Barbara Engels, Angela Heidrich, Jürgen Nauber, Uwe Riecken, Heinrich Schmauder and Karin Ullrich (Eds.)

# "Perspectives of the Green Belt" Chances for an Ecological Network from the Barents Sea to the Adriatic Sea?





**BfN - Skripten** 

# Perspectives of the Green Belt" Chances for an Ecological Network from the Barents Sea to the Adriatic Sea?

Proceedings of the International Conference
15<sup>th</sup> of July in Bonn
on the Occasion of the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the
German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation (BfN)

### **Editors:**

Engels, Barbara
Heidrich, Angela
Nauber, Jürgen
Riecken, Uwe
Schmauder Heinrich
Ullrich, Karin



Cover Picture: The German Green Belt near Pferdsdorf (Uwe Riecken, BfN)

Editors: Division II 1.3

Tel: +49-228-8491-242 Barbara.Engels@bfn.de

This publication is included in the literature database "DNL-online" (www.dnl-online.de)

BfN-Skripten are not available in book trade.

Publisher: Bundesamt für Naturschutz (BfN)

Federal Agency for Nature Conservation

Konstantinstrasse 110 53179 Bonn, Germany Tel.: +49 228/ 8491-0 Fax: +49 228/ 8491-200 URL: http://www.bfn.de

### All rights reserved by BfN

The publisher takes no guarantee for correctness, details and completeness of statements and views in this report as well as no guarantee for respecting private rights of third parties.

Views expressed in the papers published in this issue of BfN-Skripten are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of the publisher.

No part of the material protected by this copyright notice may be reproduced or utilized in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording or by any information storage and retrieval system without written permission from the copyright owner.

Printed by the printing office of the Federal Ministry of Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety.

Printed on 100% recycled paper.

# **Contents**

1	Preface				
2	Prese	ntations			
	2.1	Hartmut Vogtmann, Federal Agency for Nature Conservation	7		
	2.2	Michael Gorbatschow, Green Cross International	11		
	2.3	Steffen Flath, Ministry for Environment and Agriculture, Saxony	14		
	2.4	International Cooperation along the Green Belt of Fennoscandia I	17		
		Irina Osokina, Russian Federation			
	2.5	International Cooperation along the Green Belt of Fennoscandia II	20		
		Tapio Lindholm, Finnish Environment Institute			
	2.6	International Cooperation along the Green Belt of Fennoscandia II	23		
		Timo Hokkanen, North Karelian Biosphere Reserve, Finland			
	2.7	Experience of Latvia in Management of Transboundary Protected	25		
		Areas; Andris Viesturs Urtans, Latvia			
	2.8	Transboundary Cooperation in Field of PA Establishment and	27		
		Management; Ruta Baskyte, Lithuania			
	2.9	Transboundary Protected Areas in the Eastern Border Region of	31		
		Poland – the Concept and Implementation;			
		Zygmund Kzreminski, Poland			
	2.10	The Concept of transboundary protected area system in the eastern	33		
		Border region of Poland;			
	0.44	Grzegorz Rakowski, Jadwiga Sienkiewicz, Poland			
	2.11	Implementation of the Habitats Directive and Birds Directive in the	44		
		Slovak Republic – Twinning Phare Project 2002			
	0.40	Peter Urban, Slovak Public	47		
	2.12	Cooperation of Germany and Czech Republic in Nature Protection	47		
	2.13	Ladislav Miko, Ministry of Environment, Czech Republic	51		
	2.13	Cross Border National Parks along the former Iron Curtain – the Austrian-Hungarian Example	31		
		Laslo Kárpáti, Hungary			
	2.14	Transboundary Cooperation in Nature Conservation along the	55		
	2.14	Austrian Green Border	55		
		Maria Tiefenbach, Austria			
	2.15	Activities along the Balkan Green Belt	58		
	2.10	Gabriel Schwaderer, European Nature Heritage Fund (EURONATUR)	00		
	2.16	Possible Role of the European Commission	61		
		Andras Demeter, European Commission	•		
	2.17	Importance of Ecological Corridors and Networks - Towards a Global	66		
		Ecological Network			
		Tamas Marghescu, IUCN, Brussels			
	2.18	Jürgen Trittin, Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and	69		
	_	Nuclear Safety, Germany	-		
	2.19	Helmut Weinzierl, Deutscher Naturschutz Ring, Germany	72		
	2.20	Irina Osokina, Russian Federation	74		
	2.21	Angelika Zahrndt, BUND, Germany	76		
	222	Michael Carbatachaw, Croon Croos International	77		

3	The German Green Belt, Karin Ullrich and Uwe Riecken	79
4	Programme	84
5	List of Participants	86
6	Bonn Declaration	92

### 1 Preface

The International conference "Perspectives of the Green Belt – Chances for an ecological network from the Barents Sea to the Adriatic Sea?", held in July 2003 in Bonn, has been a milestone in the development of the vision of a European Green Belt.

Mikhail Gorbachev, former president of the former Soviet Union and guest of honor at the conference, and Jürgen Trittin, German Minister of Environment, both emphasized the importance of nature conservation as a connecting element in a Europe that is growing together. This vision was strongly supported by the Russian Vice-Minister of Natural Resources, Irina Osokina. A successful example on how to realize the Green Belt was presented by Steffen Flath, Minister for Environment and Agriculture of the State of Saxony. Mikhail Gorbachev affirmed his support and the support of his peace organisation Green Cross International to the project. The conference was crowned by the conclusion of an agreement on cooperation of Green Cross international with German nature conservation associations.

Over several decades, the nature along the former inner-German border has developed into an area rich in endangered species and habitats in a manner which is unique for the densely populated Germany. This "Green Belt" presents itself as an opportunity to develop a national ecological network of habitats. In the framework of a testing and developing project the Federal Agency for Nature Conservation (BfN) therefore commissioned a study on the actual situation of the Green Belt and to develop proposals for the protection and expansion of these areas.

At present, facing the most important enlargement of the European Union, Europe is moving closer together, and borders are becoming permeable. Alongside almost all borders unique treasures of nature have been preserved. Many of them are among the national or even international natural heritage which deserve and need conservation or require sustainable management.

The Federal Agency for Nature Conservation has taken up and further developed the concept of a "European Green Belt" along the former iron curtain which could form the backbone of a European habitat network. This includes not only the border zone itself, but also adjacent areas and especially transboundary conservation projects. Such a Green Belt could thus further help to unify Europe by turning a once dividing structure into an ecological bond.

One reason for the excellent ecological state of the Green Belt in Germany was the fact, that is was a peripheral and therefore economically less developed area and in many parts a "forbidden zone" for people with no or only extensive agricultural land use or forestry. This situation is similar in most other States alongside the former iron curtain. Now, the main objective should be to preserve the natural heritage in the border region while at the same time ensuring the socio-economic means for people living in the area.

Economic progress involves transboundary cooperation and regional development which may lead to conflicts with nature conservation objectives. Therefore, cooperation of all stakeholders active in nature conservation and sustainable regional development is essential and even more important in the area of the Green Belt. The unique opportunity to create a continuous Europe wide network of habitats will only be achieved by international cooperation and local action.

Being an area rich in endangered species and habitats the European Green Belt will represent a valuable contribution to the NATURA 2000 network of the European Union and will contribute much to achieve the EU target fixed in its 6<sup>th</sup> Environmental Action Programme (EAP) to halt biodiversity decline with the aim to reach this objective by 2010.

The conservation and development of the Green Belt gains further importance in view of a future Pan European Ecological Network: being a major means for implementing the aim of the Pan-European Biological and Landscape Strategy (PEBLS) for the conservation and management of species, ecosystems, habitats, and landscapes. The future Green Belt could serve as part of such a network and develop into a valuable tool for the implementation of common nature conservation objectives in a Europe that is growing together.

This publication resumes the international kick-off-conference for the project of an European Green Belt organized by the Federal Agency for Nature Conservation in July 2003 in Bonn. Representatives from Russia, Finland, Lithuania, Latvia, Poland, the Czech Republic, the Slovak republic, Hungary, Austria and Germany as well as from IUCN, the European Union and several NGOs have been intensively discussing the idea of a European Green Belt.

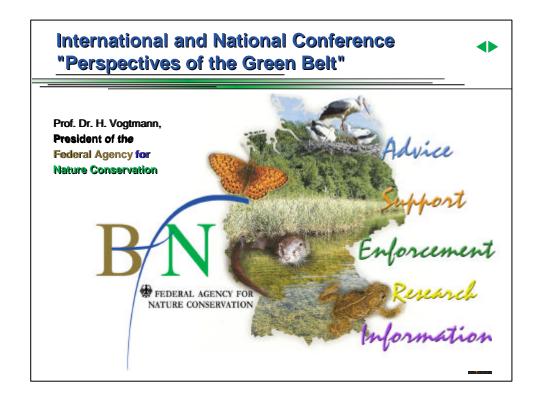
The Green Belt project will progress and promote further cooperation among the partners along the Green Belt, both at political and working levels. The establishment of a working group is planned to provide continuous support for this process. By involving national and regional governments, national and international NGOs as well as the European Commission participation of a broad range of stakeholders is envisaged. Coordinating activities will be carried out by IUCN Europe.

The enlargement of the European Union in 2004 will offer great opportunities for the conservation of the natural heritage but at the same time Europe faces important challenges. By strengthening transboundary cooperation and involving actors both from nature conservation and regional development the European Green Belt could become a symbol for sustainable development in a green Europe.

Prof. Dr. Hartmut Vogtmann

### 2 Presentations

# 2.1 Prof. Dr. Hartmut Vogtmann, Federal Agency for Nature Conservation, Germany













## Visions of the BfN



- ➤ Green Belt from the Barents Sea to the Adriatic Sea
- Expansion to the Balkan Green Belt
- Pan European habitat network
- Ecological networks worldwide



## Actions of the BfN



- ➤ Funding of further conservation projects along the German Green Belt
- Attempt to bias European infrastructure projects to the advantage of habitat networks, especially the Green Belt
- ➤ International conference on the European Green Belt on the working (project) level in 2004
  - Participants: colleagues working on specific projects within the European Green Belt
  - Publication of conference proceedings



### 2.2 Michael Gorbatschow, Green Cross International, Switzerland

### Dear friends!

I do indeed support this project, which was initiated here by environmentalists representing both governmental and non-governmental organizations and agencies. I must say that above all this project makes a lot of environmental sense, because it is an example of an initiative that can provide a boost to a very important movement, leading to the emergence of a whole network of green belts all over the globe.

And this is generally something very desirable, and not just because it might solve all our problems. Rather, this initiative is of great symbolic significance: such initiatives give people a chance to formulate their position; such clear cut and accessible projects tend to draw a sympathetic response.

It is really important to generate greater momentum in broader participation of citizens in addressing the environmental issues the world is facing in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. You will probably agree that essentially we are faced with three overriding challenges: security; poverty and backwardness; and a global environmental threat. I will not go into the first two. I will just say that they affect everyone, and we cannot ignore them. To do so would be a huge mistake.



And this awareness growing among the citizenry, while politicians are being left in the dust. Moreover, let me use as an example the preparation for Johannesburg meeting, which was convened to take stock of our environmental and sustainable development activities on a global scale. We realized that ten years been wasted. should be candid about that. even though it's now in the past. Since the International Green Cross was

actively involved in the preparations of the Johannesburg forum, I must note here that the meeting almost fell through; it was on the brink of failure. We had a very difficult time forging agreement on any particular issue, for example on the issue of fresh water. What is worse, the goal has been set, while implementation mechanisms have not been put into place. We still do not have them. Anyway, the Johannesburg experience showed that national governments need to be intensively engaged in finding solutions to these problems.

One can argue that politics is a serious matter and can be trusted only to politicians. I submit that the same principle applies, perhaps tenfold, to environmental protection. Environmental protection should not be left to politicians, certainly not to them alone. In my view this task falls primarily to the Citizens of the Earth. It is everybody's concern! It is impossible for any one country to solve environmental problems. We may issue statements, adopt resolutions, launch programs, but if people stay out of it, I mean people at the municipal level and even at the level of each residential block, because it is at this level, where waste first accumulates and people have to think: what do we do with it? It all depends on the behavior of individual families. Families rear children. Tomorrow they will become full-fledged citizens; they will elect and make decisions. But family is the starting point, where children should begin to see

the importance of the environment, and get used to the idea of living in a world where environmental problems are in the forefront.

The step that our German friends are taking is valuable as a message going out not only to German citizens, but to all of Europe. This step matters to other countries too. The message is very appropriate: we must carry on efforts to preserve habitats, and we should abandon attempts to replace sustainable development strategy (such attempts were made in the run up to the Johannesburg conference). In some heated discussions on this subject, which I was a part of, I heard a nonsensical suggestion to promote a new motto "Freedom to Trade!" without any consideration as to the consequences to habitats; the key is freedom of trade. There will be no freedom tomorrow, because life itself will be threatened, and it would be absurd to talk about freedom under these circumstances. We have reached a critical point, and I am very concerned about it.

How environmental issues are treated in different countries, notably in Russia, will be discussed later today with our German friends. In Russia there is a certain awareness of environmental issues and a desire to improve the state of the environment and take action regardless of the utterly complicated situation. The scope of problems is overwhelming. Here is another example of a similar initiative. The International Green Cross launched an initiative in Lyons, which has already gathered momentum, to organize a series of Dialogues for the Earth in municipalities, communities, at the national and international levels. Dialogues for the Earth is conceived as a forum to discuss the most burning environmental issues and as a means to encourage ideas and proposals that can give rise to programs aimed at restoring the planet's health. Dialogues for the Earth, launched in Lyons, will take place next year in Barcelona (it will be a big event). Today, respective national organizations in cooperation with governmental authorities are engaged in a dialogue that reaches out to many organizations on a national and regional level. This process is crucial and indispensable.

I would like to restate my positive attitude to something our German friends did. They held a discussion and it was decided to create the Charter of the Earth. At our meeting a year ago, you told me that one hundred thousand copies circulated very quickly, and another hundred thousand were to be published. I do not know whether that has happened or not. It has? That is wonderful! You see, there is an ocean of publications to choose from in Germany, and yet the Germans preferred the Charter of the Earth. A hundred thousand copies were sold very quickly! So, the Charter is frequently consulted by many people.

Knowing this, we added the Charter of the Earth as an attachment to my book, which is coming out in German. I should also mention that the Parliament of Tatarstan (that is in Russia) adopted a program based on the principles laid down in the Charter of the Earth, and problems there are solved with due respect to the environmental aspects. The same has been done in the Russian Republics of the Northern Caucasus, Kyrgyzstan, and Argentina. I believe that Germans are better prepared than others to discuss the principles embodied in the Charter of the Earth, in order to take stock of what is being done nationally and what still needs to be done to meet the Charter's criterion. By the way, this document was presented in Johannesburg and was included in the final document. But my colleagues who attended the event told me that at the very last moment all new elements were left out of the final document. Thus, there was no statement made on the subject of the Charter. This all goes to show how difficult it was to work through the issues. It is very important that we started to move in this direction. A high-profile forum will be held in Italy. It will be dedicated to approaches mapped out in Johannesburg with respect to fresh water. That is why I regard this initiative—the "Green Belt" project—as a significant contribution to raising environmental awareness. Perhaps the most vital need is an understanding of the environmental agenda adequate to meet environmental needs of individual countries and the world. If we can get to this quality of awareness, we can expect the citizenry to act properly. People raise their voices; they do not just go with the flow. This is exactly what is needed to make governments, and especially businesses, move to comply with environmental requirements.

I will make my next point as a person who has been dealing with the unification of Europe and building of the common European house for many years now. I think that this project allows us to cross over borders; it brings people and cultures together, thus extending the dialogue on environmental issues and on European construction to the nations of Europe. The project is important from this point of view — it has a political dimension. The idea is to create a common European economic, legal, and energy space. If we follow this road, we may be sure that a larger, united Europe is a realistic prospect, not just a utopian dream. It will take years to implement these far-reaching intentions, but I think that the Europeans are on the right track. The question arising today and I am sure it will become more urgent in future, is related to the role of Europe in solving a global set of issues. Without European experience, culture, traditions, and democratic approaches we can't really hope to do away with the problems. Only a united Europe may become the central discussion venue, where solutions to the world problems can be found. Our agenda today is also a contribution to building a united Europe.

Dear friends. Let me thank you for your consistency. I have been looking at the map, at the winding rail line stretching from the North to the South, and I kept thinking about the following: these were the islands where fauna developed naturally even during the Cold war years. Are we going to disrupt that? I think our German comrades had a very good idea. Now, under new circumstances, when we have moved away from confrontation and from a potential rift in Europe, we want to be united by a single green network. I am delighted to say that environmental activists are working at the Russian-Finnish border, and are looking into plans to create a greenbelt there. This is great! I am happy to have an opportunity at this conference not only to appreciate the significance of the initiative, but also to review the details and logistics. German colleagues have gathered some experience, they have a definite stance. I wish success to this conference!

# 2.3 Steffen Flath, Ministry for Environment and Agriculture, Saxony, Germany

Dear President Vogtmann, Dear President Gorbachev, Ladies and Gentlemen!

Thank you for the invitation to this international conference. Since I've never had the opportunity to sit next to Mr. Gorbachev before, allow me to make a preliminary remark: Fourteen years ago, in July 1989, I lived at that time in Saxony, and things began to move. I can still remember quite well how the former state leadership of the GDR urgently beseeched Mr. Gorbachev to "send tanks". And Mr. Gorbachev didn't send any tanks. I would like to say that people in Saxony — I think throughout Germany — have never forgotten you for that. I would like to sincerely thank you on their behalf, Sir.

I think, President Vogtmann, that it would be a great idea – and I would like to say that I strongly support this – if Mr. Gorbachev would agree to assume a patronage for this "Green Belt", as it were. I think this would be very helpful for expediting this project on the whole.

When I look back on the events of 10 years ago, I see that this is the year in which Federal Agency Nature Conservation established. In Saxony the air quality was still very poor, like in many countries of East Europe or other parts of this world. The water quality was so bad that hardly a fish was able to live in the Elbe River. And today, after only ten years, Ladies and Gentlemen you can convince yourselves of this: Come to Saxonv. the high water from last year has long since



receded, at present we are suffering from a drought. Just imagine: This morning the Elbe had a water level of only 80 cm. And a year ago it was over nine metres.

At any rate, come to Saxony, and you'll see for yourselves that the air quality has been substantially improved. The water quality in the Elbe has improved so much that today almost as many fish live there as 100 years ago. Even the salmon, and also the Dice Snake have returned to the Elbe. Of course, today I would like to take advantage of the opportunity to sincerely thank the federal government, in particular the Federal Agency for Nature Conservation, for their support throughout the past ten years.

Among other things, you have initiated four large-scale nature conservation projects in these ten years. I would also like to express thanks for this.

Of course, we also feel indebted to the federal agency, since one of the two branch offices is in Leipzig. Large-scale nature conservation projects as well as developmental and trial plans implemented in the past ten years have helped us to achieve a solid, constructive level of cooperation. When I look into the future I am also certain that the guidelines alone of The European Habitat Directive entail enough mutual work for quite a few years, if not for decades. I am convinced that together we will cope quite well with this. And since today I am no longer able to participate in the summer ceremonial address, I would therefore like to heartily congratulate the Federal Agency for Nature Conservation on their ten-year anniversary.

Nature knows no boundaries. This has been a well-utilised guide line for nature conservation efforts and naturally also especially for the Free State of Saxony. After the fall of the wall between the two German states it has been demonstrated that the boundary responsible for indescribable suffering was to the greatest possible extent able to prevent the contact between people. However, it was not a dividing line for the flora and fauna. That's why the idea to develop a living, binding Green Belt in place of the former "line of death" has been thankfully taken up in Saxony. With 41 kilometres we only have a minor portion of the Green Belt. If you look at this displayed map you'll see that far below Saxony has a small section that was actually the former border with the state of Bavaria. In these habitats existing there we have species which are very important for nation-wide and also Saxon nature conservation. Based on the involvement of honorary conservationists on this side and the other side of the former border we were able to place Saxony's entire portion - the 41 kilometres of "Green Belt" - under protection. Of course, this was only possible because authorities, communities, land users and conservationists worked together. Naturally our activities have not stopped with the enactment of the nature conservation status. The stocktaking of the "Green Belt" within the framework of the developmental and trial plans called for by the Federal Agency for Nature Conservation confirms the exceptional quality of projects regarding maintenance and development implemented by local project sponsors in Saxonv.

In order to ensure a necessary balance of interests with the adjacent land utilisation and to expand the biotope association, an initial land reform process is currently being implemented. The areas necessary for this process have been acquired by the locally responsible district. I am happy that quite a few things have been set in motion recently, and I also hope that the federal government has once again signalised that the remaining "Green Belt" areas may possibly be transferred – naturally we would wish this to be free of charge – to our jurisdiction. The national "Green Belt" ends south of the land triangle between Saxony, Bavaria and the Czech Republic. The still-current EU external frontier begins there. Not only does the EU expansion improve the economic and social co-operation in a united Europe, it also provides new opportunities and possibilities for nature conservation.

We are working along these frontiers with our Czech and also with our Polish partners. Of course, Saxony only has a 41 kilometre portion along the "Green Belt". But Saxony has the longest external frontier to the Czech Republic and the Republic of Poland in Germany. I can tell you that we work quite well together. For instance, the protection of the riverine mussel in the land triangle is only possible through joint action with our colleagues from the Czech Republic and Bavaria. Our black grouse population on the peaks of the Erzgebirge ["Ore Mountains"] live in close interchange with the core populations on the Czech side. The resettlement of the Dice Snake in the Elbe supported by the Federal Agency for Nature Conservation would have been impossible without animals from the Elbe catchment basin in the Czech Republic. The resettlement of wolves that migrated from Poland into East Saxony ultimately demonstrated that successful protection and consistent management in the sphere of nature conservation is only possible through transnational action. That's why the Free State of Saxony is currently supporting over 20 transnational nature conservation projects with the Czech Republic and Poland.

Naturally, as far as we are concerned, our "Sächsische-Böhmische Schweiz" national park constitutes a very special highlight of the co-operation. Thanks to the establishment of the "Bohemian Switzerland" national park in 2000 over 10,000 hectares of cross-border area are now protected. We also maintain an intensive co-operation in all environmental matters along the Polish borders, in particular with Polish authorities in Lower Silesia. Together we have accompanied the WWF "Green Belt Oder/Neiße" project promoted by the federal government.

The co-operation I've described – which indeed is finding more increasingly open borders – demonstrates that the idea of "green belts" is nurtured by fertile soil. That's why I am happy about the initiative of the Federal Agency for Nature Conservation to bring this idea (which emerged along the former inner-German border) into the discussion as a European idea. Today's conference will surely also provide many technical suggestions.

However, yet another experience garnered from our own work is important to me: We require an intensive communication as well as the contact with individuals beyond borders. Only in this manner will the still-existing prejudices be dismantled in a future united Europe. The common discussion and preparation of projects benefits our nature conservation efforts in the long run. If it intends to be successful in densely populated Europe nature conservation necessitates the consent and the goodwill of the inhabitants. The idea of a Europe-wide "Green Belt" will only be able to be realised if it is shared by all of those concerned. In this sense I would like to wish this event the best of luck. Moreover, I would also like to wish this conference lots of success and God's blessing. Thank you.

# 2.4 International Cooperation along the Green Belt of Fennoscandia I

Irina Osokina, Ministry of Natural Resources, Russian Federation

Ladies and Gentlemen.

First of all let me on behalf of the Russian delegation extend our thanks to the Federal Agency for Environmental Protection and personally to Mr. Vogtmann for the invitation to participate in the events marking the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Federal Agency and the deliberations of the international conference dedicated to the prospects of setting up Green Belt in Europe.

I am delighted to speak on behalf of the Russian delegation and to share with you in particular what we in the Ministry of the Natural Resources think about the prospective Green Belt in Europe, and what is being done in natural reserves and with regard to the specially



protected transboundary areas. Mikhail Sergueevich Gorbachov managed in his broadly framed introduction to touch upon a number of political and environmental issues.

Before I move on to make my statement, let me say a few words. The outcome of the Johannesburg meeting demonstrated that not everything has been accomplished in the decade since 1992. Not just because we did not bring it to the end, but also because the situation

has been developing in an extremely fast and unpredictable manner, so that back in 1992 it was impossible to foresee what the interstate relations would be and how the world would look like in ten years.

As a matter of fact, discussion was really difficult in Johannesburg. Regretfully, in spite of the Russian Federation's concerted efforts, the final document did not include the Charter of the Earth. However, I think we can work to rectify this and to make signing the Charter possible during this visit. My country attaches a great environmental importance to this document.

As you may probably know, Russian State Council held a special session, which was addressed by the President, who said that environmental protection is a task for all Russian citizens: it does not only top the agenda, it has reached the highest political and economic level.

Russian Ministry of the Natural resources and the Federal Agency have a long record of successful cooperation in the framework of the intergovernmental agreement signed in May of 1992. Over the preceding period of time the Federal Agency has been directly involved in a number of interesting and successful projects covering landscape development, nature preservation around the lake Baikal, environmental tourism, keeping commitments contained in the international Conventions, and outreach programs.

Here is what I would like to bring to your attention.

The way you in Germany work with the population at large, with the independent and non-governmental organizations is exemplary and not to be found anywhere else in Europe. Your experience is of great value to us. Our delegates are delighted to have the opportunity to get to know you, to study your experience, and the channels your NGOs have to influence decision-making at the federal and state levels. Undoubtedly, Agency's new initiatives looking into the feasibility of the European Green Belt deserve highest appreciation and attention.

Speakers before me said that the Environment does not follow man-drawn borders. In order to preserve biological and landscape diversity in the territories, which are nonetheless cut across by the state borders, we need to foster our good neighborly relations, not just through well-intentioned speeches at the international conferences, but through practical, joint, mutually beneficial projects both at the bilateral and global level.

As you know Russia stretches on two continents Europe and Asia, and our record in the area of natural reserves management has gained worldwide recognition. Russia disposes of vast territories untouched by the industrial development and strives to support sustainability of the global environmental system.

At present there are about one hundred interstate transboundary areas under special environmental protection. Experts believe that there are opportunities to set up many more.

It takes more that just two or more adjacent reserves to make an interstate entity. Interstate reserve is established when cooperation mechanisms are put into effect. While discussing the Green Belt, we should contemplate what these mechanisms should be. Finding an answer to this question at the conference will be ensuring the success of the European Green Belt project.

International experience shows that some requirement have to be fulfilled before the cooperation can take place. Let me draw your attention to those, which in our view are defining for the project, and without which we won't proceed from discussing the intentions onto discussing the outcome.

One of such preconditions is international cooperation covering areas with a special protection status, which is organized not only top-down, but also starts at the grass-root level. NGOs, disseminating popular ideas, are indispensable in the bottom-to-the-top build up. The cooperation should be driven by the political will of the leadership. The cooperation has the brightest prospects, when both sides are working on parity opportunities in terms of environmental protective measures, acreage, and timing of actions in their reserves. I especially stress the parity opportunities.

Cooperation in this area should be oriented to certain goals. Only this approach can bring tangible results. I think that at this conference we can formulate the particular goal of setting up the European Green Belt.

The key component of such cooperation should be, in the first place, interaction of the professionals. Therefore transboundary areas under special protection should extend the protection not only to the natural environment, but also to our nations, mentality, outlook, growth not limited to the environment, but including politics, economy, and lifestyle. For me it sums up the underlying principles of sustainable development.

There are a variety of area-specific forms of environmental protection in the Russian Federation. As I said, we have over a hundred specially protected territories, many of which are transboundary. I am not going to bore you with details. For those interested we have a

complete inventory also indicating the future of the reserves. You are welcome to familiarize yourselves with it during the break.

I will point out some of the most crucial steps to help us turn our transboundary natural reserves into real national parks. First of all, we should organize joint research, among other forms, in the form of field studies on both sides of the border and on both sides along the European Green Belt. To make the project more effective we should carry out joint environmental biota monitoring, including joint keeping of a registry of migrating species. Jointly published articles and team research studies can make an important contribution. Organizing seminars and conferences on selected topics can help us, on the one hand, keep track of the status of the projects, on the other hand, present an opportunity to make adjustments for possible mistakes and drawbacks.

Naturally, launching of joint programs in the area of environmental tourism and education is not to be overlooked. Today at the meeting with the NGOs at breakfast, mentioned by Mr. Vogtmann, I said that environmental education and training should be made available not only to the population at large. It should be targeted at businesses and aimed at stressing their accountability for the environmental situation in the Russian part of the transboundary areas.

Participation of such NGOs as the Green Cross may considerably improve the efficiency. In its turn the Ministry of the Natural Resources is supportive of the environmental initiatives of the Green Cross and the idea of establishing the Green Belt. We also cooperate with the WWF on a new project concerning keeping up the legacy of the Barents Sea related to the management for the benefit of the future generations. Very soon we are going to make a project presentation for you.

My dear colleagues, what is to be specially underlined, is the importance of the consistent implementation of the commitments undertaken at the Johannesburg World Summit in 2002. Political and environmental issues must be addressed at the global level – this is the crux of the sustainability of any nation.

Thank you.

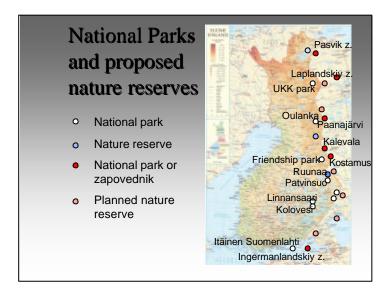
# 2.5 International Cooperation along the Green Belt of Fennoscandia II

### Tapio Lindholm, Finnisch Environmental Institute, Finland

Together with Timo Hokkanen I'm giving a presentation of international co-operation along the Fennoscandian Green Belt (Finland-Russia) from the Finnish point of view. Our presentation consists in the present analyses of the orientation of National Parks and other reserves along the boundary between Finland and Russia, gives an answer to the question how the old-growth forest areas are involved and as a case study we will look at the North Karelian Biosphere Reserve and its role of the Fennoscandian Green Belt as an aspect of cross border co-operation and have a look into the future.

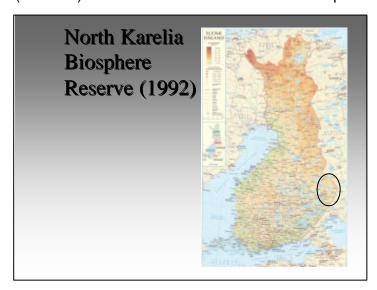
The name of this cluster is Green Belt of Fennoscandia and the Components of the cluster are: the nature reserves on both sides along the Finnish – Russian border from Finnish Bay to Barents Sea. In north then Norway can participate to this project.

Thus that is a unique corridor of old Scots Pine forests through the boreal zone, from hemiboreal to subarctic subzones in so north latitudes that most places in northern hemisphere in these latitudes exist mainly arctic permafrost ecosystems. Also thus the light conditions differ in FGB on the other parts of boreal zone having light night in summer and in northern part of the belt a long period of sun in nighttime in summer and in vice versa time without any sun in wintertime.



When looking at the Green Belt between Finland and Russia we recognize that there is a long boundary from North to South. And I would like to say that it is more a chain of pearls than a belt (see slide). There is a big nature reserves on both sides of the boundary, a part of them is old and has existed for a long time already, while the other part is still in the discussion and planning phase. When we start from the North, close to the Barents Sea, there is Pasvik zapovednik on the Russian side and Vätsäri Wilderness area at the Finnish side, which is part of

the Finnish wilderness area network in Northern Lapland. And as a third element in this cooperation: we have Norway because they have the Øvre Pasvik Nature Reserve on the Norwegian side, and these three countries are having co-operation. A little bit further south, there is ion the Finnish side the Urho Kekkonen National Park (our former President), which is a large northern boreal forest area. And at the Kola Peninsula there is the Lapland zapovednik and biosphere reserve and between them there is the Laplandsky Les area. And we are discussing and developing some connections between these two big nature reserves. In addition there is planned Khibiny mountain reserve area. South of the park there is the Kutsa Nature Reserve (zakaznik) on Russian In former times it was a part of the Finnish territory and it was then



strict nature reserve of Kutsa now there is the plan to clarify its status as a new nature reserve. The forests are not in natural condition after cuttings, but there is a good canyon with river and rapids, and there are a lot of relict plants and animal species around this area.

And south of that there is the Oulanka National Park on the Finnish side established in 1956 (a very interesting historical year in Europe); we created also some other new nature reserves and Paanajärvi National Park (established in 1991) on the

Russian side, which is also former Finnish territory and thus the toponymic names are in Finnish.

And further down in Russian side there is soon coming Kalevala National Park, which belongs to the Russian Federation developing programme List of areas (National Parks or zapovedniks), which will be established in the following ten years. The government of Karelian republic has already accepted Kalevala National Park. On Finnish side there is the Hossa hiking area and it is connected to that with a number smaller old growth forest area and there is plan on the Finnish side to have a Finnish Kalevala Park. It has been proposed to establish that also in National Park status, but the discussion is still open.

Further south of that is the Kostamus zapovednik and on Finnish side the Friendship Park established 11 years ago. In the late eighties started the discussion the need to establish nature reserves both side in that area because of the wild forest reindeers.

And as Mrs. vice-minister I. Osokina pointed out that it is very important to have scientific research in those nature reserves. These pair of nature reserves is a good example in that. One of the main tasks of them is scientific work and co-operation. We have some years ago published a book (1) based on inventories and research of the parks, and in the year of 2003 we have published the next book(2).

In Finnish North Karelia there is the Ruunaa nature reserve and the Ruunaa hiking area together with a proposed Tuulijärvi nature reserve in Russian side.

Also In North Karelia there is the Patvinsuo National Park with nice mires. Finnish side there is a small Petkeljärvi National Park and proposed Koitajoki – Tolvajärvi nature reserve areas on Russian side, all of them can be a part of a possible biosphere reserve.

In Ladoga there have been a plan to establish Sortavala archipelago and a coastal nature reserve. In Finnish side we have two national parks: Linnansaari and Kolovesi. In Ladoga lives lake seal and in Saimaa Lake in Finland lives also lake seal, both relicts and different subspecies.

In Leningrad oblast, we have according our co-operation Karelsky (Karelian) Les nature reserve and in the Finnish bay there is in Finnish existing the eastern Gulf of Finland national park and then in Russian side there is a plan of Ingermanlandsky zapovednik on the Russian side and it is also in the Federal List of developing programme of protected areas.

This all has been in the heart of the co-operation of Finnish-Russian nature conservation which started in 1985 as an agreement with the former Soviet Union and which has been resigned with Russia later. Between Finland and Russia there is also Finnish-Russian program on sustainable forest management and conservation of biodiversity in northwest Russia. We co-operate in nature conservation with the Murmansk area. the Karelian Republic, the Leningrad area, the town St. Petersburg, Archangelsk area and Vologda area. We have recently published a brochure on these activities.

# Old growth forests

- state forests in northern and eastern Finland
- -ecological need of protection
- debate about social and economic aspects of protection



In Northern and Eastern Finland the majority of the forest area is state forest, while in the south of Finland only a small part is state forest. The old growth forest inventory in Finland showed that most old-growth areas are located in north-eastern Finland and those which are located close to boundary can give a good basis to develop the green belt concept there as minor pearls of the chain.

But the question, what kind can the green belt is in Finnish side is still open. Would it be purely chain of different small or greater nature reserves or would it be a zone with a mixture ecological sustainable land use and nature reserves

- Lindholm, T., Heikkilä, R. & Heikkilä, M. (eds.) 1997: Ecosystems, fauna and flora of the Finnish-Russian Nature Reserve Friendship. Suomen Ympäristö 124: 1-364.
- Heikkilä, R. and Lindholm, R. (eds.) 2003: Biodiversity and conservation of boreal nature. Proceedings of the 10 years anniversary symposium of the Nature Reserve Friendship. Suomen Ympäristö 485. 1 325.

# 2.6 International Cooperation along the Green Belt of Fennoscandia II

### Timo Hokkanen, North Karelian Biosphere Reserve, Finland

Dear president, ladies and gentlemen.

I wish to express our cordial thanks to the organisers for making this meeting happen. We have now worked with the Russians about ten years developing the concept of Green Belt of Fennoscandia. It's a pleasure to share views and experiences.

Our concept of the Green Belt includes protected areas and the adjacent societies. There very often exists friction between societies and conservation. My presentation is about how to avoid this friction, how to work with the local people when creating the Green Belt.

# Green Belt of Fennoscandia: Cross-Border Co-operation western margin of East Eurasian Taiga valuable nature different forest use regimes BR principles: local societies involved GREEN BELT

UNESCO's MAB programme (Man and the Biosphere) is the tool we been using. Biosphere reserves are a worldwide network of model areas for sustainable development, at present consisting of more than 400 areas in almost 100 countries. Involvement of local people is one of the cornerstones of biosphere reserve activities. Biosphere reserves also need to be integrated into the regional planning. Biosphere reserves are nature reserves in the traditional sense, but they are planning, testing and monitoring units integrating man and nature.

North Karelian Biosphere Reserve is situated in the easternmost corner of Finland. It covers several municipalities, and at present the area is about 350.000 hectares. We work with the municipalities, with the local people. There also is a need to extend the work across the border, because we are situated at the eastern border of the European Union. Biosphere reserves are supported to participate in the international activities and the European Union also requires cross-border activities in environmental issues. Nature does not recognise borders. For instance the water catchment areas are extended on both sides of the border.

We started to discuss about the Green Belt of Fennoscandia in 1993. A chain of many nature reserves along the border is the core of the Green belt, but the concept of joint environmental policy at the border area has been equally important.

How to create a belt, not only a string of pearls? The biosphere reserve principles were introduced to the concept to involve local societies. So, if we have valuable nature, local people need to understand that the nature is valuable, and worth of protecting. Protection must, however, not destroy the local identity nor the local (traditional) livelihoods.

Whether it is a question of development or protection, we have to remember the local people and they have to accept the activities. We started our international co-operation with Suojärvi District (Republic of Karelia, Russian Federation), on opposite side of the border from us. A fraction of common history was one of the main things to start with, also river Koitajoki flows from Russia to Finland in the area. A border checkpoint nearby makes cross-border cooperation a bit easier.

European Union border area funding was used to promote various local activities. We created a GIS system for the whole district, created environmental education packages and participated in road construction. Nature tourism structures were built, equipment bought and new connections between actors created. All these activities also served nature protection and local people could see that nature protection has concrete benefits for them. If I have better roads to go for fishing, why not supporting the activities getting me better roads.

# Seville Strategy 1995: Sustainable development

- Involvement of local people and supporting them
  - local traditions, practicies & techniques promoted
  - ♦ local interests taken into account
  - benefits shared equitably
- Integration of Biosphere Reserves into regional planning

Mujejärvi District (Republic Karelia, Russian Federation) a bit further north is another example of the co-operation. The background is somewhat similar - there is some common history, there is a water route from Russia to Finland and a tradition of log trade. The same type of project as in Suojärvi was created and the development was again linked with nature protection. Nature resources need to be used more carefully and sustainably in the infrastructure will be created and local people will see it. A model area for sustainable tourism is a practical goal for the co-operation.

At present it is very time consuming to reach the target area at Mujejärvi District. It takes one day from Finnish side to the model area by crossing the border at the nearest international border checkpoint. But using the shortcut to the model area via a temporary checkpoint would be only one hour. The checkpoint is there, the roads are good but the checkpoint can be used only for transport of timber. All kinds of practical things and hindrances (as border crossing) have to be taken into account, and if we can overcome these obstacles, it will benefit as well the local people as nature protection. The grand goal is to offer alternatives (for instance tourism) for the economy now basing on timber harvesting only. Without alternatives there is no realistic possibilities to protect nature. However, what we will do has to be based on science.

From the Finnish point of view the emphasis is clearly on the development of the border area between European Union and Russia, not only playing with the border of Finland – Russia. The concept of biosphere reserves and biosphere reserve mode of actions has been adopted into this co-operation. Using the principles of combining nature protection and development activities, the money flow from development funds can be directed to nature protection and sustainable use of nature, too. Development funds are vastly greater than nature protection funds.

One goal for the future will be an International Karelian Biosphere Reserve. It might be realised or not, but we will work on it and the local people accept the concept. Another vision for future is to adopt the model of international biosphere reserves along the Finnish – Russian border. The goal is still somewhere in the future, but this meeting is a good example of gathering together an international collaboration group for promoting and developing the Green Belt activities.

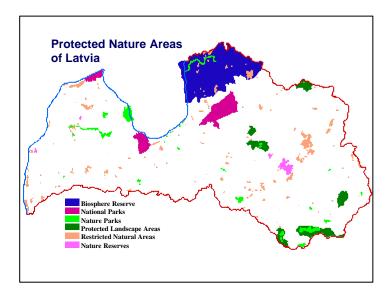
In summary my message is that we need to improve the local people' life to facilitate nature management and protection. And the concept of biosphere reserves is a useful tool for this work. Thank you!

# 2.7 Experience of Latvia in Management of Transboundary Protected Areas

Andris Viesturs Urtans, Northern Vidzeme Biosphere Reserve, Latvia

Geehrte Damen und Herren, Ladies and Gentlemen, Colleagues.

Thank you for the invitation to present what happens on the border between Estonia and Latvia. To have imagination about Latvia, looking to the luxury illuminated Europe from the birds-view, Latvia seems embedded somewhere between Barents Sea and this luxury illuminated central part of Europe. And maybe now we can see that Latvia is still not illuminated and maybe it is even our advantage in this moment to develop a more sustainable way and not to make those mistakes, which are done in other parts of Europe.



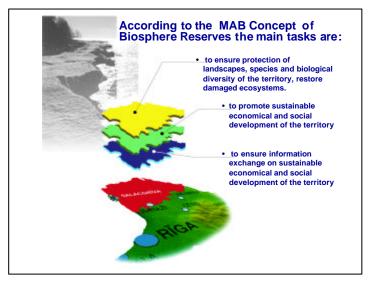
Now when we are looking at the EECONET network of Latvia, we can see that in fact the border areas contain values and you can see it from this network of valuable habitats which are in many cases located along the borders. Looking at the protected nature areas of Latvia, one can see that some of them are located definitely next to the border. And I am representing one of such areas in blue coloured north-western tip of Latvia.

As Timo Hokkanen has pointed out before, it is very important to say that in praxis biosphere reserves

can be a very suitable tool for the development of a Green Belt., In our case the biosphere reserve is based around the River Salaca. And if we are looking at the border with Estonia, you can see that according to the location of the biosphere reserve, only about one third of the border area is not designated as highly valuable or as priority.

I will skip the main principles of biosphere reserves. In the same time I must point that they fit quite well into the concept of Green Belt.

Borders, at least in Baltic region, are natural barriers between nations, like raised bogs, river valleys, or forest massifs. On this photo of the border area between Latvia and Estonia, you can see that this blue colour shows raised bogs, and the brownish colour forest massifs. And it is the question: where is the border? Now you can see that in reality in many cases borders are made by men, and they are an expression of ambitions of men and they are not taking into account the wholeness of the existing ecosystems which in border areas in many cases are of very high uniqueness. This is just a picture of this area and of the protected values on the Estonian side on the left and on the Latvian side on the right. The whole border area is used as a buffer area for the biosphere reserve. When looking at these values, one must mention animals or birds who are crossing the borders without passports everyday. In the same time we must look at one very important population which is very sparse in this area named as local people. It definitely depends on this population, whether in future this area will be managed in a sustainable way, or if there will be additional threats.



I agree with my colleague from Finland, that people are the difficult moments in co-operation and at the same I must say, that this is the case for administrators or managers of protected areas, too. I am very proud to report about number of projects trying to twin the local communities using nature as main attraction. We had a project which invited and involved nine municipalities on both sides of the border. And nature was one of the main corner-stones of this cooperation. Such approach was very challenging, because in reality this mutual understanding and

twinning is a very slow process, and only step by step we are achieving the understanding of environment as a value and not only as a raw resource. We were quite satisfied from the results of our first project and now we are developing together with Estonia another project to develop management plans for this transboundary wetland area. And I must say, that it is very important to develop such management plans, make them understandable and suitable for local people and involve all stake-holders.

And only in such case, management of this internationally valuable ecosystem which is a Ramsar site on the Estonian side, and as such announced on Latvian side in 2002, will become success. This co-operation is very important for the development of the Natura

2000 network, because our accession time to EU is quite near, we hope.

At the same time, nature protection on this border area means for us diversification of rural employment, because in those marginal areas, people must see nature and nature protection as a possibility rather than a threat. One additional, very crucial point is that to achieve sustainable development of this area, one of the main points is to make local people stand on your side, which means development of educational programs and networks for local people. And

### **Rationale for Further Joint Activities:**

- Mutual raise of transborder cooperation capacity
- Joint management of Internationally valuable ecosystems
- Development of NATURA 2000 Network
- · Diversification of rural employment
- Educational programmes and networks for local inhabitants
- Development of sustainable tourism scheme

then, based on those local people, development of a sustainable tourism scheme is possible. This is the way we are looking at those things: Keeping the balance between local people on one side, and nature on the other side. And this is the logo of our biosphere reserve meaning clear waters embedded in green forests and blessed by the sun.

It is very crucial moment now for local people to understand this. I think that in reality this initiative (Green Belt) is very useful and it is starting just in time and I think that it is a new possibility in those marginal border areas, both for people and nature.

# 2.8 Transboundary Cooperation in Field of PA Establishment and Management

Ruta Baskyte, State Service for Protected Areas, Lithuania

Dear organisers and participants of the conference.

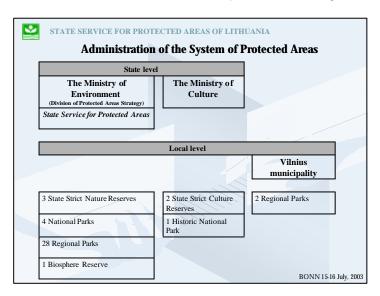
It is very nice to meet you in this international conference. I would like to introduce to you

briefly the system of protected areas of Lithuania, to talk a little bit about internationally important protected areas and to speak about transboundary cooperation management and establishment of protected areas. In Lithuania, the system of protected areas is a kind of integrated one and we wish to protect not only natural but as well cultural values, landscape and biological diversity. landscape stability and natural resources. And the system of protected areas creates for us the possibilities for development of cognitive tourism or eco-tourism, scientific research and



monitoring, promotion of the protection of natural and cultural heritage. As we see, the protected areas of Lithuania are established not only to protect the most valuable areas, but to preserve water bodies from pollution, with the establishment of a kind of protective zones to restore natural resources such like forest resources, wetland resources, lakes and others. The most valuable areas for us are protected as strict nature reserves or strict culture reserves, national and regional parks, biosphere reserves, as well as reserves on State level and Municipal level.

The system of protected areas now covers 12% of the area of Lithuania. You can see the network of protected areas and we are lucky that protected areas spread all over Lithuania and are not located only in one place. Which are the ideas of "Nature Frame"? Nature Frame is a similar idea or similar concept as the ecological network (ECONET, Netherlands), but it

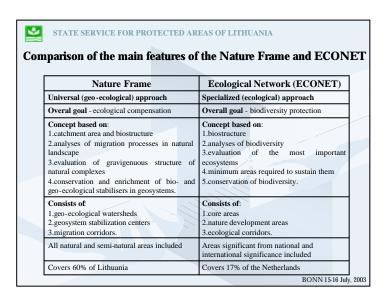


is not the same one. Nature Frame has a broader sense. Concept of Nature Frame is based on a catchment area and biostructure following an exceptionally universal approach. Of course Nature Frame combines all protected areas, as well other areas which as guarantee general stability landscape in a joint landscape system or geo-ecological compensation zones. And with regard to unprotected areas, the Nature Frame's aim is not only to develop a complete system for natural ecological compensation, but also to ensure connections between protected areas

conservation of natural landscape, biodiversity and natural agricultural resources. There area some similarities or differences between Nature Frame and the ecological network. We can

see that nature frame has a more universal approach than the ecological network, which is more orientated to biodiversity protection. We work on watershed level. The ecological network could be a part of Nature Frame and we made the efforts to merge these two concepts into one in Lithuania.

A little bit about the administration of the system of protected areas: At the State level we have two ministries responsible for the establishment and the management of protected areas. There is the Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Culture. In the Ministry of Environment we have the Division of Protected Areas Strategy and we have the State



Service for Protected Areas under the ministry, which is the main institution co-ordinating the activities protected areas. preparing different programs transboundary includina operation in concrete protected areas. At local level we have the municipalities involved in the management and establishment of protected areas.

We have thirty Regional Parks, five National Parks, three State Strict Nature Reserves and one Biosphere Reserve. And these protected areas have their own administrations. Most of them belong to the State Service of

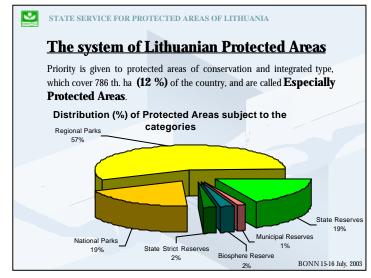
Protected Areas, but the Ministry of Culture is responsible for the management of three very important culturally protected areas in Lithuania. These are Trakai historic national park, Kernave and Vilnius castles culture reserves.

We have some internationally important protected areas. There are few protected areas, which are in the List of the World Heritage or proposed to be included in this list: the old city area of Vilnius was inscribed in this list in 1994, and Curonian Spit National Park, which is the most valuable protected area in Lithuania, was included in the year 2000. We have two more protected areas valuable from cultural aspect: Kernave Strict Cultural Reserve and Trakai Historic National Park, which we would like to be included in the list.

We have some Ramsar protected areas in Lithuania and most of them are strict nature reserves. And there is the Nemunas Delta Regional Park. Five potential Ramsar sites exist in

Lithuania and one of them, the Cepkeliai Strict Nature Reserve (the Kotra Strict Reserve in Byelorussia) might be transboundary protected Ramsar area.

Lithuania is a part of the Baltic countries, which signed and ratified conventions and according these documents on protected areas, some internationally important protected areas exist at the Baltic Seacoast. On the map which shows the internationally important protected areas you can see the Curonian Spit National Park at the Baltic Sea as one of the most valuable protected areas and it is



protected together with Russian Federation.

As other countries, Lithuania works a lot on development of their system of Natura 2000. We have started the process of planning, making borders for these Natura 2000 areas, and

some ninety areas are proposed under the EU Bird Directive and nearly three hundred areas are proposed on the habitats directive. Not all of those areas will be new protected areas. Some of them will consist in the same existing protected areas with an additional status, and with additional requirements. But of course we will have some maybe two or three percent newly established protected areas.

When we talk about transboundary co-operation, we can see that we have in our mind two aspects: General activities and some concrete activities in concrete transboundary areas. When we talk about general activities, we see and we work in general or in general policy making, signing or ratifying different international conventions and of course not only ratifying, but implementing the requirements of those conventions. When we talk about international co-operation it is not less valuable to have some bilateral agreements, international agreements with different States or with different institutions of the State.

And when we talk about establishment or management of the system of protected areas, we see that some inter-governmental agreements are very important for the protection of landscape or biological diversity values. And we are happy to have governmental agreements with Sweden, with Estonia and Latvia, with Belgium, Flanders and with the Russian Federation. More or less important are inter-ministerial agreements, which are in some cases more concrete and more helpful for the management of different activities in nature protection field. And here you can see that agreements with Denmark, Finland, Poland, Germany, Byelorussia and Latvia were signed until this year.

As I mentioned we have a lot of protected areas and here you can see the thirty protected areas in different categories are located at the Lithuanian borders. Ten of the protected areas are located at the boundary with Latvia, thirteen with Byelorussia, two with Poland and five at the boundary of the Russian Federation.

We are happy that we have started our experience in transboundary co-operation in the most valuable protected area in Curonian Spit-Kurskaja kosa National Park, which is, as I mentioned before, part of the World Heritage. The other sites are located at the border, but they do not have the status of transboundary protected areas. And a lot of work was done with Byelorussia concerning the establishment of new protected areas in the southern part of Lithuania, some activities were made with Poland and with the Russian Federation concerning the establishment of the Vištytis Regional Park, the Rominta Forest and other ones. There is the scheme in which you can see the main protected areas located at the boundaries to different States.

I would like to talk a little bit more about the co-operation in the management of Curonian Spit. Here you can see the list of actions and the beginning of co-operation was started in 1997, when the documentation for the World Heritage Institutions was under preparation. There were a lot of activities done, a lot of documentation materials were prepared and the contexts were made in a very good sense.

Now we have a administration in the Russian Federation part of this very valuable protected area and in Lithuanian, so co-operation agreements between two administrations were signed. They prepared very concrete action plans and started the implementation of these actions. Further projects were prepared with the aim to have common monitoring programs, common information system for the Curonian Spit and again concrete activities were initialised to manage this area in the most suitable way. There is the location of this transboundary protected are. Of course, when you start co-operation, when you start some concrete activities, you have some problems as well, or some problems exist in reality. When we take this case, we have visa regime, we have some differences in social life, which again cause some problems.

There is a lack of general scientific research and monitoring programs. We find a lot of very valuable data about the status of this area, about the development of dunes, coastal lines and others, but there is no common data and again when we think about the future cooperation, we need to think how to solve this problem. We have two different States, we have two different legal authoritarian planning bases and the development of information systems is also different.

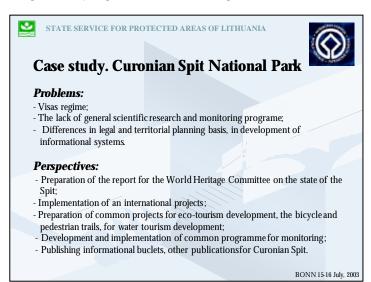
And I would like to mention one more very urgent and very high problem: There is the wish to start the extraction of oil in the Baltic Sea and this area is very close to the Curonian Spit. So the danger for the most valuable area occurred.

According to the requirements of the World Heritage Convention, some general report on the status of this very valuable area might be prepared. And we think that during the preparation of this document, a lot of problems will be solved, or maybe some new ones will be raised. I've mentioned some international projects, which had started last year and all of these projects might be finally implemented in the best way and we think that new common projects particularly for development of ecological tourism might be developed. There are very good possibilities for the development of bicycle tourism, for the establishment of pedestrian trails and there are very good traditions. A lot of new activities might be started. During the morning session a lot of ideas were raised how to involve local communities in the management of protected areas or other valuable areas.

In the Curonian Spit we have not only discussions but we have very good wishes from municipalities to be involved in management of this very valuable area and we think that particularly in development of tourism activities the local communities will be much more active as they have their own interests.

As I already mentioned, now there is no general program for monitoring of the status of this

area. Therefore we think that in the near future this program will be not only prepared but implemented. And again if you would like to have the common information about this naturally common area, universal area, you will not find, or you found only very few information, very few booklets or other publications. So we would like to have a very good information system for visitors and this system not only information about the most valuable natural or cultural values, but will present the information about possibilities to stay in this area for one or two nights.



We are talking about very unique areas and about very fragile areas and the limits for the creation of activities are quite urgent. So we hope that we will progress in transboundary cooperation, and together with the Russian Federation, with two different administrations of the National Parks, we will solve all these problems and that it will be possible for everybody to come and to enjoy a stay in this area. Thank you very much.

# 2.9 Transboundary Protected Areas in the Eastern Border Region of Poland – the Concept and Implementation Zygmund Kzreminski, Ministry of the Environment, Poland

Thank you Mr. Chairman.

As the introduction, I would like to briefly summarise the Polish-German transboundary cooperation so far. First, I would like to thank you very much for sending the invitation to the Polish Minister of Environment to attend the international and national conference "Perspectives of the Green Belt" organised on the occasion of the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the German Federal Agency for Nature Conversation.

I would like to congratulate the Agency on the organisation of the conference and on the achievements in nature conservation, particularly on the achievements on the international scale, and finally on the achievements of the agency in bilateral co-operation and your activities for promoting various projects and supporting participation of our representatives in



seminars and trainings. This is a very serious contribution to the European collaboration in nature conversation especially in the period of transformation in Central Europe and in accession of Central European countries to the EU.

As to the very important subject of transboundary cooperation, I would like to mention that Poland has already signed bilateral agreements with all its neighbours to cover the problems of environmental protection includina

conservation. The procedure and structure for our co-operation with Germany has a solid foundation. On this agreement the Polish-German Council for Environmental protection has appointed, a Polish-German group of nature conservation was appointed too, and Polish-German program council for the lower Odra (Oder) Valley International Park was established.

A concrete result of our mutual work was the publication of the Polish-German Manual for Nature Conservation. The manual gives bilingual information on the history, organisation, management and implementation of nature conservation goals in both countries. It also contains verbal and cartographic illustrations of Polish-German transboundary protected areas. It also lists NGOs engaged in the transboundary nature conservation, financial sources and information on education and research done in Poland and Germany. This manual has met a very positive response in the Ministries of the Environment in both countries and also in the regional and local public administration on both sides of the border.

The other very important and comprehensive project was the "Green Belt Odra-Nysa". As a result two landscape parks were established on the Polish side, that is the "Warta Mouth", later upgraded to be a national park (National Park of Warta Mouth"), and the Krzesinski Landscape Park. These activities have contributed a considerable improvement of one of the most important green corridors in Europe. In the Polish-German border there is a lot of

common initiatives such as the recent publication of an international atlas of Odra (Oder) flood-plain zone. The conference on the Odra River as European Ecological Corridor was recently held, and, in addition, areas of Natura 2000 in the Oder River Valley were designated. The publication on saving the Odra (Oder) River meanders was issued in 2003. In the preparation and implementation of the mentioned initiatives the leading work is being done by NGOs from both sides of the border.

With this introduction and the information of the status of the Polish German co-operation on nature conservation, I would like to thank very much for the constructive partnership. I would also like to support and endorse the goals of this conference and ensuing projects. We are also open to carry on the joint co-operation in the sphere of Green Belt activities.

# 2.10 The concept of transboundary protected area system in the eastern Border refion of Poland

Grzegorz Rakowski, Jadwiga Sienkiewicz; Institute of Environmental Protection, Poland

### INTRODUCTION

Since the end of World War II, the areas adjacent to the Polish eastern border, the so-called 'Eastern Wall', have been marked by very few economic activities, as well as a low and ever decreasing population density due to its distance from economic centres and practical lack (till 1991) of transboundary contacts, trade and traffic. On the 1300 km long border between Poland and the former Soviet Union, there were only three official road/railway border



crossing points. Tourism did not develop due to very harsh legal regulations concerning traffic and visits in the border areas. These conditions. lasting for over 45 years, have had a negative impact on local economy. However, the lack of industrial activity, tourism and dense population has actually helped to preserve local valuable nature and landscape. Similarly on the other side of the border where there have been stricter border zone regulations. Moreover. another

consequence of World War II, was that the newly established borders split apart many valuable natural complexes, i.e. wetlands, river valleys, forest complexes and mountain ranges.

Presently these natural values of the border regions are endangered. The change of the political situation after breakdown of the Soviet Union in 1991, opening the Polish eastern border and establishing political and economic contacts with Russia, Lithuania, Byelarus and Ukraine caused a quick and massive development of traffic of people and goods through new-created border crossing points. In many forgotten and used to be sleepy borderland settlements, new economic development has now taken place. This development often puts the local environment in danger. Also, the construction of new international routes is planned a part of which is going to cut through valuable natural landscape complexes. Sometimes, the areas that are protected on one side of the border have been intensively used for timber, industry, hunting on the other. Fortunately, in spite of their great value, most of the areas of the eastern borderland are still unknown and rarely visited by tourists. As such, they are worth of popularisation among nature-lovers. However, with the liberalisation of the border zone regulations, some of the most attractive areas will become targets of an uncontrolled tourist traffic which is growing every year.

This special kind of 'borderland preserve,' created right in the core centre of Europe, thanks to our history, has been ruled by laws of the nature for the last half a century. Several parts of this 'preserve' encompass a unique value, not only in the scale of Poland and the neighbouring countries, but also in the European scale. Even though many of these areas are already protected as national parks, landscape parks or nature preserves, some of them have still not been given any legal protection which is so important in the context of the growing threats. Thus the chance cannot be wasted and the successful protection for the

natural environment of the borderland can only be achieved by close cooperation between Poland and its eastern neighbours, and by implementation of the transboundary forms of nature conservation.

These premises became the basis for the concept of a system of TPAsin the eastern border region of Poland. The initial concept was elaborated by the Institute of Environmental Protection in Warsaw, in 1992. The work on the concept was then carried out in the Institute at the commission of the Polish Ministry of Environmental Protection Natural Resources and Forestry in 1993-1998. As a result, the cooperation was set out with the local environmental services, research institutes and partners abroad. The results were presented and discussed during several international and domestic scientific conferences and in publications. Hereby the concept is presented in a modified and updated form.

The main aim of the concept is to create a system of TPAsalong the Polish eastern border. The system would provide a complex protection for the most valuable border areas. If will also enable a junction of systems of protected and ecologically valuable areas in Poland and in the neighbouring countries. Thus, TPAscan fulfil the function of ecological corridors in a macro-scale. The role of such corridors is very important in context of the recent programs concerning the creation of various kinds of pan-European ecological networks.

The extraordinary nature, landscape, and also cultural and historical values of these used to be 'forbidden areas' can become a basis for development of a sustainable tourism, which, in the future, should become the main form of economic activity in the region. Development of sustainable tourism could become a chance for improvement of the economic situation of the border regions and their inhabitants, without creating threats to the natural environment.

The TPAs(TPAs) should be, therefore, the areas of close transboundary cooperation by local governments and environmental services of the neighbouring countries. This cooperation should focus on nature conservation, promoting nature-friendly forms of tourism and management according to the rules of sustainable development.

While working on the concept of TPAs, ecological, landscape and cultural values of the 50 km wide belt on both sides of the Polish eastern border were analysed. On the basis of this analysis, eight of the most valuable regions qualifying for an international protection as TPAswere selected. Also, proposals for their status and management were developed. Subsequently, all TPAs were evaluated, and the concept for their integrated protection and development of their tourist functions was worked out.

We can observe with satisfaction some positive changes that took place within the Polish eastern borderlands since the time the initial concept of TPAs has been developed by Institute of Environmental Protection. The contacts of the local environmental services, local governments and scientists with partners across the border were established in some regions (in some cases with our cooperation, i.e. during our field research, as well as during meetings, seminars and conferences we organised). These contacts still develop, although, unfortunately, not in all the regions.

Moreover, many valuable territories within the TPAs (both in Poland and abroad) which were not protected at the time of this work's beginning, have been given a legal protection in the last few years.

In spite of this, the state of the nature protection in the Polish eastern border region and the range of the transboundary cooperation are not yet satisfactory. Still, the sustainable tourism does not exist and the natural environment in some regions remains endangered. For all these reasons, the concept of the TPAs is still up to date.

## OUTLINE OF THE CONCEPT OF THE TPA SYSTEM IN THE EASTERN BORDER REGION OF POLAND

#### Main aims of the TPAs concept:

- 1. A successful protection for the most valuable, in context of nature, landscape and culture, areas which lie along Polish eastern border and/or are divided by this border.
- Closer transboundary cooperation between Poland and its eastern neighbours; especially
  concerning the protection of natural environment, development of tourism and
  intensification of contacts between environmental services, local governments and
  communities on both sides of the border.
- 3. Development of sustainable and international tourism in border areas as a basis for economic development of these regions.
- 4. Elaboration of such a system of tourism management within the protected areas, which would bring profits and, at the same time, it would not create a danger to nature.
- 5. International promotion of nature values and tourist attractions of the transboundary areas as well as the facilitation and simplification of tourist traffic between Poland and its eastern neighbours.

#### Assumptions of the concept

In order to sustain a complex protection of the most ecologically valuable areas, the main assumption of the presented concept is the creation of a system of TPAs along the Polish eastern border. The TPAs will have a status of complexes of protected areas with different protection regimes, including the existing national and landscape parks, nature reserves, nature monuments, areas of protected landscape and other, ecologically valuable areas on the both sides of the border.

The TPAs should fulfil the function of ecological corridors connecting the protected area systems in Poland and in the bordering countries. The role of such corridors is very important for the present process of the creation of pan-European network of protected and ecologically valuable areas, such as EECONET or Natura 2000. The creation of a system of the TPAs on the Polish eastern border region will thus be an original contribution by the countries of our region toward the process of the European integration.

The TPAs should be created as a result of adequate agreements between Poland and its eastern neighbours: Russia, Lithuania, Byelarus, Ukraine and Slovakia. The creation of the TPAs should be based on the assumption that each large protected area and/or valuable ecological complex which is located on, or near to the border, should have its complement in a neighbouring country, so that its protection is more effective. The most valuable sites, within the TPAs, which are not yet formally protected, should be given a protected status adequately to the country's legislation.

While working on the concept, eight regions were classified as qualifying for protection as the TPAs. Their protection should be implemented on several levels.

- 1. Country level. The level created by the already existing protected areas and objects within the TPAs, protected by the statuses of each particular country.
- 2. Transboundary level. Each of the TPAs should obtain a formal status as a result of bilateral (or, sometimes trilateral) agreement of proper authorities and environmental services of the neighbouring countries.
- 3. International level. Some of the proposed TPAs or their most valuable parts could be qualified as the objects deserving protection by the international conventions,

agreements and programs, as, for instance, biosphere reserves (program MaB UNESCO), World's Natural and Cultural Heritage Sites, areas protected by the Ramsar Convention, etc.

The TPAs should be a domain of close cooperation between the local authorities and environmental protection services. This cooperation should take place both within the countries and on a transboundary level with the aim to protect the most valuable areas in compliance with the promotion of sustainable tourism and sustainable development. The TPAs ought to become distinct functioning zones, that encompass whole administrative units of coordinated plans of space management and economic development, which should pay the necessary respect to the condition of the natural environment.

In order to make such a cooperation on a local level working, the local authorities and communities must be convinced of the idea of the creation of the TPAs. The local authorities and communities should be informed of what kind of profits they can gain from the creation of the TPAs. They are:

- Promotion of the region on national and international level,
- Increase of tourist traffic, including international tourism,
- Development of various forms of sustainable tourism and, related to it, creation of new workplaces and possibilities of additional income from tourism; thus, improving of the economic situation of the region.
- Preservation of the natural environment and increase of ecological awareness of local communities.

Transboundary cooperation within the TPAs should take place on various levels. The cooperation should focus, first of all, on the administrative bodies of protected areas and environmental protection services. The creation of the TPAs will give new frames to some of the already formed cooperation. Also, the contacts between local authorities and self-governments on both sides of the border need to be intensified; until now, they are, with a few exceptions, rather occasional. The special attention of the neighbouring countries should be directed toward an active involvement of the local communities into the environmental protection within the TPAs. It can be achieved, for instance, through the development of diverse forms of ecological education, promotion of healthy food production and the rules of sustainable development in rural areas. An important role in promoting nature conservation could also have the engagement of local communities in nature-oriented sustainable tourism and especially agro-tourism.

The effect of the transboundary contacts within the TPAs should be, in the first place:

- close cooperation of environmental services and local authorities and communities,
- exchange of information (concerning tourism, economy, state of the environment, threats to the nature and landscape, etc.),
- coordination of spatial management plans and protected areas management plans,
- coordination and exchange of information concerning a management according to the rules of sustainable development.
- exchange of information and experience concerning ecological education,
- exchange of information and experience concerning development of sustainable tourism and tourist traffic management within the protected areas,
- Facilitation of the transboundary traffic for tourists and local inhabitants,
- joint organisation of international tourism within the TPAs.

For coordinating the implementation of nature conservation goals within each of the proposed areas, small administrative bodies should be created in every country. Additionally, an international board should be constituted in order to advise, supervise and coordinate functions of each TPA. The boards should be made of both the existing as well as newly appointed qualified directors and representatives of local environmental services, local authorities, self-governments, NGO's and scientists.

#### Tourism in the TPAs

Another main goal of the concept of the TPAs is the development of sustainable tourism within these areas. Tourism, itself, is a branch of economy which can generate economic activity and income. The extraordinary nature, landscape, cultural and historical value of many borderland areas can become, and in some instances has already become, a basis for the development of tourism, which, in the future, should become the main form of economic activity in the region. Quality management of tourism in the border areas, along with the development of the infrastructure (in respect to the environmental protection) and its adequate promotion, can attract many tourists; some of the areas can even become an attraction for nature-lovers on a European scale.

The establishment of a TPA, will become an international tourist attraction. If this is followed by facilitating border crossing, proper organisation of tourist traffic and the development of infrastructure, the tourism in the borderlands can become a serious source of income. It can be a chance for local communities to receive additional money through the creation of new workplaces.

Conditions and possibilities for development of various forms of tourism are different in each TPA, however, in each case the most welcome form is a small-group, environment-friendly tourism which, at the same time, brings immediate profits to the inhabitants of a region. Thus, the most preferred forms of tourism should be the following: eco-tourism, agro-tourism, and various forms of active tourism such as hiking, horseback riding, biking, cross-country skiing, etc. These forms should replace the dominating, in some areas, forms of mass-tourism, which, because of its intensity, can locally create a serious ecological danger.

It is impossible to protect the environment successfully without support of the local communities. Possibilities of tourism development within the TPAs and the benefits that inhabitants can gain out of it may constitute an argument to convince local communities to the idea of nature protection. Creation of the protected areas with an international status is a good form of promotion of the region and it can attract tourists to it. This can be very important for those who want to invest in tourism. The condition for the development of nature-friendly forms of tourism is, therefore, a positive attitude of the local communities toward such forms of economic activity and their high ecological awareness. Ecological education can play here an important role.

The administration of a national or landscape park should be not only interested in protecting the nature landscape, but also in the management of the tourist traffic and profits to be gained from it. These profits should be directed first of all to the protected areas and then to the local community budgets. Consequently, they will become a form of local lobby which will act for environmental protection.

Nonetheless, the role, which tourism has to play within the TPAs, demands prepared programs for tourism development and its management in each area. A group of experts or a consulting firm should be hired for the development of such programs. The basis for it should include an analytical part containing:

- evaluation of tourist attractions,
- analysis and evaluation of the existing tourist infrastructure (tourist trails, nature paths, lodging, camping places, etc.),
- analysis of tourist traffic (how many tourists and what kind of tourism),
- evaluation of potential threats which tourism could bring to nature and landscape.

On this basis, a conceptual part of the program should be prepared, which would encompass:

- proposals of organisation and localisation of visitors centres (including a program for such centre work),

- program of development and promotion of the most adequate forms of sustainable tourism (including proposals necessary for infrastructure development),
- proposals of limiting the unwanted forms of tourism,
- program of eco-education for the local communities and special training for the protected areas' rangers, visitors centres staff, foresters and guides,
- concept of development of transboundary and international tourism,
- assessment of costs and proposed sources of financing.

The activity should focus on the organisation and operation of visitor centres. For each centres a special operating program should be worked out connected to the program of tourism development and management within a respective TPA. The centre should provide public with full information about ecological and cultural attractions as well as tourist infrastructure within the particular TPA on both sides of the border.

Services and commercial activities of the centres, like in some EU countries, would include the sale of the tickets (i.e. to national parks, museums and other objects), preparing attractive and varied offers of tourist products whole year round, providing guides, serving the special groups, booking accommodation and meals, renting tourist equipment, sale of souvenirs and publications, organising additional attractions (for instance, a regional inn, sale of local crafts, folk events, etc.).

The next very important problem of tourism development within the TPAs, especially for the international tourism, is the issue of regulations necessary for enabling tourists to cross the border. Today, this is very uncomfortable as it is connected with many difficulties not to mention huge lines of cars waiting at border crossing points. The TPAs should provide ways for transboundary tourist traffic which would make it easier for tourists to visit regions on the both sides of the border. This could be achieved, for instance, by establishing tourist convention zones or opening special tourist border crossings (for hikers, bikers, skiers), similar to those on the Polish-Slovakian and Polish-Czech border. It should facilitate transboundary traffic for tourists so that they do not need to use the distant road border crossings which, now, are placed only on the main roads.

Legal and political basis for the transboundary cooperation

Protection of valuable transboundary areas is not only a necessity, but an obligation which is a result of some important international conventions which Poland and the neighbouring countries have signed, including,

- Convention on Wetlands of International Importance, Especially as Waterfowl Habitat (Ramsar Convention 1971),
- Convention on World's Heritage (Paris Convention 1972),
- Convention on International Trade on Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (Washington Convention 1973)
- Convention on the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Baltic Sea Area (Helsinki Convention 1974, updated in 1992),
- Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (Bonn Convention 1979.
- Convention on the Conservation of European Wild Fauna and Flora and Natural Habitats (Bern Convention 1979),
- Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Helsinki 1992),
- Convention on Biological Diversity (Rio de Janeiro 1992).

As a basis for the creation of TPAs in this region of Europe, the Wigry Declaration, signed in Wigry, Poland in 1992, could be applied. The Declaration, that was signed by the representatives of governments, local authorities and scientists from Poland, Russia, Lithuania, Latvia, Byelarus and Ukraine, assumed a close cooperation between the signing sides in the area of environmental protection and sustainable development.

In years 1992 - 1994 Poland signed bilateral agreements concerning the cooperation in the field of environmental protection with all its eastern neighbours. As parts of these agreements on a ministerial level, Polish-Russian, Polish-Lithuanian, Polish-Byelarussian, and Polish-Ukrainian working groups for environmental protection were created. From an initiative of the Polish Ministry of Environmental Protection, Natural Resources and Forestry each of these groups put into their program the issue of creation of the TPAs.

Another forum for regional transboundary cooperation, especially concerning local authorities and self-governments, Euroregions could serve as regional transboundary structures - which would also assume the cooperation in environmental protection and tourism. Today, on the Polish eastern borderland there are three Euroregions, the Carpathian Euroregion (established in 1993), the Bug Euroregion (1995) and the Nemunas Euroregion (1997). Most of the proposed TPAs lie within either of these Euroregions.

### PRELIMINARILY DESIGNATED TRANSBOUNDARY PROTECTED AREAS IN THE EASTERN BORDER REGION OF POLAND

After the analysis of data concerning the natural and cultural values of the eastern border region of Poland, eight most valuable areas were chosen as qualifying for the international protection as the TPAs. Each of these areas is a real jewel of European nature and each one represents a different type of landscape and geographical region. Altogether, they give a full review of Polish landscape and nature diversity. Each of the chosen regions can be characterised as being unique and rich in terms of the natural environment, which includes numerous stands of rare and endangered species of plants and animals. Each of these areas also constitutes an important ecological corridor and migration route which connects natural complexes in the neighbouring countries. Some of the wildlife refuges which lie in the territories of the TPAs can be excellent examples of the importance of these areas for animals which are endangered in Europe such as: European bison (*Bison bonasus*), brown bear (*Ursus arctos*), wolf (*Canis lupus*), lynx (*Felis lynx*), capercaillie (*Tetrao urogallus*), golden eagle (*Aquilla chysaetos*), short-toed eagle (*Circaetus gallicus*), booted eagle (*Hieraaetus pennatus*), stone curlew (*Burhinus oedicnemus*), European pond tortoise (*Emys orbicularis*) and Aesculapian snake (*Elaphe longissima*).

Selected areas also include unique biotopes and landscapes, such as shallow sea lagoon that has water of low salinity, a lakeland with interesting post-glacial relief form complexes, probably, the last in Europe, primeval lowland forest, natural valleys of big rivers, carbonate wetlands, and high mountain pastures - *poloninas*. The value of the proposed TPAs is underlined by existing or projected on its territories objects with an international status (Biosphere Reserves, World Heritage Sites, Ramsar sites, etc.).

It should be remembered that the TPAs presented are only proposals, although, based on a complex analysis of the value of the borderland regions. The final number, range, limits and status of the TPAs can be decided only by the competent authorities of the neighbouring countries.

#### 1. The Vistula Lagoon Transboundary Protected Area,

The region of the Vistula Lagoon in one of the most picturesque and diverse parts of the Baltic coast. The Lagoon, attached to the Vistula Spit (Mierzeja Wislana), Elblag Height (Wzniesienia Elblaskie) and Zulawy Wislane (the lowlands of the Vistula delta), constitutes a unique nature-landscape complex which stretches through the Polish-Russian (Kaliningrad District) borderland. The Vistula Lagoon and the region of the Vistula mouth are waterfowl refuges of an international importance. The vegetation cover of the Vistula Spit and Elblag Height is rich in rare species and plant populations. Next to the great landscape and nature values of this area, there are valuable regional culture elements. The town of Frombork lying by the Lagoon, with the cathedral complex surrounded by the medieval walls, which is also home of the Copernicus

museum, attracts many tourists. The German Emperor Wilhelm's II residential complex in Kadyny on the Vistula Lagoon shore, with famous stables and a 1000 year-old oak are similarly renown. The Zulawy Wislane is a region with an original cultural landscape that entails a specific layout of settlement networks, valuable monuments of architecture, a complex of canals and hydro-technical installations. It should also be added that the Vistula Spit is one of the most popular summer recreation regions in Poland. The Vistula Lagoon and the numerous canals in the Zulawy Wislane also have a great potential for the development of water-oriented tourism.

The unique nature and landscape values of the Vistula Lagoon and the surrounding areas are not properly secured. This problem becomes more and more important in the context of ever growing environmental threats such as: pollution of water, uncontrolled development of mass tourism on the Spit, let alone the illegal exploitation of amber. The two existing landscape parks, the Vistula Spit Landscape Park and the Elblag Height Landscape Park do not provide sufficient protection of these area. What is absolutely the most significant problem is that the Vistula Lagoon itself is not protected. A proper security can be provided only by a complex protection of all the described areas, that is the Vistula Lagoon and the Vistula Spit together with their surrounding areas. Besides that, in order to make the protection fully successful for both Polish and Russian parts of this section of the Baltic Sea coast, a proper protection can be only provided by the creation of the Vistula Lagoon TPA.

#### 2. The Suwalki - Vištytis Transboundary Protected Area

In the place where Polish, Lithuanian and Russian borders meet, there is an area which is unique for each of these countries. On a relatively small area, the nature gathered surprisingly many various forms of post-glacial relief which are valuable objects for scientists and, at the same time, they create a picturesque landscape. The Northern Suwalki Region is one of the most beautiful landscape and geo-morphologically interesting regions of Poland. Because of the severe climate (the most severe in Poland excluding mountains) it is a region where many relict northern plants and animals occur. The most valuable part of the Northern Suwalki Region is protected as the Suwalki Landscape Park, but there are other, just as interesting areas nearby, which still are not protected. The Romincka Forest which lies on the Polish - Russian borderland is a magnificent sanctuary of the nature. It used to be a hunting ground for the Prussian dukes and kings, the German Emperors, as well as for noblemen from all over Europe. Today, thanks to its borderland location, it is not easily accessible and still is a wildlife refuge. On the edge of the Forest, in a huge basin surrounded by wooded hills, lies the Vištytis Lake. The lake is cut by the Russian-Lithuanian border. It is the largest lake in the Kaliningrad District and one of the largest in Lithuania which makes it an attractive recreation area.

#### 3. The Three Forests Transboundary Protected Area

Looking at the map of Central Europe it is easy to notice that in its north-eastern part, from north-east to south-west, from Vilnius, through the areas lying on both sides of the Lithuanian-Byelarussian border, and up to the Biebrza Swamps in Poland, a wide strap of extensive, mostly wooded, ecologically valuable areas stretches. This strap can be prolonged further north, through the Lithuanian and Latvian Lakeland to huge lakes and spacious forests on the Russian-Estonian border all the way to the Bay of Finland. South-westward, through the Narew River valley, the strap converges with the Vistula River valley, and then continues further through the wide Torun-Eberswalde proglacial stream valley where it reaches the Berlin area. This region is functioning as a natural ecological corridor of the European importance as a migration route for birds and forest animals.

In the middle of this strap, on the borderland of Lithuania, Byelarus and Poland, right in the center of the recently created Nemunas Euroregion, the most interesting and most valuable area is located. It is one of the largest in Europe forest complexes and it is composed of the Augustów Forest in Poland, the Dainava Forest (Dainavos giria) in Lithuania and the Grodno Forest in Byelarus. This complex is around 100 km long and 50 km wide and it covers around

500 thousand hectares. Besides forests, this area embraces numerous lakes, spacious swamps and a section of the Nemunas River valley.

The European importance of this corridor as well as the ecological value of these areas demands international protection. The existing protected areas cover only some fragments of the described complex. A complex protection can be achieved by establishing there a trilateral international protected area, which is proposed to be named after the three largest forest complexes - the Three Forests TPA.

#### 4. The Bialowieza Forest Transboundary Protected Area

The Bialowieza Forest, divided by the Polish-Byelarussian state border, is one of the most valuable natural forest complexes in Europe. It is precious not only because it is one of the biggest European forests giving shelter to many rare and endangered species, including European bisons, whose restitution was successful there. It is also the last forest in Europe where primordial, multi-level and multi-species ecosystems of natural lowland forests can be observed and where one can easily imagine how the primeval forests looked like in the far past. The Bialowieza Forest is valuable because of its historical values as well. Once it was the hunting area of the Lithuanian dukes, Polish kings and Russian tsars. It is also one of the oldest protected areas in the world. Since the 16<sup>th</sup> century, it had been protected from exploitation as a royal hunting ground.

The proper and complex protection of the unique values of the Bialowieza Forest is our duty for Europe and the World. However, so far, none of the developed in the recent years projects of a complex protection of the Polish part of the Bialowieza Forest have been realized. Presently, the Ministry of the Environment's efforts aiming for enlarging the Bialowieza National Park to the entire Polish part of the Bialowieza Forest are very close to realization. Hopefully those efforts will be awarded with a success.

#### 5. The Bug River Gorge Transboundary Protected Area

The Bug River valley is an unusual region of unique landscape. Most of the big rivers in Europe were regulated, stretched and civilized a long time ago. However, the Bug has remained a wild river due to the fact that it has been a border-river for many years. Today, the 300 kilometers long section of the river constitutes the Polish-Ukrainian and Polish-Byelarussian border. The river remains its natural winding bed with numerous islands, sand bars, meanders and oxbows. Along it one can see a great diversity of habitats: wet meadows, rich riparian forests, sands and sunny cliffs. The Bug River Valley is an shelter of wildlife existing in the quite strongly reshaped agricultural landscape of the Podlasie Region. It is also an important route of birds and plant species migration.

The most beautiful section of the Bug is its gorge valley on the Polish - Byelarussian borderland between Brest and Drohiczyn where the creation of the Bug River Gorge TPA is proposed. The river breaks here through high moraine hills raised several tens of meters over its level. The beauty of the nature is enriched by the numerous traditional wooden villages and valuable monuments of architecture.

#### 6. The Western Polessie Transboundary Protected Area

Polessie is an enormous natural-historical region. It is a territory several hundred kilometers long stretching through the central part of Eastern Europe, from Lublin, Poland to Gomel, Belarus, including also large areas in Ukraine. For centuries, the extensive swamps and numerous wide flowing rivers made this territory inaccessible. However, this has contributed greatly to its rich nature. Unfortunately, after World War II, large parts of this unique territory were significantly transformed by agricultural drainage. This one time intensive agricultural drainage did not completely ruin the Polessie region and today, a significant part of this area is grown with woods and there are still large areas of natural or semi-natural wetlands. So, Polessie has still retained a part of its old specificity. It is sparsely inhabited, and has hardly

any industry. Moreover, Polessie has over a hundred lakes which create the only one in Europe (outside of mountains) lakeland which is located beyond the range of the last glaciation.

In this place, two important European ecological corridors cross. The first one, very wide corridor runs EW along the main axis of Polessie marked by the Prypiat' River valley and located further westwards lakelands. The second one, much narrower corridor runs NS along the Bug River Valley. In this way, a natural ecological hub of a continental importance has come into existence. In 2002 a Polish-Ukrainian International Biosphere Reserve "Western Polessie" was created, covering most of the territory of proposed transboundary protected area

#### 7. The Roztocze Transboundary Protected Area

Roztocze is clearly distinguishable in the surrounding landscape as a range of remarkable elevations. It is 180 kilometers long and up to 20 kilometers wide. It runs through the Polish-Ukrainian border and stretches in NW/SE direction, from Krasnik to Lviv with its amazing landscapes and diversity of nature as well as with magnificent architecture monuments and richness of cultural diversity dwelling here in harmony. The historic towns as well as villages, settlements, churches, and old estates are perfectly composed into the landscape which itself has not been altered by the modern civilization. The natural landscapes of Roztocze include dense forests, hills, rocks, canyons, numerous springs and creeks with crystal clean water. Such regions are hardly met in Poland but also in whole Europe.

Roztocze is characterized by a specific vegetation cover, where, next to beech-fir forests with many mountain plants in the undergrowth, one could find numerous steppe flowers growing on sunny slopes as well as the relict post-glacial peatbog vegetation which grows in swampy depressions.

Roztocze is a border region not only in a geographical sense but also in a historic-ethnical one. Throughout the centuries cultures of Polish and Ukrainian people as well as smaller ethnic and religious groups had been here meeting and mixing. In many places, there are Catholic churches, Orthodox churches and synagogues next to each other. Also, old Catholic, Orthodox, Uniate and Jewish cemeteries prove the cultural diversity of this region.

The project of the creation of the Roztocze TPA was first established in 1994 and then the project was awarded with the prestigious European Ford Conservation Award.

#### 8. The Eastern Beskid Mountains Transboundary Protected Area

The projected Eastern Beskid Mountains Transboundary Protected Area will cover the western part of the Eastern Carpathians, where the Polish, Ukrainian and Slovakian borders meet. The largest value of this region is landscapes, valuable flora and rich fauna. The Polish part of the projected Transboundary Protected Area will cover the Bieszczady Mountains, the only fragment of the Eastern Carpathians in Poland and the only region of our mountains where the *poloninas* (vast mountain pastures covering the highest peaks and the tops of mountain ranges) exist. On these mountain meadows, most of the rare East-Carpathian plant species grow. The woods of Bieszczady belong to the wildest and the best preserved part of the Carpathian Forest where the refuges of such animals as bears, lynxes, and wolves are. Bieszczady are surrounded by the legend of wild and uninhabited mountains. The areas located on the Slovakian and Ukrainian sides of the border where Ruthenian mountaineers still live and cultivate their traditions are a great supplement of the Polish part of the region. In Slovakia and Ukraine, many monuments of the Ruthenian culture survived and we can still admire their traditional wooden huts and beautiful Orthodox churches.

The extensive woods of the Carpathian Forest, the open high mountain pastures, the wilderness areas neighbouring to inhabited area with a traditional cultural landscape make this region especially interesting. It was a basis for the creation of the trilateral Polish-

Slovakian-Ukrainian 'Eastern Carpathians' biosphere reserve. Apart of this reserve, the Eastern Beskid Mountains TPA will also embrace areas located further east in the Ukrainian Carpathians.

#### **CONCLUSIONS**

- Successful protection of the most valuable natural areas which lie along the Polish eastern border requires multinational cooperation.
   The Transboundary Protected Areas ought to become distinct functioning zones, which would encompass whole administrative units of coordinated plans of spatial management and economic development, which should pay the necessary respect to the condition of the natural environment.
- 2 Development of sustainable and international tourism in border areas shall constitute a basis for economic development of these regions. Development of various forms of sustainable tourism and, related to it, creation of new workplaces and possibilities of additional income from tourism; thus, improving of the economic situation of the region.
- 3 Preservation of natural environment and increase of ecological awareness of local communities is the preconditions for the successful development of TPAs
- 4 International promotion of natural values and tourist attractions of the TPAs is urgently needed as well as is the facilitation and simplification of tourist traffic between Poland and its eastern neighbours.

# 2.11 Implementation of the Habitats Directive and Birds Directive in the Slovak Republic – Twinning Phare Project 2002

Peter Urban, Centre for Nature and Landscape Protection, Slovak Republic

Implementation of the Habitats Directive and the Birds Directive in the Slovak Republic-Twinning Phare Project" is the title of my presentation. I come from the State Nature Conservancy in Banská Bystrica. This is an organisation under the direct authority of the Ministry of Environment of the Slovak Republic. This project represents a follow up of the Matra Pre-Accesion Project, named establishment of the Natura 2000 network in the Slovak Republic. This project had been carried out during two years and focused especially on the collection, information and identification of possible Natura 2000 sites and the activation of the whole Natura 2000 process in my country.

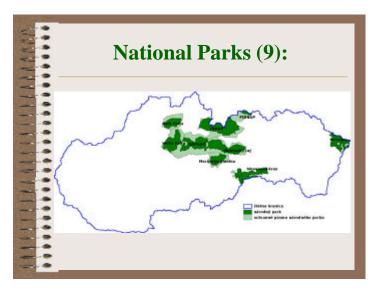
Now very short some words about my country, because I think the Slovak Republic is small but really a very nice and very interesting country not only from natural point of view. The Slovak Republic is situated in Central Europe, we say is situated in the heart of Europe and shares borders with five states. They are: the Czech Republic, Austria, Hungary, Ukrainian Republic and Poland. I said that the Slovak Republic is a small country, the whole area is less than 50.000 km<sup>2</sup>. It's maximum length from west to east is only 428 km. The diversity of ecosystems emphasises the high value of its territory in regard to biodiversity. This geographic position of Slovakia in the heart of Europe and the boundary of the Carpathian Mountains (Alpine bio-geographical region) and Pannonian lowland areas (Pannonian biogeographical region) allows for a really rich diversity of flora and fauna. The identified biodiversity of Slovakia includes for example more than 12.000 plant species and from this total number of plant species 92 are classified as endemic species. There are more than 26.000 animal species and from this number are 102 taxons (of mostly invertebrate) Carpathian endemics. We can see our rich bio-diversity of flora in comparison with some Central and Eastern Europe countries There are the species of higher plants, there are the grass-land habitats and there is a comparison of the IUCN Red List of threatened plants.



Protected areas in Slovakia including their buffer zones cover 23% of the area. There are the forests, the large scale protected areas and we have at present nine national parks, fourteen protected landscape areas and at a second there are small scale protected areas. We have more than 1.000 protected areas in the fourth and fifths level of protection.

The territorial protection in Slovakia specifies five levels of protection. The extend of restriction increases depending on the increase of the level of this protection. The protection in fourth and fifths level

includes protected sites, nature reserves, nature monuments and protected landscape elements. Caves and natural waterfalls are nature monuments.



There we can see our National Parks, they are situated in centre of Slovakia and the same we can see for protected landscape areas. In Slovakia are four biosphere reserves and twelve wetlands of international importance and some of them are transboundary protected areas.

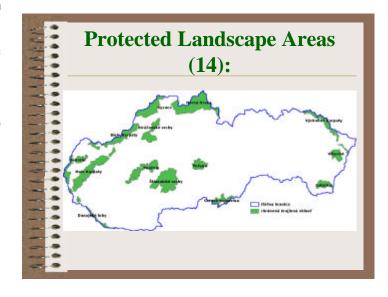
Some words about Natura 2000. Natura 2000 is a very good chance for international and transboundary co-operation in nature protection. Natura 2000 envisages core areas as part of a network strengthened by corridors, design features of an ecological network, which are

essential in maintaining biological and landscape diversity in the face of future changes to the face of Europe's environment. Europe needs this flexibility of a network structure to be able to have a chance of maintaining diversity in the changing environment.

#### Natura 2000 in Slovakia

From the legislative point of view our new Act of the National Council of the Slovak Republic, No. 543 on nature and landscape protection, came into force on January 1st this 2003. According to this act protected bird areas can be designated, they are the same as special protected areas according bird directives, and areas of European interest, they are the same

as special areas of conservation according habitats directive. Protected bird areas and areas of European interest form a part of the coherent European network of protected areas. aimed conservation of a favourable status of both National Habitats of Europe interest and species of European interest. Some words about protected bird areas: In our laws we can read: "Habitats of bird species of European interest and habitats of migratory bird species, may be designated as protected bird areas for the purpose of ensurina their survival and reproduction." The list of protected



bird areas contains 38 areas. These 38 areas cover an area of more than I.002.000 hectares, which is one quarter from Slovakia. The average area of proposed protected bird areas is more than 32.000 hectares. The overlap of proposed protected bird areas with protected areas in Slovakia is more than 55%. And: a new and very interesting information: a national list of proposed protected bird areas was approved by the government of the Slovak Republic by its decision the last week. Here we can see our protected bird areas. Some words about areas of European interest. An area of European interest according our act on nature and landscape protection is considered an area in the Slovak Republic formed by one on more sites and a) in which natural habitats of European interest or species of European interest are situated for protection of which protected areas are designated or b) which are included in the national list of these sites procured by the Ministry of Environment and discussed with the Ministry of Agriculture. Proposed, but there is only draft in this time, national list of areas of European interest contains 388 areas. The proposed areas of

European interest cover more than 5.000 km<sup>2</sup>, this is more than 11% from total area in Slovakia. The overlap of the proposed areas of European interest with proposed protected bird areas is more than 64%. The overlap of proposed areas of European interest with protected areas in Slovakia is more than 77%.

Coming back to the Twinning PHARE Project. Twinning partners are Ministry of the Environment of the Slovak Republic and German Ministry of Environment (Bundesministerium für Umwelt, Naturschutz und Reaktorsicherheit). The overall objective of this Twinning PHARE Project is to continue in the development of Natura 2000 network in



Slovakia and the enforcement of both directives, birds and habitats. There are five main work packages identified in the implementation of project. Thev information campaign for public and different groups of people of stakeholders, e.g. landowners, users, local communities, foresters and so on, the preparation of auidelines for management planning of Natura 2000 sites, with a focus on the implementation of Article 6 of the Habitats Directive, provision of technical equipment for the information system of monitoring reporting, training on handling the

Natura 2000 sites for our staff, staff of State Nature Conservancy of Slovak Republic, and relevant stakeholders too, and the preparation of the management plans for a number of future Natura 2000 sites. Implementation of this project is scheduled for the years 2003-2005, these are 24 months with a full-time assistance of the German Pre-Accession Advisor, completed with a number of short-term experts. This project will start in September 2003. Ladies and gentlemen, thank you very much for your attention.

## 2.12 Cooperation of Germany and Czech Republic in Nature Protection

#### Ladislav Miko, Ministry of Environment, Czech Republic

Thank you, good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen, dear colleagues and friends.

At the very beginning I would like to thank for invitation to this conference, which creates an excellent opportunity to discuss the problems of nature protection in former Iron Curtain areas. Secondly, before I start with my presentation, let me express my cordial greetings to the anniversary of the Bundesamt für Naturschutz, which is one of our most important international partners in nature protection at bilateral level.

Regarding the subject of the conference, we say in the Czech Republic that everything wrong may be good for at least something and this is the case of the green belts discussed here. The people were almost excluded from the former Iron Curtain Areas, but also other border areas for a long time, but fortunately the nature cannot be excluded. Today, in unifying Europe, we have the opportunity to protect the nature along the borders together in close co-operation of all partners. As you heard today many times, it is almost a rule that along the borders you can find well preserved nature; e.g. in the Czech Republic all four National parks are in border areas and have their counterparts on the other side of the border. Two of them, Šumava and Podyjí, were established in area of former Iron Curtain.

Ladies and gentlemen, let me now show you that even if we are here to speak about the future, there is a good base for this co-operation within our existing common activities. I would like to stress the idea that at the international level, the projects like green belt should be closely co-ordinated with existing concepts. You heard today about e.g. EECONET Concept or we were speaking about Natura 2000 and there are also some national ecological networks like so called Territorial System of Ecological Stability in our country, in the Czech Republic. So I think it is in our discussion necessary to take into account these existing systems and to co-ordinate the activities.

Now some words about Czech-German co-operation in nature protection in the past and in recent. Speaking about the co-operation, I have to say that we have a lot of common issues and of course opportunities. We had in the past and we have also now very high number of bilateral professional contacts. There is a lot of valuable experience present on both sides and we, as I mentioned, have very well preserved natural areas along former Iron Curtain but also along the border with Saxony.



We are all working on building of one unified network, which is Natura 2000, the European concept and of course also bilateral protected areas. I would like to say some words about the history of our recent co-operation. As you may know, from 1992 it exists an agreement on co-operation between the Czech and the Saxonian Ministries of Environment and beginning in the 90s we started also to develop the co-operation in protected areas of the Czech-Saxonian Switzerland. From 1994, it was established a Czech-German commission for the environment and within this commission we have established

also the working group for nature protection. All these activities are of course not only formal, they are very much working.

I would like to mention some basic tasks of this bilateral commission. First of all it is of course to follow up in organising of the Czech and German nature protection symposia. We would like to co-ordinate our nature protection goals and concepts in border areas, to identify the landscapes suitable for special protection along the borders, to exchange information about nature protection concepts at national level and also coordinate the relevant activities. Another task is to create a specific specialist forum for solving of specific problems of nature protection in these areas.

And of course one of the tasks is public awareness raising and promotion of public participation, as my colleagues mentioned it earlier this day. Last but not least it is very important to exchange existing information about plans and projects in nature protection on both sides. Which are the major areas of our co-operation, which is already pending? First of all, the majority of time of the work of the commission is taken by management of altogether 17 transboundary nature protection areas, which we divided in three different groups of

importance. I will mention the most important ones, these are the National Parks Ceské Švýcarsko (Sächsische Schweiz), National Park Sumava (Bayerischer Wald), and co-operation in area of Erzgebirge (Krušné Hory Mountains). Recently the most important issue is cooperation and co-ordination in establishing of the Natura 2000 network. We also discuss some other issues which touch the nature protection problems as well, even if sometimes not directly. There is a discussion about opening an operation of new border passes transboundary biking routes; we discuss very extensively the protection of the Elbe River



Valley and other water streams. I have to say that we had not so long ago a meeting with Mr. Flath, who is present here, and we discussed among others also these problems recently. And we also discuss the co-ordination of transboundary projects also in respect of optimal use of the financial tools of the European Union.



Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to mention some results. Of course they are not all the results we achieved, but I would like to show that in this about ten years co-operation we already had a lot of goals which we reached. First of all at the Czech side we created seven new nature parks, you see the names of them, which are adjacent to respective protected areas at German side. We tried to use the same or similar approach in peat-bog restoration; we use the experience of the German colleagues from Hühnerheide, in our peat bogs Novoveské and Pod Jelení Horou. We also get some direct financial support from

German side in different activities in Czech Republic; some of them are mentioned here. It was research of Rolava river valley, the specific management of orchid meadow in Krásná Lípa, where we co-operate very well with Naturschutzzentrum in Annaberg.

Then it was also support for wastewater treatment in Krásná Lípa and this is very important issue, as you mentioned the problem of the European salmon. I have to say that this year it was not only in Germany but for the first time the salmon came again to the Czech Republic also, it is just in the two small streams, but we have it back and this is an excellent result of this co-operation. And we also co-operate in the management of the Kraví hora meadows,

the meadows which are on the Erzgebirge mountains, adjacent to protected areas on the German side.

In the year 2000 we started a very intensive exchange of the information about Natura 2000 and the co-ordination of the activities on both sides. I have to say that this co-operation is really excellent and we would like to have such type of co-operation also with all our other

Financial support of German partner in different activities:

- research of Rolava river valley

- management of orchid meadow in Krásná Lípa (cooperation: Naturschutzzentrum Annaberg)

- wastewater treatment in Krásná Lípa – river Krinice/Kimitzsch

- Management of the Kraví hora meadows adjacent to protected area on German side, etc.

partners. I think this is a very good example how the experts may co-operate. These discussions are going on on very different levels, from toplevel up to the very technical discussions in the field. We also have quite close co-operation and exchange of experience in enforcement of multilateral environmental agreements in animal protection and habitat agreement, Bonn agreement). I have to say also at my good friend, who is not here, Franz Boehmer, from the Bundesamt für Naturschutz is very much involved in the activities regarding the CITES agreement, which is not directly about the green belts but it is an example of co-operation of

Bundesamt with our Ministry. Generally once a year, we are organising a meeting of nature protection directors from Ministries of Czech Republic and Saxonia and we also have very good and close co-operation between the authorities of protected landscape area Labské pískovce and now also the National Park Ceské Švýcarsko, and National Park Sächsische Schweiz. One of the results of the meetings is also a common statement on protection of the Elbe River Valley agreed last year.

Some challenges. I have to say that if you have a good co-operation with your partners, it is not always everything going O.K. Sometimes you have to solve problems on both sides and I think that is a good sign of very close and good co-operation and good partnership. For us, very interesting will be in the future the development of the management in our side of the National Park in Šumava, which is adjacent to the Nationalpark Bayerischer Wald. The

problem of solving bark beetle is being discussed for a long time and now, after the advisory mission of IUCN we started to prepare a new management rules there and this should be much more closely co-ordinated with German side than before. We also have a lot of discussions about proposals from German side, mostly from German NGOs on establishment of new protected areas in the Czech side of the border. Of course sometimes it is a little problem, because the quality of the nature areas at the border region is so high that we simply cannot protect everything. We have to allow to people to live there as well, so sometimes the discussion is

# Some results (III) From 2000 intensive exchange of information and coordination of NATURA 2000 sites preparation (expert meetings, reports, technical discussions Close cooperation and experience exchange in enforcement of the multilateral environmental agreements in animal and habitat protection (Bern agreement, Bonn agreement)

quite complicated, but it is going on. Some problems we also try to solve are existing proposals to open new border passes,. because the reasons of nature protection and sometimes of the economy do not allow doing it. There is an excellent agreement in the Elbe River Valley development and all discussions more or less are in the sense that we will try to protect the river as it is. Our big problem, where we expect a good co-operation of German side is also proposed wind-power stations in Czech side of Erzgebirge near Chomutov and so on. So you see that we have a lot of issues where we are talking together, solving it together and co-operate.

At the end of my presentation I would like to say that a transboundary co-operation of Germany and Czech Republic in nature protection is really well established and practical functioning. Especially in the border area with Saxony, where we have more than ten years of common experience, but co-operation with Bavaria is also under development now and this co-operation brings a lot of positive effects on both sides, but it is not only an effect of both sides but mostly for the nature around the common border.

Thank you for your attention.

## 2.13 Cross Border National Parks along the former Iron Curtain – the Austrian-Hungarian Example

Lásló Kárpáti, Fertö-Hanság National Park, Hungary

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

I come from West Hungary. I live in Sopron. I have worked in a national park for 13 years. And this national park is an international national park between Austria and Hungary.

The border was not particularly good for people. It was a terrible situation for people to live there. I also live in such a village that was situated between the so-called Iron Curtain and the Austrian border. But this border, which was not good for mankind, was very good for Nature. That I have to say.

In July and August of 1990 I was here in Germany, not far from Göttingen. There I had the opportunity to become acquainted with the so-called inner-German border. On behalf of a scientific commission we also discovered very interesting biotopes for the plants and birds there. As far as I know, these areas are nature reserves today.

This border near Sopron – this Iron Curtain – was a historical frontier. At that time our national park was not such a protected landscape area. But the so-called pan-European "picnic" was here. Several thousand people from the former GDR fled from here to Austria. This area also signifies a valuable area for us in historical terms.

If we take a look at the borders between Austria and Hungary and between Slovakia and Hungary, we see that these different conservation areas, this "green border" is actually not a frontier. This border is totally unfavourable for the natural habitats, for the birds and plants. Above all, the situation along the Neusiedler See is a strange phenomenon. The lake is the largest steppe lake in Europe, and has been divided with a very stringent border for over 50 years.



If we look at this map we'll see a protected landscape area in the far northern section. On the Danube River we have projects together with Russian colleagues. Next year a national park or a common protected landscape area will also be established. Later I will speak about the Neusiedler See national park and the Hungarian Fertö-Hánsag national park near what we call Lake Fertö — near the Neusiedler See. But we also have protected landscape areas near Sopron, near Hödenburg, near Köszeg, near Günz, and far in the south in the so-called "Komitat" between the Austrian province of

Burgenland, Hungary and Slovenia. This is a nature park. The nature park is called Örségi in Hungarian. This area is also a Euro-region, a west-trans-European Euro-region; and together with Austria's Burgenland the Hungarian Komitat areas Görmus and Sopron as well as Vosz and Solar comprise this overall Euro-region. And this Euro-region also has commissions. Among other things, commissions for environmental protection, nature conservation and aquatic matters. We also work together with the Austrian authorities on this level.

If we look at this area where we work — first of all I have to say that in Hungary the national park management area offices are not only responsible for the national parks, but are also responsible for other conservation areas. Therefore the national park management also

functions as nature conservation authorities. We have five different functions: Governmental activity, landscape maintenance, investigations, ecological tourism and nature conservation school. With the exception of the governmental activity, we perform these functions together with Austrian colleagues.



In Hungary, the State Ministry for Environmental Protection and Water Resources serves as the nature conservation authority. The various national parks fall under the jurisdiction of this ministry.

We have ten national park management areas. This means that altogether approximately 10 percent of Hungary is under nature conservation. The so-called "Natura 2000" areas will be added in the future. Here you can see the various heraldic birds or heraldic plants of the national

parks. Here we can see where the official borders of the different

national park management areas in Hungary are. We are in the far north-western area. The largest is the Hortobágyi National Park. But in this congress we are speaking about the cross-border nature conservation activities. This characterises the Aggteleki National Park in Hungary. The Aggteleki National Park has a very large quarry-stone cave. This cave lies partially in Slovakia and in Hungary. Personnel from the Körös-Maros National Park in the far south-eastern region of Hungary perform quite a few cross-border nature conservation activities together with colleagues from Rumania. And here in the north-west we work similarly with our Austrian colleagues.

If we look at our national park: What can we see? In 1977 the areas on the Austrian as well as the Hungarian side were declared as protected landscape areas. In 1979 they were recognized as a biosphere reserve, then as a Ramsar site and as a national park. In 1988 – that was still during the communist era – Hungarian Environmental Minister Laszlo Marroty and Austrian Environmental Minister Maria Flemming brought about a joint scientific commission and commission of experts between Austria and Hungary. I was also a member. This commission planned the



national park along the Neusiedler See in accordance with the so-called IUCN guidelines implemented by the different nations.

On the Hungarian side, the Lake Fertö (Neusiedler See) region was declared as the Lake Fertö National Park in 1991, and was incorporated into the Fertö-Hánsag National Park in 1994. In April 1994 the Prime Minister of Hungary and the chancellor of Austria jointly inaugurated the national park. Our areas of activity in the provincial komitat Györ, Moson and Sopron comprise nearly 50,000 hectares of conservation area and approximately — I will address this later — 32 hectares of conservation area designated as Natura 2000 areas.

I should also mention that the Neusiedler See National Park and the Austro-Hungarian "Seewinkel" area adjacent to the Neusiedler See National Park were registered in the World Cultural Heritage list two years ago. This has been the greatest event in our region.

The red areas are national park areas, and if we look at the map with the border we can see what our national parks look like. The dark-green regions are so-called nature zones, whereas the light-green regions are environmental zones and conservation zones. Various

activities are controlled in these zones, whereas practically nothing is controlled in the nature zones. Tourism – mainly ecological tourism – is the chief activity in the environmental zone, and conventional rural activity characterises the conservation zone.

We have 63 people. Of these employees, approximately half are university graduates and the others are nature conservation personnel and physical labourers.

At the moment this official activity means quite a bit of work for us. This means more than 10,000 letters per year. We have a nature conservation guard service, nature conservation personnel, and here you see typical "clothing" for the Hungarians. In this photo you can see a member of the Hanság nature conservation constabulary who was



awarded the "Pro-Natura" — the highest nature conservation award.

In addition we carry out training sessions, visitor control, group tours — ecological tourism and nature conservation school for people. There's a manager study course for the political community, which the participants experience in various "PHARE" programmes. On the Austrian side this is designated as "PHARE Interreg" and on the Hungarian side this is called "PHARE CDC".

We conduct investigations not only in the forests and in the "puszta" (grassland) areas, but also in the aquatic areas. We've made quite a few so-called biotope reconstructions, mainly water biotope reconstructions, whereby former swamps were once again supplied with water. We also conduct landscape maintenance. For instance, we have utilised old Hungarian animal breed such as "Rosko" sheep as well as steppe cattle and water buffalo for this activity. We have more than 1,000 head of steppe cattle. We also have a larger number of Rosko sheep and a few hundred water buffaloes. We would not be able to retain the customary old Hungarian puszta image without these animals.

We also have hunting grounds in the protected areas. But we hunt practically nothing. Wild boar can be very, very harmful in various aquatic areas and meadows. We capture them and sell them.

In the Neusiedler See region we also have fishery rights, with the exception of the nature zones. Fishermen on the Neusiedler See utilise conventional methods. Reed harvesting is also very typical with us at the Neusiedler See. The lake has the second largest reed area in Europe after the Danube River delta. In some spots along the lake the reed zone is broader than nine kilometres.



We also machines landscape have for maintenance as well as grass and reed treatment. We beautiful habitat have reconstructions, especially along the southern shores of Lake Fertö between Austria and Hungary. In 1996 more than 4,000 great white herons lived here.

Here are a few images detailing these habitat reconstructions. "Lacken" near the Austro-Hungarian border, a swamp region and now an artificial swamp biotope in the Hanság region. In addition to this aquatic biotope there are possibilities for people to spend their weekend participating in activities such as fishing. And now we'll see a few photos regarding our beautiful areas entailed in the international cooperation. Our co-operation with the Austrian colleagues is a very good example for other countries. For instance, along the border with our Rumanian colleagues in the Györ-Moson-Sopron-komitat we've also maintained these PHARE projects, and they study our work. And so our efforts also feature an Austrian as well as a west & east Hungarian and a west Rumanian co-operation.

And here you see a few photos regarding the areas which are incorporated in the World Cultural Heritage list: Fertö-Lake with the "bird-watch" bay, Neusiedler See with Austrian species, the puszta region with salt-covered meadows.

And with this beautiful plant image I would like to wish you successful work, good consultation and many thanks for your attention. Thank you!