

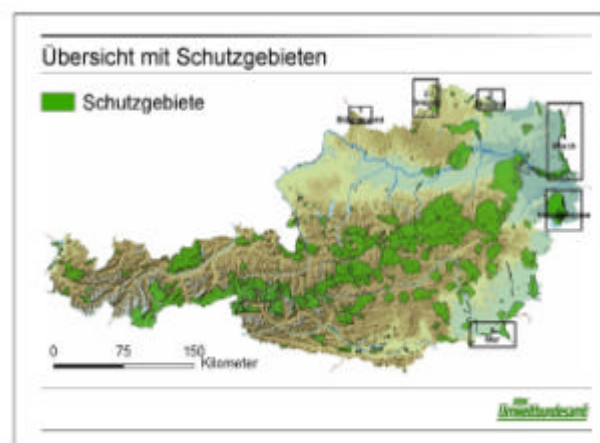
2.14 Transboundary Cooperation in Nature Conservation along the Austrian Green Border

Maria Tiefenbach, Federal Environment Agency, Austria

Before I begin with my comments on the co-operation in nature conservation along the Austrian "Green Belt" I would like to provide you with a brief overview concerning the situation of nature conservation in Austria in general. Much the same as in Germany, nature conservation lies exclusively within the responsibility of the federal states; that is to say, we have nine provincial nature conservation laws, and this means that with regard to the establishment of transborder protected areas we are actually tried and tested insofar as it concerns overcoming borders — inner-provincial borders which can sometimes also be difficult to overcome.

Austria is a relatively small country. Any view of the map shows that we are among the smaller countries with only 84,000 km². We have eight neighbour states, whereby with the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary and Slovenia we share the border to the former East Bloc with four countries. Austria's border to the former East Bloc countries is relatively long with 1,200 km. Outside I've seen that the inner-state border — the "Green Belt" in Germany — also comprises about 1,400 km. This means that we — together with our neighbour states — could contribute a relatively long section of the green belt within Europe.

This map shows the distribution of the protected areas in Austria. The protected areas along the Alps primarily have the highest density and the greatest surface area. The protected areas along the border are especially developed insofar as their borders are defined by the courses of rivers.



Now I would like to go into the six regions where we already have a co-operation with the former East Bloc states and start in the north-west with the "Bayerischer Wald - Böhmerwald" area. A view of the satellite image shows that this is a very large forest region. It is the largest continuous forest region in Europe. It is also called Europe's "Green Roof". A forested portion of 70 to 75 percent in the community areas allows one to perceive how large the forested portion actually is there.

An association formed a "EUREGIO Bayerischer Wald - Böhmerwald." in this region as early as 1994. The association comprises 285 communities and more than one million inhabitants with a surface area of 16,000 km². This association was not primarily established for nature conservation, but rather for the promotion of sociocultural, economic and regional co-operations, for the dismantling of common fears and prejudices, and also for the creation and arrangement of a mutual habitat.

I would like to mention a few exemplary projects which this association initiated in the realm of nature conservation: For instance, a landscape role model for the region was developed together with the "European Natural Heritage" Foundation; this constitutes a basis for decisions within the framework of area dedication in Austria. Another project in co-operation with the WWF relates to the development of an utilisation concept for the Natura 2000 site suggested in Austria for this region, and also the Czech protected landscape area. An investigation was related to the incidence of the riverine pearl mussel. I am speaking in past tense here because this incidence that had been investigated was completely washed away with the flood in Austria during August of last year.

According to information provided by a colleague from the Austrian Euregio association, an interest in nature conservation measures certainly exists. But it was also emphasised that the measures should not conflict with soft economic development. The region on the Austrian side has registered a trend towards emigration from regional centres. The region is attempting to establish soft tourism by means of excursion tourism, the provisioning of hiking trails or bicycling routes.

With the second exemplary area I will proceed in a westerly direction along Austria's northern border. This is the Ramsar region in the vicinity of Gmünd and the two Ramsar regions from Trebon. Together they form a unique riverine landscape with numerous moors. In the Czech Republic the Ramsar region consists of the "Trebon Pond Area" and the "Trebon Moor Area". In Austria a Natura 2000 site has been proposed. Partial areas have long been protected by law. A co-operation for this region was formed between two towns, namely between the Austrian town Schrems, which lies within the conservation region, and the Czech town "Trebon". Together they intend to establish an information centre with the mission "Man and Nature". Even this initiative is not exclusively understood as a nature conservation initiative, but should also provide an impulse for further regional development in the direction of soft tourism as well as familiarising the public with a very charming scenic area.

The next exemplary area is the national park "Thayatal-Podyij", where a co-operation with our Czech neighbours has been developed. On the Austrian side the national park was only established in 1999, whereas the national park on the Czech side has already been established in 1991. Our part, with 13 km², is the smallest national park in Austria, and I think it is also one of the smallest national parks in the world. Thayatal is a "breakthrough valley" that features a close interlocking of various habitats. It offers dry and moist meadow, light mixed hardwood forest and alluvial woods — all in very close vicinity. It is a very special-rich landscape sector, because two climatic zones border on one another. The national park information centre was only opened recently. And this centre shall also be a centre of contact with our Czech neighbours, because the exhibition information references will be offered in the Czech language as well. As early as 1999 an agreement was concluded on the political level which foresees the co-operation between both national park administrations. And building on this agreement a declaration was adopted with validity until 2010, whereby the administrations profess to work together in various themes, and whereby it is clear that the independent national park laws and the general national park idea will not be disregarded. The points of the co-operation are habitat management, game status regulation, the fishing, visitor control and infrastructure, education, research and monitoring. And last but not least — staff shall also work together with regard to response or easing procurement of financial resources, because in a cross-border capacity there are perhaps better chances of being awarded subsidies.

Now I would like to continue with you along the eastern border of Austria, in the "Thayatal and Marchauen" region. This area is also recognised in Austria as a Ramsar site. Together with the Danube riverine flood plains — which are identified as national park in this section between Vienna and the border to Bratislava (Slovakia) — it is one of the major continuous flood plain areas in Central Europe, and features a surface area of approximately 20,000 hectares. A local association was already formed in this region 15 years ago. The special feature in this association is that thrust did not come from the conservationist side, but actually through local farmers, who had established an association — the so-called "Distelverein" — to develop nature conservation objectives together with the objective or with the requirements of contractual "wise-use" (commensurate with "Ramsar diction"). In the meantime, numerous activities have been set in motion. The meadows in this region are mowed in accordance with a specific maintenance plan. So-called "ecological value areas" are allocated between the fields. The revitalisation of the March and Thaya Rivers was implemented. Fields will be transformed into meadows. Yet another important aspect is that farmers who take care of cattle herds were able to be won over to the cause. This is important, because in this region of Austria — in the so-called "Marchfeld" and "Weinviertel" —

agriculture is the dominating landscape feature, and meadows are only able to be retained if the need and demand can also be maintained. Many of these projects have been implemented in conjunction with the two neighbour states Czech republic and Slovakia. In the meantime, a regional association has also evolved, and also a so-called “Ramsar Platform”, whereby the concerned states – Czech Republic and Slovakia – work together on the administrative level.

Many measures were able to be developed on a bilateral basis. For instance, in Austria measures were implemented with funding of the EU Life programme, and in the neighbour states World Bank resources were also utilised within the course of interregional programmes or PHARE programmes.

Of course, now there are also developmental tendencies in this region, which was formerly situated along a “dead border”. It is due to the need arising from the population that further roads, bridges or ferry connections will be constructed. And now it is certainly up to both sides to find common models for nature conservation, and to arrive at solutions for expediting these developmental wishes in harmony with Nature. A competition has been planned and will be developed – “Bridges in the Landscape” – where it will be attempted to find common solutions.

For the sake of completeness – my colleague Dr. Kárpáti has already reported in detail – I mention the co-operation of the the National Park Neusiedler See – Seewinkel with our Hungarian neighbours.

Now to my last exemplary region, the “Grenz Mur”. It forms the border to Slovenia. This is a 130 km² region. Within the framework of an interregional project in 1995 a basic survey and evaluation were able to be implemented on the following themes: “Importance of alluvial flood plain landscape for the region”, “Regional demands on the landscape” and “The effects of various utilisation on the Mur River alluvial flood plain system”. In further succession a water resource basic concept for the Grenz-Mur was developed together with Slovenia and the “Frontier Waters Commission”. And building on these two previous projects, “Measures regarding the securing of resources and habitat” will be implemented by 2008 within the framework of an interregional programme. The overriding project objectives for these measures are retention of a natural cultural landscape, especially with respect to a sustainable development of tourism sparing resources, but also the safeguarding of the water supply, especially with respect to quality and quantity.

In summary it may be said that with regard to my exemplary areas that the intensification or even the co-operation with our eastern neighbours only began after the fall of the Iron Curtain, and that the many projects currently taking place – and are also able to take place – are only possible since there is also co-financing through the European Union.

On the Austrian side, all of the aforementioned exemplary regions have been proposed as Natura 2000 sites. At the moment I have not been informed as to how far this status has progressed in connection with the other states. But I hope that the Nature 2000 network will also provide strengthened possibilities for a transnational co-operation, particularly since the objectives have now been clearly indicated through the Fauna, Flora and Habitat (FFH) Directive.

I would like to conclude with a view into the past that shows foreign ministers Alois Mock from Austria and Gyula Horn from Hungary, and how they cut through the Iron Curtain along the Austrian-Hungarian border.

This image went around the world, and today it still fills me with joy.

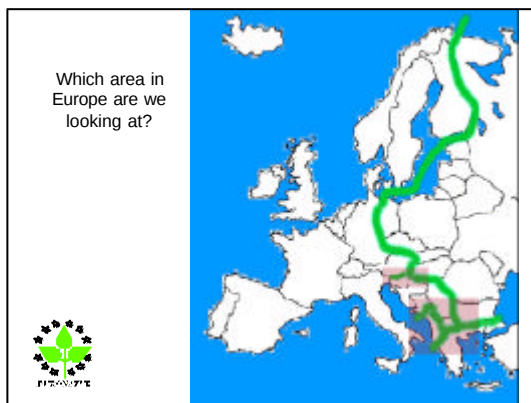
And it fills me with even more joy that in the future we will also belong to a common community of nations.



2.15 Activities along the Balkan Green Belt

Gabriel Schwaderer, European Nature Heritage Fund (EURONATUR)

Thank you very much. This afternoon I would like to warmly welcome you on behalf of EURONATUR, the European Nature Heritage Fund. And I will attempt to provide answers to at least two questions.



Namely: What is the “Balkan Green Belt”? And on the other hand: What activities have we implemented to date there together with many partners from the authorities, from the ministries, with the NGO’s, and also from the local population?

First of all, I would like to introduce you to our understanding of the “European Green Belt”. We’ve already heard quite a few things about the northern section, and here concerning the central section. Tomorrow we will hear a few more things about the section along the inner-German border.

Now I would like to attract you further south, namely in the direction of the southern Balkans. But first let’s take an interim break here. We’ve already hear a bit about the Drau-Mur region from Ms. Tiefenbach. The Iron Curtain had somewhat severely the region separating the former ex-Yugoslavia and Hungary/Rumania. But also further south, down here, Albania’s external frontiers were also strongly secured. And here between Bulgaria and Greece.

First of all, in this northern region – this is a satellite image of the Drau-Mur region. There we have to deal with the same situation as in many other regions along the “Green Belt”, that due to the border situation had quite a large area that was not accessible, that actually be preserved as a major natural potential. As early as 1990 we began to analyse what ecological potentials there are here along the entire “Green Belt” — let’s say along Austria’s section. Where must we start first of all. Here in this Drau-Mur region, we already began at that time – 1992 to 1994 – with the support of the BMU to prepare a plan for the recognition of a transnational biosphere reserve, the Drau-Mur Biosphere Reserve. Many others joined later, for instance also the Dutch environmental ministry. Here you are now looking at a biotope classification which we implemented with satellite data. There’s also a transnational biosphere reserve being planned between Austria, Slovenia, Hungary, Croatia, and also in the east with Serbia. I don’t want to keep you from seeing what this looks like in real life terms. Here you can really see that the “Green Belt” is a European lifeline.



At this point I would also like to add a general comment. We’ve already heard this in various speeches. It is very important to incorporate the local population in these activities along the “Green Belt”. This especially has to do with the fact that these are truly cross-border activities — at any rate, almost always to integrate international co-operations, the co-operation between the authorities and NGO’s of different countries, but also the inhabitants who live on both sides of the border. From our point of view, this is a very important point, a very essential element pertaining to all activities along the “Green Belt”.

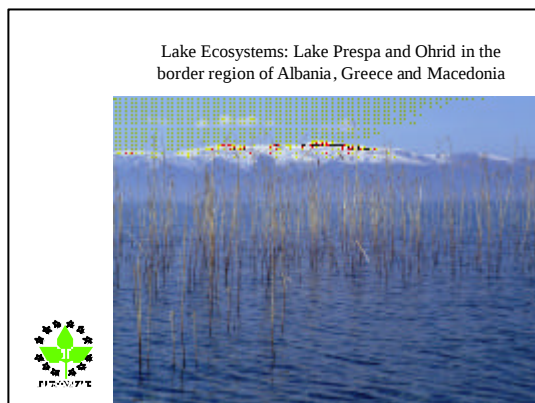
Once again, back to the starting map: Now I would like to particularly deal with this southern region, with the area which we actually call the “Balkan Green Belt”. Now this is a cutaway map. It actually shows you that the “Balkan Green Belt” is a concept for the ecological network for the southern Balkans. First of all, it concerns the border region between Albania, then Bulgaria, Greece and Macedonia. I would also add – this is unfortunately not on the map – that here is the border between Albania in the direction of Serbia and Montenegro.

There are already numerous conservation areas within this “Green Belt”. You will not be able to read this here in detail. I can very briefly describe: Here there’s a main area and the Prespa-Ohrid region which I will also speak about in a bit more detail. Here are a number of identified conservation areas. And so here we already have a nucleus for the “Balkan Green Belt”. And for the most part these are proposals for further conservation areas which should be identified. Overall, this is our vision of the objectives. There should be 16 larger conservation areas which will thus constitute the core of the “Balkan Green Belt”.



Here is a list of transnational conservation areas. This is a summary of the areas already in existence. I will not go into this into detail, but I will show you a specific example, namely the Prespa-Ohrid region. In the satellite image you see one of the world’s oldest lake landscape regions. In the meantime, this is almost completely surrounded by a conservation area belt which has been created in the last ten years.

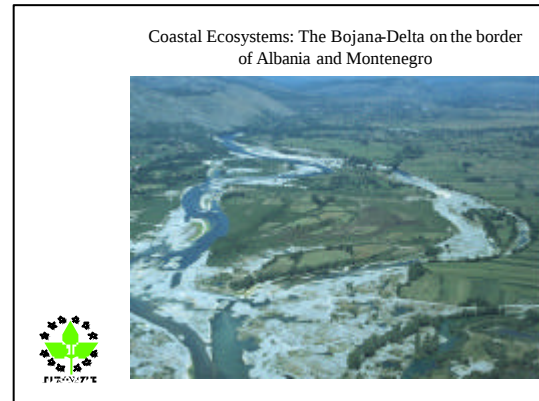
In this satellite image also see something interesting which I would like to point out to you. We are actually looking at the different intensity of utilisation in the countries. You are able to recognise this without knowing where the borders run. A very sharp edge in the landscape is discernible here: There’s intensive utilisation in the south, and in the north we have forest areas which are not so strongly utilised. Here we aren’t able to recognise much more on the satellite image. This is the border between Albania and Macedonia. Although we also have conservation areas along Lake Ohrid – this is Lake Ohrid, this is the large Lake Prespa and the small Lake Prespa – the landscape here is very strongly utilised. I’ve illustrated it one more time with this image. And therefore it goes so far that veritable “Bad Lands” are created. As I see it, this utilisation is increasing in some regions. Therefore we must urgently take action here, and I think we can also do something with the “Green Belt”. We should urgently do this if we also intend to continue maintaining a habitat in the southern Balkans; for instance, for the brown bears: a still endangered and stringently protected species. But of course this is also a vital region for other large predators such as the wolf and lynx or even the Griffon Vulture, which also appears here relative frequently.



In addition to these mountainous ecosystems, numerous lakes and rivers also characterise the “Balkan Green Belt”. Lake Prespa is an example here. Lake Prespa is an important resting spot for migratory birds. This connective function of the “Green Belt” also emerges once again through another symbol, namely through the migratory birds which link the natural land units throughout the continents with one another. Lake Prespa – just like Lake Ohrid – is not only an important resting area and winter area for migratory birds, but also an

important breeding area. One species as an example here: The Pygmy Cormorant, a species still threatened with extinction throughout the world. Now we're jumping a bit further to the West — the border between Albania and Montenegro. Here is a view from Montenegro in the direction of Albania via the fringes of Lake Scutari. As far as I am concerned, this is one of the most fascinating landscapes in Europe. Once again we also have this border situation there, where we truly need urgent cross-border co-operation, and – simply for the sake of illustration – a further species threatened with world-wide extinction: The Dalmatian Pelican.

I've just said that rivers are green lifelines. But here in the "Balkan Green Belt" they are also a part of the overall "Green Belt". This is the Bojana, a frontier river between Albania and Montenegro. The Bojana flows out of Lake Scutari – which I just illustrated – into the Adriatic Sea. It is only 30 km long, but in many portions it is still a naturally-flowing river — one of Europe's green lifelines. This year EURONATUR began to develop a conservation concept for this frontier landscape as a portion of the "Balkan Green Belt".



Much like Lake Prespa or the entire Prespa-Ohrid region, the Bojana River – which you are looking at once again in this image – is an important portion of the "Balkan Green Belt", and thus Europe's "Green Belt". However, it is also a part of Europe's natural heritage, and it is also a symbol for the peace between people and also a symbol for peace in Nature. Thank you.

2.16 Possible Role of the European Commission

Andras Demeter, European Commission, Brussels

Thank you very much for giving me the floor, Mr. Chairman.

Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to thank the organisers for inviting the European Commission to express its views on the Green Belt project. I personally feel honoured to be here and I would like to share a recent experience with you. Last Friday, I was actually standing not in a Green Belt, but in a green line, a very real green line, which presently divides the island of Cyprus into two. It is called the green line because it is greener than the rest of the island. If you see it from distance it is a tangle of vegetation and its width varies quite a lot. In places it may be up to several kilometres, where nature flourishes. In other places it is only as narrow as three meters. In those sections I find it very difficult to imagine that nature would take its natural course. As I prepared for this conference on the past Iron Curtain and its present values for nature conservation, the association came to my mind. I hope there will be a solution to the problem soon, and in such a way that it will help nature as well.

Actually the event for which I visited Cyprus was a bi-communal seminar for the Turkish-speaking and the Greek-speaking Cypriots to talk about nature conservation, the first ever such seminar. It was organised by the Delegation of the European Commission to Cyprus and the Italian Presidency, so it was quite an interesting and historic opportunity.

Now let us return to the subject of our meeting today. First of all, I would like to congratulate my hosts for the Green Belt project, which we believe is an excellent pilot project on how to put the Natura 2000 network in place. Also, let me wish "Happy Birthday" to the Bundesamt für Naturschutz!

Why do we have to deal with nature at the EU-level? Because there are grave problems. The wetlands in northern and western Europe have been reduced by at least 60%. Species are on the decline, 45% of the butterfly species in Europe are threatened, over a third of the bird species are also endangered. The bad news is that the first taxon listed on the Habitats Directive, the Pyrenean ibex (*Capra pyrenaica pyrenaica*) has already gone extinct.

I have already touched upon the trans-boundary problems, and there also land use problems, so definitely joint action is needed. These actions are prioritised in the successive environment action programmes of the European Union. We are just going through the Sixth Environment Action Programme, which has identified four major themes, and please note that one of them is nature and biodiversity. A very specific aim was adopted at the European Council in Gothenburg, a very ambitious and difficult target: to halt the decline of biodiversity in Europe by the year 2010. Well, that date is just around the corner, not in the distant future, so a lot must be done if we want to achieve this not only ambitious, but extremely pressing target.

Let me continue with a brief overview of the legal instruments of the European Union concerning nature protection - just to remind you that the EU in many ways puts legislation in place that is in-between the international conventions, the international legally binding instruments, and the national legislation. The European Union as a legal entity is a

Why dealing with nature on EU-level?

- **Major habitats under threat** - wetlands in north & west Europe have been reduced by 60% in recent decades
- **Species also in decline** - 45 % of Europe's butterflies threatened, 38% of Europe's birds threatened. **The first taxon listed on the Habitats Directive has already gone extinct !**
- **Transboundary problems** - eg. migratory birds
- **Landuse-impact of other EU-policies** - agriculture, transport, fisheries, ...

JOINT ACTION NEEDED!

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contracting party to many international conventions, so it does make it quite complicated but a worthwhile effort to conserve nature at the European level.

The nature conservation policy of the European Union is part of the *acquis communautaire* on the environment. Actually it is a rather small package, with two principle instruments for policy at the European level. One of them is the Wild Birds Directive which dates back to 1979 and it was the first nature protection instrument of the European Union. It was followed thirteen years later by the Habitats Directive, which is in a way the implementation of the Bern Convention at the European Union level. At the same time it also contributes to the implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity. These two pieces of legislation set the legal basis for a network to be set up, which is called Natura 2000, as has been mentioned by several speakers today. I only want to highlight the global aim on this network, which is to maintain or to restore the favourable conservation status of species and natural habitat types of Community importance in their natural range. The Special Protection Areas for protecting birds and the Sites of Community Importance for other animal species, plant species and habitat types are the ones that form this network. What is special about this network is that it is science-based, it has clear objectives, and it has the biogeographic component of diversity also included. It must be stressed that it is a legal obligation for the Member States to implement the directives. The Habitats Directive also contains very important provisions for the management of the sites. When we come to talk about management, please note that it also makes mention of finances.

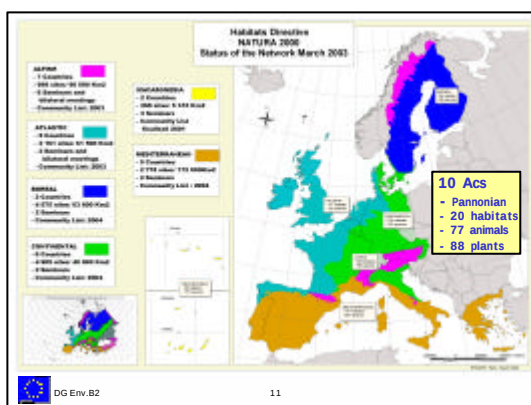


EU-nature conservation policy

Two main directives:

- **“Wild Birds Directive”**
(79/409/EEC)
bird species
- **“Habitats Directive”**
(92/43/EEC)
other animal and plant species, habitat types


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How do we stand in the year 2003? There has been a delay, unfortunately considerable delay in setting up the network. The directive specifies six biogeographic regions for the current 15 Member States, and for only one region has the list of sites adopted. It does not happen to be the largest one, it is the tiny Macaronesian region encompassing several archipelagos off the Atlantic coast (the Azores, the Canary Islands, Madeira). As for the others, work is still ongoing but definitely considerable progress has been made and a very large number of sites under both directives have already been proposed. So

we hope that within foreseeable future the lists can be closed and for the current 15 Member States the network will actually be in place.

With enlargement, the European Union will be a lot different, and for nature conservation it is also going to mean different circumstances. Long technical discussions went on for several years on how to modify the annexes of these directives in order to accommodate the biogeographic characteristics of the future Member States. Over 1000 proposals have been put forward from the ten candidate countries and finally a list has been agreed upon. This new list is now part of the Treaty and Act of Accession of 2003. About 150 pages of this document are devoted to nature conservation, which I believe has a strong symbolic meaning, indicating the importance of nature conservation.

The number of biogeographic regions will also be increased. I come from Hungary, which is fully encompassed by the newly added Pannonic biogeographic region. With further

enlargement to the east, there will be several new ones added. Europe is going to be definitely enriched through the process enlargement. New habitat types were added to Annex I of the Habitats Directive when Austria joined the European Union, for instance, the habitat type Pannonic salt steppes and salt marshes, but it will actually be with the entry of Hungary that really large stretches of this habitat type will be preserved within the boundaries of the European Union.

Let me remind all of us that for the Accession Countries, for the new member states, there is no transition period for the nature protection *acquis*. The Special Protection Areas will have to be designated, and the national list of Sites of Community Importance will have to be submitted by the first day of membership. I seize this opportunity to congratulate the Slovak Republic for being the first among the Accession Countries to have a list of the Special Protection Areas approved by the government. It may appear to have happened long time before accession, but in reality there is not so much time left until the first day of membership, so I encourage everybody keep up the good work.

Do not forget that Article 6 of the Habitats Directive has to be applied as well, a very stringent article which requires projects and plans to be assessed in light of whether they affect a Natura 2000 site or not.

The European Commission has been busy providing guidance on how to proceed with the Natura 2000 exercise and several working groups have been set up, such as one on Article 12 on species protection, and one on Article 8 on financing. There is none on Article 10 of the Habitats Directive. This article is of relevance to the topic of the Green Belt conference, because it refers to the coherence of Natura 2000 network and some of the features that might be used to achieve such coherence. It does not mention the green belt, but naturally the concept of Green Belt can definitely be a tool for putting Article 10 to work. The European Commission so far has not been able to spend time and effort on implementing the provisions of Article 10, because we have been concentrating our efforts on finalising the lists of sites, to have a network to talk about. Afterwards comes the time when we turn our mind to Article 10. For some countries it is not going to be that important, because they will have fairly large areas as Natura 2000 sites, and there will be for instance river valleys connecting up the sites - for others it might be very important. So this is still an intellectual and academic exercise, a topic on which all of us can work together.

The scale of the problem is also to be considered. Let me show you a map produced by the European Centre for Nature Conservation which depicts the habitat types for Central and Eastern Europe, stretching east from Hungary to the Urals. This illustration is in deference to our friends from Russia who are present at this conference, just to indicate the problem of scaling. In some countries there it might be extremely small fragmented patches of habitat types, in some other countries, like the Russian Federation, there are still huge tracks of natural habitat types. So when you are look at the coherence and the functioning of the networks, you run into the problem of scale. This issue should still be worked on by academics and the working group to be set upon the initiative of the Green Belt project can perhaps tackle the problem.

Let me now turn to Natura 2000 as a new window of opportunity and not as an obstacle to development: this brings us to the issue of funding. Article 8 of the Habitats Directive foresees co-financing of the management of the Natura 2000 sites. A working group has been set up to look at this problem and a report was published last year in December. The exercise looked at various options, whether a new funding instrument was needed, whether

Existing community financial instruments for initiatives like the Green Belt



- LIFE-Nature (DG ENV)
- CAP, especially Pillar 2 – Rural development
- Structural Funds
 - European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)
 - initiatives
 - LEADER+ (DG (DG AGRI)
 - INTERREG III (DG REGIO)
- 6th Framework Programme on Research and Technological Development


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existing financial instruments like LIFE- Nature, which is in operation now, could be developed, or whether various existing funding mechanisms can be pulled together to provide a new financial framework. The working group also had the mandate to put down an estimate of the cost of managing the network. The final report arrived at the figures of 3.4 to 5.7 billion euros per year for the current 15 Member States. This was a rough estimate, but it gives an indication of the order of magnitude, and it also shows that perhaps with only about 10% of what goes to agricultural spendings in the European Union, we could make the network function. These figures have been questioned both by Member States and by Commission services. A new exercise has been carried out and a new questionnaire was sent out to not only to the present Member States but also to the Accession Countries. The overall picture is that we need policy shifts in other areas to be able to cope with this problem and the impact of Accession Countries is still to be considered.

For the time being, what are the existing financial instruments? There are several, I am going to mention only some possibilities, the first one being of course the LIFE-Nature programme, which is the only instrument at the moment dedicated to the Wild Birds and the Habitats Directives. The LIFE programme has a component for environmental protection and it also has a nature component. It co-finances projects in all Member States and by now, all Accession Countries. It is a source of funding that can be used for projects like the Green Belt. It helps to implement and to further develop the Community's environmental policy therefore it is closely connected to the Sixth Environment Action Programme. However, it must not be forgotten that in reality the LIFE programme is a competition, which means that the proposals have to be really good in order to be successful. If the conservation merits of the proposal are good, but it fails on other grounds, it may fall out because the proposals must meet strict criteria.



What is LIFE really?

- A competition
- Generates 'ground up' proposals
- Helps disseminate information
- Adds value to your project
- An opportunity

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You may have heard that on the 26th of June, after a long and heated debate, the Agriculture Council adopted the Mid-term Review of the Common Agricultural Policy. The good news is that there are what we call the cross-compliance measures in the amended Rural Development Regulation. Now there is clear reference to the Natura 2000 network, in that the Wild Birds and the Habitats Directive are specifically named as under which environmental restrictions may apply. In such areas, payments may be made to compensate for loss of income or profit foregone, and in fact these payments may exceed the ceilings of the normal subsidiaries. So the opportunity is there, the CAP reform has made it possible to use these resources. Of course, more detailed implementation measures are yet to be put in place.



INTERREG III

- Initiative to stimulate interregional cooperation in EU
 - Strand A: cross-border
 - Strand B: transnational
 - Strand C: interregional
- INTERREG III C
 - Regional and other public authorities across the entire EU
- financed from the European Regional Development Fund

<http://www.interreg3.net>

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In addition, there are other instruments and Community initiatives for regional co-operation. For instance, INTERREG III, has three strands for cross-border, trans-national and interregional co-operation. It is financed from the European Regional Development Fund, so with innovative ideas, nature conservation objectives such as the Green Belt project could be funded from these sources. There is also the LEADER+ initiative, which was designed to encourage and support rural actors to think about the long-term potential of their area. Under Action 1, there is a priority

theme which I would like to point to you - making the best use of natural and cultural resources, including enhancing the value Sites of Community Interest selected under Natura 2000. Again, a clear reference is made to Natura 2000, and if your Green Belt project includes Natura 2000 sites or candidate sites, then it obviously provides a possibility for funding. Action 2 also supports inter-territorial and trans-national co-operation among Member States and Third Countries. This is an opportunity for cooperation for EU members and other neighbouring countries. I wish to remind the Accession Countries that the PHARE Programme is about to close down, or rather it is about to phase out, and the infrastructure set up for absorbing the PHARE project funds is going to be transformed into one for the absorption of the Structural and Cohesion Funds. There is going to be a period of transition in the coming time, but let us not think of that as a deterrent. For the CIS and Mongolia, the TACIS programme will continue, and it will continue to provide funding opportunities at the national, regional and international levels.

Ladies and Gentlemen, briefly those were the messages that I have brought you from Brussels. I would like to express my best wishes to you in your future efforts. Thank you for your attention.

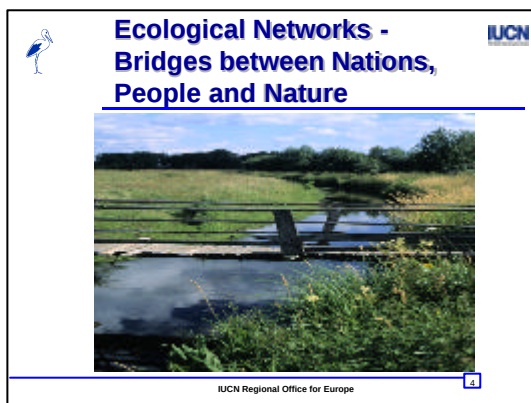
2.17 Importance of Ecological Corridors and Networks - Towards a Global Ecological Network

Tamas Marghescu, The World Conservation Union (IUCN), Brussels

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all I will say a few words in German, and then I will switch to English. I'd like to ask for patience among the interpreters. What Mr. Demeter from the European Commission talked about here was truly interesting. If we see or know that in most EU accession countries those nations being sought for the "Natura 2000" still don't know they are being sought after, then perhaps we can also perceive the order of magnitude confronting them with regard to expansion and nature conservation.

At this point I would like to congratulate – on behalf of the entire IUCN – Germany's Federal Agency for Nature Conservation on their ten-year anniversary. We hope that we will also be able to celebrate the twentieth anniversary together, because unfortunately we see an international trend — that the environment is no longer the "a priori" theme. We see that

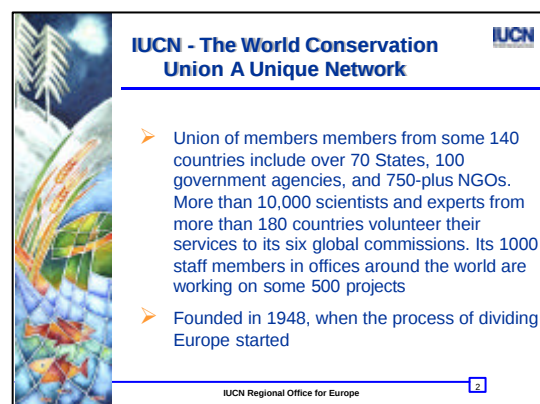


environmental ministries are once again being consolidated into larger ministries where the environment – nature conservation – only play a minor role. We are somewhat worried about this trend. But this should not take away our joy involved with the ten-year anniversary. I am an optimist, and I also hope that we will also be able to continue on this track, and that everyone will be able to work together with regard to nature conservation.

I am supposed to give a global perspective to ecological networking and the Green Belt. I would like to point out that the Green Belt is not

something, which is a completely new idea. The Green Belt is a part of an idea, which is being already realised. The Green Belt is something, which, however, can give an impetus to the existing idea. It can be politically well marketed and it establishes a North-South connection, a corridor between all of our countries.

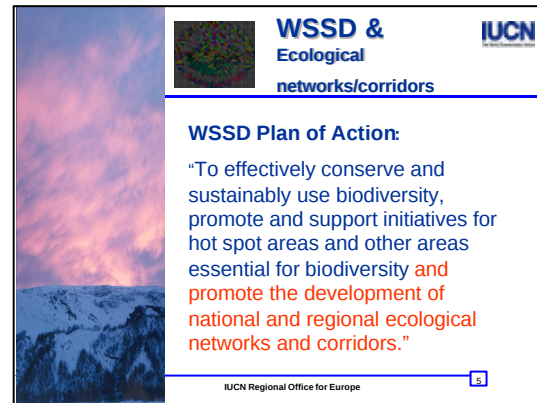
A little bit about IUCN: It is a union of members from some 140 countries including over 70 states, 100 government agencies and 750-plus NGOs. More than 10,000 scientists are voluntarily working together in 180 countries in six thematic commissions, such as the World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA), or SSC, the Species Survival Commission. And IUCN is producing products like the Red List for instance, or the protected areas' categories of IUCN, products, which are well known to you. It was founded in 1948, when the process of dividing Europe started, at a time, when my grandfather for the first time was released from prison, after he had been forcefully transported with the end of the war from Berlin back to Hungary and put into prison. For IUCN it is natural to talk about webs and networks, because it is itself the ultimate network. For more than fifty years the green web of IUCN, the green web of partnerships has generated environmental conventions (take for instance the Washington Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Fauna and Flora (CITES), which has been prepared by IUCN), as well as global standards, scientific knowledge and innovative



leadership. It is a web of partnership, knowledge, innovation and action. If we are talking about ecological networks, we see bridges between nations, people and nature. Very often we use the word “green diplomacy”.

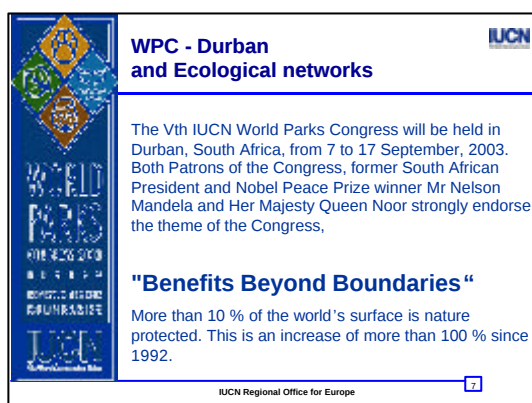
Also in Europe, first steps in diplomacy were often taken by people working in the field of nature conservation.

Where do we imbed the question of corridors such as the Green Belt and ecological networks into the international policy framework? WSSD in Johannesburg, we heard this morning from President Gorbatschow, and also from Her Excellency the Deputy Minister for Natural Resources from the Russian Federation, was a somewhat disappointing event. Action took place only at the NGO quarter, action took place for example, I may say that, in the IUCN Environment Centre. We brought together new partnerships, partnerships for instance like Green Peace with the World Business Council. Such partnerships were born in Johannesburg, new pathways of co-operation for nature conservation. But WSSD, the plan of action, contains at least also a section on ecological networks and corridors, as I have pointed out here. In Gothenburg, as well as at the Kiev conference of environment ministers recently in the Ukraine, a common statement of ministers was considered, with the intention to intensify and further strengthen the pan-European environmental network, of which Mr. Demeter has shown you already a map. So this is the international policy framework of the Green Belt.



The World Parks Congress in Durban, South Africa is about to take place from the 7th to the 17th of September in South-Africa. The 5th World Parks Congress in Durban will bring together almost 3000 people from all over the world, discussing the issues of protected areas and carrying messages forward into the CBD process. In order to emphasize the importance to find new ways, on how to deal with protected areas, Mr. Nelson Mandela, Nobel Peace Prize winner and Her Majesty Queen Noor from Jordan will preside over this important meeting of protected areas specialists. We are expecting demonstrations in front of the building, where the Congress will take place. Indigenous people from all over the world will stage demonstration. Also stakeholders of South African National Parks were being evicted out of National Parks, because they were “disturbing” the protection function; they possibly will stage demonstrations in front of the congress building and we, IUCN and the participants

of the congress will find ways and means on not to exclude them and not to have the same kind of scenes as we had them on the globalisation demonstrations elsewhere. They will be part of our congress, they are part of our congress and they will be part of our congress.



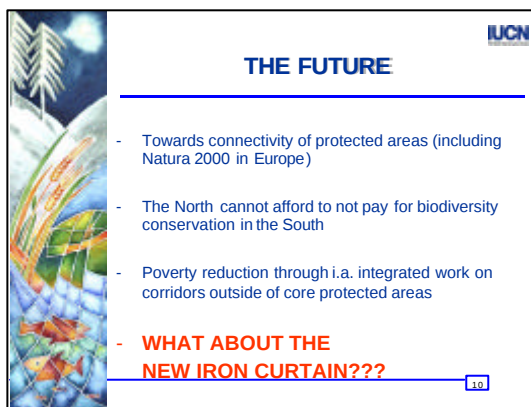
The motto of the congress is “Benefits Beyond Boundaries”. We have to say that we have achieved, since 1992, an enormous result, which is that more than 10% of the world's surface is nature protected. This is an increase of more than 100% since 1992 in Rio. We have, however, the major task to now link all these protected

areas with each other, to form a network. And I also have to say that a very unpleasant task is waiting for us, which is the review of the validity of some of our protected areas. Are they still in need to be protected? Do they still fulfil their protection function or not? This is the very tricky and dangerous part of our work, because once we are questioning, starting to question

protected areas, we are wide open for attack. That is felt from many people, but we do think we have to go forward and we have to challenge ourselves.

A simple example out of IUCN's work, during WSSD: the Presidents of Ecuador, Columbia, Panama and Costa Rica signed a memorandum of understanding on a Marine Corridor, which already has brought since then a lot of fruitful co-operation between these countries. We had presentations from Lithuania and Estonia today. Here, this is an IUCN publication on the development of a natural ecological network in the Baltic countries as part of the Pan-European Ecological Network. Anybody wishing to have a copy of this publication may put down their names on a list, which I shall leave out on one of the tables outside the conference room. This is part of IUCN's work in the region, the European region. And IUCN in Europe is happy to join the Green Belt action.

What about the future? As I said before, towards connectivity of protected areas including Natura 2000 in Europe! I am addressing here the European Commission, and I am saying all right, you, the Commission, you have the huge Natura 2000 framework in front of you for which you do not have secured the financing yet. You seem a little bit over-ambitious at the moment. You have individual sites, which are not interconnected with each other. When is connectivity going to happen? However, this is by no means a reason to reject Natura 2000. No, Natura 2000 needs all support it can get and friends it has.



The second issue, I would like to address the Commission with is that in the South, protected areas are luxury items. In the development reality of the South, it is very difficult to maintain protected areas and we need to find (with the active help and financial help of the North) ways and means to protect these enormous values in the South. For the World Parks Congress, we do not yet know what the outstanding themes will be, but it seems, because everybody speaks about poverty reduction, that poverty reduction through integrated work on corridors outside of protected areas, which at the same time also would mean

that you take pressure off the core of protected areas, will be something which could be the direction we take in the coming ten years.

And now a little bit a tricky subject: We are enlarging the European Union, borders cease to exist on the one hand, but on the other hand we are establishing again new borders. Between Poland and Byelorussia, we have transboundary national parks like the Bialowieza National Park. We have already an iron fence established between the two countries and the parts of the national park, an invaluable forest ecosystem, which does not recognize political borders. And the European bison and the genetic diversity of the European bison in the park is further endangered, because a bison on one side of the border cannot mate anymore on the other side of the border. But also colleagues from Byelorussia working in the national park administration need an EU visa to visit their Polish colleague across the border in the future. And I very much urge the European Union to look into the impact of the new EU border, the new "iron curtain", which prevents us to continue existing transboundary co-operation on nature protection. Ladies and Gentlemen, thank you very much.

2.18 Jürgen Trittin, Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety, Germany

Dear President Gorbachev,

Surely you will forgive me, but we still have a series of further presidents here, namely the president of the largest environmental and nature conservation association, dear Mr. Weinzierl. Another president I would not like to neglect mentioning is the president of Germany's Federal Agency for Nature Conservation, dear Hardy Vogtmann; and also my Russian colleague, the Deputy Minister for Natural Resources. I would like to sincerely welcome you here.



With today's event we are attempting to draw the attention of the German public to a specific aspect of nature conservation. Dear Mr. Herr Gorbachev, I certainly remember our last encounter at the German Nature Conservation Day in 2002. Not only because this was held in my constituency, but because of the circumstances involved with the inauguration of the "East-West Gate" in Duderstadt, in Eisfeld. At that time we both saw that the former inner-German border is an important site of the

coalescence of East and West, and that this also particularly applies to nature conservation. Starting with the German "Green Belt" we wanted to initiate an international nature conservation project — namely a European "Green Belt".

Borders separate. As we've seen with the "Green Belt" how Nature has developed — that is to say, has been able to coalesce — as a result of this inhumane border that separated a country, indeed two power blocks, then we also have to realise that Nature unites. Today there are a whole series of activities from people on this side and the other side of the former border, and they also serve to maintain the subsequently resulting chain of biotopes.

In 2001 the German federal government commissioned an exhaustive landscape analysis of the "Green Belt". This is now exhibited before us. It provides an overview regarding what has emerged there: 109 biotope types, of which the half are to be classified as endangered. 160 endangered species live in these stripes of land. However, 85 percent of the "Green Belt" has until now been considered as not impaired or merely marginally impaired. Today, also notwithstanding some negative developments, there is actually a far-reaching, intact biotope association.

It must be emphasised that wherever conservation efforts took place the situation is considered as secured. Unfortunately, this did not take place to a complete extent. Therefore the federal states must now ensure that they provide a contribution to the maintenance of the biotope and the biotope association. They are responsible for this. Ultimately, they must carry out the outstanding identifications of the conservation areas. We have also created an essential basis for these conservation efforts with the new federal nature conservation law. Indeed, if I may say so, the heretofore generally valid obligation to provide compensation, was also — if I may say so, by virtue of poor professional practice — cancelled with regard to

farmers. We've defined nature conservation as a public responsibility. We ultimately and technically substantiated the conservation value of the "Green Belt" with the research projects. And so today there is no longer any reason not to actually implement the resolution of the 58th Environmental Minister Conference from 6-7 June 2002— or to wait on placing certain areas under comprehensive protection. This also means – and especially in this area, but not just there – completely registering the FFH, the bird sanctuaries.

Federalism – I'd like to take this opportunity to emphasise this, and indeed the colleagues in this assembly come from a federation – lives from action within the scope of responsibility, and not from moaning about lost responsibilities. Unfortunately, we still have a problematic situation here. Even the purportedly final date for the complete presentation of the FFH areas has unfortunately once again elapsed without event. In the meantime, we have the situation whereby we still continue to have a lawsuit at hand. Not merely one that we've already lost and whereby we are now threatened with compulsory pecuniary action because we lost the lawsuit, but yet another lawsuit on account of the further violation of the FFH, — because this had not been implemented in some federal states. And indeed, at the same time federal states not only intend to amend the nature conservation amendment from 1998, but also the amendment from 2001.

In many matters the Federal Republic of Germany considers itself in an international comparison – I think rightly so – and in this context I think we can be proud of being a trailblazer in matters of environmental protection. Unfortunately, the occasional ignorance of and disregard for the valid nature conservation laws by the federal states casts a shadow here — a shadow upon federalism.

I also anticipate – and particularly with regard to the "Green Belt" project – that the identification of conservation areas and the consideration of European rights will now be governed, and this is one of the prerequisites for a "European Green Belt".

As the federal government, we want to make it even easier for the federal states with regard to the "Green Belt". I am pleased that the Federal Finance Minister is now fundamentally prepared to observe my wishes to gratuitously transfer these areas to the federal states. We no longer have any trouble with the owners with respect to conservation efforts. Indeed, you (the federal states) are one and the same. In the beginning of 2000 I had asked for such a decision. However, the prerequisite was that all federal states – not just the environmental minister, and yes Mr. Flath, I know that we occasionally have problems with this issue – are in agreement with this procedure. I hope that the federal states take advantage of this opportunity for retention of the "Green Belt" and reach such an agreement. This presupposes that whatever ensues as a result of the "Wall Property Law" – as Hans Eichel had got nothing out of this, but this naturally ensued with regard to the federal states – will also be actually accepted in this context, and that you (the federal states) will not insist on the proceeds from the sales. I think that the federal government recognised the significance of the "Green Belt" at an early date. Take a look at the individual areas, for instance around the *Schaalsee* [lake], which is still nutrient-deficient. It is one of the largest clear lakes in Germany, featuring reed beds and fen woodlands as extensively utilised meadows. Characteristically, the Schaalsee is a breeding ground and resting place for the famous "*Crex Crex*" – the corncrake – as well as for the crane, and also for the osprey, which in the meantime once again lives in considerable numbers, especially in East Germany. Otters, the large whitefish, smelt, Hasel (*Leuciscus leuciscus*), noble crayfish, tree frogs, "red-belly" toads and common viper. Not only have endangered animal species survived here, but also rare plants such as the common butterwort and the fen sedge. The federal government has supported this large-scale nature conservation project since 1992.

Another example for the significance of the "Green Belt" are short-grass meadows. And the short-grass spinney complexes in the German highlands, where there are rare orchids such as the fly orchid, spike orchid, military orchid — and even butterflies whose names most

people have never heard of, nor have them ever seen them: From “Dusty Large Blue” to “Bog Frillitary”. And the same also goes for the birds: “Brown-and-buff” European songbird, “Red-backed Shrike” or the “Nightjar”. Of course, the “smooth snake” and the common European viper also have important survival areas there.

As the federal government we have contributed a total of four large-scale nature conservation projects from the – as it is so nicely referred to – “overall representative state significance” of this living treasure. We have placed the aforementioned Schalsee landscape under protected status. We have made financial adjustments in the federal states of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern and Schleswig-Holstein. We are involved and helping to finance riverine projects such as the “*Lenzener Elbtauen*” [Elbe valley floodplains] in Brandenburg, the Drömling in Sachsen-Anhalt and Lower Saxony as well as the Rhön in Bavaria and Thuringia.

To date 43 million Euro in federal funds have been provided altogether. The objective of the new federal nature conservation law as well as the European Natura 2000 network is to link valuable habitats for flora and fauna. Along the border, and in conjunction with the overall nature conservation association, we consider a far-reaching, intact biotope association as an additional gift. There are many such biotopes and biotope associations along the former frontiers — in the central as well as the eastern and northern sections.

The interest in an economic utilisation of the region along the closed borders was marginal. But under nature conservation aspects the average 100 metre wide strips of land are extraordinarily valuable because they facilitate the migration of plants and animals. Otherwise man bisects the natural habitat everywhere. He robs the species of the stepping stones they need for migration.

However, since the borders have been opened the traffic in these regions, which in former times were situated in the middle of nowhere, the situation today is much different. Settlements are being constructed, and I think that with the eastern opening of the EU this utilisation pressure on the “Green Belt” will continue to increase. The EU has had a common border with the Russian Federation since Finland’s accession. It will be considerable longer with the expansion of the European Union in 2004. Therefore time is compelling us to link ourselves internationally, and to jointly protect this natural treasure. We must take advantage of the time to create and maintain a “Green Belt” through Europe. A “Green Belt” with natural treasures throughout Europe would be a symbol for a sustainable development in a “green” Europe capable of coping with the future.

At the same time, the coalescence of the societies from East and West would be promoted. Over the course of time such a “green” frontier for plants and animals will also become a “green” border for people.

Today the Federal Republic of Germany is already working bilaterally with many East European nations in the realm of nature conservation. Not only with the Russian Federation, but also with Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and the Czech Republic. That’s why the “Green Belt” should be an important project in the future. A European “Green Belt” would be a major contribution to the Natura 2000 conservation area network that we are expediting throughout Europe.

Under this aspect I especially welcome the planned co-operation between Green Cross International and the German nature conservation ring. They are helping to achieve the common objective — a European “Green Belt”. Green Cross International and the German nature conservation ring are trailblazers of a transnational co-operation in the realm of nature conservation. The notion to maintain and to supplement a European “Green Belt” — with regard to this idea I wish for many supporters here in Germany and in Europe, in all associations and in all responsible ministries. Thank you!

2.19 Helmut Weinzierl, Deutscher Naturschutz Ring, Germany

Mr. President Gorbachev, Madam Minister, Honourable Federal Minister, Ladies and Gentlemen!

A year ago, at the German Nature Conservation Day in Hanover, there were a series of very positive discussions between Green Cross International and the German environmental associations with the objective of forming a co-operation in mutual responsibility for the future of Man and Nature. Numerous discussions have been held in the meantime. At this point I would like to thank you, dear Hardy Vogtman, and you Mr. Schmauder, for rendering numerous intermediary services and assistance so that today we are able to sign an



agreement for this purpose. As mentioned, the basics of this accord concerning the co-operation between Green Cross International and the German nature conservation ring were the discussions with Mr. Gorbachev, in which the possibilities were actually explored.

It was clear to us that the objectives of both organisations are to be covered in far-reaching spheres. They dedicate their efforts toward sustainable development and the safeguarding of the future by means of responsibly dealings vis-à-vis Man and Nature. They want environmentally compatible economic systems, and if I only think of the example “water”, the prevention of military conflicts, which are also frequently wars surrounding resources.

Both organisations know that protection of the atmosphere is a particularly enormous challenge for the 21st century. The risk of catastrophic environmental damages, economic losses and unstable political relationships will become increasingly more distinct as a result of climatic

changes.

President Gorbachev, at this point – as in the previous year – I’d like to submit our urgent request: Perhaps you can convince Mr. Putin to sign the Kyoto Protocol so that we can finally obtain the majority, particularly since the Americans have shirked signing it.

The loss of biological diversity should also be urgently stopped. The destruction of rain forests, wetlands, coral reefs. Such a maldevelopment should no longer be financed or subsidised. And therefore our globalised economy urgently requires a framework in order to avoid these negative social and ecological consequences.

Both organisations want to achieve the realisation of German objectives by means of targeted public relations and mutually specific projects. The first project is already set in stone and is the topic of today’s conference: The “Green Belt” connective system. The former “death strips” should become a symbol of life — a “living belt”. The member association DNR – German Association for the Environment & Nature Conservation – will be actively responsible for this purpose. With respect to the second project, the protection of the Volga River, the association “European Nature Heritage Fund” intends to become involved, and the

DNR intends to exert their efforts for a mutually agreed topic regarding environmental education.

Ladies and Gentlemen, what is specifically included in the paper that we now want to undersign? As much as possible we want to achieve a pragmatic co-operation. A co-operation whereby – as mentioned – the work shall lie in the sphere of action elements which will be formulated by the three associations individually mentioned in the scope of bilateral agreements. This has all been stipulated in a detailed annexe to this co-operative agreement.

Both organisations pledge to inform the public about the activities developed in their respective networks, to exchange information, and also to mutually acquire funds. And in order to enable this co-operation the DNR will provide the necessary investment resources to the national “Green Cross Organisation” in Germany.

For the time being, we have agreed that the current agreement we are now signing will be valid for one year. Then we want to scrutinise it, improve any errors, make adjustments and – if has proven its worth – update the agreement. So much for the introduction.

Mr. President, I would like to ask you to be the first so sign the documents.



Signature of the Memorandum between Green Cross International and Deutscher Naturschutzring (DNR).

2.20 Irina Osokina, Ministry for Natural Resources, Russian Federation

Ladies and gentlemen,

allow me just to say a few words in English if you do not mind, and the translators will translate them into the respective languages. Today we talked about the European Green Belt initiative and it is very important for us, I think, to fully and truly understand what do we actually mean by this.

Whether it is an ecological desire for us and we only discuss it at different international floors, or we may consider it as real project. Because, as it was represented today by different people, we have protected areas from practically very North of Europe up to the South. And in our opinion, and in my personal opinion, we talk about this initiative as a project, but if we talk about it as a project, we need three main things to take into consideration. These are the legal framework of our project, the organisational framework and the financing. As far as the legal framework is concerned, we have a basis here already, because we have bilateral agreements on protected areas. And it was very truly mentioned by Mr. Jürgen Trittin that nowadays, after the enlargement of the European Union, the border with the Russian Federation would be longer, and I think that if we talk about the European Union Green Belt as a project, we should think about it as a project between the countries of the European Union and the Russian Federation.

In my mind, we may conclude a sort of memorandum for this European Union initiative, European Union Green Belt. And we may do it by approximation, minded by approximation of the legislation of the European Union countries and the Russian Federation. If we manage to create this legal framework, we practically have all the borders and institutions from the organisational point of view, how we may do it, because each protected area already has its rule, its groups who are responsible for keeping this area protected. And I suggest, that we think about organising a certain management group, if we talk about this European Union Green Belt initiative as a project, which will not be just a bureaucratic group of people, but management group for this very project with the representatives from each country respectively. And this group would be responsible for the concept of the development of this project, for its boundaries and main directions.

What important in our opinion is, that we do need to create a certain unified information framework and you surely know that the European Union has this program, the unified information space for Europe. And we may use part of this program for our project as well as we may use a part of the European Union R&D programs for this very project, because many representatives today talked about the necessity of research and development for the protected areas. And this is very important. And financial matters may consist and finance may go from the European Union information programs from the European Union R&D-programs of course from the national resources of the countries involved, including Russia too, and from other different sources. And I think that we may find understanding here from financial people if we will be very clear and particular about what do we actually want.

A few words about the participation of NGOs in this European Union Belt project: We consider it of greater importance, because our NGOs, in fact they are a sort of outreach to the civil society, and it is very important that they participate in it.

And I think that if you support this idea, we would have really a mega-project in Europe, from the European Union on one side and from the Russian Federation on the other side. And it will not be a project of a contradiction. It can and will be a project of unanimous

understanding and a very good project from the global point of view, just an example for other countries in other parts of the world, how environmental matters may be decided.

And one more point I would like to draw your attention, though I have some technical mechanisms also how we may do it, but I think that we will have time to just discuss it. Nobody talked about it today, or maybe I missed it, but our protected areas are not areas that are closed for everybody or for any human being to cross. These areas are protected from the economic development that may have a negative impact on them, but according to the ideas of sustainable development, we should learn how to use our protected areas, not to spoil the nature there, but to use them in our own interest. We talked today about the ecological tourism - it is one instrument from which we can have money by the way. We may use our protected areas for different types of monitoring for changing of information on commercial and non-commercial basis and on many other basis as well. And I would like maybe to discuss with you in different format, different ideas, how we may do it. But the opinion of the Russian Federation and of the Ministry of Natural Resources for the protected areas is that protected areas should exist, because they help us to keep nature, but our nature should be kept in the interests of our society. And we should find by any means the possibilities to use these protected areas in a right way. Thank you very much for your attention.

2.21 Angelika Zahrndt, BUND, Germany

Thank you very much. As far as I am concerned, today's events provided an abundance of impressive talks on the most varying transnational projects — from Finland to the Balkans.

And I find the idea of this “Green Belt” throughout Europe to be fascinating. But I think that before we enter into a project we must communicate even more effectively with respect to what this “Green Belt” should actually comprise and how this line should look like. Because what we have been introduced to today regarding projects – many transnational projects – are many “green lines”, which I think are important for the significance of nature conservation.

But as far as I am concerned, the actual significance of the “Green Belt” is that we are proceeding from an “Iron Curtain” to a “Green Lifeline”. And that with respect to this historic re-evaluation a misanthropic strip has been transformed into a space for the development of Nature. That's why I think that we should be a bit careful with regard to designating everything that is now “transnational” in this area with the name “Green Belt”. But I think that the fascination of the idea “European Green Belt” lies in the fact that we truly have a line from the North to the South that proceeds along this “Iron Curtain”, and therefore this historic turning point will once again be marked. And the change will be positive for Nature and humane encounter.

2.22 Michael Gorbachev, Green Cross International

We have signed a Memorandum providing for cooperation not limited to fulfilling one particular task – creating a green belt. We attach great importance to the Green Belt project and will stand by it. The Memorandum covers other projects too, like Fresh Water, For Peace and Civilization, and a related major project on the Volga, where we are taking the first steps. These were the initial steps, and as the esteemed Elena Osokina, deputy Minister for Natural Resources correctly said, coordination is necessary, since the projects are large-scale and they require proper management and collaboration. This explains why the Memorandum was debated for so long and changed drastically before it was finalized in a version that does not center solely on the Green Belt. Talking about the Green Belt, I too believe that we should consider more possibilities and give a precise definition to the Green Belt concept. I guess it will have special features for individual countries, for example environment-specific features



(latitude of different regions, e.g. Finland, Russia), etc. However, it will still be a green belt; the process of creating it brings us closer together rather than dividing us, and will serve as an example of treating nature respectfully. I have just been interviewed by Bavarian Radio and was asked the following question: Why do I personally support the Green Belt project and participate in it for the second time? I said in response: you know, when our German friends looked into the types of habitats in the separation

zone--where the wall stood and where the line dividing Europe was drawn--they made amazing findings. As it turned out, animals, plants, birds, and insects developed according to the laws of nature. It was important to be able to see what herbs and seeds had lain dormant for years, and we could not see what they would grow into. I was delighted to hear the German Federal Minister's statement in which he named with obvious excitement the rare species of butterflies, birds and other living creatures found in the separation zone. It is very interesting, because it shows that if we carefully preserve nature, we can regenerate resources, we can save them. We are not busy filling new pages of the Red Book. No, it is the other way round – we strike off the list flora and fauna species thought to be extinct. It is incredible! I liked this part best of all in the Minister's presentation, because everyone in the audience shared the Minister's sense of novelty combined with the realization that there is a lot we can do. Without any doubt we are going to be a part of the project, but we should also re-visit the concept. The concept will vary, and we should show understanding. Also, we have to discuss funding sources. The EU spends a lot of resources on various projects, and in my view not all of them are indispensable. There is competition for resources. But what we have here can help overcome one all-European problem. We have an important idea associated with the environment; its importance lies primarily in its educational value. This project can set an example; it can teach people and their children a valuable lesson. This is a key project, and I think we should set up a working group to run it and to take care of all practical and terminological questions. If someone thinks that we know all the answers, let me tell you: not yet. And yet we do know about the German experience, which occurred in the separation zone, the green belt. I find it inspiring, because this experience can and should be replicated everywhere.

Imagine green belts along meridians and parallels. They are fundamentally different from regular borders, because they do not separate—they connect people and spaces. I wholeheartedly welcome the project. We tried hard to develop a good Memorandum. The Memorandum goes beyond the framework of this one project, and this is good. We in the Green Cross hold in high esteem the environmental traditions established and upheld in Germany. Today we celebrate the tenth anniversary of the Agency, but environmental service dates back to the early 20th century; it is actually a hundred years old. It has shaped culture and everyday life. We need to understand that environmental protection is a universal cause to be advanced by all generations, the young and the old, researchers and businessmen, cultural and political figures. I am glad this country hosts this event, and another meeting to work out details should be scheduled in this Agency or with the Agency's support. We are not going to hide from each other. I pointed out to Ms. Osokina some valuable points in the Memorandum, and noted that without the Ministry's participation we won't be able to fulfill all of them. We signed up to the Memorandum, which means the Ministry will not back out on us, in particular on the Volga river project. The Volga is the most important river in Russia, with 65% of population living along its banks and tributaries. One hundred forty research centers worked on the project. The situation along the Volga has improved lately, not due to environmental rehabilitation, but because industrial discharge has decreased during the economic downturn. We are also faced with the task of reviving that industry, but this time in such a way as to make competitive and technologically advanced products while taking proper care of the environment.

One can regard this project as a totally new one. Hence, it is critical for us to engage our European partners in working out the details and to get assistance from them. It is crucial for Russia in general. This project is even more important than Baikal. To sum up, I think we are undertaking a serious commitment.

3 The German Green Belt

Karin Ullrich und Uwe Riecken, Federal Agency for Nature Conservation, Germany

In the area of the former iron curtain, which formed an inhumane border between East and West, the only winner was nature. The specific conditions existing along the Iron Curtain promoted the conservation or development of valuable habitats:

- Nobody was admitted to enter the border strip itself, i.e. this area was comparatively undisturbed and underwent no cultivation or intensification of land-use.
- Due to their remoteness and restrictions the situation was similar in large areas in the border regions.

As consequence of these favourable conditions the Green Belt harbours many endangered species and habitat types.

This is evident in the German section of the Green Belt, where a habitat inventory was raised in the summer of 2001 in the context of a "testing and development project" of the BN (German section of friends of the earth) funded by the Federal Agency of Nature Conservation. (Schlumprecht et al. 2002; Bund Naturschutz in Bayern e.V. 2003)

The survey showed that 16 % of the area of the Green Belt is covered by Annex I habitats (EU Habitats Directive 92/43/EWG), 48.8 % by endangered habitat types, (Riecken et al. 1994) and 85.2 % have not yet been adversely effected e.g. by agricultural intensification (11 %), forestal intensification (1 %), or the construction of roads, sealed tracks or built-up areas (2.4 %).

Although there was no systematic survey of species, data on the occurrence of mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, fish and plants originating from various other sources indicate the importance of the Green Belt for rare and endangered species. This means the Green Belt harbours at least 3 species from Annex II and 7 species from Annex IV of the European Habitats Directive, at least 22 species from Annex I of the European Birds Directive (79/409/EWG) and at least 160 species that are endangered according to the German Red Data Book.

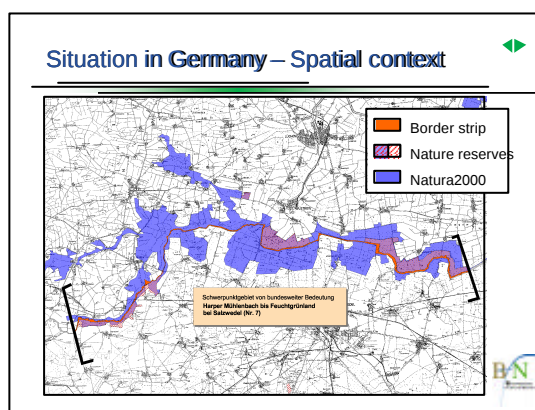


Fig. 1 The spatial context of the border strip, nature reserves and sites proposed for NATURA 2000

Regarding the conservation status of the Green Belt so far 28 % of the area is protected as nature reserves, about 38 % of the area are proposed Sites of Community Interest (pSCI – EU Habitats Directive) or Special Protected Areas (SPA – EU Birds Directive), and about ¼ of the area is covered by legally protected habitat types (German Federal Nature Conservation Act)

Areas proposed for Natura 2000 and Nature Reserves concentrate in the proximity of the former border strip (Fig. 1). Thus, we see the Green Belt in the context of the implementation of the Habitats Directive including the implementation of Article 10 and as a backbone for the establishment of a European Ecological Network.

Along the Green Belt 32 focus areas for nature conservation and development were selected (Fig. 2). These cover 937 km, i.e. 67 % of the length and 79 % of the area of the German Green Belt. 20 of these areas were rated as focus areas of at least national importance. These will form core areas in a national ecological network.

The Schaalsee-Landscape is an example for such a focus area, i.e. an area of special value typical for the Green Belt (Fig. 3). Here cross-border cooperation is already practiced on a national level between two German "Länder" in a national large-scale conservation project (Jarmatz et al. 1994).



Fig. 3: National large-scale conservation project Schaalseelandschaft
(for details: Jarmatz et al. 1994)

Between these focus areas large sections of the Green Belt serve as connecting areas and elements of national or international relevance. In intensively used landscapes, the Green Belt often is the only close to natural structure left. This renders it valuable although it is often narrow or even shows some gaps. The Green Belt crosses many landscapes of seemingly deplorable condition, which still possess a high potential for development. This potential should be followed up actively in the context of the establishment of a national ecological network.

In the year 2002 a new Federal Nature Conservation Act came into force (Bundesnaturschutzgesetz (BNatSchG) vom 20.12.1967 i.d.F. vom 03.04.2002, BGBl. I, 1193). It contains a new article, article 3, which demands the establishment of an ecological network on at least 10 % of the territory of the German "Länder". It has two goals:

- the conservation of native species of flora and fauna and their populations, including their habitats and biotic communities – and
- the preservation, regeneration and development of functioning ecological interactions.

It aims at the establishment of an ecological network consisting of natural to semi-natural elements relevant on a landscape scale, i.e. a large spatial scale (Burkhardt et al. 2003).

Such a habitat network needs to be supported by improving the permeability of the surrounding intensively used landscape for species. This can partly be achieved by an improvement in agricultural practices regarding the intensity of land-use within crops and the preservation or establishment of small structural elements like hedgerows. Accordingly in the German Federal Nature Conservation Act these measurements are treated in a separate article, article 5 concerning good agricultural practice, and have to be taken in addition to the establishment of a large scale ecological network.

The Habitats Directive and Article 3 of the German Federal Nature Act have several basic goals in common. These are "to maintain or restore natural habitats and species of wild fauna and flora of Community interest at a favourable conservation status", and as Article 10 of the Habitats Directive states to support "landscape features, which are of major importance for wild fauna and flora". These are more closely defined as features "which, by virtue of their linear and continuous structure or their function as stepping stones, are essential for the migration, dispersal and genetic exchange of wild species."

The main difference here is that the Habitats Directive aims at natural habitats and species of Community interest, whereas Article 3 of the German Federal Nature Conservation Act regards all natural habitats and native species of wild flora and fauna.

The implementation of the Habitats Directive so far concentrated on the identification of valuable sites still in supply in the landscape. However, in many places this supply will not be sufficient to form an ecologically coherent and thus functioning network, i.e. to achieve the goals of the Habitats Directive.

To solve this problem a concept for the implementation of article 3 of the German Federal Nature Conservation Act was developed (Burkhardt et al. 2003). This goes a step further by asking for the requirements of species and their habitats in order to survive at large in their natural range.

The first step in this implementation concept is to develop regional visions of:

- The overall density in which each habitat type characteristic for the physical landscape unit should occur
- The degree and kind of spatial coherence required to guarantee the functioning of ecological interactions between sites on a landscape scale, e.g. a sufficient exchange of individuals

Subsequently, the demand for additional habitat sites can be assessed by comparing these visions with the supply of existing habitats, e.g. by asking questions like:

- Are there any habitat types, which are underrepresented?
- Are there any major gaps in the occurrence of a habitat type or species, which are not in congruence with its natural range?
- Are there any discontinuities or interruptions in traditional dispersal corridors?
- Are there any isolated core areas?
- Are there any dead ends for dispersal?

Based on the requirements assessed, suitable areas for development, i.e. sites with an adequate potential for development, should be searched for.

This approach is considered as implementation of the coherence aimed for in article 10 of the Habitats Directive in Germany.

Regarding this background, the Green Belt forms an ideal backbone of an ecological network, with large core areas and connecting areas, which need to be preserved. Within the Green Belt important gaps can easily be identified and hopefully can be closed again.

There is a direct call for action, as the Green Belt in Germany is threatened by economical and other land-use interests. Thus, measurements to prevent its destruction need to be taken. Such measurements should be:

- The attempt to bias infrastructure projects to the advantage of habitat networks, especially the Green Belt
- The development of large-scale conservation concepts
- The further establishment of conservation areas
- The compensation for costs incurred and income foregone due to environmental restrictions
- And providing the means for habitat management, where this is of advantage.

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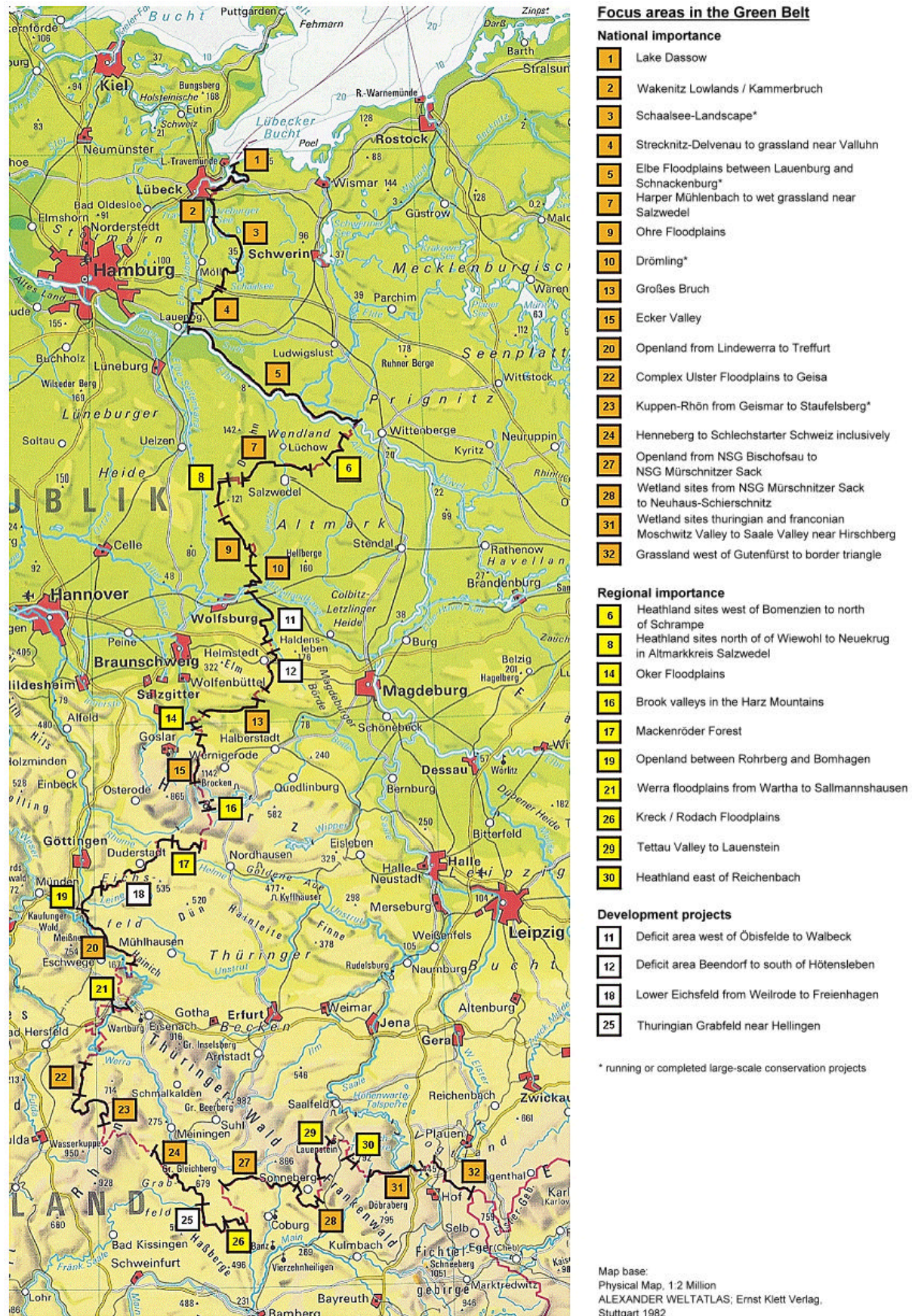


Fig. 2 Location of the focus areas (Schlumprecht et al. 2002)

15 July 2003 International Conference (conference language English/German, simultaneous translation will be provided)	
10:00 – 10:50	Welcome address and introduction to the general topic, H. Vogtmann (BfN) Welcome address M. Gorbatschow (Green Cross) Welcome address S. Flath (Minister for Environment and Agriculture, Saxony)
10:50 – 11:10	International Cooperation along the Green Belt of Fennoscandia I: Russian Federation (I. Osokina)
11:10 – 11:30	International Cooperation along the Green Belt of Fennoscandia II: Finland (T. Hokkanen/T. Lindholm)
11:30 – 11:50	Experience of Latvia in Management of Transboundary Protected Areas (A. V. Urtans)
11:50 – 12:10	Transboundary Cooperation in Field of PA Establishment and Management (Lithuanian Case) (R. Baskyte)
12:10 – 12:30	Transboundary Protected Areas in the Eastern Border Region of Poland – the Concept and Implementation (Z. Krzeminski)
12:30 – 13:40	Lunch break
13:40 – 13:50	Implementation of the Habitats Directive and Birds Directive in the Slovak Republic – Twinning Phare Project 2002 (P. Urban)
13:50 – 14:10	Cooperation of Germany and Czech Republic in Nature Protection (L. Miko)
14:10 – 14:30	Cross Border National Parks along the former Iron Curtain – the Austrian-Hungarian Example (L. Kárpáti)
14:30 – 14:50	Transboundary Cooperation in Nature Conservation along the Austrian Green Border (M. Tiefenbach)
14:50 – 15:10	Activities along the Balkan Green Belt (G. Schwaderer)
15:10 – 15:30	Possible Role of the European Commission I: International Cooperation (A. Demeter)
15:30 – 15:45	Importance of Ecological Corridors and Networks - Towards a Global Ecological Network (T. Marghescu, IUCN)
15:45 – 16:15	Coffee break
16:15 – 16:30	Address by the German Federal Minister for Environment, J. Trittin
16:30 – 16:45	Joint signature of a declaration on the cooperation between the „Green Cross International” foundation and German Nature Conservation NGOs in the presence of the president of the „Green Cross”, M. Gorbatschow, and Minister J. Trittin
16:45 – 17:15	Resume
17:15	Transfer to the BfN summer party (10 th anniversary of the BfN)
17:30	BfN summer party

16 July 2003 National Conference (conference language German/English)	
9:00 – 9:15	Introduction (R. Blanke, BfN)
9:15 – 9:40	Presentation of the results and conclusions of the testing and development project „Inventory of the German Green Belt” BN Bavaria (H. Weiger)
9:40 – 10:00	Activities and intentions of the German NGOs NABU (C. Unselt) WWF (A. Kohl) Heinz-Sielmann Foundation (G. Frank) Coffee break German association for landscape conservation (DVL, B. Blümlein) BUND (A. Zahrnt)
10:00 – 10:20	
10:20 – 10:40	
10:40 – 11:10	
11:10 – 11:30	
11:30 – 11:50	
11:50 – 12:30	Discussion (DNR)
12:30 – 13:45	Lunch break
13:45 – 14:00	Chances and intentions for the implementation of a conservation scheme along the „German Green Belt” as seen by the German Federal States Schleswig-Holstein (P. Knitsch) Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania (I. Gans) Brandenburg (C. Fittkow) Saxony-Anhalt (U. Kamm) Thuringia (K.-F. Thöne) Saxony (H. Ballmann)
14:00 – 14:15	
14:15 – 14:30	
14:30 – 14:45	
14:45 – 15:00	
15:00 – 15:15	
15:15 – 15:45	Coffee break
15:45 – 16:15	Possible role of the Federal Government (J. Flasbarth, German Federal Ministry for Environment, BMU)
16:15 – 16:45	Possible Role of the European Commission II: National Projects (A. Demeter)
16:45 – 17:45	Final discussion and „Declaration of Bonn” (U. Riecken, BfN)

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International and national conference „Perspectives of the Green Belt“

16 July 2003

„Bonn Declaration“

The participants of the national conference „Perspectives of the green belt“ have come to the following conclusions:

- Within the former East German – West German border strip („Green Belt“) a unique diversity of animal and plant species as well as habitat types has been preserved or developed, due to its historic development and seclusion.
- The „Green Belt“ presents an important backbone of a national ecological network in itself as well as in its combination with a large number of adjacent large-size areas of particular importance for nature conservation.
- Therefore, the „Green Belt“ in total is of extraordinary value from a nature conservation point of view.
- The dissection of the Green Belt, intensive land use and lack of management as well as the selling of land owned by public authorities all cause a great potential threat, which needs to be averted.
- An enlargement of the „Green Belt“ to other European countries offers the opportunity to contribute to the creation of a pan-European habitat network substantially and to create a European communication platform for nature conservation and a sustainable development.

The participants of the conference agree, that the „Green Belt“ has to be preserved in its present ecological quality and that gaps, which have already formed, should be closed again. The participants of the conference call on the federal states to accept the offer of the federal government to transfer areas in public ownership with no existing legal demands within the former border strip to the federal states for free. This should happen fast and with little bureaucratic effort.

Further on, the following measurements need to be taken by the responsible actors:

- **Municipalities and districts:** securing of an adequate management of habitats in need of maintenance, designation of suitable nature reserves in the area of the Green Belt
- **German Federal States:** designation of suitable nature reserves; allocation of financial resources for the purchase of land, support of large-scale nature conservation projects of the federal government, use of the revenues from the sale of land-pieces in the border-strip accruing in the federal states to secure their ecological quality; trans-border cooperation with neighbouring countries
- **Federal Government of Germany:** support for the conservation and development of focus areas of national importance by funding large-scale nature conservation projects, support of the enlargement of the „Green Belt“ to other European countries
- **All public authorities:** critical revision of all plans concerning infrastructure, the development of settlements and of industrial areas with regard to the goal to preserve the „Green Belt“
- **Nature conservation NGOs:** active support by the purchase of land and acceptance of responsibility for the maintenance and development of sections of the „Green Belt“; concerted campaigns in public relations, cooperation in fundraising and the implementation of specific projects, avoidance of competitive situations

- **Agriculture:** conservation and ecologically sound use of present semi-natural grassland-ecosystems, renouncement of intensification and change of land-use (e.g. breaking up of grassland) in the area of the „Green Belt“
- **Forestry:** renouncement of reforestation, ecologically sound maintenance of present forests in the area of the „Green Belt“
- **Hunters:** renouncement of the installation of raised hides and the establishment of fields for feeding game in the area of the „Green Belt“
- **Water-supply and management:** conservation of all running and standing waters in the „Green Belt“ area; renouncement of their development and maintenance; renaturation of non-natural parts of rivers and lakes
- **Tourism and recreation:** visitors guidance respecting nature conservation requirements by avoiding sensitive areas of the „Green Belt“

Furthermore, the participants agree that all parties involved should cooperate constructively in measurements of conservation, within specific projects and in comprehensive public relations work.

The German version is binding.

„Deklaration von Bonn“

Die Teilnehmer der nationalen Fachkonferenz „Perspektiven des Grünen Bandes“ sind zu folgenden Schlussfolgerungen gelangt:

- Innerhalb des ehemaligen innerdeutschen Grenzstreifens („Grünes Band“) hat sich auf Grund seiner durch die historische Entwicklung bedingten Abgeschlossenheit eine einmalige Vielfalt an Tier- und Pflanzenarten sowie an Biotoptypen erhalten bzw. entwickeln können.
- Das „Grüne Band“ stellt selbst und in seiner engen Verzahnung mit einer Vielzahl angrenzender großflächiger naturschutzfachlich besonders bedeutsamer Gebiete eine wesentliche nationale Biotopverbundstruktur dar.
- Das „Grüne Band“ hat somit insgesamt eine herausragende naturschutzfachliche Bedeutung.
- Durch Zerschneidungen, Nutzungen und mangelnde Pflege sowie den Verkauf von Flächen der öffentlichen Hand ergeben sich jedoch erhebliche Gefährdungspotentiale, die es abzuwehren gilt.
- Eine Ausweitung des „Grünen Bandes“ auf weitere europäische Staaten bietet die Chance, zur Schaffung eines europäischen Biotopverbundsystems erheblich beizutragen und eine europäische Kommunikationsplattform für Naturschutz und nachhaltige Entwicklung zu schaffen.

Die Teilnehmer der Konferenz sind sich darin einig, dass das „Grüne Band“ in seiner jetzigen ökologischen Qualität erhalten bleiben muss und dass bereits entstandene Lücken wieder geschlossen werden sollten.

Die Teilnehmer der Konferenz appellieren an die Bundesländer, schnell und unbürokratisch das Angebot des Bundes anzunehmen, restitutionsfreie Flächen der öffentlichen Hand im Bereich des Mauergrundstücksgesetzes unentgeltlich den Ländern zu übertragen.

Des weiteren sind folgende Maßnahmen durch verantwortungsvolle Akteure notwendig:

- **Kommunen und Kreise:** Sicherstellung eines adäquaten Managements pflegebedürftiger Biotope, Ausweisung geeigneter Schutzgebiete im Bereich des Grünen Bands
- **Bundesländer:** Ausweisung geeigneter Schutzgebiete, Bereitstellung von Mitteln für den Flächenankauf, Unterstützung von Naturschutzgroßvorhaben des Bundes, Verwendung der den Ländern zufließenden Erlöse aus dem Verkauf von Grenzgrundstücken gemäß des Mauergrundstücksgesetzes für die Sicherung der ökologischen Qualität der Flächen; grenzüberschreitende Zusammenarbeit mit benachbarten Staaten
- **Bund:** Unterstützung des Erhalts und der Entwicklung von national bedeutsamen Schwerpunktgebieten durch die Förderung als Naturschutzgroßprojekte; Unterstützung der Ausweitung des „Grünen Bandes“ auf weitere europäische Staaten
- **Alle öffentlichen Verwaltungen:** Kritische Überprüfung aller Planungen der Infrastruktur, der Siedlungsentwicklung und Gewerbeansiedlung vor dem Hintergrund des Zieles der Erhaltung des „Grünen Bands“
- **Naturschutzverbände:** Aktive Unterstützung durch eigene Flächenankäufe und die Übernahme von Verantwortung für Pflege und Entwicklung von Abschnitten des „Grünen Bands“; Konzentrierte Aktionen der Öffentlichkeitsarbeit; Kooperation bei der Einwerbung von Spenden und der Umsetzung konkreter Vorhaben; Vermeidung von Konkurrenzsituationen

- **Landwirtschaft:** Erhalt und naturverträgliche Nutzung vorhandener halbnatürlicher Offenlandökosysteme, Verzicht auf Nutzungsintensivierung und Nutzungsumwandlung (z.B. Grünlandumbruch) im Bereich des „Grünen Bands“
- **Forstwirtschaft:** Verzicht auf Aufforstungen; naturschutzgerechte Bewirtschaftung vorhandener Wälder im Bereich des „Grünen Bands“
- **Jagd:** Verzicht auf die Errichtung von Hochsitzen und die Anlage von Wildäckern im „Grünen Band“
- **Wasserwirtschaft:** Schutz der Oberflächengewässer im „Grünen Band“; Verzicht auf Ausbau und Unterhaltung; Renaturierung von naturfernen Gewässerabschnitten
- **Tourismus und Naherholung:** Naturschutzkonforme Besucherlenkung unter Meidung störungssensibler Bereiche des „Grünen Bands“

Die Teilnehmer sind darüber hinaus der Meinung, dass alle Beteiligten bei Maßnahmen des Schutzes, im Zuge konkreter Projekte und bei einer umfassenden Öffentlichkeitsarbeit konstruktiv kooperieren sollten.