

Network of protected areas in Central European border regions

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Within the project TransEcoNet (Transnational Ecological Networks in Central Europe, <http://www.transeconet.eu/>) transnational network of ecological important areas in border regions within Central and Eastern Europe is analysed. In this study the ecological network is to be understood as the existing network of protected areas. The area under investigation stretches from the Baltic Sea to the Ukraine and to the Adriatic Sea covering the NUTS3 regions adjoining the selected inner Central European national boundaries. The analyses are based on spatial data and are performed in a Geographical Information System (GIS). After collecting and harmonising national data as well as European data sets of protected areas all areas have been classified due to the international standard provided by the categories of IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) and categorised as core and non-core areas according to their protection status and size. Following these basic data preparation steps different analyses have been performed. First, the connectivity of the network was analysed using the results of a nearest neighbour analysis. In general the result shows a good protection status of the area under investigation. Thus, also other border areas beside the Green Belt, the former Iron Curtain, are forming important ecological networks and supply important ecological functions and services for the society. Furthermore, based on the connectivity analysis and the determination of potential habitat corridors gaps within the network are detected. For these gaps strategies will be developed to reconnect the single parts of the network. Further results of the project will be management strategies for the sustainable development of ecological important border regions which are currently in preparation.