

Proposal for the action plan of a Fennoscandian Greenbelt by Finnish Association for Nature Conservation

The Fennoscandian Greenbelt is not only a border area. Its most unique, international value is that this border area contains some of the most virgin and largest intact forest landscapes in Europe forming an impressive mega corridor. The forests are relatively well linked, reaching hundreds of kilometres from the South to the very North. The conservation of this unique character of Greenbelt – both virgin areas and connectivity - is what should be the overall idea of the Greenbelt process.

In the beginning of the process it should be clarified, which are the key Greenbelt areas from a nature protection point of view and especially which of these areas are currently unprotected or in danger and in need of protection measures. Some of such areas have already been identified in previous studies, for example in the North-West Russian GAP analyses.

To identify the key Greenbelt areas we propose that an open call for experts and participants of Greenbelt process will be opened. The proposals should include a description of the key values of these areas, possible threats and problems faced by the areas and the protection measures needed to preserve the unique nature values of these areas. An open call will give all participants and experts the possibility to evaluate the proposed areas.

The proposals, existing analyses and potential key areas should be evaluated by a Greenbelt working group, formed to carry out the process and to coordinate practical cooperation in the Greenbelt. Apart from government officials and researchers the working group should also include representatives of NGOs from all participating countries.

Based on the evaluation of the working group, a work plan including the international co-operation needed should be put together. Firstly the work plan should identify priority areas from the proposed key areas that have the most exceptional nature values, the most urgent need for protection measures and that are essential from the point of view of connectivity in the Greenbelt.

The importance of mega corridors and green infrastructure like the Greenbelt will only increase with advancement of climate change and biodiversity loss. Therefore it's increasingly important to analyse the priority areas of Greenbelt in cross boundary process, based on ecology and without the national borders of the countries in the Greenbelt area.

The long term work plan for the Greenbelt should also include identification of the biggest ecological gaps of the mega corridor in relation to the existing network of protected areas. In order to work as real a mega corridor of intact nature and restored nature areas, there cannot be large gaps. In some areas, such as in Southern Finland, this means that also the smaller remaining ecologically valuable core areas should be identified and a restoration plan composed in the long term.

FANC hopes for a fruitful cooperation to protect the Greenbelt of Fennoscandia and would be pleased to part in the above described process.

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