



european  
**green**belt

# MANUAL FOR CELEBRATING THE EUROPEAN GREEN BELT DAYS



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# 1. PREFACE

Every year, the European Green Belt Initiative celebrates the biological diversity and cultural heritage in the impressive landscapes along the former Iron Curtain during the European Green Belt Days from 18<sup>th</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup> of September. The first European Green Belt Day was celebrated on 24<sup>th</sup> of September 2016 in all nine countries along the Balkan Green Belt. The date originates back to the official foundation of the European Green Belt Association on 24<sup>th</sup> of September 2014 in Slavonice, Czech Republic.

The European Green Belt Days take place in many different locations in all 24 countries along

the European Green Belt with the main aim to increase the public awareness and knowledge about the Initiative and its vision as well as to improve cross-border exchange and cooperation.

Especially the high number of different events implemented in the same week and scattered all along the European Green Belt gives the celebration a very special value and is a strong sign for cross-border cooperation in the frame of nature protection!

Each event during the European Green Belt Days helps to increase the visibility of the European Green Belt!

## Vision of the European Green Belt Initiative

The European Green Belt, our shared natural heritage along the line of the former Iron Curtain, is to be conserved and restored to function as an ecological network connecting high-value natural and cultural landscapes, whilst respecting the economic, social and cultural needs of local communities.

This manual was prepared by EuroNatur in its function as Regional Coordinator of the Balkan Green Belt. It gives an overview of the overall context and summarises the experiences gained by preparing and celebrating European Green Belt Days along the Balkan Green Belt in the past years.

The manual provides tips what to consider when planning and implementing events during the European Green Belt Days and thus hopefully encourages organisations to celebrate the European Green Belt Initiative. The manual does not claim completeness and EuroNatur appreciates feedback and additions.

We sincerely invite you to celebrate the astonishing variety of landscapes and creatures along the European Green Belt with us during the European Green Belt Days!

# 2. BACKGROUND

Up until 1989 the **Iron Curtain** was a manifestation of the Cold War dividing the world into two antagonistic hemispheres – East and West - for nearly 40 years. For decades it symbolized the atrocities of the Cold War era in Europe and in many regions metal fences, walls, barbed wire, watchtowers, spring-guns, land mines and watchdogs demonstrated its harsh reality. Thus the area remained largely undisturbed and inaccessible. Unwittingly, the area which once divided Europe enabled the conservation and development of valuable habitats. The border area served as a retreat for many endangered species. This partition of the entire continent, harsh and inhumane though it was, had created a zone of life.

Therefore along the former Iron Curtain an outstanding ecological network and living memorial landscape developed – spanning some of the most important habitats for biodiversity and almost all biogeographical regions in Europe. Today we call this area the **European Green Belt**.

The European Green Belt runs along more than 12.500 km and connects 24 countries from the Barents Sea at the Russian-Norwegian border along the Baltic Coast, through Central Europe and the Balkans all the way down to the Black and Adriatic Sea.



Prokletije Mountain © Gavriilo Knežević



\*in accordance with UNSCR 1244 and opinion of ICJ.  
© European Green Belt Initiative/Coordination Group

The European Green Belt Initiative was born in 2003, when various existing regional initiatives merged into a joint European initiative. Besides its extraordinary ecological importance, the initiative is a living example of how Europe and its diverse cultures can grow together. From the European Green Belt, we can learn that biological diversity goes hand in hand with cultural heritage. It is a symbol for a joint, transboundary cooperation in natural conservation and sustainable development.

On the 24<sup>th</sup> September 2014 at the 8<sup>th</sup> Pan-European Green Belt Conference in Slavonice (Czech Republic), 23 governmental and non-governmental organisations from 14 countries established the European Green Belt Association e.V. - to ensure transboundary coordination and information exchange among the European Green Belt community.

Prior to the establishment of the Association, the umbrella structure for the cooperation of governmental and non-governmental organisations in the



frame of the European Green Belt had been a loose network. With the association a legal body is established, representing the initiative and ensuring coordination as well as information exchange among the European Green Belt community.

*The Centre for Protection and Research of Birds of Montenegro (CZIP) organised a field trip into the Prokletije mountain, during the European Green Belt Days 2017. @ CZIP*



#### **Mission of the European Green Belt Association**

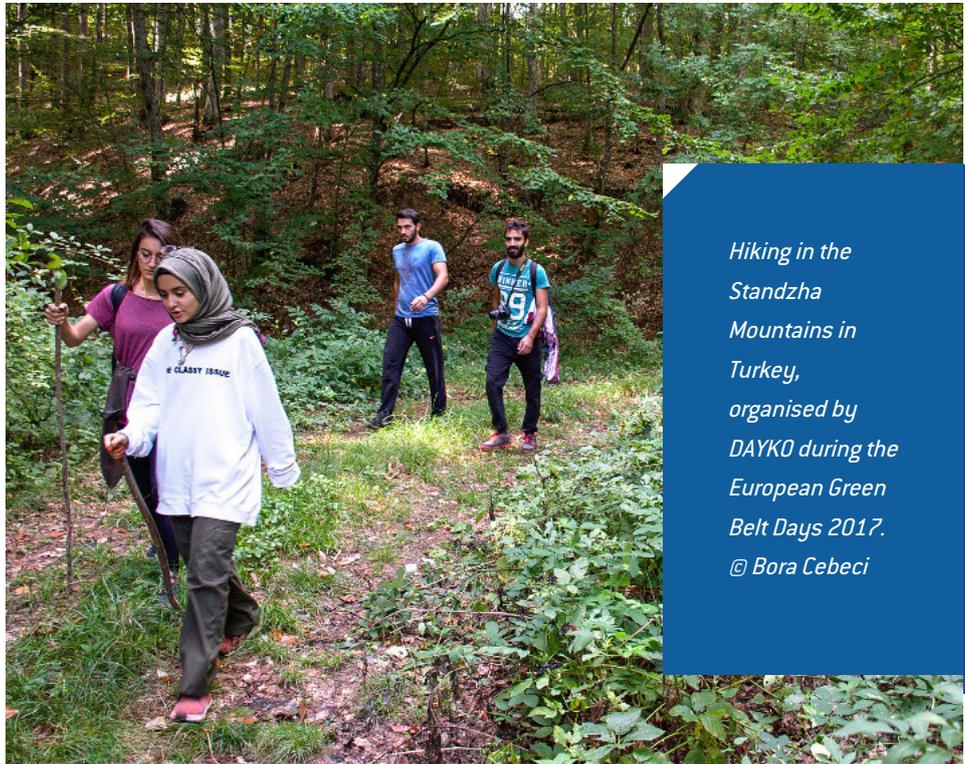
The mission of the European Green Belt Association e.V. is to ensure that the European Green Belt is efficiently protected and that its sustainable development is promoted by facilitating an ongoing coordinated transboundary cooperation at all levels and across all sectors of society.

# 3. IDENTIFY YOUR EUROPEAN GREEN BELT DAY EVENT

In order to plan your event during the European Green Belt Days, it is important to be aware of the nature of your celebration. The following questions will help you to determine your event:

## WHAT IS THE AIM OF MY EVENT?

The main aim of your event has to be related to the vision of the European Green Belt Initiative. Thus your event shall support the implementation of the vision, e.g. with a focus on the protection of the high-value natural and cultural landscapes along the European Green Belt and its connection as ecological network or on the economic, social and cultural needs of local communities.



*Hiking in the Standzha Mountains in Turkey, organised by DAYKO during the European Green Belt Days 2017.  
© Bora Cebeci*



*Bazaar with local products organised by the Bird Protection and Study Society of Serbia (BPSSS) during the European Green Belt Days 2017 in Kladovo.  
© Center for Culture Kladovo*

Another important aim of the European Green Belt Days is to bring people from neighbouring countries together, in order to improve cross-border exchange and cooperation.

The event is a good opportunity to strengthen cross-border cooperation and to celebrate the European Green Belt Days jointly with partners from neighbouring countries.

## ON WHICH DAY SHALL I CELEBRATE THE EUROPEAN GREEN BELT DAYS?

Generally, the date of the event shall be between 18<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> of September.

The duration of the event can also be extended to several days.

Pick out a beautiful area along the European Green Belt which you know well and would like to introduce to a broader audience. You may celebrate the event in nature, in a town/city or even an endangered location there. Due to the transboundary nature of the European Green Belt Initiative, the location shall be close to the border and well accessible for participants from all adjacent countries. When choosing a location, consider whether the place is suitable for the activities you plan,

## WHERE SHALL I ORGANIZE THE EUROPEAN GREEN BELT DAYS?

Your event during the European Green Belt Days shall be celebrated at a place located along the European Green Belt.



*An exhibition in a barn was organised by Green Balkans during the European Green Belt Days 2017. © Green Balkans*

especially in regard to conditions of location, cooperation partners on site and transport connection. In addition, try to change the location each year in order to present different locations along the European Green Belt.

Before starting to prepare your event during the European Green Belt Days, check if other events are taking place at the same time in the chosen area. If yes, consider to cooperate with the other event for more public outreach. But the combination of events is only advisable when the other event fits thematically to the European Green Belt and your celebration can remain as an independent part. If combining events is not suitable or possible, it is important to not organize competing events, which aim at the same target group/s. If this is the case, reconsider to adapt the location or the target group/s and activities of your event.

**WHOM SHALL I INVITE TO THE EUROPEAN GREEN BELT DAYS?**

Due to the cross-border nature of the European Green Belt Ini-

tiative, you should invite people from all countries around your event location!

**Define the target group/s:**

- Do you want to invite the general public and reach as many people as possible OR only a specific group, like politicians, school children and teachers, enterprises, sportsmen, researchers, farmers, tourism providers etc.?
- Do you want to invite only local people OR also people from a wider range?

**Choose cooperation partners:**

- Administrations of the area, especially mayors and protected area management bodies
- Local CSOs
- Local producers, businesses, companies, schools, etc.
- Other partners of the European Green Belt Initiative

The question regarding the target group/s and cooperation partners is closely linked to your aim of the event as well as the activities you want to implement during the European Green Belt Days.

**WHAT SHALL I DO DURING THE EUROPEAN GREEN BELT DAYS?**

You have incredibly diverse possibilities to celebrate the European Green Belt Days. The possible actions range from guided tours over environmental education activities, exhibitions, cultural events to scientific research and awareness raising activities

Condition is that the actions are embedded in the thematic focus of the European Green Belt and are related to the vision of the European Green Belt Initiative. Best is to implement transboundary activities. The event has to increase the knowledge and public awareness of the European Green Belt Initiative. In addition, it shall present parts of the biodiversity and/or cultural heritage of the event location. Thereby the content and specific themes of your event can be freely chosen and adapted to local conditions, for instance: biodiversity in general, a specific species, a cultural tradition or a specific threat to the nature of the respective area



*The Environmentally Responsible Action Group (ERA) organised an education and hiking weekend with youths in the Bjeshket e Nemuna mountain during the European Green Belt Days 2016. © ERA*

# 4. MATERIALS

The aim of the European Green Belt Days is to present general information about the Initiative. Therefore you are free and welcome to use the following materials which you can download on the website [www.europeangreenbelt.org](http://www.europeangreenbelt.org):

- Brochure “10 years European Green Belt”
- Leaflet “European Green Belt” in English as well as your country language

In addition you can use already existing materials from your organization, like:

- Promotion materials
- Environmental education materials
- Service offers (like guided tours etc.)



*Exhibition of the winner pictures of the Balkan Green Belt photo contest 2016 in Oteshevo organised by the Macedonian Ecological Society (MES) during the European Green Belt Days 2016.*  
© Fejmi Daut



*The organisation Protection and Preservation of Natural Environment in Albania (PPNEA) built bird houses with school children in the Prespa region during the European Green Belt Days 2016.*  
© Xh. Xherri/PPNEA

A further possibility is to produce new materials. Therefore it is advised to find a suitable sponsor who can provide the necessary funds for the production of materials. In order to contact possible sponsors it is useful to first prepare a concept for your celebration of the European Green Belt Days.

For the production of new materials for the European Green Belt Days we recommend to use the **logo of the European Green Belt**. Through the usage of the logo the event is clearly linked visibly to the European Green Belt Initiative! And your event can benefit from the brand and its recognition value.

The use of the logo is free of charge, but it is required to sign a licensing agreement for the usage of the European Green Belt trademark. For more information please contact the European Green Belt Association: [association@europeangreenbelt.org](mailto:association@europeangreenbelt.org).

# 5. PROMOTION

After all decisions have been made and the organization of your celebration of the European Green Belt Days has started, it is necessary to focus on the public relation of your event in order to inform the broad public as well as key stakeholders.

There are different communication pillars you should use to inform and invite people to your event:

- Your own medial platforms, where it is recommended to use the hashtag **#EuropeanGreenBeltDays** for social media to connect your event to the European Green Belt community
- Different media like newspapers, TV and radio stations; journalists should be invited to the event
- Target group specific placements of the advertisement



*Traditional dance group performance during the European Green Belt Days 2017 in Kladovo.*

*@ Center for Culture Kladovo*



*Mayors of the Prespa region celebrating together the European Green Belt Days 2016 in Otheshevo at the Great Prespa Lake. @ Fejmi Daut*

Events during the European Green Belt Days are implemented in up to 24 countries along the European Green Belt at the same week: between 18<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> of September.

Especially the high number of different events scattered all along the European Green Belt gives the day a very special value and is a strong sign for cross-border cooperation in the frame of nature protection!

In order to use the events for raising public awareness on regional and pan-European level for the European Green Belt community, it is important that the Regional Coordinator of your stretch of the European Green Belt is informed who is planning an event and how many events take place.

Keep your Regional Coordinator informed about your activities! Each event during the European Green Belt Days helps to increase the visibility of the European Green Belt Initiative and its vision.

As follow up please send also a short summary report as well as a feedback of your European Green Belt Days to your Regional Coordinator, presenting the activities and results of your event. Do not forget to include some inspiring and meaningful pictures.

Maybe your event will be selected to be presented in the newsletter of the European Green Belt Association as well as on the website [www.europeangreenbelt.org](http://www.europeangreenbelt.org).

## 6. LAST CHECK

The preparation of the event includes many details and tasks, which are necessary for a smooth process of the celebration. We recommend to draft an outline with a clear distribution of tasks and responsibilities, including deadlines.

### ARE YOU READY FOR THE CELEBRATION?

- Is the aim of your event clearly defined
- Are the key target groups invited?
- Do the activities fit to the chosen location?
- Did you inform your Regional Coordinator about your event?
- Are all important tasks distributed with a suitable deadline?
- What materials and tools need to be organized and when?
- Who is responsible for the food?

The smooth running of the event depends primarily on good planning and preparation.

EuroNatur wishes you a successful implementation and a great celebration of the European Green Belt Days!





*A bike tour was organised by the Bulgarian Biodiversity Foundation (BBF) during the European Green Belt Days 2016.*

*@ Martina Koleva*

## IMPRINT

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