

BESTbelt Conference 2026

Gorizia, Italy

22-25 June 2026

Conference venue: [Auditorium](#) della Cultura Friulana

Monday, 22 June 2026 – Arrival Day	
Time	Topic
17:00-18:00	Board meeting of the European Green Belt Association e.V. only members of the European Green Belt Association’s Board (Wine Bar Hotel Entourage , Piazza S. Antonio, 2)
18:30-20:30	Welcome dinner at pizzeria ‘La Tarantella’ for conference participants that have registered for the dinner at ‘La Tarantella’ (99, Corso Italia)
21:15-22:15	City Tour to the Italian-Slovenian border of Gorizia/Nova Gorica for conference participants that have registered for the city tour <i>Participants of the welcome dinner will jointly walk to the starting point of the city tour. Alternatively, e.g. in case of delays, you can directly come to the starting point (Transalpina square/Trg Evrope) at 21:15. A night bus is available to take us back to the city center at 22:47 from Piazza Medaglie d’Oro.</i>

Tuesday, 23 June 2026 – Conference (Day 1) - Auditorium della Cultura Friulana	
8:00-9:00	<p>Registration</p> <p>including submission of travel grant documentation for reimbursing participants from non-SEPA countries</p>
09:00-09:30	<p>Opening and welcome</p> <p>Moderation: Gabriel Schwaderer</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutional Greetings • Patrizia Artico, Municipal Assessor of the Municipality of Gorizia • Jutta Paulus, Member of the European Parliament (video call) • Benjamin Rolles, European Commission
9:30 – 13:00	<p>Session 1 (Part 1): BESTbelt - More power for the European Green Belt</p> <p>Moderation: Anne Katrin Heinrichs (EuroNatur) and Vincent Babl (National BUND Competence Center Green Belt)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction into the BESTbelt Project, Jörg Schmiedel (BUND Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania) • Presentation of exemplary BESTbelt funded projects <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ances Nature Reserve: Reviving Biodiversity – Dace Samite (Association “Popes Manor”) • BEE-BIO-NET: Blooming landscapes for wild bees and other pollinators in the Marchfeld region in Austria – Lisa Steiner (Bienenzentrum Vienna) • Empowering rural women through creating small sustainable businesses – Frosina Pandurska -Dramikjanin (Agrobiodiversity Conservation Organization for Rurality and Nature ACORN Skopje) • Exchange and discussion • Project Rallye of BESTbelt funded Projects • Plenary Session <p>Including coffee break</p>
13:00-14:30	<p>Lunch break</p>

Time	Topic
14:30-15:45	<p>Session 1 (Part 2): BESTbelt - More power for the European Green Belt</p> <p>Moderation: Benjamin Rolles (European Commission)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflection of overarching results & impact & lessons learned – Anne Katrin Heinrichs (EuroNatur) • Long-distance “European Green Belt Hiking Trail” as E-Path 13 – Andreas Aschaber (European Mountaineering Association) and Vincent Babl (National BUND Competence Center Green Belt for European Green Belt Association) • Taking stock – Reflection after 5 years of BESTbelt
15:45-16:00	<p>Group picture</p>
16:00-16:30	<p>Coffee break</p>
16:30-17:30	<p>Session 2: Implementation of National Restoration Plans along the European Green Belt</p> <p>Moderation and introduction: Benjamin Rolles (European Commission)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With best practices from Italy and Bulgaria, Michela Tomasella (Biodiversity Department of Friuli Venezia Giulia Region – Organisational Unit for the Biodiversity Observatory and Large Carnivores) & Sergey Aleksandrov (Bulgarian National Nature Protection Service Directorate, Ministry of Environment and Water) • Q&A
17:30-18:15	<p>Session 3: Opportunities to support the implementation of the European Green Belt Initiative's vision</p> <p>Moderation: Petko Tzvetkov (Bulgarian Biodiversity Foundation for the Board of the European Green Belt Association)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The European Green Belt Association and its activities – Florian Danzinger (Environment Agency Austria for the Board of the European Green Belt Association) • Scientific Committee of the European Green Belt Association, Jakub Skorupski (Green Federation „GAIA”) • Current initiatives to promote the European Green Belt with Susie Lunt (writer and journalist), Jürg Mäder (filmmaker), and Giel van Doorn (journalist and filmmaker)

Time	Topic
18:15-19:00	Reimbursement of travel grants and preparation of the European Green Belt Fair
19:00-22:30	European Green Belt Fair Traditional food and drinks from along the European Green Belt & dinner (at conference venue)
Wednesday, 24 June 2026 – Excursion (Day 2)	
08:30-22:45	<p>BESTbelt on the road including visits to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Slovenia: BESTbelt project: Mitigating the effects of electrocution on eagle owls in Western Slovenia Italy: BESTbelt project: Restoring biodiversity along the Italian Green Belt: forgotten bunkers, abandoned meadows and disappearing ponds Italy: Stregna municipality: Model municipality of the European Green Belt - transboundary cooperation best practice, meadow management through landowner association, sustainable tourism <p>Packed lunch in nature and joint dinner at Refugio Pian dei Ciclamini</p>
Thursday, 25 June 2026 – Conference (Day 3) - Auditorium della Cultura Friulana	
09:00-9:15	<p>Session 4: Learnings from the last days</p> <p>Moderation: Jörg Schmiedel (BUND Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wrap-up of field trip and main findings of the first conference day Outlook on the last conference day (conference venue)

Time	Topic
9:15-10:00	<p>Session 5: The German Green Belt on its way to becoming a World Heritage Site</p> <p>Moderation: Liana Geidezis (National BUND Competence Center Green Belt)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Green Belt as UNESCO World Heritage Site – Current Developments in Germany – Alexandra Kruse and Melanie Kreutz (National BUND Competence Center Green Belt) • Species diversity with focus on insects along the German Green Belt – Vincent Babl (National BUND Competence Center Green Belt) • Q&A
10:00-10:45	<p>Session 6: Cooperation with local communities along the European Green Belt</p> <p>Moderation: Francesca Visintin (Rete Italiana EGB)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bear Smart Community as an innovative, community-based conservation approach - Loukia Argriadou (Callisto Environmental Society) • EGTC GO and cross-border cooperation among local authorities on conservation of nature, sustainable territorial development and valorization of the historical and cultural heritage – Ezio Benedetti - EU Projects Coordinator (EGTC GO - European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation of Municipality of Gorizia (Italy), Nova Gorica (Slovenia) and Šempeter-Vrtojba (Slovenia)) • Q&A
10:45-12:00	<p>Session 7: The European Green Belt in times of change</p> <p>Moderation: Anne Katrin Heinrichs (EuroNatur)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creative brainstorming for future activities <p>Including coffee break</p>
12:00-12:30	<p>Wrap-up and closing of conference</p> <p>Moderation: Benjamin Rolles (European Commission) and Gabriel Schwaderer (EuroNatur)</p>

Time	Topic
12:30	Self-organized departure (conference participants)
13:00-14:00	Lunch for participants EGBA General Assembly (only EGBA members) at 'Ai Tre Soldi'
15:00-18:00	General Assembly of the European Green Belt Association e.V. at Auditorium della Cultura Friulana
19:00-20:30	Dinner for EGBA members at 'Ai Tre Soldi'
Friday, 26 June 2026 - Day of Departure	
	Self-organized departure (EGBA members)