



Dear colleagues and friends of the European Green Belt,

On behalf of the Regional Coordinators we are approaching you in order to inform you about changes concerning the future structure of the European Green Belt Initiative. First of all though, we would like to look back to the starting point of the initiative.

Based on the activities for the preservation of the Green Belt in Germany which started as early as 1989, the idea of a European Green Belt – running along the former Iron Curtain from the Barents Sea in the North to the Black Sea in the South – evolved. The European initiative started with a first international meeting 2003 in Bonn. During a second international conference in September 2004, a Programme of Work as well as a coordination structure for the initiative was developed and decided upon by all participants. IUCN was appointed as overall coordinator. Additionally, for each geographical section, a Regional Coordinator was called in: the Baltic Fund for Nature (BFN) assigned by the Association of Zapovedniks and National parks of North-West Russia is in charge of the Fennoscandian and the Baltic States, BUND (Friends of the Earth Germany) of the Central European and EuroNatur of the southernmost stretch, the Balkan Green Belt. In most countries located along the European Green Belt, a National Focal Point was appointed, in most instances by the relevant Ministries.

Today, a wide range of NGOs, GOs and expert groups in the 24 countries along the Green Belt is involved in the realization of this pan-European vision.

Within the last years, it became obvious that the coordination and implementation of such a vision requires a lot of time and finances, respectively. As so far, no core funding for the European Green Belt Initiative is available, most of the coordination and communication activities implemented by IUCN as overall coordinator as well as by BFN, BUND and EuroNatur as Regional Coordinators were financed within externally funded projects or by own resources of the respective organization.

This proved to be no longer feasible though as the degree of engagement of the organizations strongly depended on the availability of external funds. In several meetings, IUCN and the Regional Coordinators addressed this problem and discussed possible approaches on how to restructure the initiative in order to ensure a continuous and coordinated implementation of activities, which contribute to the realization of the Green Belt, and how to make the initiative more sustainable.

Main outcome of these discussions is that IUCN decided to retreat from their active role as overall coordinator of the initiative, but to take over a more representative role in the sense of a patronage. Consequently, IUCN ROfE will not be able to further host the European secretariat of the initiative. This in return requires a re-structuring of the current organization of the initiative, which also takes into account long-term schemes for financing the European Green Belt Initiative as well as its implementation and coordination.



One approach which was agreed on by the Regional Coordinators, IUCN and the German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation, which has been supporting the Green Belt Initiative from the beginning on, is to strengthen the role and the cooperation of the Regional Coordinators by creating an Executive Board of the European Green Belt Initiative. In this Executive Board – which will take decisions between Pan-European Meetings – also one National Focal Point and one NGO Partner per region should be represented.

As there are more aspects to be looked at closer, BUND and EuroNatur prepared a project proposal which was handed in to the German Ministry of Environment and the German Agency for Nature Conservation and which aims to further enhance the European Green Belt Initiative.

Main activities within the project will be to

- Further development of the organizational structure of the Green Belt Initiative
- Develop a sustainable model for financing the Green Belt Initiative
- Develop a functioning communication strategy, addressing both internal and external aspects.

All aspects will be worked out by a core project team led by BUND and EuroNatur and presented to all players on NGO and GO level during several meetings in order to ensure participation of the Green Belt Community.

The next upcoming event is a kick-off workshop for this project, held at the beginning of next year in a country along the Fennoscandian Green Belt. Participants will be informed in due course.

In order to get things started the Regional Coordinators agreed that EuroNatur acts as information hub for the European Green Belt Initiative till the next Pan-European Meeting which is scheduled for 2012.

For further information for the time being please use the email-address [greenbelt@euronatur.org](mailto:greenbelt@euronatur.org)

The Green Belt team of EuroNatur (Gabriel Schwaderer, Martin Schneider-Jacoby, Annette Spangenberg) will respond as soon as possible.

For the Regional Coordinators of the European Green Belt Initiative:

EuroNatur

Gabriel Schwaderer

Martin Schneider-Jacoby

Annette Spangenberg

BUND

Liana Geidezis

Melanie Kreutz

Baltic Fund for Nature

Roustam Sagitov