

ESDN Workshop

2026

28 - 29 May

Building a Resilient Europe: Sustainable Development and Culture in focus

Agenda

28-29 May 2026

**Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Climate and Environmental
Protection, Regions and Water Management (BMLUK)**
Stubenring 1
1010 Vienna, Austria
Room: Saal 2

**Organized by the
European Sustainable Development Network (ESDN)**
in cooperation with the
**Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Climate and
Environmental Protection, Regions and Water Management**
&
the Austrian Federal Chancellery

Day 1: Thursday, 28 May 2026

11:00 – 13:00 CEST	ESDN Advisory Board Meeting (internal meeting) Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Climate and Environmental Protection, Regions and Water Management Stubenbastei 5, 1010, Vienna Room 139 (1 st Floor)
13:30 – 14:00 CEST	Registration & Networking
14:00 – 14:30 CEST	Welcome and Opening of Day 1
14:00 – 14:10	ESDN Welcome Elisabeth Freytag-Rigler , ESDN President, Head of Department for EU-Coordination for Climate and Environment, Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Climate and Environmental Protection, Regions and Water Management, Austria
14:10 – 14:20	Austrian Welcome Anna Muner-Bretter , Federal Chancellery, Austria
14:20 – 14:30	Overview of Workshop Agenda and Day 1 Focus Gerald Berger , Moderator
14:30 – 15:30 CEST	Session 1: Culture and Sustainability – Perspectives and Approaches
14:30 – 14:45	Culture as SDG 18? - Importance and advantages of recognizing culture as decisive aspect in the post-2030 discussions Klara Košťal , Head of Department for Diversity of Cultural Expressions, Austrian Commission for UNESCO, Austria & Anna Steiner , Federal Ministry of Housing, Arts, Culture, Media and Sport, Austria
14:45 – 15:00	From SDGs to Practice: Culture as a Driver of Sustainable Development in Germany and beyond Selina Kahle , Culture and Sustainability Expert and Lecturer at Heinrich-Heine-Universität Düsseldorf, Germany
15:00 – 15:15	Integrating Culture and Cultural Actors more Closely to Sustainability Work Antti Huntus , Director of Arts and Culture Networks, Finnish Arts and Culture Agency, Finland (online)

15:15 – 15:30

Culture as a Driver of Sustainable Development: Preparing Future Generations

László Borbély, ESDN Advisory Board Member, State Counsellor, National SDG Coordinator, Prime Minister's Office - Department of Sustainable Development, Romania (online)

15:30 – 16:00 CEST

Coffee Break

16:00 – 17:15 CEST

Session 2: Conversation Islands – Interactive Group Work with Questions

16:00 – 16:25

Round 1

Island 1: How can cultural heritage and traditions be leveraged to accelerate progress on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), or on sustainable development, in general, in your region?

Kristina Smieskova, ESDN Youth Network Member, Slovakia

Island 2: What are the biggest challenges in preserving cultural diversity while pursuing the economic, social, and environmental dimensions of sustainable development? How can these tensions be resolved?

Antoine Stevens, ESDN Advisory Board Member, International Policy Attaché, Federal Institute for Sustainable Development, Belgium

Island 3: Stories and narratives shape public perception and political will. How can we use culture to accelerate the adoption of sustainable practices?

Louis Meuleman, Chair of the Scientific Committee, European Environment Agency (EEA), Belgium

Island 4: Beyond GDP and carbon footprints, how can we develop indicators that capture the cultural dimensions of sustainable development—such as community well-being, cultural resilience, or intangible heritage? What metrics would you propose?

Maria Stoll, Scientific Officer in Sustainable Development, Federal Office for Spatial Development (ARE), Switzerland

Island 5: As civil servants and experts, we often face resistance to change. What leadership qualities or cultural shifts are needed within our own institutions to champion sustainable development? How can we model these changes?

Melina Matzawrakos, ESDN Advisory Board Member, Policy Officer for Sustainable Development and Participation, Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Climate and

16:25 – 16:50 **Round 2**

16:50 – 17:15 **Round 3**

17:15 – 18:15 CEST **Results of the Group Work & Panel Discussion:
Takeaways from Day 1**

17:15 – 17:45 **Results of the Group Work**

17:45 – 18:15 **Panel Discussion: Culture & Sustainability – Main Takeaways**

Louis Meuleman, Chair of the Scientific Committee, European Environment Agency (EEA), Belgium

Jakob Mohl, UNESCO Commission Youth Delegate, Austria

Florian Kador Folkvord, ESDN Youth Network Member, Norway

Selina Kahle, Culture and Sustainability Expert and Lecturer at Heinrich-Heine-Universität Düsseldorf, Germany

18:15 **Closing & Information on Day 2**
Gerald Berger, Moderator

20:00 – 22:00 CEST **Dinner**

Hollerei
Hollergasse 9
1150, Vienna

Day 2: Friday, 29 May 2026

08:30 – 09:00 CEST Registration and Networking

9:00 – 09:15 CEST **Opening of Day 2**

09:00 – 09:10 **Welcome to Day 2**

Jeannette Muller, ESDN Vice President, Team Lead for Sustainable Development, Ministry of the Environment, Climate and Biodiversity, Luxembourg

09:10 – 09:15 **Overview of Day 2**

Gerald Berger, Moderator, Austria

09:15 – 10:00 CEST **Session 3: Sustainability, Resilience & Democracy in Transformative Times**

09:15 – 09:30 **Can resilience go wrong? Critical reflections connecting ecology and peace**

Sophia Stanger, Focal Point Environmental Peacebuilding, Austrian Centre for Peace, Austria

09:30 – 09:45 **Sustainability as a Pillar of Democratic Stability in Europe**

Maria Nikolopoulou, President – Sustainable Development Observatory, European Economic and Social Committee, Spain (online)

09:45 – 10:00 **Governance for Resilience: Linking Academic Insight and Regional Practice**

(Moderated discussion, bringing together academic and regional perspectives to explore practical pathways towards sustainability, resilience, and democratic transformation)

Sabine Schneeberger, SDG Coordinator, Office of the Regional Government of Styria, Austria

&

Franz Fehr, SDG Coordinator, University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences (BOKU), Austria

10:00 – 10:30 CEST Coffee Break

10:30 – 12:00 CEST **Exchange Spaces 1: Reflecting on Different Topics in the Context of Sustainability, Resilience & Democracy**

10:30 – 11:15 **Round 1**

Table 1: Reducing Critical Raw Material Dependency through Circularity and Technological Innovation

Sascha Thöny, Research Associate - Center for Sustainable Production and Logistics, Fraunhofer Austria Research GmbH, Austria

Table 2: The Contribution of Sustainability to Democracy & Security in Europe and beyond

Vadim Kononenko, European Environment Agency (EEA), Denmark

Table 3: A broader sustainability perspective for successful policy making and communication

Jürgen Janssen, Secretary General, German Council for Sustainable Development, Germany

Table 4: GreenDEMO: Making green transitions more democratic - and democracies greener

Katia Alarcón, Governance Innovation Expert, ICLEI-Europe, Germany

11:15 – 12:00

Round 2

Speakers remain at their tables and everyone else switches tables for round 2.

12:00 – 13:00 CET

Lunch Break

13:00 – 13:45 CET

Exchange Spaces Continued: Reflecting on Different Topics in the Context of Sustainability, Resilience & Democracy

13:00 – 13:45

Round 3

13:45 – 14:45 CET

Results of the Exchange Spaces & Panel Discussion: How to achieve Sustainability, Resilience & Democracy

13:45 – 14:15

Results of the Exchange Spaces

14:15 – 14:45

Panel Discussion: Sustainability, Resilience & Democracy – Main Takeaways

Jeannette Muller, ESDN Vice President, Team Lead for Sustainable Development, Ministry of the Environment, Climate and Biodiversity, Luxembourg

Eva Dvorak, ESDN Advisory Board Member, Director, Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Climate and Environmental Protection, Regions and Water Management, Austria

Kevin Eustatia-Palm, ESDN Youth Network Member, Netherlands

Zsombor Barta, Senior Parliamentary Advisor - International Relations, Hungarian National Council for Sustainable Development (NFFT), Hungary

14:45 – 15:00 CEST

Workshop Closing

14:45 – 14:50

Farewell

Anna Muner-Bretter, ESDN Advisory Board Member, Federal Chancellery, Austria

14:50 – 15:00

ESDN Close and Next Steps

Elisabeth Freytag-Rigler, ESDN President, Head of Department for EU-Coordination for Climate and Environment, Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Climate and Environmental Protection, Regions and Water Management, Austria

15:00 CEST

End of the ESDN Workshop
