



Hour of birth: The idea Green Belt Europe

During the international conference “**Perspectives of the Green Belt**” in Bonn (Germany) from 15th to 16th of July 2003 organised by the German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation (BfN), it was announced that Mikhail Gorbatchev will be the patron of the Green Belt and this vision of a Green Belt through Europe was firstly officially discussed.

Results of the conference: <http://www.bfn.de/09/090203.htm>

The implementation of the idea Green Belt Europe as the biggest trans-boundary habitat network through Europe is the central challenge for European nature conservation in the next decades. The existing nature conservation areas and pristine landscapes should be conserved as core areas and the landscape beside and between these areas must be developed as stepping-stones for species. In this way, the Green Belt Europe contributes to the implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and Natura 2000 (EU Habitats Directive 92/43/EWG).

The European Green Belt runs through 22 countries and currently there are three distinct areas of activity:

- The **Fennoscandian Green Belt**, with Norway, Finland and the Russian Federation.
- The **Central Green Belt**; running through Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Germany, Czech Republic, Austria, Slovakia, Hungary, Slovenia, Croatia and Italy.
- The **Balkan Green Belt**; running along the barrier that separated Balkan countries (Croatia, Serbia and Montenegro, Macedonia, Romania, Bulgaria, Albania, Greece, Turkey), ending at the Black Sea.

A very big step for the Green Belt Europe was the **international conference in Hungary** in September 2004. The World Conservation Union (IUCN) and the German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation (BfN) jointly organised a conference that took place in the trans-boundary protected area of the Fertő-Hanság National Park in Hungary. Over 70 participants from 17 countries attended the conference. This Green Belt Europe-conference had the goals of introducing the idea of the Green Belt to national representatives and international experts from the different countries that lie along the route of the former “Iron Curtain” and to debate what the Green Belt would be, how it could be implemented and what its “added value” would be to nature conservation and sustainable development in Europe.