



Dear friends of the Baltic Green Belt, for more than 15 years, I have been involved in the protection and further development of the German Green Belt and since 2003 in the European Green Belt initiative. Over many years, there were no capacities for Green Belt activities at the Baltic shoreline between Germany and Russia. But in January 2009 things began to change. The Baltic Green Belt funded within the EU's Baltic Sea Region Programme, started very successfully. Within three years, the 22 project partners from all countries along the Baltic Green Belt made a big step forward to develop this section of the European Green Belt as part of the natural and historical European heritage. They also prepared the field to further promote the already ongoing sustainable touristic use of this heritage by innovative and creative actions. Now we are facing the end of the EU Interreg project, but I am sure that this new, strong partnership will form a sound base for the future of the Baltic Green Belt. Therefore I would welcome the idea of the Baltic Green Belt as a fourth independent region within the European Green Belt initiative.

Uwe Riecken, National Focal Point of the European Green Belt Initiative for Germany



More awareness among residents of the Baltic Green Belt

Three years ago, the expression „Green Belt“ was virtually unheard of along most of the Baltic Green Belt, even though the Green Belt initiative had been spreading from the former inner German border towards the north and the south for almost 20 years. Through the Baltic Green Belt project, many people living at the coast or visiting it - children, teenagers, students and interested adults – have realised that they live in a unique place.

Film presentations in the bunker Memel Nord and underwater talks in a dive cabin on Rügen island, Green Belt wild-life on You Tube and hands-on outdoor seminars in Laheema National Park – these and many other activities all along the Baltic Green Belt taught the

people about the values of natural and cultural heritage as well as the threats that this heritage is facing. Many of the Baltic Green Belt advocats walked and biked hundreds of kilometers to show journalists, university students or travellers the landscapes, plants, animals and cultural objects that make the Green Belt special.

Awareness raising takes a lot of commitment and continuous efforts. The outcomes are hard to measure, but counting activities may give an idea of the commitment for the Baltic Green Belt: The project community organised more than 30 public information events in all countries at the Baltic Green Belt, and an additional 40 events were attended by the partners. As a result, more than 60 newspaper articles were published as well as some radio and TV reporting.

Throughout the project, the project partners have developed a common idea of what the European Green Belt vision means, how each partner can contribute and how the European Green Belt can be a helpful tool to solve problems

at the respective part of the Green Belt. However, it became clear that different approaches are needed to establish the Green Belt in the minds of people in the different countries: In Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, the time is now right



Reiner Bütikofer, Member of the European Parliament, supports an awareness bike tour at the German-Polish border (photo: Lohse)

to talk about the Soviet history. While in recent years people would avoid the topic, nowadays they are interested. In Germany, on the other hand, the period of division is already vanishing from people's memories. We have to act fast. The European Green Belt initiative has provided the project community with very useful prerequisites, i.e. a communication manual. This helped us very much to join in and become proactive parts of the initiative.



Students visit a museum bunker in the Lithuanian Seaside Regional Park (photo: Maack)



Impulses for nature conservation...

Along the coastline of the Baltic Green Belt there is a great variety of well-preserved, unique habitats, such as coastal lagoons, cliffs, dunes, reefs and estuarine systems. But there is a need for greater conservation, due to substantial threats, such as pipelines, huge hotel complexes, as well as sand and gravel extraction. These steadily growing threats are about to cause the loss or degradation of some of the last undisturbed places. The Baltic Green Belt project presented responses to these threats and demonstrate how to counteract these developments wherever possible.

A strengthened Green Belt on land

On the landward side of the Baltic Green Belt, a typical measure for preserving nature was to secure areas for nature conservation, e.g. by identifying and promoting valuable land slots as compensation areas or designation areas for conservation programmes. Furthermore, biodiversity experts worked to prohibit or alter destructive projects to prevent their complete loss. For this high work load task a coordinating office and consultancy for conservation and development of Green Belt sites along the coast of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania was established. It also provided substantial consultation and scientific advice on all political levels.



Continuous talks between different stakeholders involved were necessary to secure „Rostocker Heide“ (photo: Barkowski).

Partners in all countries of the Baltic Green Belt held workshops and seminars about nature conservation and tourism for local decision makers, entrepreneurs and other stakeholders. One important goal of such meetings was to discuss projected detrimental developments in order to identify alter-

native concepts. Such intense consultation and lobbying on local, regional and national scale has secured for example the endangered woodland „Rostocker Heide“, the largest wooded area in Germany's coastal strip as well as the Seaside Regional Park in Lithuania which were both threatened in their conservation status by economical interests.



The long-tailed duck (*Clangula hyemalis*), a threatened at the Green Belt (photo: Schmiedel)

Contributions for a better Green Belt at sea

On the seaward side of the Baltic Green Belt, shipping, resource over-exploitation and the input of nutrients and hazardous substances threaten the Baltic Sea severely. The sea may seem to be large with enough space for all activities, but in fact, almost all areas of the territorial coastal waters are designated for certain uses nowadays. The interests competing with nature conservation for marine areas is just as strong as on land. Therefore, the Baltic Green Belt named safe shipping, sustainable and spare resource-use as well as properly managed marine protected areas as significant milestones for a Baltic Sea filled with life as a basis for a healthy Baltic Green Belt.

The fate of the marine environment depends to a large extent on international policies on the EU and Baltic Sea Region levels. In the past three years the project partners lobbied on international conferences and meetings for a better environmental status of the Baltic Sea, handed in statements and recommendations on relevant political proposals and action plans, on regional up to European level. Networking and a close cooperation with international umbrella organisations strengthened the ability.

With workshops, seminars and excursions along the former border strip the vulnerability of habitats along the Green Belt, which in many places has become a last refuge for nature, was shown.

Lobbying and consultancy on political level, like submission of a list of insufficiencies to the „Baltic marine“ status seminar within the NATURA2000 process, helped to improve the conservation status of marine habitats and species. As a result many countries were requested by the EU to make amendments. Further partners handed in a political statement concerning the amendment of the fisheries law of Schleswig-Holstein and sent in recommendations on whale protection in coastal waters of Schleswig-Holstein. As foundation for thematic discussions, a series of information leaflets were published and delivered in several languages.

The project partners organised parliamentary information events on national and EU level and prepared the stage for a Baltic Green Belt presentation with demands on marine protection.

Foundations for a sustainable coastal development

The Green Belt is more than conservation of spectacular landscapes, rare animals or specialised plants. The Green Belt is also an offer to people. The Green Belt wants to offer ideas of how to make a living in remote places while conserving the natural and cultural heritage for the future - in other words of sustainable regional development.



Planning for the Green Belt wants to integrate people with nature conservation



As a basis for such development, the Baltic Green Belt project took stock of existing values and threats along the Baltic Green Belt, of relevant legislation and legal obligations in the coastal zone and of concepts suitable to be applied in the Green Belt areas at the Baltic coast. The two major sources for these concepts were existing studies of integrated coastal zone management and regional projects at the European Green Belt. Within the project, several partners visited other parts of the Green Belt for field impressions and discussions. Additionally, the scientific partners examined climate change as one important aspect of future development in order to make conclusions available to the pilot projects. From the variety of pilot project activities in very different fields, the topic of cultural heritage proved to be most innovative and useful as Green Belt case studies to learn from in the wider community.

Cultural Green Belt heritage assessed for sustainable development

In 2009 and 2010, partners carried out large field campaigns to inventorise cultural heritage all along the Latvian and Estonian Green Belts. They listed more than 400 military heritage objects related to the occupation period - 3/4 in Estonia and 1/4 in Latvia. The data were used in different test cases to demonstrate possible use in regional planning and tourism development. For planning purposes, the data were compiled in a GIS data base in order to assure for compatibility with the planning authorities' tools. Several municipalities in Estonia picked up the data. For example, the municipalities of Laheemaa National Park used the

cultural heritage objects in a new zonation scheme for the Park. The new data assured for a better conservation of the objects themselves and revealed opportunities for further development, e.g. in tourism planning, will become visible. The cultural and natural heritage situation in Estonia were summarised in the book „Estonian Green Belt“.

Tourism products for demonstration developed

In a different pilot project, the cultural heritage data were used to demonstrate means of how to directly generate products to foster tourism. This pilot is particularly interesting with respect to the process. The national rural tourism association functioned as the initiator and external moderator of the deve-



A typical military heritage object during inspection for tourist suitability (photo: Lauku Celotajs)

lopment of military heritage tourism in the coastal region. Within stakeholder seminars, they forwarded background knowledge about the Green Belt, rural tourism marketing and options related to existing but mainly yet unused military heritage.

Practical demonstration outputs were a comprehensive map and online data base for tourists - both multilingual. The procedures followed and experience gained during the pilot project resulted in extensive guidelines for the touristic use of military heritage.

One site described in the touristic data base was developed within a another pilot project. Former train tracks of a military narrow gauge railway were restored as a biking route for tourists through the Latvian Slitere National Park in order to merge nature tourism with cultural experience.



A new bridge completes the former railway bike trail in Slitere National Park (photo: Ratkevica)

More knowledge about environmentally friendly farming

The intense agricultural use, especially industrial animal farming and unsustainable land cultivation, are serious sources of nutrients which cause eutrophication in the marine waters. Eutrophication is the most severe environmental problem of the Baltic Sea. In order to prevent and decrease the nutrient impact in Poland, the Baltic Green Belt project set up an innovative, bottom-up initiative. It included a comprehensive monitoring of industrial animal farms as well as an extensive training kit for farmers, including an online help desk, guidebooks, best practice examples and exhibition materials. The project partners conducted many public events and spread information about eutrophication and how to reduce nutrient input. They reached several hundred small scale farmers.

Lessons learned

The Green Belt has been used successfully to make the purposes of nature conservation tangible. It has proven to be a good tool to get involved with various stakeholders relevant to conservation, development and agriculture and to promote environmental issues among them. The cultural heritage aspect of the Green Belt has been elaborated particularly well in the project. However, the situation in the different countries vary quite strongly with respect to the state of the art, the political priorities and the historical perceptions. In the future it will be crucial for the long-term success of the Green Belt to find more ways to combine natural and cultural history in Green Belt development at the Baltic Sea coast.



During stakeholder seminars, intense discussions about options and needs helped to generate realistic ideas for planning (photo: EMU).



Baltic Green Belt project outcomes and perspectives

Project wrap-up: online & print

Within three years, the Baltic Green Belt partners achieved considerable attention and support for the vision of the Green Belt and actively put forward examples of how to implement the Green Belt. The activities as well as an action plan for the Baltic Green Belt are published in the series Coastline Reports (ISSN 0928-2734) which will also be available for download soon.

www.eucc-d.de/coastline-reports.html

For direct access to reports, websites, films, and books prepared within the Baltic Green Belt project, visit

www.balticgreenbelt.uni-kiel.de/results.html

More Baltic Green Belt websites

www.balticgreenbelt.de

www.balticgreenbelt.org.pl

www.estoniangreenbelt.eu

facebook group
„European Green Belt“



Baltic Green Belt network during 3rd Baltic Green Belt forum in Tallinn (photo: Vaitkevičienė)

Making the network last

The network of active people is an achievement in itself. During the 3rd Baltic Green Belt forum in Tallinn October 2011, the community discussed and adopted a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for ongoing cooperation within the Baltic Green Belt network. It was signed by thirteen organisations, and is still open to more signatories. Based on this MoU, the Baltic Green Belt network will pursue the nomination as the fourth independent region within the European Green Belt including the election of representatives through the network members. Preliminarily the contact for the Baltic Green Belt network is Jörg Schmiedel of BUND Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania.

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News from the European Green Belt

European Green Belt in Brussels

In order to gain more support for the European Green Belt initiative on the European level, the GreenNet and Baltic Green Belt project organised a parliamentary lunch debate with several Members of the European Parliament on October 19th, 2011. As an output of this event, Dr. Liana Geidezis and Dr. Kai Frobel from the BUND-Office Green Belt had the chance to present the European Green Belt initiative and



Joe Leinen, Member of the European Parliament opens the parliamentary lunch (Schmiedel)

the ongoing Interreg projects during a session of the ENVI-committee in the EU-Parliament (EP) in Brussels on December 19th, 2011. The presentation focused on the Green Belt as a unique monument of European history and longest existing ecological network of the European continent. The speakers called for an EP resolution to protect the Green Belt, and demanded further support of trans-boundary projects.

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Strategic Development of the EuGB

In November 2011, a new three-year project for the European Green Belt (EuGB) was launched by the regional coordinators BUND and EuroNatur. The project funded by the German Fe-

deral Agency for Nature Conservation has the goals to:

- develop a sustainable model for financing the EuGB
- review the organizational EuGB structure
- establish a functioning EuGB communication strategy

EuroNatur will act as the pan-european information hub for the EuGB until the next pan-european Green Belt meeting which is scheduled to take place at the Balkan Green Belt in late June 2012. As a first step, the aim is to establish an executive board for the EuGB initiative. The first meeting of the project team and selected representatives from each Region will take place in Helsinki, Finland February 2012.

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