

## GreenNet - Lobbying for Nature

### Lunch Debate “European Green Belt”

**Brussels, 19<sup>th</sup> October 2011. A first lobbying event about the European Green Belt at the EU-Parliament in Brussels underlined the outstanding importance of the 12.500 km long ecological corridor through the continent. The lunch debate was jointly organised and conducted by the two EU-funded projects GreenNet (Central Europe Programme) and Baltic Green Belt (Baltic Sea Region Programme).**

Jo Leinen, Member of the Parliament and chairman of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI), welcomed the participants. He expressed his pleasure to welcome the “Green Belt” at the EU-Parliament and put emphasis on the importance of the ecological network for the protection of Europe’s biodiversity. An overview of the origin and background of the European Green Belt-initiative and explanation about common political requirements towards the EU were given by Prof. Hubert Weiger, chairman of Friends of the Earth Germany (BUND). Dr. Liana Geidezis from the BUND-Project Office Green Belt and Gabriel Schwaderer from EuroNatur, the two Regional Coordinators for the Green Belt in Central Europe and the Balkans, presented the impressive Green Belt-landscapes and species pointing out their outstanding importance for nature conservation. The representatives from the Lead Partners, Stefanie Maack from Kiel University and Detlev Geissler from the Association of Rural Development Thuringia (ThLG), introduced the currently EU-funded projects Baltic Green Belt and GreenNet.

Fruitful discussions amongst the participants took place, how to further support and enhance the Green Belt Europe as an ecological corridor, prime example for trans-boundary nature conservation and regional development, but also as a territorial challenge with geopolitical and cultural relevancies. The Green Belt initiative spans the borders between old and new EU Member States, EU Candidate countries, and the external border of the EU. The need of further lobby work and public relations on EU- and member state-level to show the huge possibilities which are offered by the Green Belt for trans-boundary cooperation in nature conservation (harmonising of management), rural development and spatial planning were underlined as necessary next steps.

Existing problems, like the currently unregulated support of biomass production and infrastructure measures as for example hydro power plants and river regulations along the Green Belt Slovenia-Austria or at the Balkans, were clearly pointed out. Jo Leinen has been very positive concerning the request towards the EU-Parliament to adopt a resolution for the protection of the Green Belt. The established contacts on EU-level are a good starting point

for further lobby work to support the ecological network Green Belt and for capitalisation of GreenNet results.



Figure: Detlev Geissler (ThLG, Lead Partner GreenNet) presenting the GreenNet-project at the lunch debate. (Source: BUND-Project Office Green Belt).

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