

Facts

Natural Environment

Green Belt of Fennoscandia – biodiversity gives rise to growth and wellbeing

Biodiversity and healthy habitats in the Green Belt of Fennoscandia are greatly important to the region's vitality. The Green Belt is to become a model area, where cross-border cooperation supports sustainable development.

Extending from the Baltic Sea to the Arctic Ocean, the Green Belt includes valuable natural areas in Finland, Russia and Norway. Its core is made up of national parks and protected areas in all three countries. The Green Belt of Fennoscandia is the northern portion of the European Green Belt.

Its greatest resource is its incomparable nature. The Green Belt's clean natural areas, magnificent landscapes, versatile hiking opportunities, and its berry- and mushroom-filled forests, fishing spots and hunting grounds draw tourists from both Finland and abroad. Nature-based sources of livelihood and businesses provide jobs and business opportunities for locals. The cultural heritage of the border region is also irrevocably linked to nature.

Sustainable development across borders

Dynamic and safe border regions are in great demand around the world. The Green Belt of Fennoscandia has the potential to develop into an internationally distinctive model area, where both nature and people benefit from cross-border cooperation.

Finland, Russia and Norway share responsibility for protecting the biodiversity and maintaining the vitality of the natural areas in the Green Belt. Cooperation between the countries is based on a Memorandum of Understanding signed in 2010. The cooperation between the countries includes the implementation of international objectives on biodiversity.

Green Belt actors of key importance

To safeguard the future of the Green Belt, the public must recognise and appreciate its natural values and the benefits and abundant opportunities provided by its biodiversity. As the benefits of the Green Belt's biodiversity are significant for local actors, their participation has been sought in building the future of the area.



Working together to safeguard a biologically diverse Green Belt

MARKUS SIRKKA



Aichi Biodiversity Targets as the main framework

Strategic goals:

- Address the underlying causes of biodiversity loss by mainstreaming biodiversity across government and society
- Reduce the direct pressures on biodiversity and promote sustainable use
- Improve the status of biodiversity by safeguarding ecosystems, species and genetic diversity
- Enhance the benefits to all from biodiversity and ecosystem services
- Enhance implementation through participatory planning, knowledge management and capacity building
- **More information:** www.ym.fi > [nature](#) > [biodiversity](#) > [strategy and action plan for biodiversity](#)

Biodiversity is essential to life. The decline in biodiversity has been recognised as a future threat equal to climate change. In addition to conservation, sustainable use of natural resources can help minimise the pressures directed at biodiversity

Ecological corridor helps in adaptation to climate change

The Green Belt of Fennoscandia is a cross-section of boreal evergreen forest that is over one thousand kilometres long. The most significant risks to the environment and to species in this area include climate change, harmful invasive species, impacts of human activities on the environment, and changes in land use that have fragmented protected areas. To protect this area, cooperation is needed to identify the risks it faces and to plan measures for eliminating or minimising these risks.

The Green Belt is an important ecological corridor not only regionally, but also by European standards. Species may move from one area to another through the interlinked protected areas and find new habitats as conditions change. As the climate warms, numerous species will migrate northward seeking cooler habi-



ARI MERILUOTO

tats, while some will migrate from the east to the west as the natural history of Fennoscandia has shown. At the same time, harmful invasive species will pose a threat to biodiversity and these must be identified and eliminated in time.

Sustainable use to halt the decline in biodiversity

Finland, Norway and Russia have all committed to protecting biodiversity in accordance with the international Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). The pro-

ected areas in the Green Belt of Fennoscandia play an important role in achieving this objective.

However, conservation alone is not enough to safeguard biodiversity. Good regional planning can help improve the connectivity of protected areas. The requirements and conditions for the sustainable use of natural resources and the limitations on resource use must also be taken into account in planning related to land use and natural resource use, and natural resource use and management

EU funding for cross-border cooperation

Cross Border Cooperation Programmes finances projects seeking answers to shared challenges in the border region between EU and its Eastern neighbours. During 2014–2020 there are three programmes in the Green Belt area: Kolarctic, Karelia and South- East Finland–Russia. More information on the programmes and their calls: www.enicbc.fi



MARITA BJÖRKSTRÖM

Twin park cooperation

Four Finnish–Russian Twin Parks have been established in the Green Belt, and Inari–Pasvik, a Finnish–Norwegian–Russian Trilateral Park has been established. Twin park cooperation promotes good practices in guidance, managing protected areas and promoting nature-based tourism on both sides of the border.

www.ym.fi/vihreavyohyke
(in Finnish)

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