



16th Conference of the European Society for Ecological Economics

ESEE2026

Looking for (the) Just Judges – Promoting Sustainable and Inclusive Well-Being in Turbulent Times

30 June – 3 July 2026, Ghent (Belgium)

ESEE2026: CALL FOR ABSTRACTS

In medieval art and political thought, the **Just Judges** symbolized the moral and civic ideals of governance. Most notably portrayed in Jan van Eyck's *Ghent Altarpiece*, these figures represented rulers and policymakers guided by wisdom, integrity, and responsibility toward the common good. They embodied a vision of justice rooted in balance – between authority and compassion, human aspiration and divine order. Today, as societies are confronted with ecological breakdown, widening inequalities, and the complex ethics of planetary stewardship, this allegory retains striking relevance. The search for “just judges” continues, now in the form of decision-makers and institutions capable of reconciling social, economic, and environmental objectives.

Promoting **sustainable and inclusive well-being** invites a rethinking of what it means to live well within ecological limits. It calls for an understanding of prosperity that extends beyond material growth, acknowledging the interdependence of human and natural systems. This vision emphasizes equity across generations and communities, participation in decision-making, and respect for cultural and ecological diversity. Within this context, **ecological economics** offers a critical lens for examining how societies can align economies and economic activity with ecological integrity and social justice. By interrogating dominant growth paradigms and exploring alternative measures of value and welfare, the field contributes to reimagining governance, policy, and practice in ways that promote fairness and long-term resilience.

Against this backdrop, the **16th biennial Conference of the European Society of Ecological Economics** invites scholars, practitioners, and policymakers to engage with the theme “*Looking for Just Judges: Promoting Sustainable and Inclusive Well-Being*”. We welcome contributions that critically and creatively engage with the conference theme across the diverse dimensions of ecological economics. Submissions may address questions of governance, justice, sustainability, socio-economic transformation, institutional innovation, or any of the thematic areas represented in the ESEE2026 programme (see Appendix A below), including approaches that rethink well-being, economic paradigms, ecological boundaries, and the role of technology, business, and societal values. Through dialogue, critical reflection, and interdisciplinary collaboration, the conference aims to foster shared learning and innovative thinking toward more equitable and ecologically resilient futures.

We look forward to welcoming you in Ghent next summer!

Submission Information

Abstract proposals must be submitted through the official submission platform before January 6, 2026, 23:59 (CET) - previously: December 19, 2025, 23:59 (CET).

To be accepted for evaluation, each proposal must include the following information:

- **Abstract Title**
- **Authors:** Full name, institutional affiliation, and e-mail address for each author
- **Presenting author**
- **Position of the Abstract in the ESEE2026 programme:** Select up to three subtracks in which your contribution could fit. This information will be used to build the final conference programme and to assign reviewers to the submissions.
- **Best matching subtrack:** If you have selected more than 1 subtrack above, you can indicate which subtrack would be the best fit for your submission.
- **Keywords:** A minimum of 4 and a maximum of 6
- **Short abstract:** Up to 150 words
- **Extended abstract:** Up to 800 words, including a short reference list
- **Student contribution:** Indicate whether the main contributor / presenter of the paper is a PhD student. (PhD students participating in ESEE2026 will get separate emails on PhD student events and on the Student Prize)
- **Evaluator commitment:** Confirm that the submitting scholar agrees to act as an evaluator for up to 3 other submissions within their area of expertise.

Any scholar may submit an Abstract proposal via [ConfTool](#). Please note that **each participant** may **present** only **one paper** at the conference. The presenting author must be clearly indicated upon submission.

Evaluation of Abstract Proposals

All submissions will be evaluated by the following criteria set forth by the Scientific Committee:

- **Thematic relevance to the field of ecological economics**
To what extent does the submission fit within the scope and core themes of ecological economics?
- **Originality and innovation**
Does the submission address novel research questions, approaches, or perspectives?
- **Scientific quality of the proposal**
Are the research questions well embedded in the academic literature? Are the methods appropriate and the results relevant?
- **Clarity of presentation**
Are the research objectives, methods, and (expected) results clearly and coherently presented?

Depending on the number of submissions, each abstract will be reviewed by **two to three evaluators**, drawn from the pool of participants, organisers of special subtracks, and members of the extended Scientific Committee — including the ESEE Board and Country Contact Network.

Next Steps

Accepted contributions will result in a time slot for a **15-20' presentation** during the ESEE2026 conference. Depending on the number of accepted submissions, (90') sessions at the conference will consist of 4-6 presentations each. We will have a maximum of 12 parallel sessions per time slot based on the capacity of our venue. All submitted abstracts will be **evaluated by mid February** after which all participants will be notified. Registrations for ESEE2026 will be opened soon after that.

Student Prize

The European Society for Ecological Economics (ESEE) will award **three prizes** for the **Best Student Papers** during the Ghent conference.

To be eligible for the prizes, applications have to meet the **following criteria**:

- The paper should be a complete and unpublished manuscript in English, and represent an original contribution to the field of ecological economics;
- The paper should be led by a (PhD) student and written by a student as the main or only author;
- To be considered for the prizes, being a (PhD) student implies that the main or only author was a (PhD) student within the year leading up to the conference, i.e. on the 30th of June 2025;
- Papers with multiple authors should include a clear description of the contribution that the (PhD) student made to the work;
- The research should follow standard ethical requirements as defined by the home institute of the (PhD) student;
- The paper should be presented as an oral presentation by the candidate during the ESEE conference (poster submissions were not eligible).
- A full paper containing a maximum of 6,000 words (excl. tables and figures), accompanied by an abstract of maximum 150 words should be submitted to the Local Organizing Committee by May 10th 2026.
- Current student representatives in the ESEE Board are not eligible for competition.

When submitting an Abstract to ESEE2026 you currently only need to highlight if you, as main author and presenter of a paper, were a (PhD) student one year prior to the start of the conference (i.e. June 30th, 2025). All (PhD) students will receive an email in January to enroll for the Best Student Paper competition.

*Appendix A – Final ESEE2026 programme
(including Special Subtracks)*

1. Beyond GDP: Rethinking Well-being and Prosperity

- 1.1 Well-Being and Prosperity: Theoretical Foundations
- 1.2 Beyond GDP Indicators and Metrics
- 1.3 Measurement and Drivers of Well-Being
- 1.4 Beyond GDP Frameworks at Regional and Local Scales
- 1.5 History and Critique of GDP and its Hegemony
- OSS1.6 - Rethinking Circular Economy Metrics: Towards Greater Societal and Policy Relevance
- OSS1.7 - Temporal Dimensions of Sustainability: Time as a Key to Just Social-Ecological Futures?
- OSS1.8 - Providing a Good Life for All Within Planetary Boundaries

2. Ecological Boundaries, Biophysical Realities and the Commons

- 2.1 Planetary Boundaries and Material Footprints
- 2.2 Nature Conservation, Ecosystem Services, and the Commons
- 2.3 Transitions in Energy, Materials, and Circularity
- 2.4 Promises and Pitfalls of the Bioeconomy
- 2.5 Interlinkages Between Earth Systems

3. Justice, Equity, and Inclusive Futures

- 3.1 Unequal Exchange and Global Power Relations
- 3.2 Intersectional Justice in Sustainability Transitions
- 3.3 Intergenerational Equity and Rights of Future Generations
- 3.4 Indigenous and Local Knowledge for Just Futures
- 3.5 Tackling Income, Wealth and Carbon Inequalities
- 3.6 Interspecies Justice and Rights for the Non-Human Lives
- OSS3.7 - Reclaiming Voices: Traditional Arts Reshaping Environmental Governance
- OSS3.8 - Towards Non-Anthropocentric Nature-Based Solutions (NBS): Theories and Policy Implications

4. Socio-Ecological Transformation in Times of Crisis

- 4.1 (Geo)Politics, Polarization, and the Green Agenda
- 4.2 Mediatization and the Science–Policy Interface
- 4.3 Imaginaries of Collapse and Hope: Navigating Uncertainty and Futures
- 4.4 Crises as Catalysts? Transformative Potential and Risk of System Shocks
- 4.5 Social Movements, Collective Action, and Grassroots Resilience
- 4.6 Research in Action: Science-Practice Interface and Extended Knowledge for Transformation

5. Technology, Work and Care

- 5.1 The Role of Technology in a Post-Growth Society
- 5.2 The Future of Work and Work-Time Reduction
- 5.3 Care Economies and Social Reproduction
- 5.4 Universal Basic Services and the Right to Provisioning
- 5.5 Automation, AI, and the Politics of Technological Change

6. Institutional Innovation and Governance

- 6.1 Deliberative Democracy, Participation, and Citizen Assemblies
- 6.2 Legal Innovations: Rights of Nature, Commons Law, and Beyond
- 6.3 The Role of Markets, Law, and States in Post-Growth Societies
- 6.4 Institutional Path Dependency and System Change
- 6.5 Industrial Deals and Strategic Governance for a Just Transition
- OSS6.6 - Sustainable Welfare and Eco-Social Policy
- OSS6.7 - Exploring Degrowth Societies: Future Scenarios and Policy Mixes

7. Ecological Macroeconomics, Public Finance, and Money

- 7.1 Post-Growth Macroeconomic Frameworks
- 7.2 Employment, Inflation, and Stabilisation Policy Without Growth
- 7.3 Rethinking Monetary Policy and Money
- 7.4 Work and Income Distribution in Ecological Macroeconomics
- 7.5 Public Finance for a Just and Sustainable Transition

8. Sufficiency, Values, and Behavioral Change

- 8.1 The Ethics and Politics of Sufficiency
- 8.2 Social Norms, Identity, and Values: Well-Being Beyond Consumerism
- 8.3 Demand Side Measures and Consumption Corridors
- 8.4 Lifestyle transformation, Frugality, and Voluntary Simplicity
- 8.5 Narratives, Learning and Cultural Change for Sufficiency
- OSS8.6 - Challenges of Micro-Behavioral Methods for Macro-modelling and Policy Assessment

9. Reimagining Places and the Urban-Rural Divide

- 9.1 Designing the land: Sustainable Land Use and Regional Planning
- 9.2 Mobility, Migration, and Territorial Cohesion
- 9.3 Food Systems, Rural Regeneration and Agroecological Futures
- 9.4 Urban Metabolism, Ecological Cities and lifestyle change
- 9.5 Bridging the Rural–Urban Divide: Local Economies and Bioregionalism

10. Rethinking Business and Finance

- 10.1 Impact Investing, ESG, and Greenwashing
- 10.2 Post-Growth Business Models and Mission-Driven Enterprises
- 10.3 Banking and Finance for the Common Good: Public, Cooperative, and Ethical Models
- 10.4 Ownership, Power, and the Democratization of the Economy
- 10.5 Impact of Environmental Crises on Financial and Insurance Markets
- OSS10.6 - Blue Economy Across the Land-Sea Continuum

11. Developments in Ecological Economics as a Scientific Field

- 11.1 Philosophical Considerations in Ecological Economics
- 11.2 Methodological Questions in Ecological Economics
- 11.3 Historical Development and Perspectives on Ecological Economics
- 11.4 Critical Reflections and Future Developments in Ecological Economics
- OSS11.5 - Teaching and Learning Ecological Economics
- OSS11.6 - Learning from Non-Capitalist Economies

More information on each of the Open Special Subtracks can be found in the full ESEE2026 programme [here](#).