Call for Applications

Doctoral Conference on Sustainability Transitions

Part of the "Dialog Europa" Series by the 4EU+ Alliance and Villa Vigoni

Dates: 23–26 November 2026
Venue: Villa Vigoni, Menaggio, Italy

Scientific Leads: Professor Marc-Philippe Weller (Heidelberg University) and Professor Teis Hansen (University of Copenhagen)

Overview

Within the framework of the joint 4EU+ and Villa Vigoni initiative *Dialog Europa*, a doctoral conference on **Sustainability Transitions** will be held at Villa Vigoni. The event will bring together PhD candidates from the 4EU+ partner universities and the Young Villa Vigoni to explore key dimensions of sustainability transformations across disciplines. The conference will incorporate complementary perspectives on social, legal, economic, technological, and environmental aspects of change.

The conference aims to foster an interdisciplinary dialogue among emerging scholars and to provide a platform for presenting innovative research on the multifaceted challenges and opportunities of sustainability transitions.

Format and Participation

A total of **18 doctoral candidates** – two from each 4EU+ member university and the Young Villa Vigoni – will be selected to participate. Participants will present their research in **paired sessions**, coordinated around central themes related to sustainability transitions. Each pair will be encouraged to link their disciplinary approaches and develop a cross-cutting perspective relevant to the broader theme.

Final Session: Joint Bachelor Design Workshop

As part of the concluding session, participants will engage in a **brainstorming and peer-feedback workshop** dedicated to the concept design of the **Joint Bachelor in Sustainability Transitions**. This program is being developed under the 4EU+ *Future Project*, and participants' contributions will feed directly into its curriculum design process.

Topics of Interest

Submissions may address, but are not limited to, the following areas:

- Corporate sustainability governance and private law transformation
  (e.g. Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive, Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive)
- Law as an enabler, accelerator, and constraint of sustainability transitions
  (e.g. Emissions trading schemes, particularly the EU Emissions Trading System (ETS); Regulatory instruments of the European Green Deal; Climate litigation as a driver of societal transformation)
- International law, climate obligations, and the crisis of multilateral governance
  (e.g. The implementation and limitations of the Paris Agreement; The consequences and

enforcement of advisory opinions, such as the recent opinion of the International Court of Justice on the obligations of States in respect of Climate Change)

- Social and ethical dimensions of transformation
  (e.g. Human rights implications of climate change and biodiversity loss; Rights of Nature)
- The link between innovation and sustainability transitions (e.g. the role of incumbents vs new entrants, innovation as radical change vs extending the lifespan of existing technologies, dark side of innovation, social/grassroot/frugal innovation)
- Transition policy (e.g. mission-oriented innovation policy, transformative innovation policy, policy for transitioning multiple socio-technical systems [agri/energy/transport etc.] at once, green industrial policy, transition policy in times of competitiveness, sovereignty and security)
- Policy mixes for sustainability transitions (e.g. methodological advances in promoting large-scale policy mix analysis, comparative and/or longitudinal policy mix analysis, policy capacity)
- Conceptualising the future in sustainability transitions (e.g. bridging techno-economic and socio-technical pathway analysis, system dynamics modelling in transition studies)
- Environmental and climate governance
  (e.g. Governance of the ETS; national climate laws and policies in the global context, the mechanism of COPs, power and coercion in global environmental governance, the gap between theory and practice/ implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity, Rethinking ambitions and targets in environmental protection policies (e.g. outdated (?) concepts like the maximum sustainable yield in fisheries governance, transforming laws and politics in the direction of sufficiency))
- How effective are legal frameworks for the global commons (high seas, biodiversity etc.)?
  (e.g. UNCLOS, the BBNJ Agreement and the governance of the high seas; The Convention on Biological Diversity; Deep-Sea mining regulation and the role of the International Seabed Authority)

Application

Interested doctoral candidates are invited to apply with:

1. A **proposal abstract** (max. 500 words) outlining their research and its relevance to the conference theme
2. A brief **academic CV** (max. 2 pages)

Applications should be submitted digitally to the local 4EU+ office of the respective university by **1 September 2026** using the following link: Submit application

Costs: Travel expenses and accommodation will be covered by the sending university in accordance with its respective regulations.

Working Language

The conference will be conducted in **English**.