

The **BESTbelt** initiative in Lusevera, Italy

Davide Scridel

Italian (European) **GreenBelt** Association

ReCo Scientific Conference – 5th December 2025

“Restoring biodiversity along the Italian Green Belt: *forgotten bunkers, abandoned meadows and disappearing ponds*”

Applicants: Lead: **RETE ITALIANA EGB**; Partner: **WILD ROUTES**;



Funding: € 39.988,50  **BESTbelt**  With financial support of the European Union



Duration: 24 months, from **01/10/2022 to 30/09/2024**.

Stakeholders: Lusevera Municipality, Julian Prealps Natural Park, D. Molaro.



Collaborators: Rifugio Pian dei Ciclamini, La AleGra, Molaro Sas, Paolo Moro, Marco Basso, Luca Dorigo.

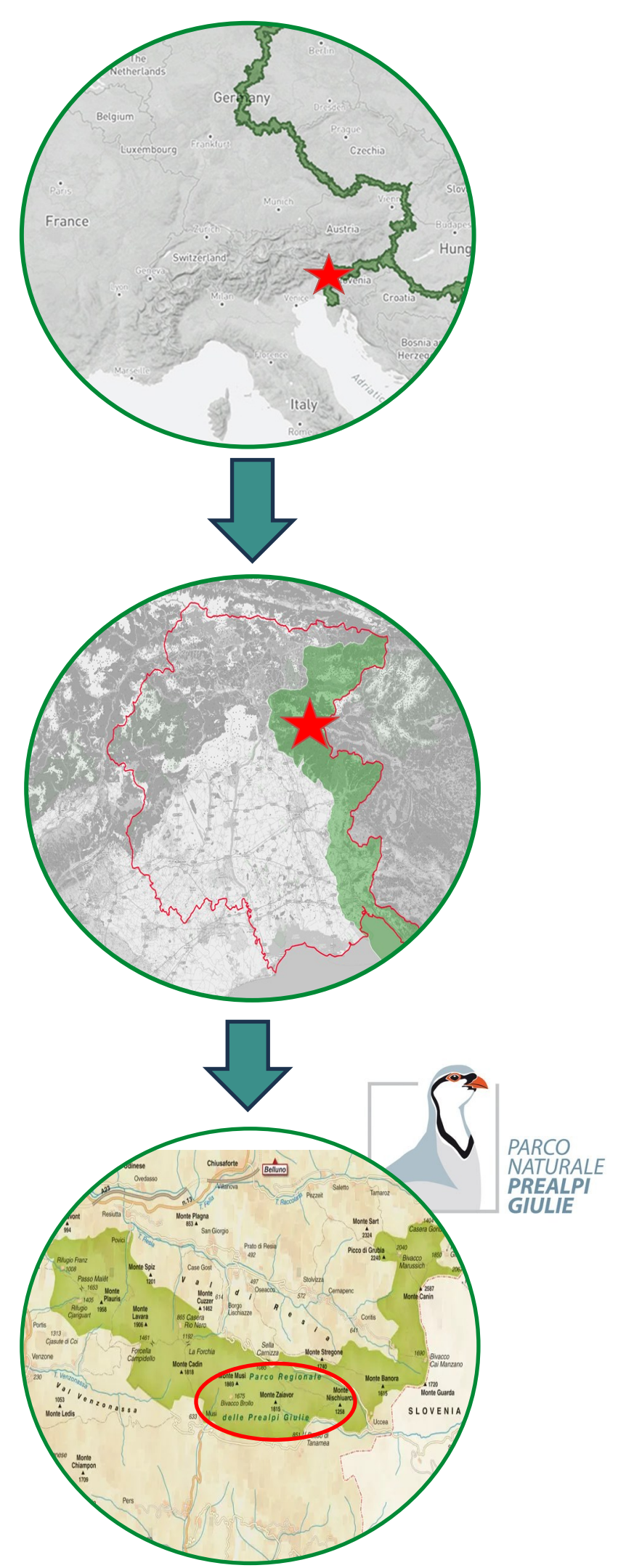


“Redefining battlegrounds:
from specters of past wars to symbols of **biodiversity** renewal”

Where and Why: LUSEVERA

- Small mountain municipality on the **Italian-Slovenian border**. Example of coexistence of cultures in one territory.
- Affected by sharp **population decline**, profound changes in land use and economy, **loss of traditional agro-pastoral practices of land maintenance**.
- Unique and still wild territory, **hotspot for biodiversity and Natura 2000 sites**, located in the heart of the **Julian Pre-Alps Natural Park** and of the Italian Green Belt;
- A place **heavily affected by the wars** of the past century, and particularly the **Cold War**, which has left its scars and remnants here.

These characteristics made Lusevera the ideal place where to put into practice the **purpose and vision of the European Green Belt**.



Project GOALS and RESULTS:

Conservation and/or restoration of biodiversity and ecosystem services

Conservation activities & Restoration activities were held in **three pre-alpine ecosystems:**

- I. BATS (and bunkers)
- II. Meadows (shooting range)
- III. Ponds (watering troughs)



Project GOALS and RESULTS:

I. Forgotten bunkers

Six abandoned Cold War bunkers have been restored by a local contractor, and repurposed as artificial hibernacula suitable for hosting endangered bat species.



Project GOALS and RESULTS:

I. Forgotten bunkers

Post-operations surveys showed the colonization by FIVE different species of bats visiting and roosting in the restored bunkers.



Meta menardi



Meta menardi



I. Forgotten bunkers

Cave-dwelling entomofauna

Euscorpius spp.



Glis glis



Cervus elaphus



Cuculus canorus



Scoliopteryx libatrix



Henicopidae spp.



Rathousia



Troglophilus neglectus



Project GOALS and RESULTS:

II. Abandoned meadows

1.3 hectares of pre-alpine meadows have been freed by a local forestry company from encroaching shrubs and trees, for a total of 5 hectares of open Natura 2000 protected grassland.





Project GOALS and RESULTS:

II. Abandoned meadows

After decades of abandonment, traditional agro-pastoral activities (manual mowing, sheep grazing) have been brought back to these meadows. La Alegria farm is maintaining these pre-alpine meadows open through a sustainable management of the territory.





Hemerocallis lilioasphodelus



Ophris insectifera



Anacampis pyramidalis



Aquilegia einseleans



Lilium carniolicum



Succisa pratensis



Dianthus shyssopifolius

Argynnis aglaja



Deilephila porcellus



Zygaena filipendulae



Coenonympha pamphilus



Parnassius mnemosyne

Project GOALS and RESULTS:

III. Disappearing ponds

A small mountain wetland of 5 small ponds, essential habitat for endangered amphibians and invertebrates, was restored through manual labor.



Project GOALS and RESULTS:

III. Disappearing ponds

- highly increased number of *Rana temporaria*, and of *Bufo bufo* egg strips;
- *Ichthyosaura alpestris* and Odonata species were observed in high abundance;
- specimens of *Bombina variegata* were spotted in the ponds after years of absence.



Libellula depressa



Rana temporaria



Ichthyosaura alpestris



Bombina variegata

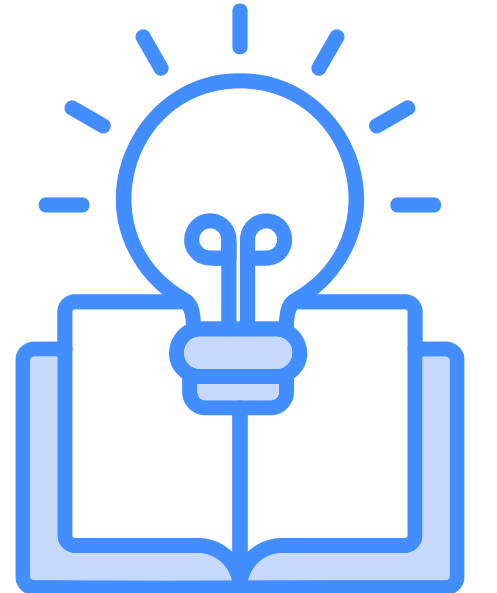


Project GOALS and RESULTS:

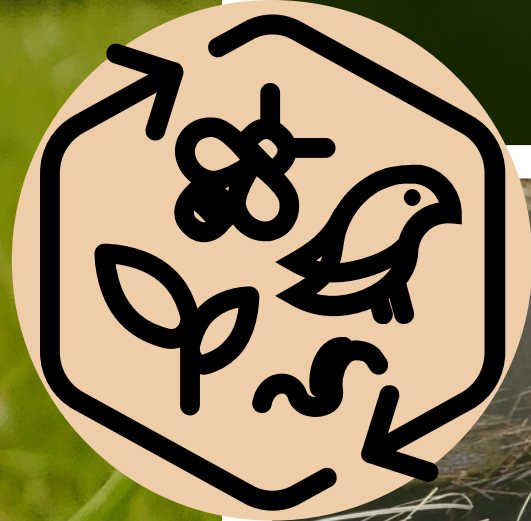


Knowledge of biodiversity, natural resources and ecosystem services

- Pre- & post-operations surveys on biodiversity and habitats.
- Scientific dissemination through data and know-how sharing



Project GOALS and RESULTS:



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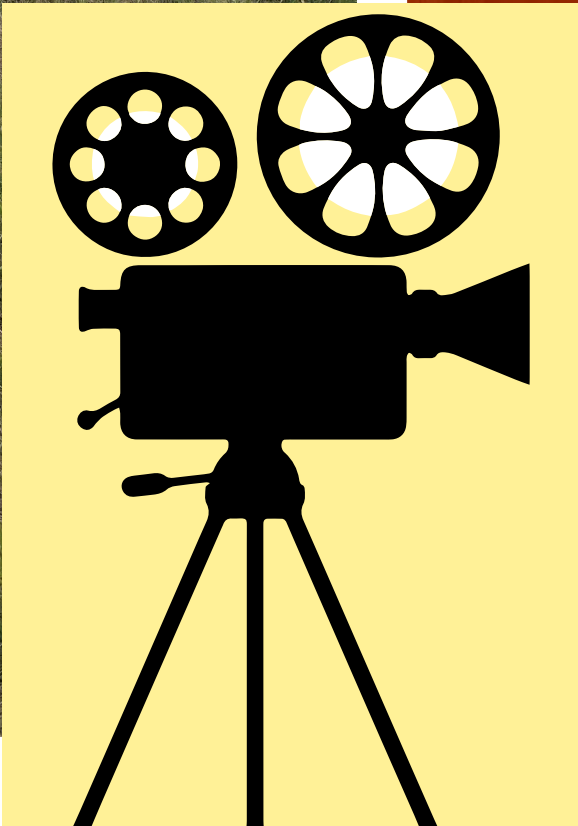


Environmental education and dissemination

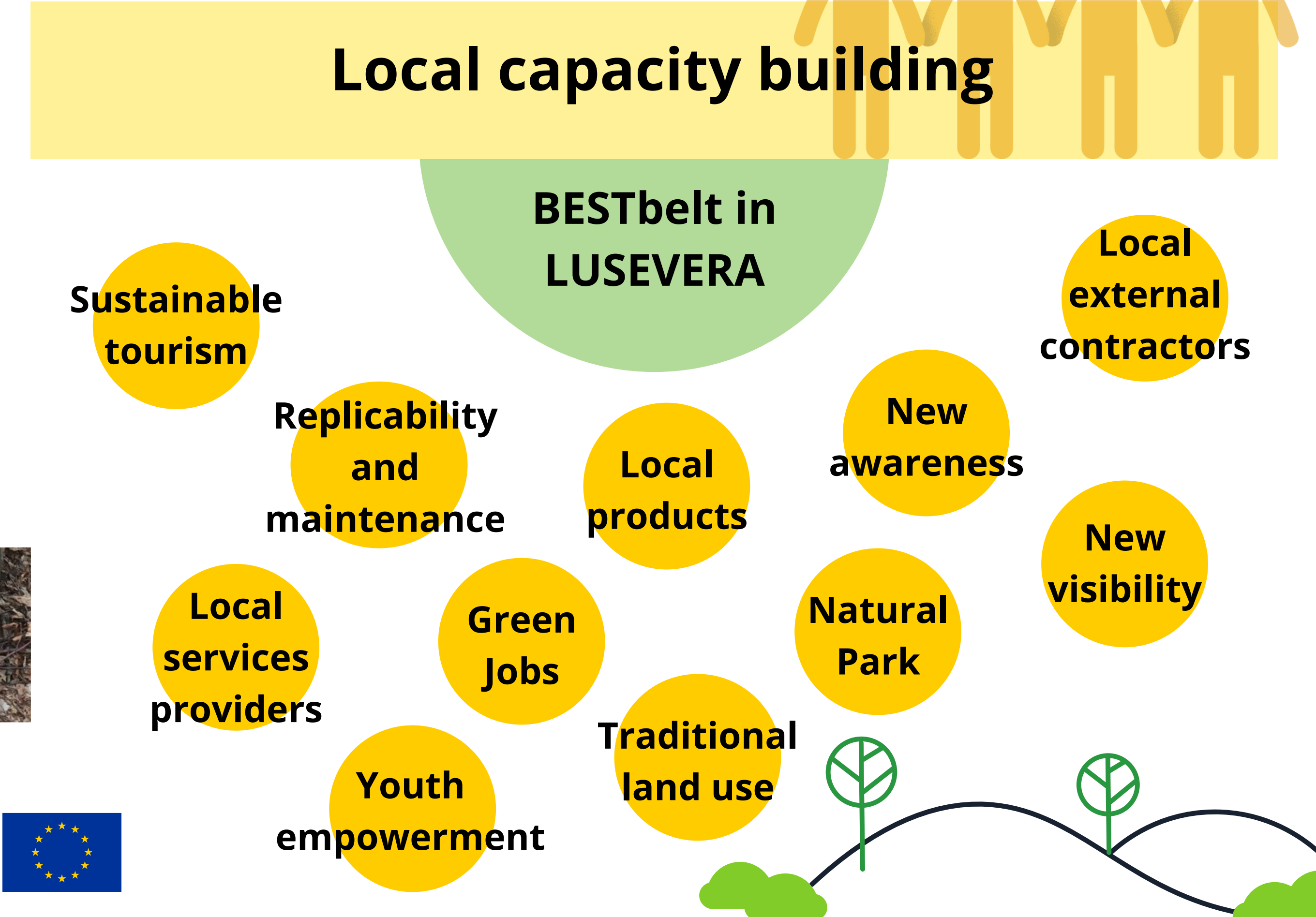
- 5 guided tours for schools on local nature and history
- 3 Conferences open to the public and stakeholders
- Publications and Radio interviews
- Project updates on Social Media platforms
- EGB Virtual Tour
- Short Documentary on the project
- Two workshops for children on the Lusevera bat
- Multilanguage Informative panels along the EGB Trail



Project GOALS and RESULTS:



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With our small BESTbelt project implemented along the European Green Belt, we aim at celebrating our joint vision and effort towards our common good, a greener and more sustainable Europe.

**The whole is greater than the
sum of its parts.**

- Aristoteles



BESTbelt



With financial
support of the
European Union

GRAZIE-

HVALA!

Thank you very much
for your attention!!



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