

Press Release (Berlin, 19 June 2018)

**Iron Curtain and Green Belt
Networks and Opportunities for Cooperation in a European Border Landscape**

**International conference on occasion of the European Cultural Heritage Summit
in the course of the European Cultural Heritage Year 2018 | Berlin 17 – 19 June 2018**

Berlin, 19 June 2018 – Today marked the end of the kick-off conference of the European Cultural Heritage Summit framed by the European Cultural Heritage Year 2018 “Iron Curtain and Green Belt. Networks and opportunities for cooperation in a European Border Landscape”. At the symbolic venue in Bernauer Straße – today Berlin Wall Memorial – where the impacts of the German partition once culminated, representatives of various disciplines examined the diverse facets of Cultural and Natural Heritage, left by the post-war history of a divided Europe along the Iron Curtain trail.

Based on the guiding theme of the European Cultural Heritage Year “border areas – encounter areas” prospects of an intensified border-crossing cooperation of the responsible institutions for monuments, memorial sites and historic sites in the former border regions were explored.

The President of the German National Committee of ICOMOS e.V. and Landeskonservator Berlin (Berlin State Curator), Prof. Dr. Jörg Haspel, summarised the outcome of the conference as follows: “The conference has shown that in Europe former lines of conflict can become lines of cooperation in the present. Border areas offer places for encounters, even for the revision of historic and present neighbourhood conflicts. The cultural and natural heritage left behind in Europe by the Iron Curtain offers unique places of learning for cultural and political education as well as appealing potentials for tourism. Its international conservation and development should be supported sustainably by concerted actions within the European heritage and environment politics as well as UNESCO cultural heritage programmes.”

The Director of the Berlin Wall Foundation, Prof Dr. Axel Klausmeier, pointed out: “Without the history and testimonies of Cold War and Iron Curtain reunited Europe of today with its current tendencies of fragmentation cannot be understood. Therefore I am particularly pleased that the participants of the conference have unanimously agreed to Europeanise the “Network Iron Curtain” in the future and extend its activities beyond national borders. So far this network has only been active within Germany. The conference contributions of Austria, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovenia and Denmark among others gave an important impetus to this goal.”

An additional objective of the conference was to intensify the dialogue between nature conservation and preservation of historical monuments. With the example of the former border region of the Cold War possible overlaps between the different interests of protection (protection of natural and cultural heritage) have been identified in the spirit of a “Nature-Culture Journey”. Moreover, perspectives for stabilised international cooperation in the form of a “standing conference” between institutions operating in the field of natural and cultural heritage have been discussed. **Dr. Kai Frobels, representative of the BUND, (Bund Umwelt und Naturschutz Deutschland e.V. - German Union for the**

Environment and Nature Conservation) underlined “the importance of the National Natural Monument as an instrument to safeguard values in nature conservation and cultural heritage. Hence the BUND firmly supports the efforts made by the federal states Thuringia and Saxony-Anhalt to register their parts of the Green Belt as National Natural Monument.”

The representatives of the Federal Agency of Nature Conservation (Bundesamt für Naturschutz - BfN) clearly stated, that the Initiative Green Belt, which has already been started in 1998, not only aims for the preservation of the former border strip within Germany as the longest national biotope network axis as a matter of nature conservation: “The former German border strip has become an indispensable retreat for many rare and endangered species and therefore must be preserved by all means. But apart from its preservation as natural heritage the purpose must be the long-term conservation of the Green Belt as a cultural heritage as well as the stimulation of sustainable economic development in the Green Belt region, such as tourism and recreation. By now this triad of objectives has been transferred on the entire European Iron Curtain in the context of the European Green Belt Initiative.”

The chances of the Green Belt being nominated for the UNESCO World Heritage List have been discussed based on the available “Feasibility Study World Heritage Green Belt” which were supported by the BfN with funds from the Federal Environment Ministry. Numerous monuments, relicts, sites, traces and testimonies of the Iron Curtain and the Cold War are found embedded in the “Green Belt Europe”, partially registered as landmarks, partially valued as cultural heritage or worthy of preservation as elements of the Cold War cultural landscape. Thus the corridor of the Green Belt connects recent natural heritage with the cultural heritage of contemporary history of Europe in a unique manner. The conference participants recommended to further explore the potentials of a cross-border World Heritage nomination as mixed cultural and natural property.

The Iron Curtain Network

Twelve Federal German sites, museums and memorial sites along the historic Iron Curtain, which exemplarily embody aspects of the former confrontation of systems in Germany and the history of a divided Europe, have been awarded with the European Heritage Label (EHL) in 2011. These institutions and locations spread over eight federal states have merged into the Network Iron Curtain. Since 2012 joint education programmes have been carried out regularly in order to convey the former threat and its overcoming to future generations.

More details: www.netzwerk-eiserner-vorhang.de

The Initiative Green Belt

In Germany “The Green Belt” has been initiated in 1989 already, as a project for preservation and development of a German-German landscape of memory symbolising the overcoming of Cold War and habitat along the Iron Curtain, crossing inner German borders. The project has been started by the BUND e.V., who has ever since been advocating the preservation and development of the Green Belt. In 2002 the BUND has also stimulated the idea of a European Green Belt. In 2003 existing initiatives throughout Europe merged into the “Green Belt Initiative Europe”. Today the initiative consists of roughly 150 governmental and non-governmental organisations, universities, spatial development planners and other participants from 24 countries.

More details: www.bund.net/gruenes-band and www.europeangreenbelt.org

Iron Curtain and Green Belt

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Organisers: Deutsches Nationalkomitee von ICOMOS e.V. (German Committee of ICOMOS - International Council on Monuments and Sites), IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature), Stiftung Berliner Mauer (Berlin Wall Foundation), Landesdenkmalamt Berlin (Berlin State Office for Heritage Preservation - LDA Berlin), BUND (Bund für Umwelt und Naturschutz Deutschland - German Union for the Environment and Nature Conservation), Brandenburgisches Landesamt für Denkmalpflege und Archäologisches Landesmuseum (State Office for Heritage Preservation and Archaeological Museum of the federal state of Brandenburg - BLDAM)

Partners: Iron Curtain Network, German Commission for UNESCO (DUK), Federal Agency of Nature Conservation (Bundesamt für Naturschutz - BfN), BUND Department Green Belt (regional coordinator Green Belt Central Europe and European Green Belt Association e.V.), Green Belt Berlin (Senatsverwaltung Umwelt, Verkehr und Klimaschutz Berlin), Centre for Contemporary History Potsdam (Zentrum für Zeithistorische Forschung - ZZF Potsdam)

Supported by the Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and Media (BKM) on the basis of a resolution of the German Parliament.

Conference programme:

<https://sharingheritage.de/en/events/konferenz-iron-curtain-and-green-belt-das-erbe-des-eisernen-vorhangs-2-2/>

<https://sharingheritage.de/veranstaltungen/konferenz-iron-curtain-and-green-belt-das-erbe-des-eisernen-vorhangs-2-2/>

A printed conference documentation is planned.