RESEARCH WEEK 2026

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EU GREEN

EUROPEAN UNIVERSITIES ALLIANCE FOR SUSTAINABILITY: RESPONSIBLE GROWTH, INCLUSIVE EDUCATION AND ENVIRONMENT

EU GREEN RESEARCH WEEK

Otto von Guericke University Magdeburg, 2-4 June 2026 (4th Edition)

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Introduction

Welcome to the fourth edition of the Research Week!

This edition marks an important transition for the alliance. While it closes an initial phase largely dedicated to structuring collaboration, it also opens a new chapter: one that calls for a stronger articulation between research, education, and innovation.

This booklet provides an overview of the dynamics, partnerships, and thematic priorities that have shaped the alliance's activities since its inception. It is organized around six research clusters, that each brings together academics from all partner universities. These clusters gather dynamic, research-driven teams that generate new knowledge and lie at the heart of the alliance's activities. Each section introduces the scope of a cluster and its orientation, followed by a presentation of its seed funding projects. These projects illustrate the diversity of ongoing collaborations.

The final section includes a directory of the Research Week participants, comprising cluster members, invited speakers, members of the Joint Research Committee (the decision-making body of WP3, composed of vice-rectors for research or representatives), the European Taskforce (bringing together European project officers from all partner universities), and the librarians' network. This directory is intended to facilitate interaction during the event and to encourage future collaborations.

We hope this booklet will serve not only as a guide for the week, but also as a prompt for reflection. Strengthening the link between research, innovation, and education, ensuring broader participation, and critically assessing our collective progress will be key to shaping the alliance's next phase.

The EU GREEN Research Coordination Team (WP3)

1. Cluster 1. Emerging Paradigms for Health and Well-Being

Cluster 1 fosters interdisciplinary research on health and well-being by integrating health sciences, nutrition, sustainable urban and agricultural development, and personalised care. Its research agenda addresses major contemporary challenges, including chronic and neurodegenerative diseases, mental health, occupational health, infectious diseases, and vascular and metabolic disorders. Additional areas of expertise include oncology, immunology, nanomedicine, advanced health technologies, bioactive natural compounds, and innovative therapeutic approaches such as protein-based and radiopharmaceutical treatments.

The cluster places particular emphasis on prevention, healthy ageing, and quality of life through research on sustainable nutrition, physical activity, elderly care, and healthy work environments. Guided by a One Health perspective, it also explores the relationships between human health, environmental sustainability, urban regeneration, and the reduction of chemical inputs in agriculture.

Its principal subclusters focus on respiratory diseases, student mental health, nutrition education, precision medicine, and antibiotic discovery. Current collaborative projects examine health determinants across the life course, mental well-being, personalised medicine, workplace health, and sustainable strategies for promoting well-being through sport and physical activity.

Seed Funding 1 — MHUS. ***Mental Health of University Students: associated factors between countries***

To have sustainable academic environments, it is necessary to promote the well-being of staff and students. Mental health has been getting worse over time in university students, with the pandemic exacerbating it. The aim is to leverage a mental health project, by comparing the mental health of university students between European countries and the factors that influence it. Data from this study will be used to apply for funding from Horizon Europe for the development of strategies to promote the mental health of university students, contributing to sustainable development.

Project lead: Lara Manuela Guedes de Pinho - lmgp@uevora.pt

Seed Funding 2 — TAILEXER. ***Prescription of tailored physical exercise from the integration of omic, clinical and lifestyle data to prevent cardiovascular diseases***

Research has shown that physical exercise is an effective therapeutic tool to deal with cardiovascular diseases (CVDs). However, the success of these preventive programs depends on the ability to identify the population at risk and to apply tailored physical exercise interventions. The purpose of this project is to integrate omic, clinical and lifestyle data to define the cardiovascular risk level of an adult population to propose tailored physical exercise programs that focuses on those physical condition factors most necessary for each person according with their health status. A randomized representative sample of the population (men and women) with ages between 18 and 65 years old was selected. At a methodological level, participants were classified into several risk levels of suffering from CVDs and an initial evaluation of inflammatory, protein, lipid, clinical and lifestyle markers was made. Based on this stratification, a tailored physical exercise intervention was performed. Lastly, a final evaluation was made to analyze the effectiveness of the intervention in each of the defined categories. The team tried to carry out a proof of concept to evaluate the feasibility of our plan and methodology to refine the proposal to improve it to subsequently participate in future European calls (HORIZON, ERAPerMed, or MSCA schemes).
Project lead: Rafael Timon-Andrada - rtimon@unex.es

Seed Funding 3 — Oxidative Stress. ***Implications of oxidative stress and pro-inflammatory factors in nutritional therapy***

The World Health Organization considers that inflammation is a non-specific response of the body to a series of triggering factors - microorganism, physico-chemical and environmental factors, which is why we must give it importance in the management of public health. Research in the field of Precision Nutrition is essential for the development of strategies to promote the general well-being of the population. The purpose of the event is: - Encouraging and transmitting research results focused on the implementation of methods to prevent inflammatory processes in the body with the help of biochemical markers. - Consulting health experts for the possibility of implementing a computerized decision support in preventive nutrition; - Establishing health strategies based on the determination of biomarker levels in the prevention and identification of various inflammatory processes in the human body.
Project lead: Mariana Muresan - mmuresan@uoradea.ro

Seed Funding 4 — Abreak4YOU. ***Evaluation of the impacts of a relaxation-mediated intervention during University classes - a pilot study***

University students exhibit signs of stress, anxiety, and depression, which impacts their mental health and well-being. Incorporating relaxation breaks during classes has shown significant benefits for physical and mental well-being, helping to reduce the symptoms mentioned before. These breaks lead to a decrease in fatigue, help reduce muscular tension and enhance cognitive abilities. The implementation of relaxation-mediated intervention programs in university students holds a tremendous potential to improve health and wellbeing amongst this highly susceptible group. The project aBREAK4you will be implemented in 3 different universities, providing for robust data on the effectiveness of such programs. Overall, this project aims: i) To assess the impact of psychoeducational interventions focused on relaxation techniques on students' self-perceived general health indicators and well-being; ii) To evaluate how these sessions influence

the experience of both physical and mental relaxation; iii) To establish a sustainable, long-term intervention program that ensures continuity and ongoing positive effects on students' health and well-being.
Project lead: Ana Isabel Rodrigues de Morais - ana.morais@uevora.pt

Seed Funding 5 — PRO-Brain. ***PROtein misfolding in neurodegenerative diseases: integrating BioinfoRmAtIcs and biochemistry for Natural compound therapies***
Protein misfolding and aggregation events are the hallmark of several neurodegenerative diseases, such as Alzheimer's and Parkinson's disease. Due to proteostasis capacity decline, aging contributes to the onset and progression of these debilitating conditions. Since Europe has a rapidly ageing population, the incidence of neuropathologies and their costs are expected to increase markedly. Hence, the discovery of disease-modifying therapies represents a compelling challenge for researchers. The aim of PRO-Brain project is to explore the role of plant-derived natural compounds as sources of therapeutic agents for innovative drugs able to prevent or mitigate the progression of neurodegenerative diseases. Specifically, by combining -omics data analyses and experimental approaches, we intend to identify molecular players of proteostasis network able to counteract protein misfolding and aggregation, and whose expression can be modulated by natural compounds. Of note, this multidisciplinary project aligns with the goal of promoting health and well-being and is consistent with the concept of sustainability applicable to drug discovery.
Project lead: Ileana Ramazzina - ileana.ramazzina@unipr.it

Seed Funding 6 — SHAPED. ***Sustainable Health and Academic occuPational Exposures during Digital transformations of work***
Good health and well-being of teaching and research staff is necessary for sustainable academic environments, but little is known about the effect of the ongoing rapid digitalization in higher education and the corresponding changes in the way work is performed and subsequent effects on health and wellbeing. The changes present potential risks for overconnectedness, long working hours, isolation and altered physical activity behaviours and dietary patterns. Previous studies have identified mental health concerns among academics, while less consideration has been made on the impact of the sedentariness of a typical academic's work on their overall health. The aim of this study is to leverage the EU Green network and living lab environment to describe and compare digitalization and determinants of mental and physical health across academics at the nine universities. Data from this study will contribute to sustainable development strategies both at our EU Green campuses and more generally in the EU, and will form the basis for future funding applications for longitudinal consideration of key determinants and health.
Project lead: Jennie Jackson - Jennie.jackson@hig.se

Seed Funding 7 — EDOP. ***Eating Disorders in Older People in Residential Care***
Eating disorders (EDs) are among the most lethal psychiatric illnesses, and yet their presence in later life remains largely invisible. While research and services tend to focus on adolescents and young adults, there is growing evidence—and clinical concern—that EDs in older populations are underdiagnosed, misattributed to general frailty or dementia, and inadequately managed.

This project—EDOP-25: Eating Disorders in Older People in Residential Care—will catalyse a cross-national, interdisciplinary collaboration across three EU GREEN partner institutions (University of Gävle, University of Extremadura, and Atlantic Technological University) to reach expert consensus on the current main challenges in the detection, diagnosis and treatment of older persons with EDs in residential care, and to reach consensus on which parts of existing national treatment guidelines for EDs are relevant and useful for the treatment of older people. Over one year (Jan–Dec 2026), our project will bring together Delphi study methodology, early career researcher (ECR) involvement, stakeholder and researcher workshops, and produce joint outputs in the form of a Delphi study, a policy/practice brief, and a preparatory framework for larger funding proposals. We will host an in-person workshop (in Extremadura) with external stakeholders (regional care networks, public health agencies, dietetics associations) to start discussing a policy/practice brief, and thereafter we will conduct a Delphi study to continue the work with the policy/practice brief. There will be a second in-person workshop to bring together ECRs and senior researchers from all three countries, and to analyse and write the study results. We will simultaneously refine a Horizon Europe concept note on healthy ageing with a special focus on nutrition and mental health, based on emerging results. The entire action is designed to seed sustained collaboration across disciplines (gerontology, nutrition, mental health, qualitative methods), institutions, and countries.
Project lead: Mikaela Willmer - Mikaela.Willmer@hig.se

Seed Funding 8 — NEXT-AGE 80. ***Cross-Border Living and Care Expectations for the Next Generation of Older Adults***

Europe is on the verge of a demographic inflection: cohorts born in the 1960s–70s will reach very old age in the 2040s–50s. Unlike their parents, these future older adults are digitally literate, value autonomy, and seek alternatives to institutional long-term care. Yet, policy and service models still reflect assumptions of past generations, with limited insight into what today's 55–65 year-olds expect at age 80. NEXT-AGE 80 is an exploratory, multi-partner collaboration across Universidade de Evora (PT), Universidad de Extremadura (ES), and Otto von Guericke University Magdeburg (DE). It will reinforce collaboration by combining complementary expertise (healthy ageing, social care, digital health, community design) and will deliver travel and networking, information sharing, access-to-data arrangements, and joint outputs (a comparative insight report and a short working paper) that seed larger projects (Interreg/Horizon) and formalise a cross-border subgroup on "Next-Gen Ageing".
Project lead: Sandra Pais - spais@uevora.pt

Seed Funding 9 — miRAMa. ***A Novel microRNA-Based Diagnostic Framework for Proactive Mastitis Management in Dairy Cattle***

Contemporary animal production faces the profound challenge of maintaining animal health while simultaneously increasing productivity and minimizing environmental impact and antibiotic use. In the dairy sector, mastitis epitomizes this challenge, as it represents an inflammatory disease of the mammary gland intrinsically linked to immune responses and responsible for substantial economic and welfare impacts. This condition is a leading cause of economic loss and therapeutic antibiotic administration. Addressing this issue head-on, this project proposes a simple, cost-effective method to detect microRNAs (miRNAs) in milk, which serve as direct

molecular reflections of immune system activity. The central premise is that the early detection of specific miRNAs can predict disease onset, thereby significantly improving animal welfare and reducing the reliance on antibiotics. This initiative, however, aims for an impact beyond scientific discovery; it is founded on a dual mission that pairs pioneering research with a robust formative and dissemination strategy to ensure its innovations are effectively translated into industry-wide practice.
Project lead: Mario Baratta - mario.baratta@unipr.it

Seed Funding 10 — Nurses4sustainability. ***Nurses4sustainability***
The shortage of nurses and new graduates reporting lack of competence in some areas and high levels of stress make it important to study nursing education and clinical practice education (CPE) as it is the basis for nurse wellbeing and competence in the future. The project 'Nurses4Sustainability' brings together nurse researchers from Gävle, Extremadura and Parma. The team consists of three female researcher and four male, four early career researchers. Capacity building and networking are emphasized during the research project focusing on nursing students during clinical practice education and their supervisors. The overall aim is to contribute to a sustainable empowering education for nursing students and a sustainable work environment for nurses working as supervisors at the same time as they perform their duties as registered nurses. The project Nurses4Sustainability will promote an inclusive, sustainable nursing training during CPE, empowering nursing students and their supervisors (registered nurses). Strengthen the collaboration between the university and the local/regional healthcare setting for a sustainable CPE. Nurses4Sustianability brings nursing researchers within EUGREEN together to explore and develop strategies to improve nursing student CPE, competence and wellbeing as well as supervisors' competence and wellbeing. In the long run, it contributes to attracting, training, and retaining qualified nurses and addressing the global nursing workforce shortage. The specific aims are 1) to explore nursing students' competence, learning and wellbeing (thriving and stress) after the last CPE in relation to how the CPE is structured and student-rated CPE learning environment; and 2) to explore supervisor competence, wellbeing and structural conditions for the role. Activities planned are networking in online meetings and three workshops, one in each university, data collection and co-authoring 1-2 papers. Training of early career researchers will take place during all parts from project management, design of a multi-site cross-sectional study, data collection, analysis and results dissemination. Stakeholders from regional healthcare settings will be involved in the beginning and at the end of the project. Based on the results from the research project and workshops with stakeholders a course plan for an online supervisor training course will be developed to empower supervisors in the clinical healthcare settings.
Project lead: Ylva Pålsson - ylva.palsson@hig.se

Seed Funding 11 — OXY-FIBRA. ***Optimizing Exercise Physiology in Special Populations: Evidence from Fibromyalgia towards Broader Clinical Applications***
Exercise represents a cornerstone of health promotion and clinical rehabilitation. However, individuals with chronic clinical condition such as fibromyalgia, frailty, and cardiorespiratory diseases, often display impaired physiological responses to exercise, limiting their ability to achieve therapeutic benefits safely. Previous studies conducted at the University of Évora have consistently demonstrated reduced muscular oxygen utilization in women with fibromyalgia,

leading to premature fatigue, autonomic imbalance, and altered cortical activation patterns. These phenomena were identified through integrated assessments involving near-infrared spectroscopy (iSuch evidence highlights a potential convergence of physiological mechanisms across different chronic conditions, emphasizing the need for transnational collaboration to develop standardized protocols for exercise optimization in vulnerable populations. This project seeks to consolidate a transnational collaborative research line within the EU GREEN alliance, involving the University of Évora (Portugal), the University of Extremadura (Spain), and Otto von Guericke University Magdeburg (Germany). The general objective is to optimize exercise physiology in special populations through the integration of advanced monitoring technologies and personalized intervention strategies.

Project lead: José Alberto Frade Martins Parraça - jparraca@uevora.pt

2. Cluster 2. Agriculture, food, and environmental sustainability

Cluster 2 explores innovative approaches seeking to improve the agroecological transition through sustainable, resilient, and climate-adapted agricultural systems. Its research activities address the environmental consequences of conventional agricultural practices, including biodiversity decline, soil degradation, water contamination, and inefficient resource use, while promoting circular and resource-efficient production models.

Research projects include sustainable plant and seed health management, food quality, consumer behaviour and food acceptability, environmental remediation, water management, and the valorisation of agricultural waste and by-products for the development of novel ingredients and biomaterials. The cluster also investigates biodiversity conservation, animal welfare, sustainable aquaculture, and the integration of digital and IoT technologies in precision agriculture and livestock monitoring.

Special emphasis is placed on enhancing the resilience and functioning of agroecosystems in the context of climate change, especially regarding water scarcity, nutrient losses, and ecosystem degradation. Researchers also examine agri-environmental policies, governance models, and regulatory frameworks designed to support ecological transition and the development of sustainable food systems.

Seed Funding 12 — AGRIBIOPEP. ***Bioactive peptides recovery from agrifood industry waste***
The project proposes solutions for reusing and valorizing the high percentages of waste from agri-food industries. This involves studying alternative and natural sources of low-cost proteins that would reduce the dependence and environmental footprint that animal proteins tend to leave behind. It aligns with the Horizon Europe strategy "From Farm to Fork" and with the priorities of the European "Green Deal". Proteins would be used in future projects to develop technologies in order to use bioactive peptides as innovative food ingredients and supplements in the food industry.
Project lead: María José Benito Bernáldez - mjbenito@unex.es

Seed Funding 13 — CDF+. ***Circular Dairy Farming Plus***
The CDF+ seed funding project aims at creating EUGREEN joint research and informative network focused on the application to international research calls related to the sustainable food production chain and waste management. Considering the need for an interdisciplinary approach to improve the dairy production system sustainability, an MSCA staff exchange proposal including cutting-edge research, covering the entire dairy production cycle phases (production, processing, recycling) will be finalized and submitted. Other proposals will be developed under the same concept.
Project lead: Lars Hillström - lars.hillstrom@hig.se

Seed Funding 14 — BioFungiFood. ***Innovative procedures against emerging fungal species under challenging climate change conditions for healthy and safe vegetables***
This seed project will lay the groundwork for a collaborative international research team to apply for funding for a project based on an integrated and safe system focusing on alternative and natural fungicides, with innovative procedures for evaluating, detecting, and controlling emerging fungal species that affect vegetables, promoting healthier food production for human and animal consumption, and contributing to environmental sustainability. It aligns with the Horizon Europe policy "from farm to fork" and the European Green Deal.
Project lead: Alberto Martín González - amartin@unex.es

Seed Funding 15 — COOBASED. ***A cooperative-centred approach to develop alternative and sustainable food supply chains***
The Coobased seed project aims to investigate and understand new solutions and initiatives that can help foster a more sustainable “Food System” in Europe based on the promotion of organic food through cooperative-based proximity networks. To this end, a multidisciplinary approach is proposed, which will first analyze the obstacles that hinder the development of alternative production and distribution chains for organic food and the drivers that can promote these novel and direct food supply models based on farmers’ cooperatives or consumer organizations. Subsequently, possible solutions will be studied, on the one hand from the technological point of view in order to improve the processing and packaging of small-scale food so that it can reach the consumers safely and meet their expectations. On the other hand, we intend to explore the possible business models that can be implemented considering both the nature of the desired relationships between producers and consumers and the cooperative approach. Finally, we will work on the development of a research project proposal on this topic to be presented in future Horizon Europe calls.
Project lead: Francisco Javier Mesías Díaz - fjmesias@unex.es

Seed Funding 16 — SUSTREM. ***Nature-oriented remediation of historical mining sites for environmental sustainability***
The project concerns remediation of areas affected by historical metal(loid) ore mining with considering phytoremediation, water protection and possible land use for agricultural purposes. Former mining areas occur throughout Europe and pose an environmental hazard and risk to humans through likely input of toxic elements into food chains and their release into water. We

will examine the use of several additives (biochar, various mineral and organic waste materials) to improve the quality and health of soils on mine dumps, tailings and in their surroundings, and to limit the release of toxic elements to water. Special attention will be paid to limiting the release of acid mine and rock drainage. The project will be implemented on the example of selected mining areas in Poland and Portugal. Plants suitable for revegetation and phytoremediation of these sites will be tested. Factors that determine soil health and plant growth, and limit the uptake of toxic components from soils, will be examined. Focus will be given to the specificity of soil microbiome and the aspects of biodiversity of fauna and flora in these sites under the conditions of phytoremediation.
Project lead: Anna Karczewska - Anna.karczewska@upwr.edu.pl

Seed Funding 17 — MultiForest. ***Multifunctional approach to agroforestry for resilience and sustainability***
The MultiForest proposal has the main objective to develop a multifunctional approach in the management of rural areas in four territories of the EU GREEN Alliance, in Italy, Poland, Spain, Portugal, developing research proposals to implement this new approach together with local stakeholders. The multifunctional approach focuses on the ecosystem services that can be provided in agroforestry and silvopastoral systems, making clear to stakeholders all the benefits that can derive from a sustainable management of forests and related environments moving towards green and digital transition. Beyond the sequestration of carbon, forests can provide many other provisioning, regulating, supporting and cultural services. The partners aim at providing tools for estimating and potentiating the ecosystem services, in cooperation with the stakeholders with the final goal of making the rural environments more viable and attractive. To this end, the partners plan to identify the specific challenges in each territory, to co-create research proposals, to keep an observatory for funding opportunities, and cooperate in the communication activities. Each partner University brings a stakeholder to the MultiForest team. The partners will visit each other during 4 workshops dedicated to specific categories of ecosystem services, and after this round of visits it will be clear how the research approach for multifunctionality can be written and put in practice in proposal writing.
Project lead: Elena Maestri - elena.maestri@unipr.it

Seed Funding 18 — Artificial Intelligence in Veterinary Medicine. ***Artificial Intelligence in Veterinary Medicine***
The third edition of Interdisciplinary International Conference on the use of "Artificial Intelligence in Veterinary Medicine" will be held at the University of Environmental and Life Sciences (UPWR) in the John Paul II Hall in April 2026. The educational conference aims to disseminate knowledge and access of current methods of implementing AI in veterinary medicine for students and staff as well as scientists and practitioners of 4 European EU GREEN partner universities: Wroclaw University of Environmental and Life Science, the University of Gävle, Atlantic Technological University and the University of Extremadura Established in 2024 by Dr Marta Facon-Poroszewska, the AI VET Conference is a platform of networking, knowledge sharing and discussion among top scientists, business owners and academic teachers of European education area focused on the topic of AI implementation in veterinary industry, science and education to support sustainable European development and high quality research-based education. Achieving

these goals could increase European competitiveness while preserving western civilizational standards of social responsibility in rapidly changing world after AI introduction.

Project lead: Marta Facon-Poroszewska - marta.facon-poroszewska@upwr.edu.pl

3. Cluster 3. Engineering and technology for sustainable development

Cluster 3 develops sustainable engineering and technological solutions to address global challenges related to energy, mobility, urbanisation, agriculture, and resource management. The cluster promotes innovative approaches that support social equity and climate-neutral development through interdisciplinary research in engineering, digital technologies, and sustainable infrastructure.

Research activities focus on renewable energy systems, resilient infrastructures, circular economy models, smart industries, water and wastewater management, climate-neutral technologies, and digital transformation for sustainable development. The cluster also explores ecological materials, operational performance models for complex systems, and innovative urban and mobility concepts designed to improve sustainability and resource efficiency.

Alongside the integration of sustainable materials into urban development, infrastructure planning, and agriculture, research interests encompass precision agriculture technologies, sensor networks, information systems, renewable energy solutions, and advanced machinery to enhance agricultural productivity and resource efficiency in the context of climate variability and increasing environmental constraints.

Seed Funding 19 — CHAIN2SUSTAIN. ***Collaborative Human AI Decision-Making for Sustainability***

Decision making under the perspective of sustainability is a complicated endeavour. It requires taking into consideration several complex and uncertain factors, competing interests over varying timescales regarding cost, environmental aspects, quality of life and fairness. We aim at benchmarking different approaches to hybrid Human and Artificial Intelligence (AI) collaboration, for the purpose of assisted decision making, with a sustainability bias.

Project lead: Salvador Abreu - spa@uevora.pt

Seed Funding 20 — EUGTEC. ***EU Green Thermal Engineering Conference***

The EU Green Thermal Engineering Conference (EUGTEC) brings together universities to foster collaboration, research, and innovation in thermal energy, supporting decarbonization and EU's climate and energy goals. The organizing universities (Gävle, Oradea, ATU, Parma, and Extremadura) will share expertise across diverse thermal energy fields—such as thermodynamics, heat transfer, distribution, renewable energy, energy storage, ICT applications—through keynotes, presentations, and workshops featuring academics, industry representatives, and authorities. By creating a platform for academia-industry engagement, EUGTEC advances the SDG goals of clean energy, climate action, and sustainable development. This joint effort fosters knowledge exchange between academia, industry, and policymakers, driving innovation and practical applications in thermal engineering. The conference, held in Oradea and streamed online, reduces travel impacts and enhances the participation of young researchers (e.g. MSc and PhD students). On an international scale, the conference can act as a global hub for exchanging ideas, knowledge, and best practices.

Project lead: Mathias Cehlin - Mathias.Cehlin@hig.se

Seed Funding 21 — DT-MMS-i. ***Digital Twins in Management, Maintenance and Sustainability of infrastructures***

Critical infrastructures are the backbone of societies providing essential services for their functioning. These infrastructures are exposed to numerous risks. The Structural Health Monitoring (SHM) of these infrastructures generates a massive amount of data. The evaluation of this data has allowed for the monitoring of the performance and safety of such structures. The impressive development of artificial intelligence algorithms, along with the current maturity of analytical models, enable the exploration of new digital control paradigms for these infrastructures, improving their resilience and sustainability. The digital twin is an example of cutting-edge technology for enhancing the information extracted from SHM monitoring of an infrastructure. In this project, we want to identify different infrastructures in EU Green regions in which a digital twin can be developed, the different methodologies that can be used to implement this technique, the barriers and challenges we face when implementing this technology in an infrastructure, the cost of implementation, the added value that digital wins can bring to the infrastructure maintenance and how can improve the infrastructure sustainability.

Project lead: María Inmaculada Torres Castro - inmatorres@unex.es

Seed Funding 22 — ZeroRR. ***Zero-emission regional energy supply with integrated recycling***

This project addresses the topics of electricity generation from renewable sources, efficient energy storage to smoothen fluctuations in generation and consumption, efficient heat supply systems and use of geothermal energy. Sustainable recycling of the hardware, e.g. photovoltaic panels, is also addressed. This seed-funding project is intended to prepare a wider collaborative research approach on application of the mentioned technologies to create "zero-emission" regional energy networks with the potential of even creating a CO2 sink. Six partners from the EU Green consortium will be involved. The intended proposal creates links to six different sustainable development goals and will be organised such that the carbon footprint will be low.

Project lead: Ulrich Krause - ulrich.krause@ovgu.de

Seed Funding 23 — Edu-GreenLabs. ***AI for Inclusive and Sustainable Learning Ecosystems***
Edu-GreenLabs unites three universities of the EU-GREEN Alliance – the University of Oradea (Romania), Otto-von-Guericke University Magdeburg (Germany), and the University of Evora (Portugal) – to establish a durable and interdisciplinary collaboration addressing one of Europe's most pressing educational challenges: reconciling digital inclusion with environmental sustainability. The project directly operationalises EU-GREEN's Strategic Roadmap 2030, especially its pillars Education for Sustainable Societies and Green Digitalisation, and serves as a concrete preparatory stage for a Horizon Europe proposal under HORIZON-CL2-2026-TRANSFORMATIONS-01-05 – The Future of Education in the Digital Era. Across the European Education Area, schools and universities face two interconnected crises. The first is digital inequality: persistent divides in access, competence, and infrastructure still limit the participation of rural learners, under-resourced institutions, and disadvantaged regions. The second is the ecological footprint of digitalisation: the massive energy consumption of cloud-based learning platforms, high data-transfer rates, and short hardware lifespans contradict the European Green Deal's commitment to carbon neutrality. As education becomes more data-driven, its energy demand also rises, and the promise of "smart learning" risks excluding those without connectivity while harming the very planet that education seeks to protect. Edu-GreenLabs proposes a pragmatic and forward-looking response based on low-energy, offline and equitable AI systems for education. The initiative does not fund research experiments but instead focuses on capacity building, methodological integration, and governance design to prepare a large-scale collaborative research project under Horizon Europe. It will consolidate existing expertise, harmonise ethical standards, and produce open-access resources that will become permanent assets within EU-GREEN's shared infrastructure.
Project lead: Adrian Hatos - ahatos@uoradea.ro

Seed Funding 24 — SAVE-U. ***Sustainable networks supplychain***
Within Cluster 3, a sub-cluster addresses the adverse impacts of rising demand for energy, materials, and food through sustainable engineering and technology. A key challenge is assessing practices that contribute to sustainability issues. This research develops a sustainability assessment framework for Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) value chain, where sustainability efforts are growing but remain debated. While sustainability initiatives within HEIs—such as green campus programs, energy efficiency projects, and well-being measures—are expanding, their effectiveness and consistency remain contested. In addition, activities traditionally viewed as positive, such as international mobility, research collaborations, and global partnerships, can inadvertently increase carbon footprints or resource consumption, revealing the nuanced and sometimes conflicting dimensions of sustainability in academia. Measure includes various aspects of sustainability such as renewable energy use, efficient heating, green campus initiatives, or well-being measures. It aims to provide a holistic and scalable tool for HEIs to identify strengths, gaps, and trade-offs in their sustainability performance. To ensure the alignment of institutional strategies with long-term sustainability objectives, a roadmap will be developed for better sustainability practices within the university value chain, supporting decision-makers in implementing targeted improvements.

Beyond the academic sector, this seed-funding project will establish the foundation for a broader "sustainable network", fostering interdisciplinary collaboration among universities, industry partners, and policymakers. The long-term vision is to extend the framework to other industries, promoting cross-sector learning and innovation in sustainable value creation.

Project lead: Jettarat Janmontree - jettarat.janmontree@ovgu.de

4. Cluster 4. Heritages and Tourism

Cluster 4 explores contemporary challenges related to heritage and tourism through an interdisciplinary approach that brings together the humanities, social sciences, environmental sciences, arts, law, architecture, digital technologies, and tourism studies. The cluster examines heritage in its material, intangible, ecological, and digital forms, considering it both as a legacy to preserve and as a strategic resource for sustainable development, territorial attractiveness, and social cohesion. In the context of environmental, societal, and geopolitical transformations, the cluster seeks to rethink how heritage is created, preserved, interpreted, and mobilised within both local and global dynamics.

Research activities are organised around three complementary axes. The first investigates the creation and rediscovery of heritage, cultures, and identities through artistic expression, documentary practices, digital innovation, and social and technological change. The second focuses on preservation and circulation, addressing conservation practices, sustainability challenges, and the interactions between heritage, territories, and communities. A third axis examines historical trajectories and contemporary transformations through critical and political perspectives, including questions of memory, conflict, migration, representation, inclusion, and heritage justice.

The cluster explores sustainable models of growth, evolving tourism practices, digital tools for cultural mediation, and governance frameworks related to heritage policies. It also addresses issues surrounding sustainable medical tourism and fair access to cross-border healthcare across Europe. More broadly, the cluster encourages inclusive, multilingual, and participatory perspectives that support intercultural exchange and contribute to a deeper understanding of the diversity and transformation of heritage over time.

Seed Funding 25 — MOTEA. ***Model of tourism for engagement adoption***
This project aims to enhance the digital communication of European Tourist Destinations (ETD) to transform them into Smart Tourist Destinations (STD) and promote sustainability. It focuses on studying ETDs webpages in the Strategic Online Communication Approach context for public

engagement. The result is a scale MOTE-A (Model of Tourism Webpages for Engagement Adoption), applied to a sample of ETDs webpages to show their level of engagement. Model MOTE-P (Prediction) will then be tested with PLS to explain if greater engagement leads to better tourism economic results.
Project lead: María Victoria Carrillo-Durán - vicduran@unex.es

Seed Funding 26 — NOTES. ***Net-zerO challenge for Tourism EducatorS***
This project is a collaboration among EU GREEN Universities to support tourism, cultural and natural heritage industries transition to Net Zero. To address the significant gap in sustainable literacy and decarbonisation knowledge (Conefrey, et al. 2023) this project will assess and identify the skills and training required by the tourism industry. This project will aid curricula design to provide skilled graduates to facilitate transition towards Net Zero, enable the sector to become more sustainable, align with the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive and benefit communities and destinations.
Project lead: James Hanrahan - james.hanrahan@atu.ie

Seed Funding 27 — TRACE. ***Tracking Circularity in Tourism Destinations***
TRACE (Tracking Circularity in Tourism Destinations) aims to transform tourism into a circular, sustainable sector across key European regions. Utilizing advanced AI and Circular Economy Sustainable Tourism Indicators (CESTIs), TRACE collects and analyzes critical data, enabling tourism destinations to significantly reduce their carbon footprint, enhance resource efficiency, and minimize waste. By implementing digital twins for real-time monitoring, TRACE empowers destinations to make evidence-based decisions in the formation of policy instruments. Through active stakeholder engagement, TRACE promotes innovative practices that align with the EU Green Deal's sustainability goals, setting new standards in eco-friendly tourism across the demo sites in Spain, Italy, Greece, and Lithuania.
Project lead: João Gomes - joao.santos.gomes@hig.se

Seed Funding 28 — SENTINEL. ***Smart Engagement and Networking Tools for Interactive Narratives in European Living Heritage***
The SENTINEL project addresses persistent challenges in the cultural heritage sector, where institutions often rely on costly, fragmented, and inaccessible tools for content creation, sharing, and exhibition design. Many cultural heritage institutions (CHIs), especially smaller or underresourced ones, face significant barriers to adopting advanced digital solutions due to high costs, technical complexity, and a lack of interoperable systems. This limits their ability to collaborate, reuse digital assets, and engage visitors through modern, interactive experiences. SENTINEL responds by designing two interconnected toolkits, SENTINEL Create and SENTINEL Design, that empower CHIs of all sizes to produce, share, and deliver engaging digital and physical heritage experiences. SENTINEL Create simplifies the production and reuse of interactive multimedia content, integrating resources such as 3D models, images, and metadata, while ensuring compatibility with European Collaborative Cloud for Cultural Heritage (ECCCH) standards. SENTINEL Design provides innovative tools for 3D visualization, visitor navigation analysis, and lighting optimization, enabling institutions to create accessible, cost-effective, and aesthetically refined

exhibitions. The project's ambition is to democratize digital transformation in heritage by offering userfriendly, open-source, and interoperable tools. These will reduce duplication of effort, lower costs, and encourage collaborative workflows across the ECCCH. Inclusivity lies at the project's core: the intuitive interfaces, minimal hardware requirements, and participatory development ensure that small institutions, freelancers, and non-technical users can also benefit. SENTINEL's methodology is built on user-centered design (UCD), stakeholder workshops, iterative testing, and pilot deployment across a diverse set of museums, archaeological sites, and cultural organizations in Ireland, Italy, and Spain. These pilots ensure practical validation, scalability, and adaptability of the toolkits.
Project lead: James Hanrahan - james.hanrahan@atu.ie

Seed Funding 29 — RIVER. ***RIVER TALKS/Paroles de fleuves***
In his essay on the imagination and waters, Robert Haas calls rivers "the ecological unconscious" (globalonenessproject.org). Rivers are elemental to our imaginary, to world-making practices, storytelling, and literature. The imagery of rivers spans from the mythic and metaphysical to travel or the political. Hence, rather than merely a setting or a metaphor, they function as dynamic matter and relational spaces in our imagination. Yet, under the sustainability development goals of clean waters and life below waters, rivers seem to mainly feature as the subject of analysis considered from a geographical, hydrographical, and biological perspective, sidelining the cultural and literary potential in emphasising the relevance of river stories, the resilience of rivers, and their sustenance for communities. The anticipated international conference of RIVER TALKS/Paroles de fleuves thus seeks to focus on existent rivers and their local ecologies from a literary and cultural studies perspective. As the title implies, the conference topic thereby touches upon various dimensions of the river imaginaries as sustaining an ecological unconscious from talks about rivers to the voice of rivers themselves.
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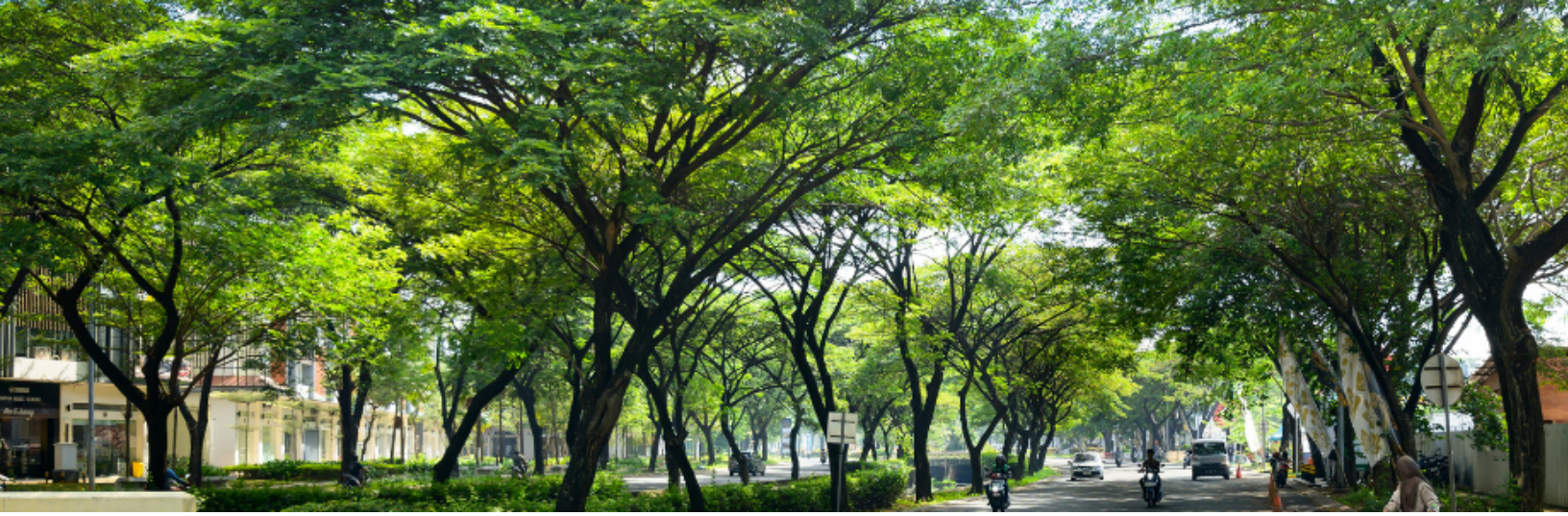

5. Cluster 5. Education sciences for sustainable development

Cluster 5 focuses on education for sustainable development through collaborative, interdisciplinary, and systems-oriented research. It aims to develop innovative educational frameworks that integrate ethical, social, environmental, and economic dimensions of sustainability into teaching, learning, and institutional practices.

Research activities explore how education can foster sustainable behaviours and cultural transformation at both individual and organisational levels. Particular emphasis is placed on pedagogical approaches that support sustainability competences among students, academics, schools, and external stakeholders in national and international contexts.

The cluster investigates key contemporary challenges such as climate action, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), innovation, and the circular economy, and aims to inform curriculum design, campus management, community engagement, and institutional governance. It also seeks to map existing sustainable initiatives across the EU GREEN community in order to identify gaps, needs, and opportunities for collaboration. Researchers contribute to the development of inclusive educational practices and transformative learning environments capable of addressing complex global challenges and supporting sustainable societal transitions.

Seed Funding 30 — BASE. ***Baseline Assessment of Sustainability related Educational practices and perceptions of the academic and research staff across EU Green***
Taking an intra-disciplinary approach, this project designed, executed, and evaluated a survey to explore the sustainability-related education practices and perceptions (SREPP) of academic and research staff across the partner Universities. It established critical insights into the existing SREPP and the associated challenges, and supported the development of a framework to monitor the progress of EU Green towards embedding Sustainability, Education for Sustainable Development and the SDGs (collectively referred to in this document as SHE) in pedagogical practice.
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Seed Funding 31 — GROUFES. ***GROwing Up the Future: Education for Sustainability***
Climate change, digitalization, biodiversity loss, environmental degradation, migration and flight, ageing society, future anxiety, and depopulation of rural regions are global sustainability challenges, which affect our education systems, too. We need to explore pathways to address those current and emerging sustainability challenges through education by empowering learners with new skills, values and attitudes that lead to more sustainable societies. By doing this, we need to transform our educational practice, too, and need to learn how to work more interdisciplinary. The international and interdisciplinary conference "Growing up the future: Education for Sustainability" wants look into various facets of sustainability education from an interdisciplinary perspective taking into consideration global issues and challenges as well as regional and national realities. The conference besides providing a platform for sharing experiences and teaching practices to bring much needed transformation in education for a sustainable future.
Project lead: Karina Becker - karina1.becker@ovgu.de

Seed Funding 32 — CRESD. ***Collaborative Research in Education For Sustainable Development***
The project Collaborative Research in Education for Sustainable Development (CRESD) is a research endeavour that aims at developing and applying an assessment tool (questionnaire) regarding the knowledge, attitudes and behaviours of EU Green students regarding sustainable development. This project is partly constructed on the BASE: Baseline Assessment of Sustainability related Educational practices and perceptions of the academic and research staff across EU Green. While BASE focused on teachers, this new project analyses students' engagement with sustainable development. CRESD project also builds on pilot research conducted by the University of Oradea team, that, based on extensive literature review, developed and tested an assessment tool regarding students' knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours related to sustainability (SKABS tool). Based on these, through dialogue and joint work, we aim to further refine and apply this tool across all partner universities. The final research report will provide relevant insights enabling partner universities to develop strategies to enhance and implement their education for sustainable development approaches and practices.
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Seed Funding 33 — CLEAR. ***Community-led Low-carbon Economy Actions for Rural areas: barriers and opportunities in area-based partnerships***
The CLEAR project investigates how area-based, community-led rural partnerships, particularly Local Action Groups (LAGs) established under the Community-Led Local Development (CLLD) frameworks (former LAEDER approach), contribute to implementing a low-carbon economy (LCE) in rural Europe. Rooted in the EU's participatory development model, LAGs represent bottom-up governance, enabling local communities to shape development priorities according to their territorial needs. This project recognises LAGs as pivotal intermediaries in bridging local realities with European climate and sustainability policies, while also addressing their underexplored potential to advance low-carbon transitions. LAGs have historically supported economic diversification, social inclusion, and innovation, creating resilient local economies through sustainable agriculture, renewable energy projects, and preserving cultural and natural resources. However, existing research shows that while LAGs are vital for local governance,

their engagement in energy transition and carbon reduction remains limited. Furthermore, their collaboration with research institutions, a key requirement of the EU rural development policy, is weakly institutionalised. These gaps hinder the effective transfer of knowledge and innovation between universities and rural actors. CLEAR aims to address these challenges through two complementary dimensions: socio-organizational and analytical preliminary studies.
Project lead: Marek Furmankiewicz - marek.furmankiewicz@upwr.edu.pl

Seed Funding 34 — BAGELS in ECE. ***Blue And Green Learning Environments Supporting Sustainability in Early Childhood Education***

This project advances the EU-GREEN alliance's mission to promote sustainability-oriented transformation in higher education through research, teaching, and social engagement. It focuses on Early Childhood Education for Sustainability (ECEfS), a crucial yet under-represented area with transformative potential for both individual wellbeing and collective ecological responsibility. Anchored in the framework of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (particularly SDG 4 – Quality Education and SDG 11 – Sustainable Cities and Communities), the project addresses urgent European and global concerns regarding environmental degradation, disconnection from nature, and the need to foster sustainability-minded citizens from the earliest stages of life. Education plays a pivotal role in enabling sustainable futures. Early Childhood Education (ECE) provides a strategic space for developing competencies, values, and dispositions required to care for the planet and build equitable, inclusive societies. The project builds upon existing collaborations within the EU-GREEN alliance among four universities — Évora (Portugal), Parma (Italy), Atlantic Technological University Mayo (Ireland), and Gävle (Sweden). These partners have previously collaborated through Work Packages 2, 3, 5, and 6, including the GROUFES Conference and the BIP Living, Inquiring and Knowing: Outdoor Practices for Sustainability (LINK), establishing trust, shared frameworks, and mutual learning that now underpin this proposal. Empirical evidence indicates a critical reduction in children's outdoor experiences across Europe, with current averages of only ten minutes per day and a 50 percent decline compared to the previous generation (UNESCO 2022; Centre for Young Lives 2025). Limited engagement with outdoor environments negatively affects children's physical and mental wellbeing and weakens their capacity to build empathetic and sustainable relationships with the world. This project addresses these challenges by advancing research and practice on outdoor pedagogies for sustainability in ECE contexts.
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Seed Funding 35 — STSF. ***Sustainable Teachers for Sustainable Futures***

This project addresses a widely shared challenge in European higher education: preparing a teaching workforce for early childhood and primary education that is not only motivated and professionally grounded but also equipped to engage with sustainability as a long-term educational value. Initial teacher education (ITE) systems across Europe are under pressure due to persistent issues, including staff shortages, high attrition rates, declining professional status, and an often superficial or inconsistent inclusion of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) in both curricula and practicum experiences. Despite substantial policy commitments to ESD, the absence of a standardized instrument to screen for patterns in professional engagement that incorporate sustainability values remains a significant gap, leaving these dimensions underexplored and

unevenly addressed in practice. The STSF project addresses these gaps by integrating two often-disconnected priorities—professional identity and sustainability education—into a single, evidence-based framework for reflection and improvement. The project brings together three EU GREEN partner universities—the University of Gävle (UiG, Sweden), the University of Oradea (UO, Romania), and the University of Extremadura (UEx, Spain)—each representing different models of teacher education. This diversity provides a foundation for comparative analysis of how institutional structures and national contexts shape pre-service teachers' motivation, identity, and orientation toward sustainability values. The primary objective of STSF is to create an early-warning system against the deprofessionalization of the teaching profession. By implementing the Sustainable Teacher Engagement Profile (STEP) as a multilingual screening instrument, the project will screen for patterns in professional engagement that incorporate sustainability values. This data will highlight key areas requiring attention, enabling universities to strengthen teacher resilience, reinforce sustainability values, and proactively address the factors that lead to teachers leaving the profession before they become entrenched problems.
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6. Cluster 6. Challenges in ecosystem biodiversity and function

Cluster 6 addresses the global decline of biodiversity and the growing pressures placed on ecosystems by human activities, climate change, and unsustainable food production systems. The cluster investigates the mechanisms driving biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation while developing strategies to conserve, restore, and sustainably manage natural and agricultural ecosystems.

Research activities focus on biodiversity monitoring, ecosystem functioning, ecosystem services, ecological intensification, and the impacts of land-use change, pollution, and climate change on terrestrial, freshwater, and marine environments. The cluster also examines how agricultural practices affect soil, water, atmospheric quality, and greenhouse gas emissions, as well as the effectiveness of sustainable management approaches in reducing environmental degradation.

Taken together, the projects engage with a wide range of ecosystems and species, from microbiota and forests to coastal habitats, wetlands, mountains, and marine ecosystems. Observational, experimental, and modelling approaches are used to assess biodiversity trends, understand ecological processes, and support evidence-based conservation and policy decisions. Cluster 6 supports the protection of biodiversity, the preservation of ecosystem services, and the development of sustainable solutions that balance environmental conservation with human wellbeing and food production needs.

Seed Funding 36 — EUFoodHabits. ***European consumers' preferences and attitudes towards plant-based products designed to replace animal-based products***
Across the world, there's a growing trend to eat less animal-based foods (ABF) for health and environmental purposes and eat plant-based alternatives (PBF). There is also the emergence of highly processed PBF, which aim to imitate the sensorial and nutritional qualities of ABF, but their impact on health is still under debate. This project aims to explore how European consumers, with different cultural backgrounds, perceive these plant-based options, so that we can provide as main outcome, scientific-based dietary recommendations based on enhanced and sustainable dietary patterns.
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Seed Funding 37 — PROVES. ***Promoting evidence-based solutions for biodiversity and ecosystem services delivery***

Pollution, overexploitation, urbanization, demography, land use change and inequality, is leading to unprecedent biodiversity loss and humanity to face pervasive socio-economic crisis, aggravated by climate change. Decisive action and solutions are needed to overcome these challenges. We envision to build a long-term research collaboration platform to provide evidence-based solutions that can foster biodiversity, restore degraded environments, promote ecosystem resilience and adaptation, and human well-being, with a focus on EUGreen regions.

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Seed Funding 38 — ALGAEMETH. ***Algae and Crop Residues for Sustainable Biomethanol***

The ALGAEMETH seed project aims to establish the scientific and organisational groundwork for a future Horizon Europe proposal on renewable methanol from crop residues and microalgae. It is designed as a preparatory step for forthcoming advanced biofuel funding opportunities, such as the HORIZON-CL5-2026-02-D3-01 topic or related forthcoming calls. The project addresses the urgent need for alternative low-carbon fuels for shipping and other sectors where electrification is difficult. The combustion of fossil fuels remains a major source of greenhouse gases, making the development of renewable and carbon-neutral energy carriers essential. Current biofuel production relies largely on plant-derived biomass rich in oils and energy content. This feedstock cannot meet the growing demand, and raises concerns about competition with food production. In parallel, large quantities of crop residues remain underexploited, with limited technologies available for nutrient recovery. Microalgae represent a promising complementary resource. They grow rapidly, do not compete with food production, and can achieve higher oil yields than terrestrial plants. Despite these advantages, algae alone are not economically feasible as a biofuel feedstock. A promising solution lies in combining crop residues and microalgae in an integrated biorefinery. By coupling biofuel production with the generation of high-value co-products, such systems can be both environmentally sustainable and economically feasible. This approach is particularly relevant for shipping, where demand for carbon-neutral fuels is rising rapidly.

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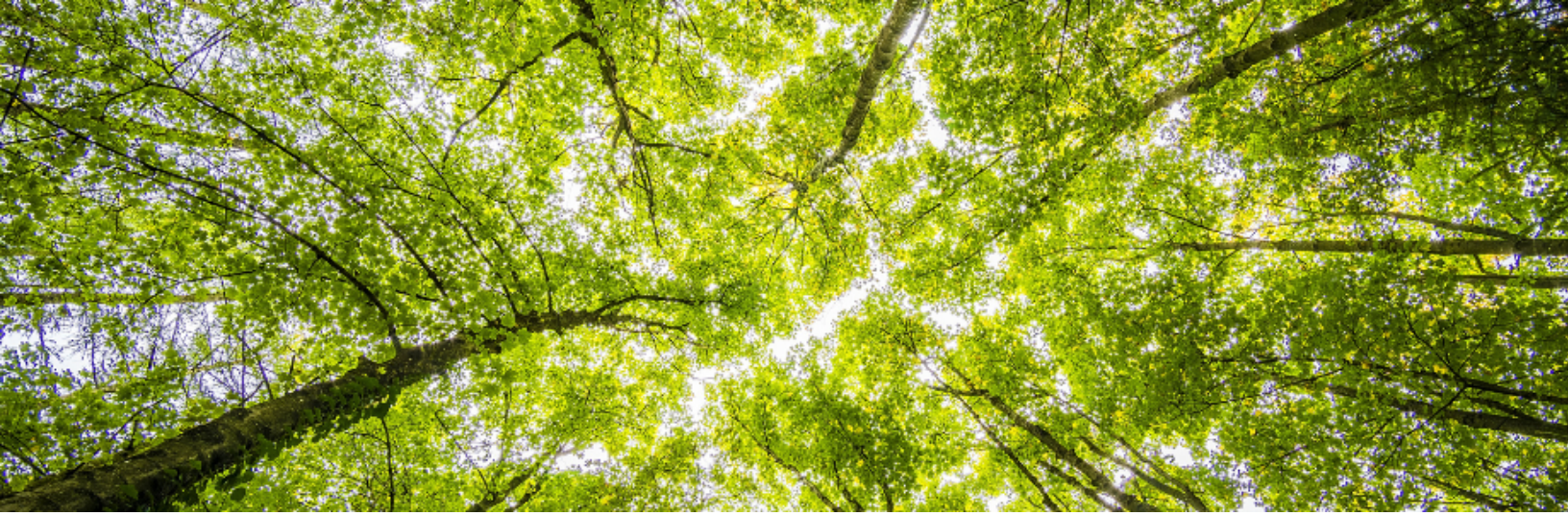

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