

Final Conference INTERREG-Projekt Dare2Connect

Supporting Danube Region's ecological Connectivity by linking Natura 2000 areas along the Green Belt

*Minutes, online Conference, 10.11.21, 9-12:00
compiled by Christine Pühringer, Naturschutzbund*

Number of participants: 65

Link – presentations: <https://docs.umweltbundesamt.at/s/ne9GFC2Ad5PwcxE>

Link – press release: <https://www.umweltbundesamt.at/news211116>

<https://www.umweltbundesamt.at/en/news211116en>

Intro with Slide-Show and Interactive participants map:

<https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/0/viewer?mid=1tuuMKL-3LHI3CD4xGjhmCPuqgDC6koqP&ll=49.048537446198885%2C16.578399943750007&z=5>

Introduction

Helmut Gaugitsch

Umweltbundesamt:

Project DaRe to Connect within the INTERREG Danube Transnational Program in the last 2 years paved the way for a declaration with the aim to maintain, improve and develop the Green Belt as backbone of ecological connectivity in Europe.

Experts will present the main project results and highlight how they contribute to the establishment of a transnational European Green Infrastructure.

Welcome notes

Richard Mergner

Bund für Umwelt und Naturschutz Deutschland e.V. (BUND)

Welcome on behalf of Project lead partner and Friends of the Earth Germany (BUND). Project implementation was big challenge in times of a global pandemic. Thanks to Gebhard Banko for the organization of the conference and to the Interreg Danube Program for financing.

BUND active for the EGB from the very beginning of the initiative. Latest Success: 80% of the inner German GB protected as National Monument.

Not only Germany, but whole Europe was separated over decades. Green Belt now is symbol for transformation und chance for man and nature.

D2C is about better linking ecosystems, landscapes, but also people. GOs and NGOs from the Danube Region countries worked together, good results have been achieved: More than 3,300 km of GB in Danube Region were analyzed, so we can better see where increased protection is needed.

Green Belt symbolizes the idea of a united Europe. Goal remains: preservation and development of the EGB as backbone of European Green Infrastructure - especially via transnational cooperation. - Cross border work is needed to keep diversity as a livelihood.

BUND will continue to work on the future perspective: Declaration of EGB as a natural and cultural world heritage site.

On behalf of the lead partner, thanks again to all who contributed to project. „Be connected with the European Green Belt“

Viktoría Hasler

Federal Ministry for Climate Action, Environment, Energy, Mobility, Innovation and Technology

Welcome on behalf of virtual host country Austria

Designation as World Heritage is important goal for the next years, but also a very complex process Austria is aware of its special responsibility for the unique biotope network system. Already in 2019 joint strategic vision for the GB was signed by Minister of Environment and the federal states: „Declaration of Illmitz on the preservation and promotion of the Green Belt of Europe“

Two national parks, many nature parks and natural areas in Austria’s Green Belt, also valuable agricultural land between protected areas. One of the pilot regions in the project is situated in Austria’s very north-west

Looking forward: EU Green deal great tool, linked to many policies and guidelines, provides funding opportunities. In Austria recently two funds (with EU and national means) presented: Forest Fund and Biodiversity Fund (80 million Euros).

But Areas not only have to be connected but also improved. State of nature in the EU is poor. Restoration urgently needed. Challenging und exciting times coming – hopefully we can achieve more speed on our GB activity and on restoring nature

Jutta Paulus

Member of European parliament

European Green Belt is lighthouse project for „United in Biodiversity“ (in modification of The EU-claim), connects 1000s of kilometers across Europe, all types of ecosystems, valuable but also degraded habitats.

Nature Restoration law under development at EU level. Connectivity must become part of this regulation. Nature needs connection, species have to migrate. It gives multiple benefits for nature conservation, climate change mitigation and adaptation.

A Transnational European Nature Network (TEN-N) is demanded.

„Best Belt“¹ - Pilot GB project just launched for biological diversity projects along the European Green Belt

¹ The EU-funded project aims to make it easier for local nature conservation organizations getting access to EU funds with a specific small grant projects and communication actions along the entire European Green Belt over the next four years. The project supports tangible initiatives that preserve the biological diversity along the former Iron Curtain, and implement promising approaches for a sustainable regional development.

<https://www.europeangreenbelt.org/news/news/eu-pilot-project-strengthens-nature-conservation-at-the-european-green-belt/>

Brian McSharry

European Environment Agency

Many policies concerning green infrastructure and protected areas: e.g. EU Biodiversity Strategy (May 20) - protection of minimum of 30% of land and 30% of sea area, with 1/3 strictly (currently 25,7 % land, 11,1 % sea) protected – Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework by the CB follows this with 30by30 target. Both of these feed into a 2050 50to50-vision as well as an integrated land/seascape vision. Necessary to protect and restore nature using green and blue infrastructure

Also “Land around” is important: 15% of N2000 sites connected by (semi-)natural ecosystems outside N2000

Green infrastructure and protected areas serve to protect and restore nature.

- We see a loss in biodiversity and a clear need to improve our nature
- It is recognized that access to nature is beneficial to our mental and physical health
- These areas help us reduce risk to disasters
- They - amongst other benefits - clean our air and water and provide us with food

They mitigate the effects of climate change

To achieve the EU and Global targets for protecting and restoring biodiversity, and the health of our planet, we need the combination of green infrastructure and protected areas.

Transnational Strategic Vision

Martin Kuba – BUND

Bund für Umwelt und Naturschutz Deutschland e.V. (BUND)

EUROPEAN GREEN BELT. Extraordinary ecological network and living memorial landscape along the former Iron Curtain, 12.500 km, backbone of the Pan-European ecological network and core of EU Green Infrastructure (GI) and TEN-G.

PROJEC: Start 2018 in frame of Interreg Danube Program, 11 partners from 8 countries +14 associated strategic partners

GOALS:

- identify ecological corridors between protected areas along the EGB, maintain and enhance ecosystems and their services
- development the connectivity of protected along Danubian GB as backbone of EU Green infrastructure
- improve capacities and trans-national and trans-boundary cooperation

6 PILOT REGIONS in DE, AT, CZ, SK, HU, RO, SRB, HR, where a lot has happened.

Broad awareness raising for regional stakeholders, connectivity analysis, mapping, detailed connectivity concepts.

Transnational corridor Analysis by University of Vienna: Computation of potential multifunctional corridors via Connectivity-Functionality Index

Identification of 15 Areas of Action on transboundary level where safeguarding or restoration is necessary – crucial for the future development of ecological corridor and ecosystem-service

Results are mainstreamed via a D2C transnational strategic vision:

"Green Belt in the Danube Region 2030".

MAIN CONTENTS

- European Green Belt as Focal Region for Implementation of Policy Strategies (Biodiversity Strategy, EUSDR PA 6)
- Implementation of a TEN-G/TEN-N scheme
- Enabling agriculture and forestry to act ecologically and economically sustainable
- Improve ecological Connectivity along the EGB under consideration of local and regional specifics of nature, landscape and culture
- Foster bi- and/or trilateral trans-boundary cooperation
- Bring forward a nomination of the European Green Belt as UNESCO world natural AND cultural heritage

Reading and Signing of Declaration - 1 partner per project institution

<http://www.interreg->

[danube.eu/uploads/media/approved_project_output/0001/48/b5f8c779356c0fcfe87e23ab0d5442f0cf259560.pdf](http://www.interreg-danube.eu/uploads/media/approved_project_output/0001/48/b5f8c779356c0fcfe87e23ab0d5442f0cf259560.pdf)

Results and measures from D2C project

Practical examples from the six pilot regions underpin the need for an integrated management approach for functional connectivity of protected areas along the European Green Belt:

PR 1 - Bavarian Forest-Mühlviertel-Šumava (DE/AT/CZ)

Eva Volfová, Ametyst

PILOT AREA

Grassland-dominated areas in Upper Austria (AT), Bavaria (GE) and southwestern parts of Czech Republic including National parks: Šumava and Novohradské hory Mountains, many Natura sites.

Main topic were meadows, 3 key habitat types and threatened species (mainly birds, butterflies) were treated

ACTIVITIES & MEASURES

- Connectivity analysis: Potential migration corridors – based on “Linkage Pathways Tool” / Selected priority areas
- „Šumava meadows“-working group – analysis and proposals for data collection, limits for land intake, management, strategic approach → Concept of Šumava meadows
- Restoration of meadows – stimulating compilation of Regional strategy of adaptation measure (Pilsen Region)
- Stakeholder meetings, exchange of experience with management, more than 300 stakeholders involved
- Example: Maltš River meadows managed by water-buffaloes: suitable corridor to link extensive grassland habitats

PROJECT IMPACT:

- remote sensing data helpful to identify existing valuable habitats and less natural habitats with high potential as (connecting) habitats
- Spatial quantification of connectivity and landscape services
- Ecosystem services, highlighting benefits for human well-being
- Areas of Action: “safeguard and restore” helpful policy tools in frame of common agricultural policy and biodiversity strategy
- Through GIS tool in Šumava meadows proposals for management of 48 localities were identified, scout patronage groups (16 localities)
- Good Base for possible following Interreg-Project on Meadows

PR 2 - Zahorie-Little Carpathians/Male Karpaty (SK)

Peter Puchala, State Nature Conservancy of the Slovak Republic

PILOT AREA

SCI "Morava River" with floodplain forests and meadows, old oxbows, temporal wetlands with high biodiversity and species richness

PLA (Protected Landscape Area) Zahorie (including several SCI's) with sandy soils dune-features, forested mainly pines

PLA Little Carpathians (including several SCI's and SPA) with high diversity of habitat-types. Natural forests, meadows, pastures, secondary-forest-stepic communities and karst-features

many protected areas in pilot region (N2000, also national protection and Ramsar)

BARRIERS MAPPING

identification of existing barriers, builtup areas, line transport infrastructure, legal barriers; field fencing mapping; GIS data analysis

PROPOSED MEASURES = Connectivity Concept

Most of the measures to improve migration capacity, special GI measures (green bridge) - also prevention of new barriers and fences and removal of fences (also symbol of Iron Curtain)

STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT

Meetings, Workshops, Cooperation with Bratislava regional office, Terrestrial system of ecological stability (implementation of results in the regional level)

SUCCESS:

barrier removed: 6 km fence, connectivity improved!!!

Bratislava will consider results in local planning

3. Örseg-Goričko (HU/SI)

István Szentirmai, Órség National Park Directorate

PILOT AREA

Cultural landscape in 3 countries; Órség National Park, Goričko Landscape Park; mixed forests in the south, arable land in the north; many rare bats, butterflies, birds (in man-made habitats)

CHALLENGES OF PILOT AREA

- Current land use change, habitat fragmentation / homogenization, arable intensification, loss of natural elements
- protected areas, Natura 2000 network, National Ecological Network (HU)

PLANNING ECOLOGICAL CORRIDORS

- Mapping current distribution of species
- Identifying existing corridors and barriers: GIS analyses & field work
 - o Marsh fritillary – connecting HU-SL Population
 - o 6 Bird Species – creating Veteran tree network
 - o 5 Bat Species – connecting two Natura 2000 sites by tree lines

IMPLEMENTING ECOLOGICAL CORRIDORS

- Preservation zone in spatial plans
- Core: most important natural habitats
- Corridor: linear elements and stepping stones

- 3,733 ha added to National Ecological Network
- Stakeholder consultations (Ministry of Agriculture, Council of Vas county, Local municipalities)

ACHIEVEMENTS OF PROJECT

- Database on the target species enlarged; Understanding connectivity in the landscape scale improved; Tools for future conservation actions
- National Ecological Network updated and revised
- Ecological corridor plan for the Marsh fritillary, shared knowledge and harmonized conservation actions on target species
- plans for future projects including Life application and incentives for landowners

4. Iron Gates-Djerdap (RO/SRB)

Amalia Dumbrava, Iron Gates Nature Park Administration

PILOT AREA

- 2 Protected areas along one of the most beautiful section of the Danube: Djerdap National Park & Iron Gates Natural Park, unitary ecosystem: unique habitats, ecosystems, species. Danube is most important ecological corridor between Rumania & Bulgaria
- Plans to declare cross-border area as Biosphere Reserve and cross-border RAMSAR site
- Danube Gorge, characterized by an alternation of depression basins and narrowing sectors

ACTIVITIES & MEASURES

- ecological and spatial data-collection (N2000 invertebrates in Iron gates Natural Park)
- Assessment of impact of ecological barriers on bat species along the Green Danube Corridor
- Monitoring protocol for medium voltage poles in Iron Gates Natural Park & Djerdap National Park
- Analyze ESS in 6 different plots
- Research on birds in the pilot region
- Socio-economic analysis of services and benefits for local communities

STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT

To make the concept of ecological corridors known, very positive, good discussions many NGOs, local communities, also investors in energy sector (powerlines, windfarms)

IMPACT OF PROJECT

- Proposal for Change in legislation on reporting the accidental dead and capture of protected species
- Improvement of spatial planning of residential areas, discussions to maintain a high level of protection
- Information of ministry on missing legislation for ecological corridors in Romania – hoping for clear regulation in near future
- Official commitment of the network operator for Isolation of two powerlines in next future to protect bird species

NEXT STEPS

Keep Contact with energy-sector, ideas for Life Project; use obtained data for Improvements for Birds and Bats

5. Drava River in Virovitica-Podravina County (HR)

Vladimir Juhaz, Public institution for management of protected parts of nature and ecological network in Virovitica Podravina County

PILOT AREA

Unique section of Drava, preserved wetlands and forest habitats, high bio- and geodiversity, protected and endangered species (e.g. 116 bird species) and habitat types, mosaic of cultivated landscape, natural dynamic river processes, cultural heritage

ACTIVITIES & MEASURES

- Opening conference, Steering Committee Meeting, Celebrations
- Workshops with educational institutions and stakeholders; national conference GBE in the RC
- Researchwork for 3 species
- ESS analysis and survey, ground truthing
- GIS and drones education
- Press: project leaflet, large brochure, memory game set; Winter Wetlands Bike Tour
- Stakeholders involved

IMPACT OF PROJECT

- Definition of feasible ecological corridors; education of local population; extension of knowledge of endangered species
- Estimation of ecosystem services by functions; draft proposals for ecological corridors
- Recognition of major threats
- New knowledge and tools for the implementation of protection

NEXT STEPS / FOLLOW UP ACTIVITIES

- Preserve favorable condition of important habitats; develop & implement appropriate N2000 management plans
- Improve natural state and adequate care of endangered plant & animal species and habitats
- Preserve and protect natural dynamic river processes
- Conduct education of the local population and school system on the importance of river systems
- Apply the acquired knowledge and tools in the protection and preservation of the area
- Control of invasive alien species
- Present important events in the media

6. Danube River oxbows – Béda (HU)

Tibor Parrag, Duna-Drava National Park Directorate, Department Head for Nature Conservation

PILOT AREA

- In South of part of Danube Drava National Parc and Mura-Drava-Danube Biosphere Reserve, also Natura 2000 site
- former and active floodplain of river Danube, complex of forested and riparian habitats (side branch, oxbows, temporary lakes)

ACTIVITIES & MEASURES

Developing detailed habitat restoration plan for better water-supply

- Geodetic survey of certain waterbodies
- Analysis of present water discharge
- Alternatives for improving water discharge
- Mapping the actual vegetation
- Cost estimation

Stakeholders involved (state forestry company, South-transdanubian Water Management Directorate, Municipality of Kölked village, Local angling association)

IMPACT OF PROJECT

Based on the restoration study a LIFE proposal has been developed, unfortunately rejected due to cost efficiency issues – is now to be revised

NEXT STEPS

Revision of LIFE proposal, Involving potential Croatian partners
Keeping the stakeholder cooperation alive

Interconnected Green Belt (WP 3)

Ecosystem-Services and indices derived from GIS and Remote Sensing (COPERNICUS)

Stefan Fuchs, University Vienna

Identification of local, regional und transnational habitat corridors using innovative GIS approaches derived from pilot actions

- GIS analysis and open space mapping to identify biotope islands and calculate connectivity corridors with the lowest "spatial resistance" based on land cover/use.
- Calculation of CFI (Total Function Value) = indicator for the potential of areas as multifunctional corridors between protected areas using an ESS capacity matrix and GUIDOS toolbox.
- Classification of regions for which action is required, so-called Areas of Action:
Safeguard Areas, which should be protected and preserved from change of use
Restoration Areas, which should be upgraded and restored to be able to guarantee the corridor.

Basis for regional evaluations and planning of measures, especially in the pilot region.

OUTPUT: provision of concrete guidance and recommendations on planning and establishment of transnational ecological corridors connecting Natura 2000 areas on local and regional level

Outlook

Martin Kuba – BUND

LOOKING BACK

Project very affected by pandemic, many events only online, almost everything was (more) complicated

Demonstrable concrete success: method of corridor planning was already used in other projects, for example in Hungary, where it was anchored in national policy. Barriers were removed in Slovenia. Also basis created for further work in other pilot regions, some projects already started.

Project results have a lot of potential for further development of GB

STEPS AHEAD?

How best implementing the results, secure them permanently?

BUND will continue to work for EGB to be maintained and developed as the backbone of Green Infrastructure. Today shown, that GB can contribute a lot to this. GB should be included in strategic processes on all levels, e.g. EU Biodiversity Strategy.

D2C and its results provide many starting points for further work and implementation. With D2C not only shown where along the GB in the Danube Region new protected areas can contribute to the 30% target, but also how the ecological connectivity can be improved.

Microsoft Teams

Participants in the chat list:

- stefan.a.hube
- Eva Wolfsw...
- Martin Blj L.
- Tibor Parrag
- Uliete Proch...
- Gabriela Ko...
- Florian Bitt...
- andrea.cas...
- Štefánka ČL
- CZ - Kunco...
- BH
- BW
- Eva Horn...
- Emanuel Wl...
- +40
- Thomas Wlaku

Chat messages:

- Barbara Gebhard 11:01: corridors connecting Natura 2000 areas on local and regional level been produced?
- Barbara Gebhard 11:01: Map of participants: <https://www.google.com/maps/@48.4292222,16.5783994,17.500782z>
- stefan.a.hube 11:05: @Schmidler Stefan: We didn't assess this aspect, but it would be indeed very interesting to look into that.
- Štefánka Dolná - Goriska Nature Park (Guest) 11:09: Slovenia, Grad 191 9264 Grad
- Ring Schneider (Guest) 11:09: jüdische location Rostock, Germany
- Tibor Parrag (DONPD (Hendry)) (Guest) 11:09: Parrag Tibor, DONPD Pecs, Hungary

Search: Suchbegriff hier eingeben

10:09 16.11.2021