

Transnational Restoration & Connectivity Strategy

ReCo



European
Green Belt

Enhancing Ecological Connectivity Through
Habitat Restoration · 21 February 2025

BUND / BN
Jörg Schmiedel



SPATIAL SCOPE: 5.800 KM

**European Green Belt from
Poland to Croatia**



**ReCo Transnational
Restoration & Connectivity
Strategy**



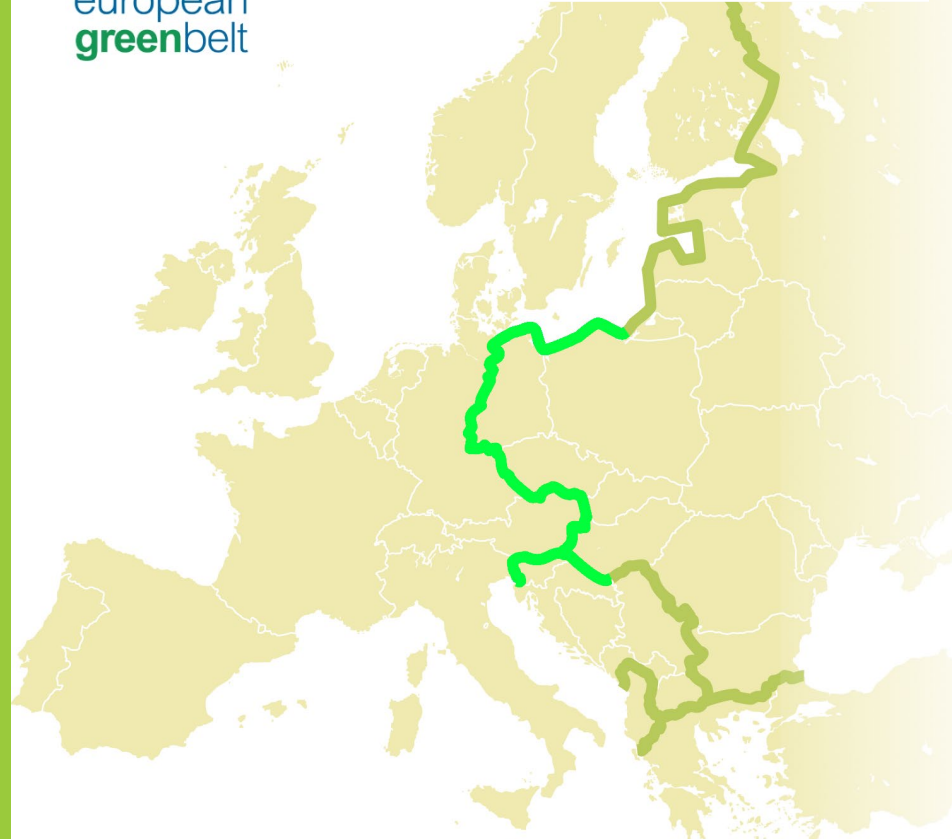
european
greenbelt

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WHY DO WE NEED THIS?

- International cooperation essential for European Green Belt development
- Ongoing decline of habitat diversity
- Many excellent counteractions and solutions available



Offer a
ready-to-use toolbox
for European Green Belt
improvement



THE TOOLBOX

The compartments:

- A. Managing Habitats
- B. Enhancing Connectivity
- C. Species Conservation and Management
- D. Local History and Heritage
- E. Visitor Management
- F. Public Information
- G. Political Lobbying and Involvement
- H. Research and Citizen Science



One tool from the toolbox

(a ReCo activity)

Can be replicated or adapted elsewhere

Advice and consultation possible!

EXPERT PEER REVIEWS OF SITE MANAGEMENT AND STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT ENHANCE CONSERVATION SUCCESS

Green Belt locations in Poland, Germany, Czech Republic, Austria, Slovenia and Italy

Addressed issue

Actors in the European Green Belt possess a wealth of local knowledge and extensive expertise on nature as well as cultural and historical backgrounds. However, management requirements are diverse, often very demanding, and the locally responsible teams for implementing the actions often small. Additional external advice to tackle specific or non-standard questions can sometimes be helpful, as well as an uninvolved expert's view on the chosen solutions from a possibly different perspective. Peer review visits by small expert peer review teams to management actions provided just that.



Location

Various locations in the Baltic and Central European Green Belt were subject to peer review visits, namely Ińsko lakeland in Poland, the Fichtelgebirge/Smrčiny Mountains on the German-Czech border, Podyjí/Thaýatal national parks on the Czech-Austrian border, the Karavanke high mountain area in Slovenia, the Trieste karst in Italy and coastal Slovenia.

Activities

- A detailed methodology of the peer review teams' tasks and duties was created. It includes a final assessment form to be filled both by the peer reviewers and the hosts. Some of the reviewed activities were already completed, but most were still undergoing implementation.
- Peer review teams of 4-8 international experts were selected to visit each site. Prior online discussions on the selection of activities to be reviewed and the stakeholders to be involved resulted in a detailed agenda of the visit, which was jointly produced by the host and the peer review team.
- The core part of all peer review visits were intensive consultations with local stakeholders having diverse relationships to the activities to be reviewed. People affected by their outcomes and persons involved in their realization were common, but also individuals responsible for local policies or administration were interviewed.
- Open conversations with all hosts and stakeholders, explicitly not only featuring perceived successes and benefits, but also possible shortcomings, failures and worries, are a central requisite for effective peer reviewing. A friendly and sincere atmosphere, strictly omitting any notion of control, accusation or exposure, was therefore maintained throughout all peer review visits and also afterwards.

Added value for the Green Belt

- The wide set of expert opinions and analytical approaches provided by the peer reviewers substantially improved the results of the reviewed activities.
- The hosts' roundup of ongoing and completed works, necessary for preparation and execution of the peer review, upgraded the understanding of their own activities besides their functioning and impacts, gaining valuable experience for future tasks.
- Peer reviews conducted during the realization process of a measure can yield excellent hints for optimization of the work lying still ahead, thereby instantly improving impact and efficiency.
- The peer review visits highly improve international cooperation in the European Green Belt. Profiting from its diversity, they utilize international experiences and expertise locally for better performance and solutions. Some of the contacts created during the peer reviews serve the network long after the peer review has ended, being the basis for constant exchange.
- The conclusions of the peer reviews are particularly useful in planning future activities both by the hosts and the peer reviewers, as they will allow to avoid repeating mistakes and to strengthen the positive impacts of future actions.

Where to replicate?

Expert peer review visits can be replicated anywhere in the European Green Belt where larger activities or projects are ongoing.

Who to ask?

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All peer review visits featured here were part of the ReCo Interreg project and are one of its most important deliverables.

References

ReCo project consortium (2025): Joint peer-review reports on peer-review excursions by Joint Pilot Teams to ReCo Pilot Regions / Reports from the Peer-Review visits.



Field meeting of the peer review team with a local stakeholder in Fichtelgebirge/Smrčiny Mountains (Jörg Schmiedel).

WHERE TO GET IT?

- Downloadable on ReCo web page
- Or ask for it directly

- Enhanced version will be published in Nov 2025, also printed copies



www.interreg-central.eu/projects/reco/



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Questions? Suggestions?

Thank you!

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