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# The European Green Belt and why it is important

Transforming the Iron Curtain into the European Green Belt as a  
significant part of European Green Infrastructure

Webinar hosted by MEP Jutta Paulus and MEP Nicolae Ștefănuță

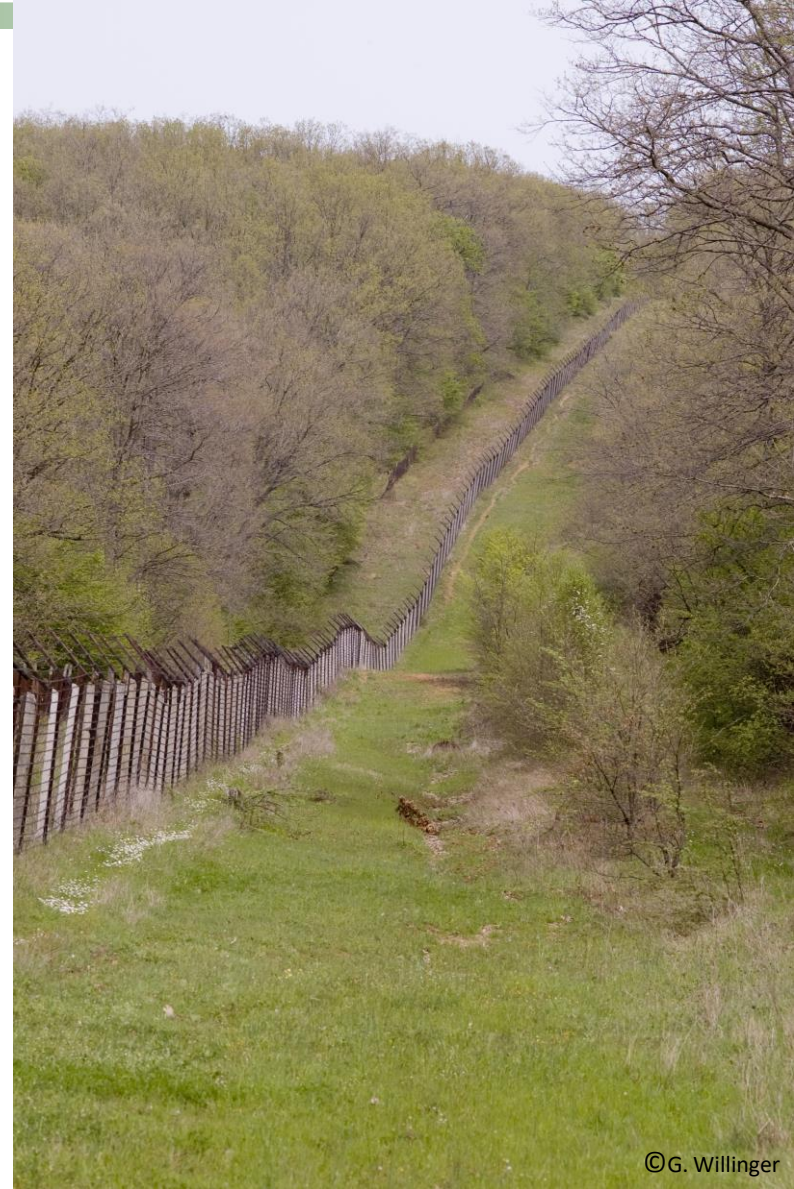
From the Barents Sea to the Balkans -  
The BEST for the European Green Belt

Gabriel Schwaderer, EuroNatur

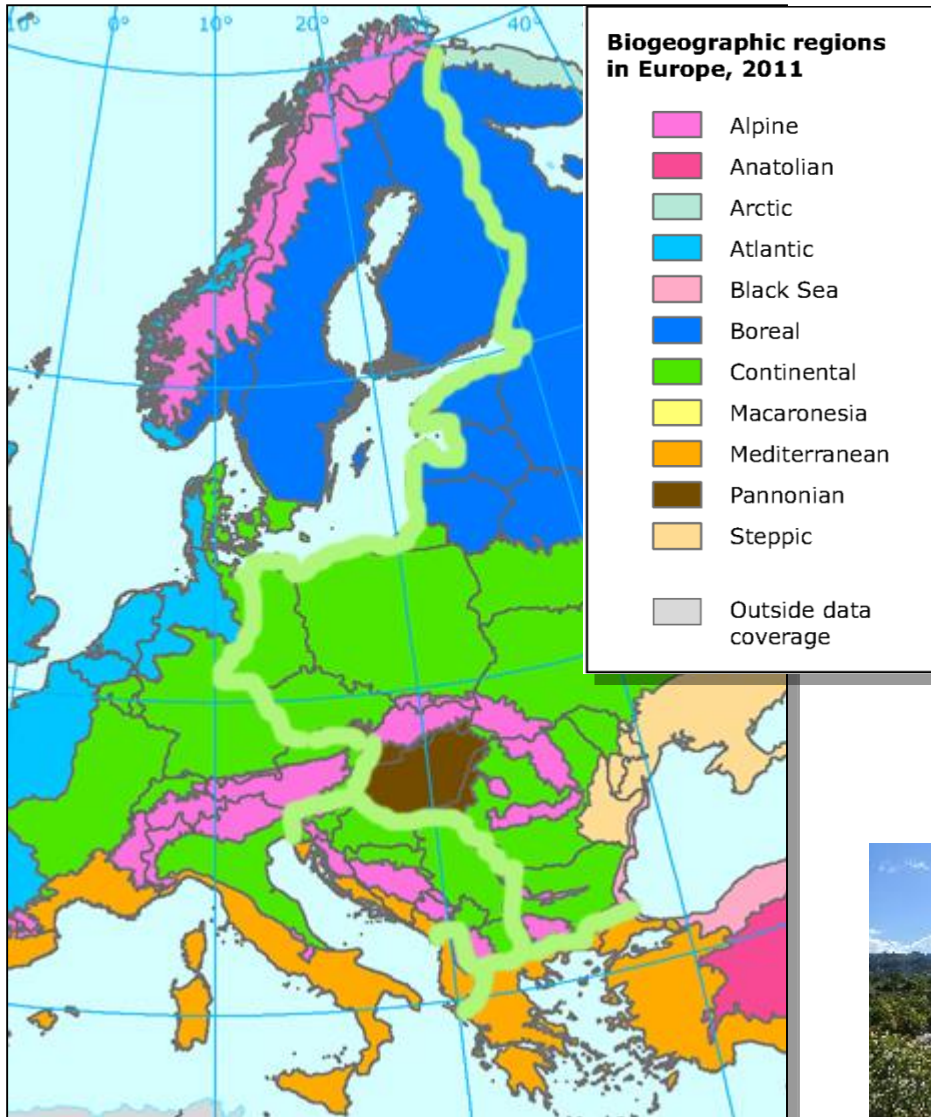
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# The European Green Belt (EGB)

- From the very North to the very South of Europe
- **Ecological network** connecting high-value natural and cultural landscapes due to specific history, border location, and pan-European dimension
- High potential for **ecological connectivity and Green Infrastructure**
- Model area for conservation and restoration of a functional ecological network **respecting the economic, social, and cultural needs of local communities**
- Framework for **cross-border cooperation** on regional and municipal level as well as for protected areas
- **Opportunities for sustainable development** of peripheral areas of Europe



# The European Green Belt



- Former Iron Curtain
- 12,500 km long
  - 8 biogeographic regions
  - > 7,500 protected areas
  - 24 states
  - 4 sections
- Comprises
  - Wilderness areas
  - Cultural landscapes
  - Water ecosystems and coasts
  - Threatened species



- 1989: Fall of the „Iron Curtain“
- Border between East and West Europe created a unique continuity of natural habitats
- 1989 – 2003: First unconnected activities in different countries along Green Belt
- 2003: Start of the pan-European Green Belt Initiative
- Today, PAs along the EGB serve as core areas of an EU-level GI
- 2014: Establishment of the European Green Belt Association (EGBA)
- 2019: Celebration of 30 years of joint action for the European Green Belt – a unique memorial landscape of younger European history



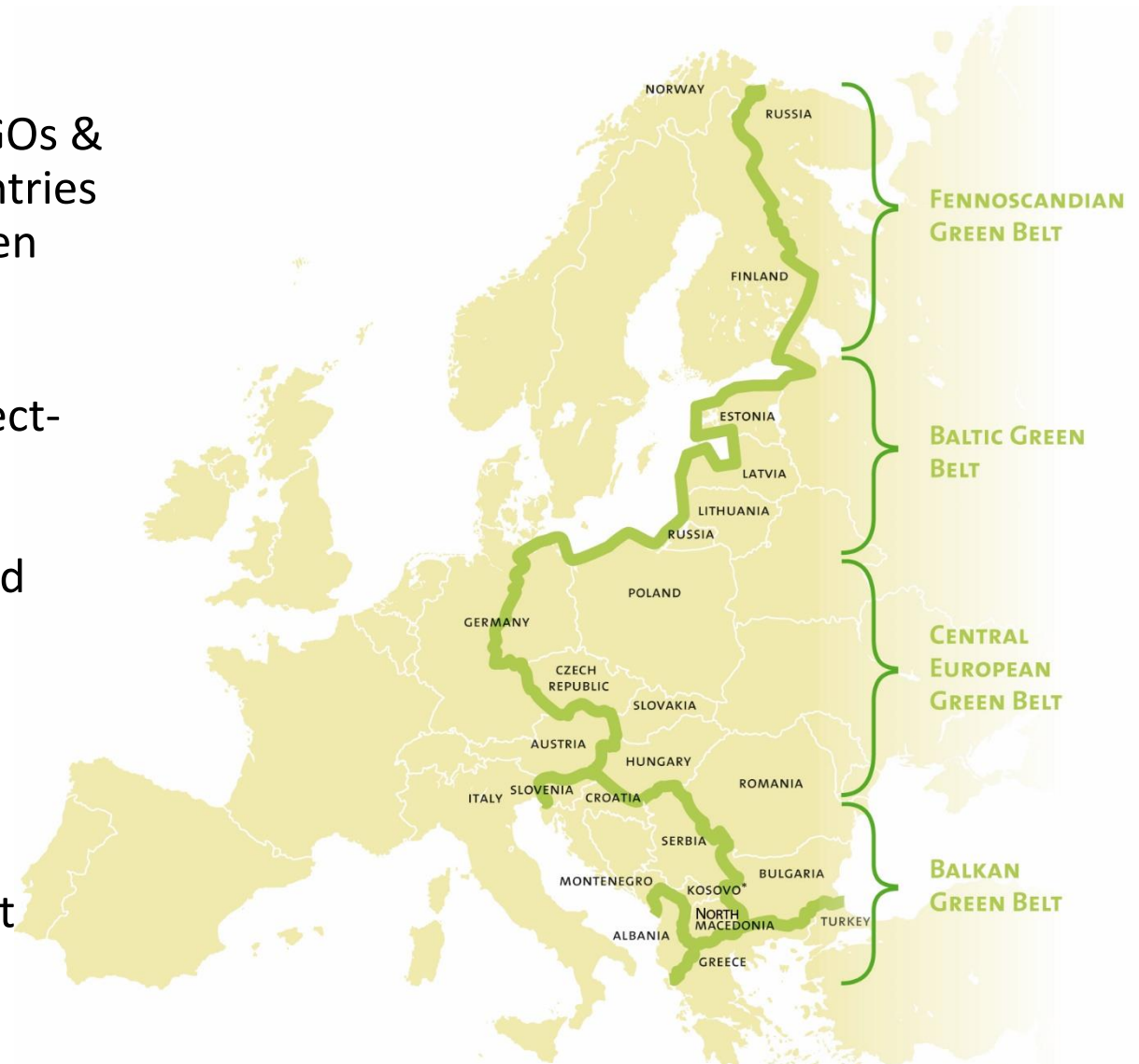
# The EGB provides important services

- **Outstanding ecological and cultural values**
- **Ecosystem Services:** Comparatively high regulating, cultural and provisioning services
- Contributes to a higher proportion and **better connectivity** of core habitats (Natura 2000/Emerald)
- High potential for **sustainable regional development**
- **Local job opportunities** with regards to sustainable forestry, agriculture and tourism
- Opportunities for environmental education, monitoring and science
- EGB should be nominated as **World Heritage** site



# The European Green Belt Initiative

- A wide range of NGOs, GOs & expert groups in 24 countries along the European Green Belt committed to its conservation
- Aims to harmonize protection efforts and human activities with natural environment in protected areas and beyond
- Stands for joint efforts towards cross-border activities in biodiversity conservation and sustainable development on European level



\*in accordance with UNSCR 1244 and opinion of ICJ.

# The European Green Belt Initiative

Operates at different levels:

- People and projects on the **local level** are crucial and the heart of the European Green Belt
- **Regional level** reflects diversity of the European Green Belt and offers platform for exchange and common action
- **Pan-European dimension** adds value to the local and regional levels



\*in accordance with UNSCR 1244 and opinion of ICJ.



## From the Initiative to the European Green Belt Association (EGBA)

- 2014 at the 8<sup>th</sup> Pan-European Green Belt Conference: Foundation of European Green Belt Association e.V.
- Legal umbrella structure representing the European Green Belt Initiative and ensuring coordination as well as information exchange among the European Green Belt community
- Current members: 32 organizations, representing 17 countries
- Chair: **euRONATUR**
- Deputy Chair:  RETE ITALIANA EGB
- Advisor:  IUCN
- Currently board consists of 10 organizations



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Participants of the 10th Pan-European Green Belt Conference 2018 in Eisenach, Germany





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# Vision

*“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.”*

# Spatial Reference Area of the European Green Belt

## (Fennoscandia under discussion)

It defines the area where activities of the initiative are concentrated. Purpose of the spatial reference area is to support the work of the European Green Belt Association & the European Green Belt Initiative, e.g. as a base for analysis & implementation of connectivity/ GI. It comprises the total area of municipalities located directly at the European Green Belt line or located with their midpoint within a specific corridor around the European Green Belt line. Also protected areas (all categories) located with their midpoint within a specific corridor around the European Green Belt line are considered with their total area. For protected areas having their midpoint not within a the specific corridor around the European Green Belt line only the area within the selected municipalities is considered for the spatial reference area of the European Green Belt. Thus the protected areas form natural connections to the surroundings of the European Green Belt. The width of the corridor varies between the four regions:

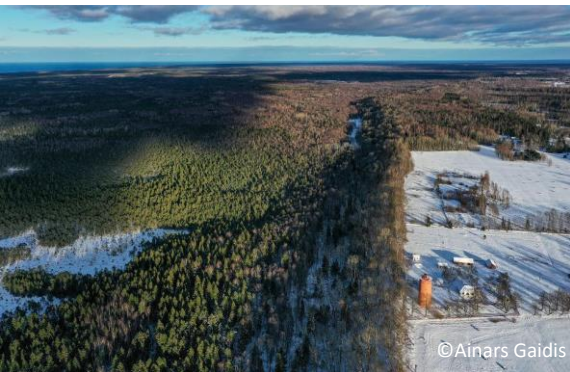
- Balkan: 50 km
- Central Europe: 10 km
- Baltic: 20 km

For coastal waters seawards at the Baltic Sea the spatial reference area is defined as 12 nautical miles (22,2 kilometers; 13,8 miles) from the baseline according to the definition of territorial waters of the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. Other coastal waters are considered to be within the spatial reference area of the European Green Belt until a distance of 5 km (equivalents 3,11 miles) from the coast





# Opportunities



- With its natural values and its ability to deliver multiple valuable ecosystem goods & services, the European Green Belt deserves conservation as a **trans-European biodiversity network**.
- The European Green Belt stands out as a **memorial landscape and is a peace project**.
- The outstanding natural & cultural values qualify the European Green Belt to be **nominated as a World Heritage site**.

# Opportunities



- Many areas along the European Green Belt represent the periphery of Europe. The EGB concept offers opportunities **for green jobs and local sustainable developments.**
- **Significant funding will boost the potential** of the EGB in terms of ecological connectivity and local sustainable developments.
- The European Green Belt is not only about nature, but also about people: **the EGB has the potential to foster the European integration**

**We envision a bright, unified future where all people can explore the unique history, culture and natural wonder of the European Green Belt.**

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