



Dear friend of the Baltic Green Belt,

nature conservation and tourism offer unique chances for a truly sustainable development of rural regions – ecologically, economically and socially – if they go hand in hand. Internationally important habitats are outstandingly numerous not only at our Latvian coasts but also in the area we nowadays call the European Green Belt along the former Iron Curtain, and they exist, of course, all over Europe. Therefore, the Latvian Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development actively supports the promotion of nature tourism in the Baltic Sea Region (BSR) and beyond. By bringing stakeholders from ongoing initiatives, such as the Priority Area „Tourism“ of the EU Strategy for the BSR, the European Green Belt and EUROPARC, together in Riga for the „Baltic Nature Tourism Conference“, Latvia wants to push forward to make the BSR an environmentally healthy and more attractive macroregion as an example for other regions to follow.

Raimonds Vējonis, Minister of Environmental Protection and Regional Development in Latvia



News from the Baltic Green Belt

3rd Baltic Green Belt Forum in Estonia in October 2011 – mark the date

The 3rd international Baltic Green Belt Forum will take place from October 4th - 6th, 2011 in Haapsalu, Estonia. As the host and Estonian Focal Point, Prof. Kalev Sepp of the Estonian University of Life Sciences invites all interested participants to mark the date and follow updates at the website below.

www.estoniangreenbelt.eu

BSRP projects contribute to sustainable tourism strategy development

Leaders of tourism related BSRP and other Interreg Projects, among them AGORA 2.0 and Baltic Green Belt, got together in Greifswald (DE) on March 26 - 27th 2011 to discuss contents, necessities and specific contributions of a sustainable tourism strategy within EUSBSR implementation.

www.baltic-sea-strategy-tourism.eu



Participants at the workshop organised by Greifswald University (photo: Meliss)

Public participation in Polish planning processes still insufficient

The Green Federation GAJA recently reviewed the implementation of the Aarhus and Espoo Conventions ratified by Poland in 1997 and 2001, respectively. With respect to NGO participation in planning processes, the review revealed general improvements but also serious lacks. A comment was submitted to the Polish Ministry of Environment in response to a recently published periodic governmental implementation report.

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Green Belt Resolution of Stralsund..

...demands further development of the Green Belt in Germany and Europe. The resolution gained full support of more than 550 participants of the 30th German Convention for Nature Conservation (DNT) in October 2010. Initiated by BUND (Friends of the Earth Germany), the resolution stands as a prominent demand for effective measures to stop the deterioration of Green Belt habitats.

www.balticgreenbelt.de

BUND invites you: cycle the Baltic Green Belt of Germany in August

BUND Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania (Friends of the Earth) will organise a bike tour along the Baltic coast from August 7th - 14th, 2011 and invites international friends of the Green Belt to participate in nature experience, info events and glancing underneath the Baltic sea surface. Please indicate your interest to join - we keep you informed!

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Visitors after presentation by Jörg Schmiedel (2nd from left) in front of a dive cabin (pic: BUND MV)



Case Study Sustainable tourism at the Latvian Green Belt

Natural & Cultural Heritage at the Latvian Green Belt

Military heritage is abundant at the Latvian Green Belt along the open Baltic Sea, but people are few. Far away from the Latvian cities, extraordinary biodiversity was preserved here due to strong restrictions and secret military activities during the Soviet era, when military units covered more than 10 % of the territory of the Latvian SSR. Several unique military objects survived the end of the Cold War, e.g. the radio tower of Irbene, the trail of a former narrow-gauge railway and numerous bunkers and shooting ranges. However, little is known about their history under Soviet reign. At the same time, bears, wolves, beavers and elks roam the forest landscape that has grown on top of unique dunes formed by the near-by sea, waves and winds. Tourism is a great chance for the region to improve economy, but not everyone is aware that the capital for tourism is intact nature.

Cooperation & sustainable tourism

Therefore, two regional key players in nature conservation and tourism teamed up: The Latvian Nature Conservation Agency's Administration of Slitere National Park who is responsible for managing about 100 protected territories and the Latvian Association for Rural Tourism with a network of more than 150 tourism providers at the Green Belt.



Lauku Celotajs - Latvian Association for Rural Tourism
www.celotajs.lv



Nature Conservation Agency
Slitere National Park Administr.
www.slitere.lv

Their goal is to demonstrate how cultural and natural heritage can be combined for tourism that is environmentally friendly, economically viable and that has a unique selling point: the heritage of the former Iron Curtain. The pilot approach included:

- assessment of military heritage
- exemplary touristic products

Pilot activities

In 2009, four stakeholder workshops were carried out to introduce and discuss the idea of military heritage based tourism and to compile locations of military heritage objects. In parallel, military heritage sites were assessed in the field following guidelines developed by Lauku Celotajs. A list of suggested objects was presented to Slitere National Park Administration for evaluation of their suitability for touristic development against the background of nature conservation. Next to general facts, Lauku Celotajs collected contemporary witnesses' stories related to the sites identified. In a public campaign carried out through mass media, Latvians were called to send in their memories.

In total, 69 stories were collected. The final list of about 100 military heritage objects was compiled in a multilingual tourism data base in English, Latvian, German and Russian, and a military heritage map for tourists was compiled together with tourism providers.



Screenshot of the military heritage data base at www.celotajs.lv/cont/wrth/military_en.html.

In parallel to the data base development, Slitere National Park Administration designed and implemented a nature trail for bicyclists, which uses an existing corridor parallel to the sea shore. The corridor was cut into the forest back in 1916 to build train tracks for a narrow-gauge railway, and was used for wood transportation until 1963. For implementation of the bicycle trail, the corridor was partly cut-clear, two bridges across rivers were built and information stands installed. To promote the trail, a brochure about the railway was produced, a test ride carried out and a newspaper for tourists compiled



One of the bridges built for the bicycle trail in Slitere National Park (photo: Ratkevica).

Lessons learned

Soviet heritage is a high potential topic in Latvia, as society has not come to terms with this recent chapter of history. Currently, the public response is divided, but many people quite willingly contributed to the collection. In this manner, the project initiated a conversion process, changing the perception of the Soviet period from a burden to a cultural history value.

The former **military areas do not receive enough attention** among decision makers. Some nature conservationists consider these areas as degraded. Even though the majority of previous borderland is still intact and partly protected, valuable habitats are therefore lost to private landowners.

The **transnational potential of military heritage tourism development is not exploited** yet. A number of valuable objects currently unused but with high potential for tourism were identified not only in Latvia, but also in neighboring countries. Due to a similar history and heritage, developments in tourism marketing should be carried out at least in trilateral cooperations with Lithuania and Estonia.

Pilot project outcomes

- data base: 100 heritage objects
- guidelines for tourism providers
- military heritage tourist map
- bicycle trail with info boards
- brochure, newspaper, leaflets
- stakeholder meetings, test rides
- events and information for the general public



MobEE – Innovative mobility, energy & experience concepts for Baltic coastal tourism

New project initiative: MobEE

MobEE is a network initiative which has the goal to come up with a transnational funding proposal in 2012.

In the framework of MobEE, Kiel University wants to bring together researchers with practitioners from nature conservation, tourism, transport, renewable energies and related sectors in order to combine their expertise to bring forward a transnational research and development project for sustainable tourism development along the coasts of the southern and eastern Baltic Sea. At the same time the partners are to be introduced to and linked on a long term basis within a network for nature conservation and sustainable development, the European Green Belt.

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Not only cycling but also e-biking could become more frequent in BSR tourism (photo: Maack)

International Bureau of the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research

MobEE is financed by the International Bureau, which has been commissioned by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) to strengthen the international ties of German universities, research institutes and enterprises with the ultimate goal of building up competencies for the scientific community in Germany in research and innovation.

In doing so, the International Bureau is making an important contribution to cultivating an international dimension within the research programmes of the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF).

www.internationales-buero.de

MobEE Facts

- Main Partners: Kiel University & Lund University
- Funding: International Bureau
- Duration: Jan – Dec 2011
- Type: network activities
- Regional focus: Baltic Sea coasts
- Goal: to prepare a transnational R & D project proposal
- Infos & contact:
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Who is involved in MobEE?

MobEE was initiated by the working group Coastal Geography of Kiel University together with selected stakeholders from science and tourism.

How does MobEE work?

MobEE funds are used to organise international workshops, finance mutual visits and information exchange within a period of one year. During these activities, experience in tourism shall be discussed and ideas for a transnational project proposal shall be gathered.

Who is MobEE for?

MobEE wants to attract scientists and practitioners dealing with nature conservation, tourism, transport or renewable energy production in the Baltic Sea Region. They are invited to participate in MobEE events, contribute to proposal development and become part of a project consortium.

MobEE Initial Partners

- Estonian University of Life Sciences (EE)
- Kaliningrad University (RF)
- N.I.T. Institute for Tourism Research in Northern Europe (DE)
- Lauku Celotajs - Latvian Association for Rural Tourism (LV)
- CORPI - Coastal Research and Planning Institute (LT)
- Gdansk University (PL)
- BFN - Baltic Fund for Nature (RF)

First international MobEE workshop in Riga in March 2011

The first international MobEE workshop “Dimensions of sustainability in tourism at the Green Belt: nature protection, mobility and beyond” is carried out on March 23rd, 2011 in Riga, within the “Nature Tourism Conference” organised by Lauku Celotajs. It is meant to generate a common understanding of sustainability in tourism at the Green Belt.

Based on practical examples presented, the participants discuss good and bad practice as well as future options for the development of sustainable tourism, particularly concerning questions of mobility and energy. The geographical focus will be set on the area along the former Iron Curtain, nowadays developed as the European Green Belt.



Wind power is a chance for decentralised energy production in isolated tourism destinations. (photo: Maack)

Coming up in September: Mobile workshop at Green Belt of Germany

An international mobile workshop along selected sites of the Green Belt in Germany is planned to be carried out from September 17th - 24th, 2011.

The idea of this field trip is to give potential partners on site impressions of previous development projects at the Green Belt, to exchange experience concerning nature conservation, sustainable tourism and Green Belt implementation and to compile specific ideas for a transnational proposal. The mobile workshop will build up on previous projects such as Experience Green Belt and Baltic Green Belt.



News from the European Green Belt

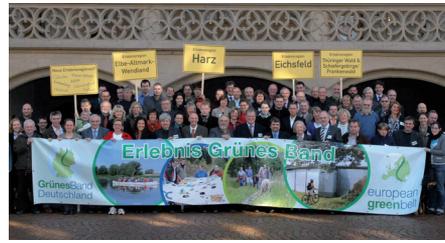
Binding Award under the sign of the European Green Belt

In November 2010, the Binding Prize for outstanding contributions to nature conservation was awarded to five individuals who have one thing in common: for many years, they have been strongly and extraordinarily engaged in protecting the Green Belt. We congratulate Dr. Martin Schneider-Jacoby, Borut Stumberger, Dr. Uwe Riecken, Dr. Kai Frobel and Alois Lang.

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Experience Green Belt project concludes in future forum ...

in the new focus area Duderstadt, DE.



Participants of the Future Forum in Nov. 2010

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New Interreg project for the Central European Green Belt

A new Interreg IVB project was approved within the Central Europe Programme: Greenet. 22 partners from Germany, Austria, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia, Serbia and Italy do not only want to conserve the unique ecological retreat of the Green Belt but also to develop peripheral rural areas in a sustainable and integrated way. The KickOff is planned for May 2011.

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News from the Baltic Sea Region

Natura 2000 network growing but further funding required

Since the latest additions of NATURA 2000 sites, the network consists of some 26.000 sites, covering almost 18 % of the EU landmass and more than 130 000 km² of sea. The next crucial step to a fully operational network which stops the loss of biodiversity by 2020 is to secure funding for effective management and restoration. Stakeholders from nature conservation were invited to contribute to a Communication by the European Commission concerning this aspect, which can be expected in mid 2011.



Marine habitats such as mussel beds must be protected efficiently (photo: Wichmann)

New Grant Programme for cooperation of Russian Federation and EU

The Baltic Sea region plays a strategic role in relations between Russia and the EU. The European Parliament has allocated 20 Mio euro to the „EU

Baltic Sea Strategy External Action Programme in favour of the Russian Federation“, to support the external dimension of the EU Baltic Sea Strategy especially involving Russia. A first call directed at non-state actors and local authorities in the BSR with a total budget of 3.5 million Euro was launched in January 2011.

eeas.europa.eu/delegations/russia

Marine Litter in the Baltic Sea

Three-quarters of marine litter consist of plastic. Its durability (300-450 years) makes it a cumulative threat to the marine life. HELCOM has been collecting data since the end of the 1990s by regional environmental monitoring. The results are alarming. Litter in the Baltic Sea has a very similar magnitude as in the North Sea, with more than 700 waste parts per 100 meters of coastline. Time to act: NGOs tackle the marine litter problem in their campaigning in 2011. They call for action to set targets to reduce litter in the environment and strengthen MARPOL, the Marine Pollution convention.

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Fehmarn Belt

Since the ratification of the treaty between Denmark and Germany to build a fixed link across the Fehmarn Belt in 2009, three alternative solutions were discussed: an immersed tunnel, a cable-stayed bridge and the so-called zero alternative (continued ferry services). On February 1st the Danish Minister of Transport announced that the tunnel option is favoured. In 2011 the Environmental Impact Assessment report and the application for a construction permit is to be submitted to the German authorities. It is essential to call for the environmentally friendliest plannings to protect marine habitats and life. Thus, all three options must be included in the application.

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Litter on a Baltic beach (photo: Körner)

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This newsletter was compiled within the Baltic Green Belt project, part-financed by the European Union (ERDF). The newsletter contains third party articles. The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect those of all Baltic Green Belt partners. The editors do not accept liability for any errors or misprints herein and do not take responsibility for content of third party internetpages pointed to.

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