo National Park. Available at: <https://www.nationalparks.fi/patvinsuonp>

¹⁴⁹ Luontoon (n.d.) Oulangan kansallispuisto. Available at: <https://www.luontoon.fi/oulanka>

¹⁵⁰ National Parks (n.d.) Urho Kekkonen National Park. Available at: <https://www.nationalparks.fi/urhokekkonennp>

¹⁵¹ Luontoon (n.d.) Tsarmitunturin erämaa-alue. Available at: <https://www.luontoon.fi/tsarmitunturi>

Name of park	Description	Main activities
Natsional'nyy Park Paanayarvi (Russia) ¹⁵²	1,044 km ² ; Scandinavian and Russian Taiga ecoregion forest habitats, lakes, and rivers	Nature protection, educational and research activities, tourism opportunities (hiking, fishing, camping)
Pasvik Nature Reserve (Russia) ¹⁵³	166.4 km ² ; boreal forests and wetland	Nature protection and management, research and monitoring, ecological education (with children and adults), tourism opportunities (hiking, museum, guided tours, bird watching)
Kalevalsky National Park (Russia) ¹⁵⁴	744 km ² ; old-growth boreal pine forest	Nature conservation and restoration, monitoring, preservation and restoration of historical and cultural objects, environmental education, research, tourism opportunities (hiking, trekking, guided tours)
Store Sametti - Skjelvatnet (Norway) ¹⁵⁵	74 km ² ;	Reindeer husbandry

5.1.2 Baltic Green Belt

Table 5-5 Overview of protected areas, their ecosystems and main activities within the Baltic Green Belt

Protected area	Description of ecosystems	Main activities
Lahemaa National Park (Estonia) ¹⁵⁶	The total area of the National Park is 747.84 sq km, of which 479.10 sq km of mainland and 268.74 sq km of sea. It is the conservation area for woodland, wetlands and coastal ecosystems, but also semi-natural communities (alvars), geological monuments (the Baltic Klint) and historical and architectural monuments.	Eco-tourism (hiking, cycling, campfire sites), services related to eco-tourism (nature centre), management of the national park (e.g. study trails)
Matsalu National Park (Estonia) ^{157 158}	The park includes the Matsalu Bay and its coastline, the Kasari River delta, and nearly 50 islands and islets, along with the surrounding Väinameri Sea, covering a surface area of 48,860 ha.	Hiking, observation of birds, folk art, sightseeing (churches, manors)
Ķemeru National Park (Latvia) ¹⁵⁹	The area of the national park is 38,165 ha, with the most important natural values being high moss bogs, wet forests, shallow coastal lakes, dunes, meadows, mineral water	KNP Foundation (meadow management, excursion, projects in nature protection/restoration), eco-tourism (services and

¹⁵² Paanajarvi National Park (n.d.) Homepage. Available at: <https://eng.paanajarvi-park.com/>

¹⁵³ Pasvik National Nature Reserve (n.d.) Homepage. Available at: <https://en.pasvik-reserve.ru/>

¹⁵⁴ Wikipedia (2021) Kalevalsky National Park. Available at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kalevalsky_National_Park

¹⁵⁵ No official website accessible

¹⁵⁶ Loodusega Koos (n.d) Laheema National Park. Available at: <https://loodusegakoos.ee/where-to-go/national-parks/lahemaa-national-park>

¹⁵⁷ Visit Matsalu (n.d) Why should you come to Matsalu. Available at: <https://visitmatsalu.ee/en/>

¹⁵⁸ Estonia protected areas (n.d.) About the national park. Available at: <https://kaitsealad.ee/en/protected-areas/matsalu-national-park/about-national-park-1>

¹⁵⁹ Kemeru National Park (n.d.) Homepage. Available at: <http://www.kemerunacionalaisparks.lv/>

Protected area	Description of ecosystems	Main activities
	formation, resting places for migratory birds. The NP also hosts protected animal and plant species.	accommodations, healing facilities, guide services)
Ślowiński National Park (Poland) ¹⁶⁰	The Park has an oblong shape and embraces an about 33 km long stretch of the Baltic coast with a 2 km-wide belt of shallow coastal waters. It is further comprised of sand formations, coastal lagoons as well as mires, meadows, and woodland. The wetland lies on on the migration route of many birds - geese, swans, ducks, waders along the southern coast of the Baltic Sea	Education and research regarding the ecosystem of the park (the Park Scientific Council, monitoring, museum, library, educational publications); eco-tourism (services and attractions, accommodations, hiking/cycling)
Woliński National Park (Poland) ¹⁶¹	The current area of the Park is 10,937 ha, including forest ecosystems covering 42.5%, aquatic ecosystems (42.8%) and non-forest land ecosystems (14.70%).	Education and research regarding the ecosystems of the park, tourism (accommodation, museums, guided tours), fishing and bison demonstration park
Vorpommersche Boddenlandschaft National Park (Germany) ¹⁶²	Covers 786 km ² , out of which 83% are coastal waters and windflats, 8% are forests, 5% are grasslands, 3% are moor and heather and 1% are settlements.	Eco-tourism (hiking, cycling, horse-riding, boating, surfing, fishing, camping), national park management (visitors, ecosystems)
Curonian Spit National Park ¹⁶³	Covers 26,474 ha, out of which 72% are forests. The NP includes 632 plant species, 1,277 animal species and 279 bird species. It was established in 1991 and included on the UNESCO list in 2000.	Eco-tourism (cycling, hiking, bird watching, collection of natural goods), education and excursion services regarding the ecosystem of the NP, visitor centres, management of the NP
Jasmund National Park ¹⁶⁴	Covers 493 ha of beach forests on the Baltic coast.	Eco-tourism (hiking, geochoacing), management of the NP

5.1.3 Central European Green Belt

Table 5-6 Overview of selected protected areas, their ecosystems and main activities within those in the Central European Green Belt

Protected area	Ecosystem	Main activities
Thüringer Schiefergebirge / Obere Saale Nature Preserve (Germany) ¹⁶⁵	The nature preserve is a mountainous conservation park area dotted with castles, caves, campsites & hiking & biking trails. In five very different natural areas, it is home to an	Eco-tourism (hiking, cycling, geocaching, accommodation and other related services); Raising knowledge regarding the nature preserve;

¹⁶⁰ Slowinsky National Park (n.d.) Homepage. Available at: <https://slowinski.pl/en/>

¹⁶¹ Wolinsky National Park (n.d.) Homepage. Available at: <https://wolinpn.pl/>

¹⁶² National Park Vorpommersche Boddenlandschaft (n.d.) Homepage. Available at: <https://www.nationalpark-vorpommersche-boddenlandschaft.de/en/>

¹⁶³ Curonian Spit National Park (n.d.) Homepage. Available at <https://nerija.lrv.lt/>

¹⁶⁴ Nationalpark Jasmund (n.d.) Homepage. Available at <https://www.nationalpark-jasmund.de/en/>

¹⁶⁵ National Park Thüringer Schiefergebirge/Obere Saale (n.d.) Homepage. Available at: <http://www.thueringer-schiefergebirge-obere-saale.de/>

Protected area	Ecosystem	Main activities
	enormous geological and biological diversity.	Education for sustainable development; Internships and volunteering programmes
Bavarian Forest / Sumava National Park (Czechia / Germany) ¹⁶⁶	The NP protects a little-inhabited area of the mountain range. It is covered by the most extensive forest in Central Europe, whose natural composition was, however, changed and today spruce plantations prevail in most of the area. In many places non-native spruce varieties were planted. These are not well adapted to the harsh local climate and are therefore vulnerable to a range of threats, such as strong winds and bark beetle	Management of the NP; Science and research into the flora and fauna of the NP; Eco-tourism (hiking, cycling, water activities, guided tours, information centres, etc.); Ecological education
Podyjí National Park (Czechia) ¹⁶⁷ / Thayatal National Park (Austria) ¹⁶⁸	Podyjí NP, adjacent to Austria's Thayatal NP, together they are referred to as the Inter-National park. It protects near-natural forests along the deep Dyje / Thaya River valley. The well-preserved state of the biome of the park is cited as being unique in Central Europe	Management of the NP; Nature protection; Eco-tourism (hiking / biking trails, accommodation, visitors' centrum) / Eco-tourism (hiking / biking trails, rental place for (e-) bikes, services related to tourism); Research and education; Management of the NP
Záhorie Protected Landscape Area (Slovakia) ¹⁶⁹	The first lowland protected landscape area in Slovakia and protects 275.22 km ² . The western part of the Landscape Area is formed by the Morava River and mainly consists of vast riparian zones and floodplains. The north-eastern part contains sand deposited by aeolian processes, which create dunes. Because of its location, this area is an important route for migrating birds.	Management of the protected area; Environmental education (for the public and students, organisation of specific events); Eco-tourism (hiking and cycling trails)
Lake Neusiedl - Seewinkel National Park (Austria / Hungary) ¹⁷⁰	The NP extends over an area of 97 km ² of the province of Burgenland and protects parts of the westernmost lake of the Eurasian Steppe. The area of the	Eco-tourism (e.g. guided tours, NP centres, etc.);

¹⁶⁶ National Park Sumava (n.d.) Homepage. Available at: <https://www.npsumava.cz/>

¹⁶⁷ National Park Podyjí (n.d.) Homepage. Available at: <https://www.nppodyji.cz/>

¹⁶⁸ National Park Thayatal (n.d.) Homepage. Available at: <https://www.np-thayatal.at/de/pages/start-63.aspx>

¹⁶⁹ Protected area Záhorie (n.d.) Homepage. Available at: <https://chkozahorie.soprs.sk/>

¹⁷⁰ National Park Neusiedler See (n.d.) Homepage. Available at: <https://www.nationalparkneusiedlersee.at/>

Protected area	Ecosystem	Main activities
	NP is a meeting point for different plant and animal species. These include alpine, pannonian, asian, mediterranean and northern European species. This results in a mosaic of environments, including wetlands, herding meadows, meadows, sand steppes and salt areas.	Nature & research of the NP (management of the NP, monitoring of the flora and fauna); Training of citizens and students); Management of the NP (directorate, finances, HR, monitoring, public relations, rangers, etc.)
Órség National Park (Hungary) ¹⁷¹	The NP was established in 2002 with a total area of 440 km ² . The region of the NP takes its name Órség (meaning 'watch post') from the Magyars, who in order to defend the western gates, built watch posts across this land. Over the centuries, the landscape has been shaped by farming on small sections keeping harmony in relations with nature and maintaining diversity.	Eco-tourism (visitors' centres and attractions, accommodations and other tourism-related services, hiking and cycling (learning trails); Gastronomy (local foods, pumpkin seed oil, orchards, etc.); Cultural heritage (belfries, churches, pottery, and National Park Product Seal)
Duna-Dráva National Park (Hungary) ¹⁷²	The NP was founded in 1996 and covers 490 km ² . Majority of the NP is located between the Danube and Drava flood land areas. Black stork and white-tailed eagle populations are of European significance. Seven invertebrate species are found only here in Hungary. Habitats along the Drava host more than 400 protected plants and animals. Species endemic to national park areas include the black hawthorn and the Drava caddis fly.	Management of the NP; Nature conservation (Natura2000 conservation plans, wildlife protection declarations); Eco-tourism (caves, museums on native species of the NP, accommodations and other tourism-related services, learning hiking paths); and Environmental education (e.g. Tettye Education Center of the Danube-Dráva National Park)
Triglav National Park (Slovenia) ¹⁷³	The Triglav National Park extends along the Italian border and close to the Austrian border in the north-west of Slovenia, that is, in the south-eastern section of the Alps. The park covers 840 square kilometres, or 4% of the territory of Slovenia	Hiking, mountain climbing, water sports (canoeing, rafting, kayaking); Organic farming; Education and research into the ecosystems and culture of the NP (info points, museums, mobile information terminals); Management of the NP

¹⁷¹ Órség National Park (n.d.) Homepage. Available at: <https://www.orseg.info/en/index.html>

¹⁷² Duna-Dráva National Park (n.d.) Homepage. Available at: <https://www.ddnp.hu/>

¹⁷³ Triglav National Park (n.d.) Homepage. Available at: <https://www.tnp.si/en/home-2/>

Protected area	Ecosystem	Main activities
Miramare Marine Protected Area ¹⁷⁴	The Miramare MPA has the guardianship of 30 hectares of marine-coastal biodiversity, which is under its complete protection. There are also a further 90 hectares of buffer zone that was established in 1955 by order of the Port Authority, in order to defend the core area from night fishing using fishing lights.	Eco-tourism (snorkelling, diving), research and monitoring, education, awareness raising

5.1.4 Balkan Green Belt

Table 5-7 Description and main activities undertaken in the main National Parks and protected areas within the Balkan Green Belt

Name of park	Description	Main activities
Cheile Nerei - Beușnița National Park (Romania) ¹⁷⁵	367.6 km ² ; Mountainous area with forests, gorges, springs, waterfalls and lakes	Management of the park (incl. protection of Natura 2000 areas), nature camps for school students, tourism opportunities (Hiking, camping)
Djerdap National Park (Serbia) ¹⁷⁶	63,786.5 ha; narrow forested mountain area alongside the Danube, the biggest and longest breakthrough gorge in Europe	Protection, conservation and improvement of the park and its cultural property (e.g., enhancing connectivity), tourism opportunities (hiking, caves and canyons visits, cycling)
Stara Planina National Park (Serbia) ¹⁷⁷	1,140 km ² ; gorges & waterfalls, mountain pastures and forests	Sustainable forestry, silviculture and restoration of degraded forests, forest nursery (incl. sale of seeds), management of nature areas, management of fishing and hunting grounds, research work, tourism opportunities (swimming, hiking, hunting, fishing)
Pelister National Park (North Macedonia) ¹⁷⁸	171.5 km ² ; mountainous area with forests and meadows	Tourism opportunities (excursions and nights in mountain lodges, cycling, winter sports, folklore events, visit of museums and cultural monuments)
Galičica National Park (North Macedonia) ¹⁷⁹	227 km ² ; mountainous area located between two lakes, islands	Scientific research (incl. monitoring), tourism opportunities (hiking, cycling, paragliding, visit of cultural sites, wilderness camping, bird watching)
Mavrovo National Park (North Macedonia) ¹⁸⁰	730.8 km ² ; mountainous area with rivers, forests and lake Mavrovo	Management of the park and its biodiversity, tourism opportunities (hiking, mountaineering, winter sports, accommodations and restaurants, cave visits, fishing, visit of cultural sites)

¹⁷⁴ Miramare Marine Protected Area (n.d.) Homepage. Available <https://www.ampmiramare.it/en/the-miramare-mpa/>

¹⁷⁵ Parcul National Cheile Nerei Beusnita (n.d.) Homepage. Available at: <https://www.cheileneireibeusnita.ro/>

¹⁷⁶ Djerdap National Park (n.d.) Homepage. Available at: <https://npdjerdap.rs/en/>

¹⁷⁷ Srbijašume (n.d.) Homepage. Available at: <https://srbijasume.rs/>

¹⁷⁸ Park Pelister (n.d.) Homepage. Available at: <http://park-pelister.com/>

¹⁷⁹ National Park Galičica (n.d.) Homepage. Available at: <http://galicica.org.mk/en/homepage/>

¹⁸⁰ National Park Mavrovo (n.d.) Homepage. Available at: <https://nprmavrovo.org.mk/en/>

Name of park	Description	Main activities
Sharr Mountain National Park (Kosovo) ¹⁸¹	532.7 km ² ; mountain range	Tourism opportunities (hiking, mushroom picking, wild camping) ¹⁸²
Bjeshkët e Nemuna - National Park (Kosovo) ¹⁸³	630.3 km ² ; mountainous terrain, with numerous lakes, dense deciduous and coniferous forests and alpine landscapes	Tourism opportunities (hiking, mushroom picking, wild camping) ¹⁸⁴
National Park Prokletije (Montenegro) ¹⁸⁵	Mountainous area with jagged peaks, glacial lakes, gorges & springs carpeted in rich flora.	Tourism opportunities (hiking, mountain climbing, visit of cultural sites) ¹⁸⁶
Skadar Lake National Park (Montenegro) ¹⁸⁷	Largest lake of the Balkan Peninsula	Tourism opportunities (hiking, guided tours, fruit/mushroom/herbs picking, kayak/boat rental, bird watching, fishing) ¹⁸⁸
Buna River - Velipoja (Protected Landscape) (Albania) ¹⁸⁹	230.3 km ² ; estuaries and lagoon	Management of the wetland area and its species (incl. actions to prevent over abstraction of water), education on ecosystem services and values
Shebenik-Jabllanicë National Park (Albania) ¹⁹⁰	339.2 km ² ; Forests, shrubs and grasslands with rare plants and animals	Agriculture and livestock rearing, honey production, tourism opportunities (hiking, guided tours, natural caves, visit of cultural sites, camping, special events and festivals)
Valbona Valley National Park (Albania) ¹⁹¹	80 km ² ; Valbona River and its surrounding areas of mountainous terrain, alpine landscapes, glacial springs, deep depressions, rock formations, waterfalls and a valley of dense coniferous and deciduous forest ¹⁹²	Tourism opportunities (hiking, including via guided tours)
Nikaj-Mertur Regional Nature Park (Albania) ¹⁹³	175 km ² ; Alpine landscapes, deep valleys, vertical cliffs, dense coniferous and deciduous forests, small lakes and rivers. ¹⁹⁴	No information available online.

¹⁸¹ No official website accessible

¹⁸² Alper (n.d.) Sharr Mountains National Park. Available at: <https://www.getalper.com/sharr-mountains-national-park/>

¹⁸³ No official website accessible

¹⁸⁴ Alper (n.d.) Bjeshkët e Nemuna National Park. Available at: <https://www.getalper.com/bjeshket-e-nemuna-national-park/>

¹⁸⁵ No official website accessible

¹⁸⁶ Visit Montenegro (n.d.) Prokletije National Park. Available at: <https://www.visit-montenegro.com/destinations/plav/attractions/prokletije/>

¹⁸⁷ No official website accessible

¹⁸⁸ Nacionalni parkovi (n.d.) Cjenovnik za Nacionalni park Skadarsko jezero. Available at: <http://nparkovi.me/cjenovnik-skadarsko-jezero/>

¹⁸⁹ Living Buna (n.d.) Homepage. Available at: <http://livingbuna.org/>

¹⁹⁰ Nature Experience Albania (n.d.) Shebenik-Jabllanicë National Park. Available at: <https://www.nature-experience-albania.com/national-parks/shebenik-jabllanice-national-park/>

¹⁹¹ No official website accessible

¹⁹² Wikipedia (2022) Valbonë Valley National Park. Available at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Valbon%C3%AB_Valley_National_Park

¹⁹³ No official website accessible

¹⁹⁴ Wikipedia (2022) Nikaj-Mërtur Regional Nature Park. Available at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nikaj-M%C3%ABrtur_Regional_Nature_Park

Name of park	Description	Main activities
Parku Kombëtar i Prespës (Albania) ¹⁹⁵	277.5 km ² ; encompasses the country's sections of the Great and Small Prespa Lake	Professional beekeepers, fishers and collectors of medicinal plants, biodiversity conservation, tourism opportunities (hiking, guided tours).
Fir of Hotova National Park (Albania) ¹⁹⁶	343.6 km ² ; hilly and mountainous terrain with numerous valleys, canyons, gorges, rivers and dense deciduous and coniferous forests. ¹⁹⁷	Tourism opportunities (hiking, rafting, thermal baths, visit of cultural sites)
Pindos National Park (Greece) ¹⁹⁸	2,000 km ² ; pine forests, canyons and mountainous areas	Protection and management of the area to promote its ecologic, aesthetic, cultural and local values, education in schools, information sharing and awareness raising, publication of books and brochures, tourism opportunities (hiking, climbing, water sports, swimming, fishing, hunting, visit of cultural sites, collecting herbs, flowers and mushrooms, camping, skiing)
Prespa National Park (Greece) ¹⁹⁹	Alpine meadows, forests of beech and oak, juniper, a lakeside forest, a wetland, settlements, pastures and crops	Wetland management, guarding of the protected area, environmental education, opportunities for tourism (Hiking, mountaineering, cycling, camping, camping, swimming, use of boat, hunting and fishing)
Kerkini Lake National Park (Greece) ²⁰⁰	Nature area centered on a hill-ringed lake & home to many birds	Monitoring, patrolling, environmental education, tourism opportunities (bird watching)
Rodopi Mountain Range National Park (Greece) ²⁰¹	1,700 km ² ; Mountainous area with forests, lakes, rivers & waterfalls	Tourism opportunities (hiking, wildlife watching, guided tours) ²⁰²
Dadia - Lefkimi - Soufliou Forest National Park (Greece) ²⁰³	428 km ² ; pine and oak forests, interrupted by clearings, pastures and cultivated lands	Environmental monitoring, patrolling, awareness raising, forest management (incl. logging), biodiversity protection (incl. supplementary feeding program for vultures, protection of animals), agriculture, viticulture, sericulture, animal husbandry, beekeeping, tourism opportunities (hiking, visit of cultural sites)
Nestos National Park (Greece) ²⁰⁴	Delta landscape of gorges, lagoons & floodplain forests	Scientific monitoring, protection of the natural area, awareness raising, tourism opportunities (hiking,

¹⁹⁵ Prespa National Park (n.d.) Homepage. Available at: <http://prespanationalpark.gov.al/?lang=en>

¹⁹⁶ No official website accessible

¹⁹⁷ Wikipedia (2023) Fir of Hotovë-Dangelli National Park. Available at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fir_of_Hotov%C3%AB-Dangelli_National_Park

¹⁹⁸ Pindosnationalpark (n.d.) Homepage. Available at: <https://www.pindosnationalpark.gr/en/>

¹⁹⁹ Prespa National Park Management Body (n.d.) Homepage. Available at: <https://fdpap.gr/>

²⁰⁰ Greek insiders (n.d.) Lake Kerkini National Park. Available at: <https://greeceinsiders.travel/kerkini-lake/>

²⁰¹ No official website accessible

²⁰² Riverland (n.d.) Rodope Mountain Range. Available at: <https://riverland.gr/rhodope-mountain-range/>

²⁰³ Dadia-Lefkimi-Soufli National Forest Park (n.d.) Homepage. Available at: <https://dadia-np.gr/>

²⁰⁴ National Park of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace (n.d.) Homepage. Available at: <https://fd-nestosvistonis.gr/#>

Name of park	Description	Main activities
		cycling, kayaking, bird watching, horse riding, archery, water park, visit of cultural sites)
Strandzha Nature Park (Bulgaria) ²⁰⁵	1,161 km ² ; temperate forests crossed by ravines, streams and rivers	Conservation and restoration of biological and landscape diversity, educational, promotional, consulting and advertising activities, construction/maintenance infrastructure, scientific and applied research activities, creation and maintenance of database, tourism opportunities (hiking, visit of cultural sites)
Meandri na Biala reka (protected site) (Bulgaria) ²⁰⁶	15.31 km ² ; forest crossed by a river	No information available online.
Ali botush strict nature reserve (Bulgaria) ²⁰⁷	16.38 km ² ; mountain range covered by forests of the endemic Bosnian pine ²⁰⁸	Management of this strictly protected nature area. ²⁰⁹
Belasitsa Nature Park (Bulgaria) ²¹⁰	117.3 km ² ; covers the northern slopes of Belasitsa Mountain, including beech and chesnut forests	Nature management and restoration, educational programs, development of informational material, construction and maintenance of tourism infrastructure, preservation of cultural heritage, monitoring, control of the sustainable use of resources, tourism opportunities (hiking, tree huts and other accommodation, visit of cultural sites)
Pirin National Park and World Natural Heritage Site (Bulgaria)	403.56 km ² ; covers the Northern and Middle parts of Pirin Mountains	Protection of old growth forests of Balkan and other natural features, protection of biodiversity (large carnivores, Balkan chamois, endemic plants and invertebrates), development and maintenance of visitor infrastructure. ²¹¹
Rila National Park and Rilski Monastery Nature Park (Bulgaria)	107.92 km ² ; covers highest parts of Rila Mountains including Musala summit - the highest peak on the Balkan peninsula at 2925 m	Preservation of natural and cultural heritage (mountain ecosystems, rare and threatened plant and animal species, Rilski monastery), maintenance and development of tourist and visitor infrastructure (e.g. visitors centers, hiking trails), tourism opportunities, awareness raising on protected areas and biodiversity conservation. ^{212,213}
İğneada Floodplain Forests National Park (Turkey)	31.55 km ² ; forests intermittently covered by water, lakes	Tourism opportunities (hiking, cave visits, camping, bird watching, canoeing) ²¹⁴

²⁰⁵ Strandzha Nature Park (n.d.) Homepage. Available at: <https://www.strandzha.bg/en/>

²⁰⁶ No official website accessible

²⁰⁷ No official website accessible

²⁰⁸ Wikipedia (2021) Ali Botush Reserve. Available at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ali_Botush_Reserve

²⁰⁹ Bulgaria Travel (n.d.) Ali Botush Reservation. Available at: <https://bulgariatravel.org/ali-botush-reservation/>

²¹⁰ Belasitsa Nature Park (n.d.) Homepage. Available at: <http://www.belasitsa.net/index.php/bg/>

²¹¹ Pirin National Park (n.d.) Homepage. Available at: <https://www.pirin.bg/>

²¹² Rila National Park (n.d.) Homepage. Available at: <https://rilanationalpark.bg/en>

²¹³ Directorate of Rila Monastery Nature Park (n.d.) Homepage. Available at: <https://www.parkrilski-manastir.eu/en/>

²¹⁴ Şengelen, Ö (2022) Exploring lush green floodplain forests of İğneada. Available at: <https://www.dailysabah.com/life/travel/exploring-lush-green-floodplain-forests-of-igneada>

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