

#EuropeShallHearYou



# Young Voices on a Sustainable European Future

## ABSTRACTS

German-Baltic Conference Riga 2022



Federal Foreign Office





### **German-Baltic Conference**

The German-Baltic Conferences bring together young European leaders to envision truly European solutions for a joint future. In four Clusters Youth Ambassadors develop ideas to be discussed with decision makers on regional, national and European level. In parallel the partner organisations of the German-Baltic Youth Exchange Network (GBYEN) use this opportunity for expanding their crossborder networks.

### **German-Baltic Youth Foundation - dbjw**

In light of joint responsibility for the European history **dbjw** strives to win young Europeans to contribute to a peaceful and cooperative future. To accomplish this goal the **dbjw** offers loans, grants educational seminars and networking opportunities. We stand in for democracy, human rights, and rule of law.

### **Acknowledgement**

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## Table of Contents

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1. Cluster A "Sustainability and Consumption" .....    | 2 |
| 2. Cluster B "Sustainability and Digital System" ..... | 4 |
| 3. Cluster C "Sustainability and Nature" .....         | 6 |
| 4. Cluster D "Sustainability and Democracy" .....      | 8 |





# Cluster A “Sustainability and Consumption”

## **Abstract - Cluster A “Sustainability and Consumption”**

Achieving sustainability requires a radical rethinking of society’s consumption patterns. Not only is it necessary to consume in a more sustainable way, but also to reduce consumption itself. Advertisement plays a crucial role in influencing consumption behavior, while being a core element in our economy and our lifestyle.

This policy paper argues that new regulations on advertisement in the European Union (EU) are necessary to reduce consumption, since we might not realize how many advertisements we are exposed to and how influential it is for our consumption lifestyle.

The authors of this paper identified two major challenges. First, advertisement pushes consumers towards over-consumption tendencies by creating needs and invading the public sphere. Second, a number of advertising campaigns rely on so-called green and eco-friendly claims, misleading the consumer into a false sense of sustainability. Also, a lack of regulation on the use of eco labels gives a competitive disadvantage to the companies that produce truly eco-friendly products.

In the long-term objective of creating an advertisement-free society and driven by those observations, the following paper prescribes 3 recommendations:

1. Banning advertisements for the most environmentally harmful products, such as flights, and prohibiting advertisement in publicly owned space.
2. Creating an independent European agency for advertisement control with the goals of setting, implementing and monitoring environmental regulations in advertisement, providing a platform to citizens and businesses and introducing a European-wide labeling system clearly stating the environmental impact of advertised products.
3. Reclaiming the existing advertising space with awareness campaigns about the environmental impact of consumption.

Given the prescriptive approach to the topic, the paper constitutes an essential read for the policymakers, who are especially interested in social and political processes that lead to prominent sustainable changes.

**Keywords:** sustainability, consumption, advertising, policymakers, recommendations

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# Cluster B “Sustainability and Digital System”

## **Abstract - Cluster B “Sustainability and Digital System”**

What's the point of deploying more cars when the road is full? Similarly to a traffic jam, electric grids sometimes are suffering from bottlenecks, and cannot transport all the electrical renewable energy that is being produced. We propose to optimise the capacity of transmission lines by using data to be able to utilise cold weather as natural cooling for the systems which allows for higher load flows.

Current electricity grids are not adapted to transfer renewable electricity in an optimised manner, leading to the over-use of non-renewable energy. Where a line, running from a green energy source, cannot transport enough energy due to the worry of overheating, a polluting source might have to jump in and produce electricity to compensate.

We propose to optimise the existing electrical grid system by exploiting natural weather occurrences to cool the power lines and maximise the use of existing green energy plants. To do so, data about the weather, the wind and temperature needs to be collected and analysed, to ensure that the maximum amount of energy can be dispatched without risks. If applied, emissions can be lowered by utilising the status quo - and being consequently more cost effective than the implementation of alternative measures.

We are therefore going to expand on the possibility of utilising the already existing data about weather conditions and with minimal additional censoring infrastructure to be able to increase the electrical power transmission through the infrastructure while utilising the cold weather as a natural cooling system.

With this proposal, we call for policies to encourage unified inter-regional data collection and communication. Further, we request electric grid operators to cooperate with other grid operators, to aid optimal usage of renewable energy all across Europe.

**Keywords:** energy, smart grid, renewable energy, transmission line, voltage, energy production, electricity, wind energy, energy data collection, energy production monitoring, data visualisation, data science

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# Cluster C “Sustainability and Nature”

## ***Abstract - Cluster C “Sustainability and Nature”***

Our growing mass consumption of personal electronic devices, such as smartphones, is placing a great pressure on the environment due to the reliance on rare earth elements (REE) and other precious metals. The value chain that entails the mining, processing, use, and disposal of these elements leads not only to the destruction of ecosystems and the exploitation of human labour but also to the precarious dependence on unreliable strategic suppliers like China. As part of the wider sustainable transition, we must thus reevaluate the value chain. We follow a comprehensive approach examining the value chain of REE and precious metals from an ecologically, economically and socially sustainable perspective. We propose changes to the acquisition of new REEs and precious metals and the product design of electronic devices, as well as establishing an effective and inclusive right-to-repair policy and greater obligations for recycling.

**Keywords:** Recycling, rare earth elements, value chain, sustainability

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# Cluster D “Sustainability and Democracy”

## **Abstract - Cluster D “Sustainability and Democracy”**

Our paper aims to present the reasons why we need to strengthen democratic systems in Europe in order to achieve more appropriate decision-making processes regarding climate policy. We focus on youth in particular; not only because this paper is the outcome of a youth conference, written by high school and university students, but also because we claim that youth participation is missing from politics, in terms of inclusion, interest, and possibilities. While representative democracy favors the participation of older generations, younger generations are more affected by the climate crisis. This is an imbalance we want to tackle. Our objective is to develop political instruments for younger generations to express their opinion that is then taken into account by national governments. For that, we propose to organize a youth citizen assembly. While citizen assemblies (involving all age groups) have been widespread for a long time and known as an important instrument for deliberative democracy, we realized that assemblies targeting especially people under 30 years old have not been commonly used. We claim that such a youth citizen assembly could be an ideal tool to raise awareness about climate-related issues as well as to foster the participation of young people in decisions about climate policies. This is especially important because these policies impact in the first place their future lives and hence we find it crucial to give younger generations a possibility to shape climate policies. Our model of a youth citizen assembly involves 100 randomly selected participants representing the youth of a given society by using quotas. They come together once a month over the course of six months to get input by experts, discuss on selected topics and try to find compromises and propositions. The overall outcome of the assembly can be a law framework that is then handed over to the national parliament. We claim that while the parliament is not obliged to adopt the propositions, they must read and discuss them and provide an explanation in case a proposition is rejected.

**Keywords:** deliberative democracy, citizen assembly, youth political participation, climate policies

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