

Results and Conclusions

**Pan European Workshop
European Green Belt
Bratislava/Stupava • Slovakia • 18th-21st November 2007**



„Networking – for Nature and Development“

Aims of the Workshop

Having held the last pan European Workshop in Hungary in 2004, another pan European workshop that would gather all key partners and their main partner organisations from the 23 countries along the Green Belt was considered highly essential for 2007. The aim was to evaluate the previous results and to agree on the next steps in project development based on the Programme of Work. By involving additional NGOs, potential capacities that previously lay idle can be activated and the integration of local partners and projects into the initiative can be further extended.

Agenda

In a short round of introductory presentations the background of the European Green Belt and the development of the initiative were outlined and the main actors were introduced. Considering that the workshops in 2005 and 2006 had been carried out on a regional level, the development of all three sections of the Green Belt was presented in the form of selected country snapshots. The content of these presentations focused on current threats to valuable areas that cause need for action, successful and therefore exemplary project implementations as well as awareness raising measures that were expected to trigger further discussions, reproduction or creativity. A separate time slot was reserved for the presentation of results out of the Research and Development Project „GIS Mapping of the Green Belt“, that make up a scientifically based cartographic working basis with numerous possibilities of use for future project work. One additional thematic block dealt with concrete measures in public relations, the necessity for awareness raising and the chances that lie in a more efficient public relations work. In workshops that were set up alternately in regional as well as in thematic groups the participants discussed and developed proposals and possibilities for new project ideas and designed outlines for an efficient public relations work based on the Programme of Work.

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Previous Development and Status quo of the Initiative

The high number of requests regarding the participation in the workshop and the opportunity to present projects clearly showed the broad interest that has by now developed with regard to the European Green Belt initiative. This allowed – and also required – a selective choice of participants and contributions based on their relevance for the initiative. The project presentations and their results as well as the discussions regarding the need for actions show the vast progress in implementing the Programme of Work. Nevertheless, these activities are distributed rather inhomogenously along the Green Belt and do not cover all fields of activity in the Programme of Work in the same way.

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Based on the results from the GIS Mapping Project and also from the Gap-Analysis for the Central European Green Belt in the frame of the INTERREG III B CADSES project – that allow a versatile use – important spatial databases have been set up for future transboundary planning and development along the Green Belt. The results presented in the frame of the INTERREG-project include vital components for a potent overall public relations work for the Central European Green Belt that were created especially by developing a corporate design and a map-based internet platform with detailed information on the Green Belt sites.

Next to the creation of this joint working basis, numerous bi- and trilateral projects were activated or even implemented in the Central as well as the South Eastern European Green Belt. These activities cover a broad range of tasks listed in the Programme of Work. They reach from aspects of species conservation, over the preparation of transboundary protected areas, implementation and establishment of landscape conservation measures, sustainable or soft tourism development, capacity building, to environmental education and public relations.

Further Project Development

The presentations and contributions to the discussion provided an overview on projects planned and also on synergies that can be thus gained. During the working groups and during numerous bilateral discussions in between, concrete possibilities and intentions to implement bilateral as well as transregional projects were conferred, e.g. INTERREG-Projects in Central Europe including the Baltic Sea, projects focusing on capacity building in the Balkan region and in Russia, and projects on community development for rooting nature conservation more deeply in the respective regions.

Some contributions showed that despite all the past meetings, publications and events along the Green Belt, some national partners have not yet fully internalised, that

- the initiative aims to promote transboundary **and** transsectoral cooperation – based on clearly formulated nature conservation objectives,
- the initiative offers the chance to serve as a marketing instrument for nature conservation.

Both deficits can be traced back to the heterogeneity of the partners regarding their backgrounds and aims, to the specific regional situation as well as to the continuous growth of the Green Belt community. It shows that both aspects must be continuously and intensely communicated.

Another possibility to minimise this deficit and to bundle resources at the same time is to strengthen joint project development. A corresponding impulse should come both from the Regional Coordinators and from IUCN and be focused on those countries in which so far no or only few Green Belt activities took place so far.

Optimising the Public Relations Work

A „visible“ advance compared to previous meetings was demonstrated by various publications that were presented by the workshop participants: Both in their variety and in their professional design – partly using the Green Belt logo in the respective language – these publications make up a broad basis for further public relations work. Some of the presentations on events, exhibitions and websites showed that the growing brand awareness is used for exemplary public relations work.

The workshop was intensely used for discussing deficits in public relations and to consider further possibilities. It became obvious, that the efficiency in awareness raising for the Green Belt on a regional/translateral level can hardly be strengthened by developing new materials or websites. In fact, a more intensive communication within the network and the targeted use of materials throughout the initiative is required.

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The following projects, activities and platforms currently require implementation and input by all partners, especially the National Focal Points:

- Set up of a digital picture archive and database for joint use (IUCN GB Coordination Office)
- Extension of information offered on the Green Belt website www.europeangreenbelt.org (IUCN GB Coordination Office)
- Research and shooting for a TV documentary in 2009 (BBC, NDR, ORF)
- Research for and production of a Green Belt exhibition in the Museum of Linz in 2009 (Management Linz09)
- Research for and production of a DVD for presentation at the COP 9 of the CBD (IUCN GB Coordination Office)

Involving new partners

Suitable new partners for the European Green Belt initiative participated in the workshop in Stupava. Nevertheless not all gaps caused by nonexistent, missing or (out of various reasons) non-active National Focal Points could be filled. A certain need for action still exists regarding the new or renewed nomination of Focal Points.

One step towards the involvement of partners in protected areas was presented by BfN, IUCN, BN Bayern and EURONATUR: a badge showing the logo of the European Green Belt designed to be put up at highly frequented nature conservation facilities. Approximately 90 pieces were selectively handed out to the participants in the frame of the workshop.

An involvement of new partners with a background in cultural issues or media proved to be very promising. Both on a national and on a European level numerous possibilities can be used to further spread the vision of the Green Belt.

Necessary political Lobbying

The necessity for a strengthened lobbying on the political level on the part of IUCN Europe in coordination with the key partners in the respective regions was mentioned several times. This lobbying is essential especially for the nomination of National Focal Points as well as for a broad political, strategic and financial support of the initiative.

The requirements for a strengthened communication regarding the orientation and focus of the initiative, as well as further efforts by IUCN and the regional coordinators to develop multilateral projects involving local partners can only be accomplished by the Green Belt Coordination Office and the Regional Coordinators as long as personnel capacities and financial endowment is given. It is the task of all partners of the initiative to consider this during their own lobbying and future project development.

On the part of IUCN the European Programme Coordinator stressed the willingness to further engage in the initiative by keeping up the secretariat and the coordination office for the European Green Belt initiative.

Conclusion

Apart from the results, i.e. clearly formulated needs for action, the various discussions also beyond the frame of the agenda as well as the motivating exchange of experience on smaller and larger success, the meeting clearly showed the importance of a pan European workshop. To make optimal use of the evolving dynamics and the further extension of new bilateral contacts is part of the follow up. The willingness to engage in the initiative was articulated and stated clearly from many sides.

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