Dear Reader

Welcome to this special ‘European Green Belt’ newsletter.

The implementation of the ‘European Green Belt’ initiative was launched in 2004 at the Ferto-Hanság National Park, in my home country of Hungary. Just across the Hungarian-Austrian border the Hungarian park joins the Neusiedler-See National Park in Austria. This transboundary protected area forms around the shallow Lake Ferto or Neusiedl, which with its extensive reed beds is the largest of its kind in Europe. This site which lies at the heart of the Green Belt also represents the cultural and historic dimensions of the initiative, as this was the place where the Iron Curtain was first broken in 1989. I am immensely proud that IUCN can provide the secretariat for this bold initiative. Facilitating and enhancing the activities of nature conservation organisations to protect biodiversity are the core functions of The World Conservation Union (IUCN). One of IUCN’s key roles is to provide a platform for Governmental and non-Governmental organisations to meet and reach agreement on issues of nature conservation and sustainable development. In the first issue of this newsletter you will see how the Green Belt has been structured in Europe with its three sections in Fennoscandia, Central Europe and South Eastern Europe. Furthermore, to ensure that results are achieved at the local level, the Secretariat is working with regional co-ordinators and national focal points in each section. Europe is criss-crossed by political, cultural and economic borders that often hinder the conservation of the continent’s biodiversity. Nature does not respect these borders and we utilize the well-known geographic, political and historic features of the former iron curtain consciously to demonstrate the benefits of transboundary cooperation on nature conservation and rural development. Thus we are uniting nature and nations where they were previously separated.

As this newsletter impressively shows, the ‘European Green Belt’ has got off to a flying start, and projects are being initiated throughout its range building on successes in each of the respective sections. I look forward to a long and prosperous partnership working together with all the stakeholders throughout the 22 countries of the European Green Belt.

Tamás Marghescu
IUCN Regional Director for Europe.

The initiative of the European Green Belt has the vision to create the backbone of an ecological network, running from the Barents to the Black Sea that is a global symbol for transboundary cooperation in nature conservation and sustainable development. Spanning the historic course of the Iron Curtain in Europe, the former “death strip” shall be converted into a network of transboundary protected areas. Moreover, the initiative shall serve to better harmonise human activities with the natural environment, and to increase opportunities for the socio-economic development of local communities.

The course of the Green Belt is a legacy of history, having been the symbol of political and ideological division between the powers of Europe in the second half of the twentieth century. The Iron Curtain was one of the most divisive barriers to affect Europe, running for approximately 8500 km from the northern most tip of Scandinavia, through Central Europe and into the countries of South Eastern Europe, spanning some of the continent’s most impressive and fragile landscapes. The border area, filled with barbed-wire fences, walls, minefields, guard towers and bunkers, constituted a ‘forbidden zone’ where no activity was allowed. The only positive result was that now the route of this strongly protected borderline travels through some of the most important remaining habitats for biodiversity in Europe, incorporating most of Europe’s distinct biogeographical regions.

At its heart the Green Belt is expected to form an ecological network of the protected areas which today exist along its route and thus contribute to the conservation of biodiversity. Since a Green Belt means many different things to the different stakeholders, there will be no single form for the Green Belt to take throughout Europe. In most countries, the Green Belt will connect National Parks, Nature Parks, Biosphere Reserves and transboundary protected areas and other areas used to foster sustainable development initiatives. In some countries, for example Germany, it is in addition aimed to protect the Green Belt in its entire length. By encouraging sustainable development, it is hoped that areas that have suffered from shrinking populations and eroding economies since the fall of the Iron Curtain will benefit from new sources of income.

An immediate priority for the implementation of the Green Belt Initiative is the development of site-based projects in different areas. One of the first tasks will be to generate a detailed map of the entire route, showing the protected areas and land use practices. This will be used as a tool to identify areas where project attention should be focused in the future.

The European Green Belt has the chance to take one of the World’s leading symbols of human division and transform it into an example for the future of nature conservation in Europe.
The organisational structure

The Green Belt is an initiative spanning 22 countries. Its objectives range from the local to the global level. Therefore it must have a structure that enables these objectives to be met.

The route of the Green Belt is divided into 3 regional sections: Fennoscandia (Norway, Finland, Russian Federation), Central Europe (Germany, Austria, Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Italy, Slovenia, Croatia, Baltic Section: Poland, Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania) and South-Eastern Europe (Serbia and Montenegro, Romania, Bulgaria, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Albania, Greece, Turkey).

Each of these sections will be coordinated by a relevant organisation experienced and widely accepted in the region, the so-called ‘Regional Coordinator’. For the Central European Green Belt, the BUND, and for the South Eastern European Green Belt, Euronatur will take over this function.

The Secretariat for the European Green Belt is hosted by the IUCN Regional Office for Europe. The Secretariat gathers and exchanges information with stakeholders active in the area of the Green Belt and supports studies and pilot projects within the Green Belt.

The initiative is overseen by the IUCN Green Belt Coordinator, Alois Lang. He is linking the stakeholders with each other and with the secretariat, contributing to the development and implementation of projects and acting as an information hub within the Green Belt community and towards media.

In the single countries forming the Green Belt, national representatives, authorized by their respective state agency responsible for nature and regional development, serve as National Focal Points. They shall promote synergies and co-operation between national and Green Belt activities.

The Green Belt …

The "Green Belt of Fennoscandia” spans 1000 km across the Finnish-Russian-Norwegian borders from the Gulf of Finland in the south to the Arctic Ocean in the north. This 20 to 30 km wide belt includes some of the last remaining old-growth boreal forests, harbouring about 50 percent of the endangered forest species in the area. It is mainly due to the Cold War and the consequent low economic activities, that this area remains in a nearly pristine state. Since the end of the Cold War, ongoing extensive logging is threatening the forest belt, where a series of protected areas has already been established. If no protection is put in place, more than half of the unique natural areas forming the "Green Belt of Fennoscandia” are likely to be destroyed or degraded.

The main biodiversity values of the Fennoscandian Green Belt are: the western margin of east Eurasian taiga, presence of all boreal zone subzones from South to North and outstanding climax Scots Pine stands.

The Fennoscandian animal world is unique due to the presence of species such as taiga reindeer, grey wolf, brown bear, wolverine, ringed seal, land-locked salmon. It is also very important concerning the availability of key habitats of migrating birds.

Looking at the protected areas along the Fennoscandian Green Belt, there is a region of trilateral cooperation in the north, with the Pasvik zapovednik on the Russian side, the Øvre Pasvik Nature Reserve in Norway and the Vätsäri Wilderness area on the Finnish side. Further south, several important areas are situated along the Green Belt, such as the Kalevala National Park, which belongs to the Russian Federation developing programme List of Protected Areas (National Parks or zapovedniks), which will be established in the following ten years (2005-2015). There is also a plan to establish a Finnish Kalevala Park. Further south, e.g., the Kostomuksha zapovednik and on the Finnish side the Friendship Park, which have been established to protect the wild forest reindeer, constitute the Green Belt.

The protection of the Green Belt has become during the years 2003-2005 again an actual topic in the international discussion. There is an effort to nominate this valuable protected zone along the Russian-Norwegian and Finnish-Russian border in the World Heritage List of UNESCO. The proposal forms for nomination of the Russian part have been completed in the end of 2004.

In the Resolution 3.101 "Advancing boreal forest conservation” the Third World Conservation Congress in Bangkok urged Russia to facilitate and continue to fund needed scientific, technical, indigenous and local community activity to assist in the nomination and designation of boreal forest regions as recognized international sites, for example such as the discussed transboundary World Heritage Site ‘Green Belt of Fennoscandia’.

Vladimir Moshkalo, IUCN Moscow
The Central European Green Belt is one of three regions of activity building the European Green Belt. It is running through Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Germany, Czech Republic, Austria, Slovakia, Hungary, Slovenia, Croatia and Italy. Since the fall of the Iron Curtain in 1989, BUND (Bund für Umwelt und Naturschutz Deutschland, Friends of the Earth Germany) is engaged in the protection of the valuable habitats along the German Green Belt and is appointed regional coordinator for the Central European Green Belt.

The Central European Green Belt enfolds numerous nature conservation areas and pristine landscapes, e.g. National Park Kuršiu Nerijų at the Baltic coast in Lithuania, the transboundary National Parks Bayerischer Wald/Sumava, Thayatal/Podyji or Neusiedler See/Fértő Hanság or the floodplains of Danube, Thaya and Morava, the biggest and last pristine floodplains in Central Europe. In the intensively used cultural landscape of Central Europe the Green Belt is a last retreat and structural element for many endangered species. In spite of its high value for nature conservation, the Green Belt is threatened especially through intensive agriculture or infrastructure projects, e.g. the planned road building between Vienna and Bratislava.

From 11th to 13th of October 2005 the first workshop for the implementation of the Central European Green Belt took place in Nature Conservation Centre Mitwitz near the German Green Belt. Organised by the regional coordinator BUND-Project Office Green Belt, funded by the German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation (BNR) and supported by IUCN. About 40 participants from nearly all adjacent countries discussed initiatives, opportunities and projects regarding inventory of habitats, public relation and environmental education, e.g. UNESCO-school projects and public biodiversity days, as well as common problems concerning the protection of the Green Belt. A big step for implementation and protection is the submitted Interreg IIIB-project with 7 participating countries along the Central European Green Belt. This project proposal was presented and discussed at the workshop. Components of the project, which would start in April/May 2006 if allowed, will be a gap-analysis of the habitats along the Green Belt, eco-tourism and development of leaflets and materials for public relation and environmental education in the languages of the participating countries. The workshop was a fruitful and constructive meeting of stakeholders, who agreed on several essential next steps for establishing the Central European Green Belt.

The Balkan Peninsula, the Iron Curtain followed not only the borders of the states of the Eastern Block but also those of Albania and Yugoslavia forming a “Y” from the Danube to the Mediterranean and the Black Sea.

The Balkan Green Belt is an extremely heterogeneous, but mostly natural corridor. The lowest points in the Pannonian Plain are at the Danube only 68 to 88 m above sea level, while the mountain peaks are up to 2753 m high in the Korab Mountain between Albania and Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. From the Adriatic Sea at the mouth of the Bojana River, the landscape rises in a distance of only 80 km up to 2693 m in the Prokletije massive between Albania, Montenegro and in the province of Kosovo in Serbia. The Green Belt links extremely important wetlands such as coastal areas, rivers and lakes with the mountains in the very centre of the Balkan.

The IUCN Strategy for South Eastern Europe "Conservation without Frontiers – Towards a new Image for the Balkans" identifies a preliminary list of 38 important transboundary sites, where protected areas should be developed. 20 of these are covered by the Green Belt initiative in the region. Only one country, Bosnia and Herzegovina, out of eight covered by the new IUCN SEE office in Belgrade is not situated at the Green Belt but all neighbouring countries are within reach. Thus, the Green Belt initiative offers an ideal opportunity to promote protected areas as tool for regional development in the Southeast of Europe and to form an outstanding chain of protected areas.
The European Green Belt Coordinator

From July 2005, Alois Lang works with IUCN’s Programme Office for South-Eastern Europe as the new Green Belt Coordinator. He lives in Eastern Austria, where he has been working for the Lake Neusiedl National Park for twelve years, setting up public relations and ecotourism in close cooperation with the Hungarian National Park administration of Fertő-Hanság. Beyond that, Alois Lang has assisted in several national and international projects concerning nature conservation and ecotourism. Most of the participants of the first Green Belt Conference in September 2004 will already know him, as he was closely involved in the organization and contributed to discussions and events.

The Coordinator is responsible for a wide range of tasks – from the collaboration with nature conservation organisations and authorities to the promotion of the biological and economic functions of the Green Belt. Although based in the IUCN Programme Office in Belgrade, he is kindly invited by the Fertő-Hanság National Park to use an office in Hungary as well.

“Borders separate, nature unites”, a quote from the German Federal Minister of Environment Jürgen Trittin’s speech at the first International Green Belt Conference in Bonn 2003, serves as a motto for the Coordinator. Uniting experts and stakeholders working for the Green Belt initiative is just one of the targets, and the first steps towards it will be to keep in touch with as many partners as possible.

Contact: alois.lang@iucn.org

Regional Coordinator for the Central European Green Belt

Melanie Kreutz
Dr. Liana Geidezis

Bund Naturschutz (BN) – the Bavarian branch of BUND – was the first who recognised the value of the “Iron Curtain” through Germany already in the early 1980ies and struggled for it’s conservation. In December 1989 Bund Naturschutz organised the first meeting of more than 400 nature conservationists from East- and West-Germany, which took place in the town Hof in the Bavarian-Saxonian-Czech border area. During this meeting the name Green Belt was created and all participants agreed to the first resolution for the protection of the unique habitats of the Green Belt Germany – the project was born.

Since then, BUND-Project Office Green Belt, situated at the headquarters of Bund Naturschutz in Nuremberg, coordinates projects and activities along the German Green Belt and was appointed as Regional Coordinator for the Central European Green Belt.

Contact: melanie.kreutz@bund-naturschutz.de
liana.geidezis@bund-naturschutz.de

... South-Eastern European Green Belt

Gabriel Schwaderer
EURONATUR, Executive Director

Even before the political change in Europe, EURO-NATUR recognized the ecological value of the border zone between East and West. In 1990, EURONATUR started to initiate and implement conservation actions along the southern section of the European Green Belt. Particularly, our role has been to stimulate transboundary cooperation and to get real action started in order to safeguard the ecological pearls along the European Green Belt. The first concrete initiative was started off in the transboundary zone of Austria, Slovenia, Croatia, Hungary and Serbia along the river system of Danube, Drava and Mura. The overall goal is to protect this approximately 2000 square kilometre large area and to develop it in a sustainable manner. Other examples are activities of EURO-NATUR and many partners at Lake Prespa and Lake Ohrid in the transboundary area of Albania, Greece and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia as well as at Bojana river in the border zone of Albania and Montenegro. Our latest attempt within the European Green Belt initiative is the preparation of the designation process for a transboundary protected area along the border of Albania and Macedonia north of Lake Ohrid. The area called Jablanica and Shibenik forms part of the core area of the highly endangered Balkan lynx.

During the 1st European Green Belt work group meeting in September 2004 EURONATUR was appointed as coordinator for the southernmost section of the European Green Belt, the Balkan Green Belt. It is both honour and responsibility for EURONATUR to contribute in this role to the initiative of the European Green Belt. We are aware that it will not be an easy task to achieve protection for the Green Belt but we are committed to contribute with concrete projects and contacts to governmental and non-governmental organisations in the region to make that initiative a success. We are convinced that the Green Belt initiative is a key instrument to promote nature conservation in Europe and to establish further transboundary protected areas.

Contact: gabriel.schwaderer@euronatur.org

Introduction to the Programme of Work

The Programme of Work lies at the heart of the Green Belt. It was the product of discussions that have taken place with stakeholders at the launch meeting of the initiative in 2004 and two subsequent rounds of consultation. The document defines the structure the Green Belt will take, the different mechanisms that need to be put in place to enable it to achieve its goals and the activities that should happen within the coming years to ensure that the Green Belt becomes a reality.

The overall goal of the Programme is to establish the Green Belt as the backbone of an ecological network running from the Barents to the Black Sea. This network will become a global symbol for transboundary cooperation for both nature conservation and sustainable development. Furthermore the Programme ensures that the Green Belt will provide a useful contribution to the commitments made by countries to halt the loss of biodiversity by 2010.

To ensure as much synergy with ongoing activities at the global level for protected areas, the document is modelled around the CBD Programme of Work on Protected Areas. Many of the targets within the Green Belt PoW will support those developed by the CBD.

Recognising that tasks have to happen at different levels, the Programme makes separate requests to the Secretariat and the stakeholders within each of the targets. In this way, it is hoped that stakeholders will be able to identify where their current or future activities can contribute to the realisation of the targets and goals.

Contact: gabriel.schwaderer@euronatur.org
Programme of Work

Vision: To create the backbone of an ecological network, running from the Barents to the Black Sea that is a global symbol for transboundary cooperation in nature conservation and sustainable development.

History

The European Green Belt (hereafter called the Green Belt) is an initiative to transform the route of the former Iron Curtain including the still strongly protected borderline between Finland and Russia into an ecological corridor, running from the Northern tip of Europe at the border between Russia, Norway, and Finland, crossing Central Europe to the border of Former Yugoslavia today between Slovenia, Croatia and Hungary and continuing to the Black Sea, Aegean Sea, Ionian Sea and Adriatic Sea along the borders of Albania, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Romania, Serbia & Montenegro and Turkey. For centuries this line has witnessed some of Europe’s most devastating human conflicts and for decades at the end of the ‘twentieth century’ it was also the symbol of political and ideological division between the powers of Europe. The ‘Iron Curtain’ in name still represents an icon for division, both political and personal, and is still a healing wound for many of the people and countries deeply affected by it.

The only benefit to come from the Iron Curtain was that it created a forbidden zone to people, allowing biodiversity a 40 year respite along its route. Elsewhere in Europe, habitats were being changed and modified through processes such as intensive agriculture, transport infrastructure or industrial development. The route of this strongly protected borderline thus travels through some of the most important habitats for biodiversity in Europe. This is the starting point for the Green Belt initiative.

A Green Belt

A Green Belt means many different things to many different people. Also given the great diversity of political, biological and socio-economic conditions in the countries that border the Green Belt, there will be no single form for the Green Belt to take throughout Europe. In most countries, the Green Belt will connect National Parks, Nature Parks, Biosphere Reserves and trans-boundary protected areas and other areas used to foster sustainable development initiatives (e.g. agri-environmental schemes, community lands). In some countries, for example Germany, it is in addition aimed to protect the Green Belt, i.e. a strip of land of varying width, in its entire length. At its heart the Green Belt is expected to fulfill the functions of a backbone of an ecological network and thus contribute to the conservation of biodiversity. However, a Green Belt must also serve to better harmonise human activities with the natural environment, increasing opportunities for the socio-economic development of local communities. The Green Belt will become a tool for cooperation across borders between local communities and also an important instrument to fulfil the national and international commitments made by decision-makers.
Programme of Work

In 2004, experts and national representatives from the countries along the Green Belt met at the Ferto-Hanság National Park in Hungary to launch the initiative and identify the steps required to make the Green Belt a success. The main outcome of this meeting was the Programme of Work which was then consulted widely among stakeholders and partners along the Green Belt. The Programme document is modeled on the Convention on Biological Diversity Programme of Work on Protected Areas. There are three overall Programme elements that outline the actions required to meet the objectives of the initiative and the activities that will support the realization of these actions. There are seven goals, each of which contain a number of time defined targets. For each goal, the activities are separated by whether the Secretariat or the Stakeholders should carry them out. In this way it is possible for the Secretariat – hold by IUCN ROFE – to support the activities of Stakeholders and vice versa. By developing a series of time defined and concise targets it is hoped that this document will promote activities ‘on the ground’ and ensure that the Green Belt becomes a physical reality.

Within each goal, the Programme identifies targets and activities that are suggested to be undertaken by the stakeholders involved in the initiative and the secretariat. These targets and activities have been devised to ensure that they are SMART:

- SPECIFIC
- MEASURABLE
- ACHIEVABLE
- RELEVANT
- TIMED

The Programme of Work will be annually assessed and compared to the activities taking place within the Green Belt.
**PROGRAMME ELEMENT 1**

**Direct action for the establishment of the European Green Belt.**

This details the actions that need to be taken in the establishment of the Belt in the different ecosystems and countries that run along the belt. It lists specific targets and priorities for each country involved.

**GOAL 1**

**The establishment of the European Green Belt as a functional ecological network**

**Target:** By 2010 the European Green Belt is established securing its development to a functional ecological network, being representative of the ecosystems along its route. It will serve to embed the protected areas involved further into their surrounding landscapes. As such the Green Belt will become an important contribution to the commitments made by EU heads of State and Pan-European Environment Ministers to halt the loss of biodiversity by 2010. The Green Belt will contribute to the Pan-European Ecological Network and will help EU Member States to fulfill their obligations to the Habitats Directive, including Article 10 concerning connectivity. The Green Belt will also become an important contribution to the CBD Programme of Work on Protected Areas Goal 1.3, as well as to other international conventions and initiatives.

**SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES OF STAKEHOLDERS:**

1.1.1: By 2006 make available to the secretariat relevant data stored by NGOs or international and national agencies to be accessed and used for the production of a GIS map and database of the entire Green Belt to be accessible, as far as is permitted, to all stakeholders.

1.1.2: By 2006, develop a portfolio of running projects and project proposals to take place at the local level in regions along the Green Belt.

1.1.3: By 2007 conduct a gap analysis to identify priority areas i.e. undesignated areas, vulnerable habitats, etc. for Green Belt activities.

1.1.4: By 2007 complete an assessment of the ‘status’ of the Green Belt along its route (e.g. status of protected areas, levels of infrastructure development, water quality, species status).

1.1.5: By 2007 transboundary projects are initiated to support integrated water basin management within the Green Belt.

1.1.6: By 2008, the Green Belt becomes part of national action plans for the development, management and enhancement of protected areas and the fostering of transboundary cooperation.

**SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES OF THE SECRETARIAT:**

1.1.7: Facilitate the initiation of a project to create a GIS map of the entire Green Belt by 2006, including information on all protected and designated areas under national legislation and international treaties.

1.1.8: Prepare maps for educational and tourist purposes under the corporate design of the Green Belt.

1.1.9: In collaboration with stakeholders, the secretariat should identify several representative regions along the Green Belt, within which to focus activities. These focal regions will act as case studies to highlight the benefits of the Green Belt to national and regional authorities and the public. These case studies will then be disseminated to all potential actors and the general public (e.g. “Green Belt region of the Year”).
1.1.10: Coordinate with national authorities and NGOs the identification of representative species that could be used to provide a public face for the Green Belt. These species would be used as one informal ‘barometer’ of the status of the Green Belt over time and a reminder of the important biodiversity within the region.

1.1.11: In collaboration with stakeholders initiate and support the establishment of protected areas and protected corridors within the Green Belt in order to close identified gaps and enhance connectivity.

1.1.12: Promote the Green Belt towards the major international agreements to ensure that the Green Belt remains a useful tool for the protection of biodiversity.

1.1.13: Initiate a study on the change in status of relevant species and habitats in the Green Belt and on the changes in different forms of land use etc.

1.1.14: Initiate an assessment of the natural and cultural sites along the Green Belt.

1.1.15: Promote the ecosystem approach as a tool for integrated management of biodiversity

GOAL 2 The Green Belt becomes an established mechanism for the sharing of knowledge, experience and best practice on transboundary cooperation for nature conservation and sustainable development.

Target. By 2008 the necessary mechanisms are in place and are running to allow participants to share and use positive/negative experiences in transboundary cooperation. Information will be available on diverse issues such as funding, management plans, conflict resolution, public-private collaboration etc.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES OF THE STAKEHOLDERS:

1.2.1: Stakeholders share their experiences of collaboration for transboundary cooperation.

1.2.2: Stakeholders share positive and negative experiences of working with actors working outside the environmental sector.

1.2.3: Stakeholders include the Green Belt initiative into project proposals they develop.

1.2.4: Stakeholders active in the area of the Green Belt inform the Secretariat of all projects and their status to allow an overview of activities.

1.2.5: Stakeholders translate information into local languages

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES OF THE SECRETARIAT:

1.2.6: The secretariat makes it possible for stakeholders to share experiences in local initiatives from different regions of the Green Belt, primarily through web tools, printed newsletter and accessible database

1.2.7: The secretariat pursues links with the private sector and explores possible collaborative projects to raise the profile of sustainable activities within private practices.

1.2.8: The secretariat works with actors (organisations, authorities etc), outside the environmental sector (e.g. transport, infrastructure, development, tourism) to promote synergies with the Green Belt.
GOAL 3: The Green Belt becomes a viable tool to aid the sustainable development of communities at the local level within its range.

Target: By 2006 projects have been successfully initiated within the Green Belt focussing at the integration of biodiversity conservation and sustainability into local land use practices.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES OF THE STAKEHOLDERS:

1.3.1: Partner organisations identify funding opportunities for local level projects and seek to integrate the Green Belt concept into them.

1.3.2: Stakeholders integrate the Green Belt into events organised at the local level.

1.3.3: Stakeholders inform the secretariat of projects approved under the Green Belt initiative

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES OF THE SECRETARIAT:

1.3.4: The secretariat seeks funding sources, especially EU level funding, and coordinates the creation of consortia of organisations to work with transboundary cooperation at the local level.

1.3.5: The secretariat develops a Green Belt corporate design for use by the stakeholders.

GOAL 4: The Green Belt becomes an ecological laboratory to study landscape and continental scale ecological processes and the response of habitats and species to major ecological changes.

Target: By 2007 the Green Belt becomes a target area for landscape and biodiversity research projects.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES OF THE STAKEHOLDERS:

1.4.1: Green Belt stakeholders actively seek partnership and funding for the development of large-scale research projects along the Green Belt.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES OF THE SECRETARIAT:

1.4.2: The secretariat works to ensure that by 2007 the Green Belt is part of at least one major research project concerning the landscape ecological processes.
PROGRAMME ELEMENT 2

Participation and Institutional structure of the European Green Belt.

This details the roles of the different actors in the initiative, including major international NGOs, national NGOs and the countries involved. It details the structure of the different working groups and the reporting and activity obligations.

GOAL 5: The Green Belt operates with a transparent and efficient structure that ensures the full participation of all stakeholders.

Target: By 2006 national focal points have been established for all countries along the Green Belt and are working with the initiative under a shared set of ‘Operative Principles’ to be developed in collaboration with them.

SUGGESTED ACTIONS BY THE STAKEHOLDERS

2.1.1: Countries bordering the Green Belt ensure that there is a representative authorised by their respective state agency responsible for nature and regional development that represents their country within the Green Belt initiative, hereafter called the ‘National Focal Point’.

2.1.2: National focal points propose synergies between their duties and Green Belt activities through promoting the incorporation of the Green Belt within state conservation projects and mechanisms.

2.1.3: National focal points promote collaboration between the Green Belt and national administrations outside nature conservation, e.g. transport or development.

2.1.4: Stakeholders ensure that the secretariat is fully informed of project planning and communications activities made under the Green Belt.

2.1.5: All stakeholders strive to create new synergies between their respective activities and increase cooperation between national focal points, state organisations and NGOs.

SUGGESTED ACTIONS BY THE SECRETARIAT

2.1.6: As soon as possible the secretariat develops a set of ‘Operative Principles’ consulting them with national focal points and regional coordinators.

2.1.7: By mid-2005 the secretariat ensures that there is a Green Belt coordinator position created, that is dedicated to overseeing this initiative.

2.1.8: By the end of 2007 secretariat undertakes a review of lessons learnt implementing the Programme of Work.

2.1.9: The efficacy of the institutional structure is assessed on an annual basis and the secretariat identifies improvements and changes.

Target: By 2006 regional subdivisions are established for the Green Belt and are being coordinated by organisations with sufficient experience and expertise in that region and which are recognised by the stakeholders in the region.

SUGGESTED ACTIONS BY THE STAKEHOLDERS

2.2.1: Regional coordinating organisations organise annual workshops in their region to discuss current activities in the Green Belt.

2.2.2: Regional coordinating organisations prepare annual reports on activities and developments in their region.

2.2.3: Regional coordinating organisations ensure the full communication with national focal points and stakeholders at the national level, and advise the secretariat on important issues in their region as they develop.

SUGGESTED ACTIONS BY THE SECRETARIAT

2.2.4: As soon as possible the secretariat develops a Memorandum of Understanding in consultation with the organisations that will act as regional coordinators.

2.2.5: National authorities are consulted as to which regional subdivisions best suit their work.
PROGRAMME ELEMENT 3

Enabling activities.

This element identifies the different activities and tools that will be used to ensure that the targets in Elements 1 and 2 are achieved. Primarily these relate to targeting funding opportunities, communications tools and the exchange of information and best practice between countries and experts involved in the initiative.

GOAL 6: The Green Belt becomes a widely acknowledged initiative within participating countries and among international organisations

Target: From 2005 on the Green Belt is promoted at relevant national and international forums, and synergies are identified between the Green Belt and other national and international initiatives

SUGGESTED ACTIONS BY THE STAKEHOLDERS:

3.1.1: Partners inform the secretariat of project and funding opportunities as they arise along the Green Belt.

3.2.1: Stakeholders engage with the secretariat to offer information and input into the content of the website as well as to translate the main information into local languages.

3.2.2: Stakeholders offer the documents and experience that can be shared broadly.

SUGGESTED ACTIONS BY THE SECRETARIAT:

3.1.2: The secretariat supports the administrative and communications/promotional activities of the Green Belt.

3.1.3: From 2005 the Green Belt secretariat strives to initiate and coordinate the implementation of the projects on the ground.

3.2.3: By mid-2005 the secretariat has successfully secured financial support and initiated the development of a Green Belt website that is the information hub for the entire initiative.

3.2.4: The secretariat ensures that the Green Belt website is regularly maintained and updated.

3.2.5: The secretariat develops a newsletter that is available in print and electronically (by 2006) to be distributed to all stakeholders and contributes to existing newsletters, updating them on developments and activities in the initiative.

3.2.6: The secretariat secures funding for a workshop every two years to take place in a different country each time to discuss the current and future developments taking place within the Green Belt.

3.2.7: The secretariat organises biennial workshop with a host country and local organisation.

Target: By 2006 the necessary communications methods are established to ensure the wide dissemination of information to relevant stakeholders, participants and policy-makers.
GOAL 7: The Green Belt becomes a ‘brand’ for products and activities that enhance local and regional sustainable development and nature conservation.

Target: By 2007, a concept for Green Belt brand is established to create a brand that is sought by organisations and businesses to attach to their products.

SUGGESTED ACTIONS BY THE STAKEHOLDERS:

3.3.1: Stakeholders propose products, which could be used to promote the use of the brand in different regions of the Green Belt.

3.3.2: Ideas on how to use the brand are collected and sent to the Secretariat, which will develop proposals for discussion at the regional or national level.

SUGGESTED ACTIONS BY THE SECRETARIAT:

3.3.3: The secretariat should initiate the development of terms of reference permitting the use of this brand.

3.3.4: By 2007 a number of test cases should be established to promote the use of the brand in different regions.

3.3.5: By 2008 the secretariat should work to launch the brand and ensure it is functioning and generating interest from local and regional businesses.

Target: By 2007 the Green Belt has successfully integrated its activities with local and regional businesses, providing a working mutually beneficial example of public-private partnerships.

SUGGESTED ACTIONS BY THE STAKEHOLDERS:

3.4.1: Stakeholders should initiate pilot projects working with private-public partnerships.

SUGGESTED ACTIONS BY THE SECRETARIAT:

3.4.2: The secretariat will seek to secure funding for a pilot study to review existing private-public partnerships along the Green Belt and to establish guidelines for future interactions.

3.4.3: The secretariat will work to support the launch of test partnerships within one year of the study’s completion.

For further information, contact:
Alois Lang
IUCN European Green Belt Coordinator
Dr. Ivana Ribara 91, 11070 Belgrade
Serbia and Montenegro
Tel: +36 99 537 632 (Sarrod office)
E-mail: alois.lang@iucn.org
mobile +43 660 213 6487

Supported by the German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation (BfN) with funds of the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety (BMU).
Mapping the Green Belt

One of the first projects that will take place within the Green Belt is the development of a GIS map and a geo-database for the route of the European Green Belt. The GIS map will use the Corine Land Cover data as its starting point, and will show the major land cover types and land uses throughout the Green Belt; on top of these will be laid the protected areas that occur along the Green Belt’s route.

All the data required to complete this task already exist either within the databases of European agencies, national nature authorities or NGOs. Thus the aim of this project is to draw this data together and standardise them into one format to create an accessible database. The output of the project will serve a dual purpose of being both a scientifically rigorous database used by project partners to study the different areas of the Green Belt and to effectively target actions, and a communications tool to politicians and the public.

Users of the tools that will be produced during this project will also be able to link to more detailed site based inventories for specific areas. In this manner the project will also raise awareness to the considerable amount of work done at the site level throughout Europe.

Meetings for the Implementation of the European Green Belt

In order to foster co-operation and information exchange between the different stakeholders along the Green Belt, a project facilitating several regional meetings is financed by the German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation (BfN). Within that frame, a series of four regional workshops is being planned for the Fennoscandian Green Belt (2006), the Central European Green Belt (2008) and the South-Eastern European Green Belt (2005 and 2007). The project is coordinated by the Green Belt Secretariat, while the specific topics of each meeting are identified in agreement with local stakeholders and the regional coordinators. In general, the meetings are aimed at the regional level and at regional stakeholders such as experts from nature conservation, administrations and land-use.

The first Central European Green Belt meeting, held in Mitwitz / Germany in October 2005, organized by the regional coordinator BUND, proved to be important and successful means to discuss progress achieved as well as present and possible future activities with the main stakeholders. The first regional Green Belt meeting for South-Eastern Europe in the frame of the BfN project took place in Novi Sad, Serbia and Montenegro, from 7th - 10th November 2005, in close co-operation with the Regional Coordinator “Euronatur” and the “Institute for Nature Conservation of Serbia”.

GREEN BELT – Protection and Valorisation

of the longest habitat system in Europe

(INTERREG III B CADSES Project – application submitted with the 4th call)

Proceeding from the fact that unique natural and cultural landscapes have been preserved along the former “Iron Curtain”, the GREEN BELT Interreg III B project aims at both the protection of this longest habitat system in Europe and the sensitive valorisation of its natural potential. Trans-national feasibility studies will be combined with pilot projects giving best practice examples for regional development measures especially in the field of sensitive traffic development and tourism. A common PR initiative in 8 languages (website, mobile exhibition, printed material in a new corporate design) intends to raise the awareness for the Green Belt topic in the CADSES and beyond.

The project includes partners (regional and national stakeholders and NGOs) from Germany, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Austria, Hungary and Slovenia. The involvement of two non-EU partners from Bulgaria and Croatia will contribute to extend the Green Belt initiative also to the Balkan Belt.

Lead Partner: Association for Rural Development in Thuringia (Thüringer Landgesellschaft ThLG), Weimarerische Straße 29 b, 99099 Erfurt, Germany

Information and contact: SALVE Consult, Office for European Projects, Jakobstraße 10, 99423 Weimar, Germany, Phone 0049(0)3643495595, greenbelt@salve-consult.de
The project duration is April to December 2005. Content of the preliminary study is a survey of suppositions, possibilities and potentials for ecotourism and sustainable development in the Green Belt-regions. The main aim is to create a comprehensive “marketing concept” for the Green Belt related to nature conservation aims. The study is supported by the German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation (BNH) and conducted by BUND-Project Office Green Belt. For a proposed main project starting in summer 2006 2-4 model-regions will be determined. In these selected regions exemplary projects should be implemented.

Further information: BUND-Project Office Green Belt, Bund Naturschutz in Bayern e.V. melanie.kreutz@bund-naturschutz.de
of Green Belt stakeholders

cond Iron Curtain with exactly the same functions and the same effect on the nature as the first one. This is the region where the restricted border zone really existed. Due to this many valuable ecosystems and habitats were preserved in this zone. Some of them belong to the most valuable in the European scale, and they are now endangered by still growing transboundary traffic. In 2000 in Poland the concept of trans-boundary protected areas system in this region was worked out. So, one of the solutions, how to engage Poland and other Central European countries which are not bordering with the present Green Belt is give the possibility to start some trans-boundary projects aimed at the nature protection along the Iron Curtain-bis, i.e. along the former western border of USSR.

Grazgorz Rakowski
Institute of Environmental Protection, Warsaw
National focal point for Poland

Slovakia

The strip of land along the border of Austria and Slovakia represents one of the best preserved lowland natural areas in Slovakia. Well known is Morava river floodplain for its flooded meadows and wetlands. Green Belt in Slovakia also covers some of the best preserved Danube floodplain forests and in the corner where borders of Slovakia, Austria and Hungary meet, the last refuge of the great bustard (Otis tarda) in Slovakia. After the fall of the Iron Curtain, we can freely enjoy these areas, but it is also not easy to protect them anymore.

Our NGO is targeting intensive forestry and logging – threat to forests which have developed natural structure due to absence of forestry for decades, by implementing LIFE Nature project „Conservation and management of Danube floodplain forests“.

Most threatened is the part of Green Belt crossing the Bratislava capital city. Big pressure on the land for the development, road infrastructure or plans for building the golf court in the middle of great bustard nesting area are threatening connectivity and existence of the Green Belt.

We welcome the “Green Belt Initiative”, showing the international importance of “our” border areas. We would appreciate if the initiative could also bring support to activities of local groups and initiatives, which can make the real difference on the ground.

Dr. Tomáš Kušík, chairman of BROZ,
Regional Association for Nature Conservation and Sustainable Development,
Bratislava

Austria

The European Green Belt to me is a fascinating vision that links nations and offers opportunities to the people on both sides of this former barrier – and to the mostly overwhelming natural landscapes in these areas. To change a painful, barbed wire border to a band of life, and to preserve it, does not only contribute to a better understan-

Karin Kowol
BUND Thuringia

BUND Thuringia has been engaged in the project Green Belt for the past fifteen years. This project is not only one of many different nature conservation projects. It is the longest biotope line in Europe and has much to do with man and nature and with man’s exposure to history.

In the beginning it was a hard job for emotional reasons of the local population and especially the land users. They had been expropriated for the purpose of border protection and now they perceived the efforts of nature protection as second expropriation.

But after long discussions, intense public relations work and hard efforts to realize nature conservation projects with local actors the atmosphere changed. Today Green Belt is not only a successful project of NGOs with projects of biotope management and environmental education. Now federal state Thuringia and county administrations start their own “Green Belt” projects, e.g. a 80 km hiking trail along Green Belt Thuringia excluding the most sensitive parts of Green Belt. They have realized, that Green Belt is a pearl of the region as well as a chance for regional development.

So we want to encourage all actors along Green Belt Europe to overcome the first difficulties in promoting this idea.

Josef Limberger, Chairman,
Naturschutzbund Upper Austria

Slovenia

In my point of view the Green Belt first of all offers new opportunities for linking ecosystems with each other – not only in protected areas, but also in adjacent areas. For my work, this initiative provides good arguments to connect our area with the valuable sites along the Mura river. From the international perspective, the Green Belt brings the chance to exchange knowhow with experts in the fields of cultural landscape, agriculture, tourism and sustainable development in general. It also motivates me to see that some hundreds of kilometers away, colleagues are struggling with the same problems and we can learn from each other, so the Green Belt sometimes brings a kind of confirmation for our work. In lesser developed areas we can profit from the experience in advanced neighbouring countries. The Iron Curtain separated nations – now minorities are much more in contact across the border, and nature conservation serves as a catalyst for transboundary regional development. This is of high importance, as people rely on nature conservation, and the Green Belt is an excellent tool to be used for both.

Stanka Desnik, Institute for Nature Conservation / Goričko Nature Park, Slovenia, National focal point for Slovenia