

EUKI NETWORKING CONFERENCE 2024

**JOINING HANDS TO DRIVE
THE GREEN TRANSITION FORWARD**

FOREWORD



Dear EUKI Community

It was a great pleasure to witness the dynamism that permeated our recent EUKI Networking Conference 2024 on 14 and 15 May. This final report encapsulates the significant insights gained and the collaborative spirit fostered throughout the two-day event, which sought to advance our joint commitment to driving forward the green transition.

The challenges posed by climate change transcend national borders, demanding a unified and cohesive response. Fortunately, the wealth of expertise shared at the conference by specialists from different fields shows that, together, we are capable of and committed to playing our part in achieving the EU's climate targets.

As we move closer to 2030, our discussions have underscored the need for a swift and inclusive approach to implementing the European Green Deal. It is impressive to witness the dedication with which EUKI projects from countries in Central and Eastern Europe are tackling pressing climate issues.

My key takeaways from the panel discussion with representatives of EUKI projects were as follows: I was thrilled to see the diversity of issues being addressed by EUKI projects. But it's also about quantity, not just quality. The success stories shared with me on stage showcase what European climate action truly looks like on the ground. I encourage you to spread these inspiring stories far and wide!

I am confident that the insights gained and the partnerships reinforced at the conference will catalyse further action and foster deeper engagement across Europe. Moving forward, let us continue to seize every conceivable opportunity to advance the green transition.

I look forward to our continued collaboration and the next EUKI Networking Conference in 2026.

Warm regards,

Dr Simon Marr

Head of Division European Climate Policy
European Climate Initiative
Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action
(BMWK)



Dr Simon Marr delivering a keynote

TABLE OF CONTENTS

01	EUKI Networking Conference 2024 - Joining Hands to Drive the Green Transition Forward	03
02	Day 1 – Forming a Strong Coalition for Climate Action	04
03	Day 2 – Driving Ambitious Climate Goals: Insights on EU 2040 Targets and Innovative Entrepreneurship	16
04	Outcomes of the EUKICON Workshops	22

EUKI NETWORKING CONFERENCE 2024

Joining Hands to Drive the Green Transition Forward

5th EUKICON in Berlin

On 14 and 15 May, 181 participants attended the EUKI Networking Conference in Berlin, travelling from across Europe to meet their peers in person. The conference aimed to inspire climate action professionals, from EUKI project coordinators and politicians to researchers and industry representatives, to share ideas and come up with new ones. This report summarises the highlights of the packed EUKICON24 Agenda for you. Enjoy reading!



Group picture of participants and the EUKI Secretariat

EUKICON24 in Numbers

181

Participants

100+

Organisations

50+

EUKI projects

23

Countries

181 participants gathered from over 23 countries across Europe for EUKICON24. Together, they represented more than 100 organisations from 50-plus EUKI projects.

DAY 1

Forming a Strong Coalition for Climate Action

The first day of the EUKI Networking Conference 2024 laid a solid foundation for dialogue and collaboration, reinforcing the shared commitment to advancing climate action across Europe. It brought together key players in European climate action, academics, industry representatives and policymakers. Their discussions and input highlighted ongoing efforts and potential in regard to achieving climate goals through collective action and innovative solutions.



Group picture, from left to right (f.l.t.r.): Miklos Martin, Anna Niemczyk, Iryna Holovko, Marie Wonneberger, Nele Büchner, Elsa Benhöfer, State Secretary Sven Giegold, Ulrike Leis, Dragomir Tsanev, Dr Simon Marr, Marko Starčević, Audrey Mathieu, Krassimira Dimitrova and Colleague

Before the conference officially kicked off, State Secretary Sven Giegold took a moment to explore the innovative ideas behind ongoing EUKI-funded projects: [Sun-Sharing](#) – Supporting Solar Energy Communities in South-East Europe, [Renocally](#) – Municipal Renovation Action Plans, and [Cooperative Transition of Polish and Bulgarian Coal Regions](#). These were just a few of the many projects showcased in the EUKI poster gallery. State Secretary Giegold quipped: ‘That’s a shocking number of posters!’

Progress so Far and Challenges Ahead

Official Opening

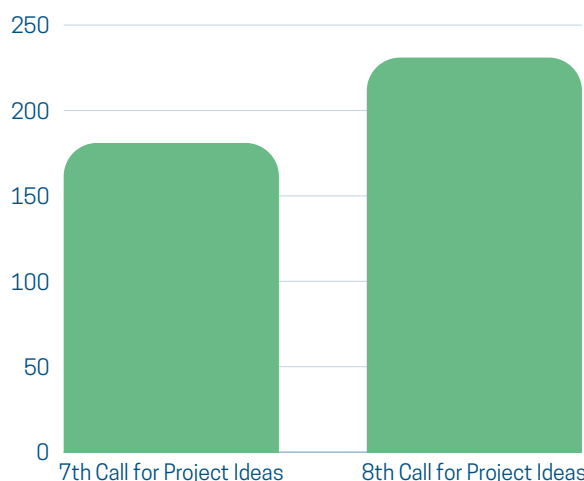
On the first day, moderator Marianna Evenstein invited to the stage EUKI Director Nele Bünner for a welcome address, BMWK State Secretary Sven Giegold for a keynote on European climate policy, and Anna Niemczyk, Iryna Holovko and Miklos Marton, three policy experts from the EUKI Community, for a panel discussion. The official opening can be viewed in full [here](#).

Nele Bünner, Co-Director of the EUKI Secretariat, highlighted the conference's value by pointing out the broad range of participants and the importance of sharing perspectives on climate action. 'The European Climate Initiative, since its inception in 2017, has funded 210 projects with a total of EUR 95 million, involving 440 organisations across Europe in the process,' noted Bünner, underscoring the initiative's extensive impact and the collaborative spirit it fosters. Around 100 of these organisations, representing 51 completed or ongoing projects, were present at EUKICON24. Bünner warmly invited them to engage with their peers, experts, and policymakers, and to use the opportunity afforded by the conference to exchange ideas and experiences. ●



Nele Bünner holding the welcoming speech

Submitted Project Ideas



'I'm very excited to finally meet many of you in person, having just joined the EUKI team at the beginning of this year. At that time, we also launched the 8th EUKI Call for Project Ideas. A total of 231 project ideas were submitted. For you, that's just a number. For us, it was a 28 per cent increase in project ideas submitted, compared with previous years. These numbers are evidence of the urgent need to tackle climate change challenges, and also of your never-ending, inspiring ideas of how to tackle those challenges.'

– Nele Bünner, EUKI

Standing Strong in Times of Crisis

Keynote by State Secretary Sven Giegold

State Secretary **Sven Giegold** from the German Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action (BMWK) delivered a compelling address on European climate policy. Reflecting on Europe's commitment to climate action amidst global crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic, economic pressure, and Russia's attack on Ukraine, Sven Giegold stated: 'In this moment, the Green Deal was put into practice, and we managed to vote on all the different bits of legislation which will change the way we do business, build buildings, organise mobility, and produce energy.'

The State Secretary drew attention to the European Climate Law framework for making Europe the first climate-neutral continent and the role of the 'Fit for 55' package in setting legally binding obligations. 'For the first time, we have enacted environmental legislation and, at the same time, introduced binding social redistribution requirements with the European Social Climate Fund,' he explained, emphasising the holistic approach to climate and social policy offered by the redistribution of revenue generated through CO2 emission certificates.



'With your [EUKI] projects, you bear the brunt of pressure from many backward-looking populists, because you link Europe and the climate. And I can tell you on behalf of the German government that we will not give in to this pressure.'

– State Secretary Sven Giegold, BMWK

Highlighting the practical progress made, the State Secretary shared: 'Last year, Germany alone saw 14 gigawatts of new photovoltaic installations, translating to one million new solar entrepreneurs.' This reflects the tangible impact of policy measures on renewable energy adoption and the broader societal shift towards sustainable practices.

Looking ahead, Sven Giegold stressed the importance of implementing the Green Deal and fostering economic opportunities through green innovation, not least in less advanced areas such as agriculture and biodiversity. 'We need a Green Deal industrial plan to implement green achievements and seize economic opportunities,' he said, calling for a supportive environment for future industries and innovators.

In a broader geopolitical context, the State Secretary underlined the importance of European solidarity in times of tension, especially when it comes to supporting countries such as Georgia in their pursuit of European integration and democratic values. 'In this moment, I would say we are all Georgians,' he declared, accentuating the interconnectedness of climate action and democratic principles. ●



State Secretary Sven Giegold holding a keynote

Engaging Civil Society for a Just Climate Transition

Panel Discussion with EUKI Project Members and State Secretary Sven Giegold



Panel discussion, f.l.t.r.: Marianna Evenstein, Anna Niemczyk, Iryna Holovko, Miklos Marton and State Secretary Sven Giegold

EUKI policy experts Iryna Holovko, Miklos Marton and Anna Niemczyk joined the State Secretary on stage for a spirited discussion that emphasised the critical role played by civil society in achieving a fair climate transition across Central and Eastern Europe. Moderator Marianna Evenstein opened by highlighting concerns about rising costs resulting from new carbon pricing mechanisms. **Iryna Holovko**, an advisor from [Adelphi Research](#), spoke about the important role of civil society in identifying and supporting vulnerable communities affected by these changes. ‘Civil society possesses the necessary knowledge and access to help governments design effective policies,’ she noted, underscoring the need for their involvement in implementing the Social Climate Fund. State Secretary Giegold elaborated on the issue of integrating social equity into climate policy. He stressed that ‘climate policy and social equality are not opposites’ and advocated for inclusive approaches that involve citizens and businesses as partners.

Miklos Marton, Climate & Energy Transformation Officer at the [National Society of Conservationists – Friends of the Earth Hungary \(MTVSZ\)](#), highlighted the need to educate politicians about the benefits of climate action. He stressed the importance of making the case for climate initiatives in simple, clear terms. Marton also pointed to the economic advantages detailed in the [Paris Pact Payoff report](#) by [Climate Action Network \(CAN\)](#) Europe, which demonstrates the social and economic benefits of early investment in climate action.

Anna Niemczyk, Senior Researcher at the [Institute of Power Engineering – National Research Institute \(IEN\)](#), shared insights from Poland, focusing on the integration of renewable energy and hydrogen technologies to aid hard-to-decarbonise industries. She called for policy frameworks, financial incentives, and cross-sectoral collaboration to support these transitions. ↓

In closing, State Secretary Giegold expressed his appreciation for the efforts of civil society and local actors in advancing renewable energy projects, drawing attention to Germany's near 100 per cent renewable energy use on sunny days. He called for ongoing collaboration and innovation, underlining the fact that substantial progress is both possible and essential. The session ended with a reminder of the vital role played by civil society and local initiatives in driving forward the green transition, with a hopeful outlook for overcoming challenges through collective effort. ●



'We need to propagate the relevant knowledge, because once the various stakeholders, governments, industry and civil society understand why we are doing what we are doing and that they have a part to play in reaching the goals, they will be more willing to get involved in the initiatives.'

– Anna Niemczyk, IEN



Anna Niemczyk in a panel discussion

EUKI Success Stories: The People Behind EUKI Projects

The session highlighted both the statistical impact of EUKI projects and the personal stories of those involved. It featured an engaging keynote by Dr Simon Marr, followed by a panel discussion. The session also included a short video on EUKI's achievements to date. Watch the recording of this session [here](#).



Dr Simon Marr holding a keynote

He pointed out that achieving the 2040 interim target for climate neutrality is crucial for guiding post-2030 climate and energy frameworks. He made clear that all sectors must prepare for net-zero emissions, drawing attention to the dual benefits of reducing emissions and strengthening Europe's economic competitiveness.

Dr Marr also spoke about the importance of engaging with younger generations and leveraging digitalisation and artificial intelligence (AI) to enhance climate action. He praised the EUKI Community for its innovative solutions and broad expertise, calling for these ideas to be scaled up with appropriate political support. His remarks set the stage for further discussions on industrial decarbonisation and other critical topics during the conference. In conclusion, Dr Marr's speech was a call to action in which he advocated for continued cooperation, learning, and sharing of best practices to achieve Europe's ambitious climate goals.↓

Uniting for Common Ground in the Green Transition Keynote by Dr Simon Marr

Dr Simon Marr, Head of Division for European Climate Policy and the European Climate Initiative (EUKI) at Germany's Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action (BMWK), highlighted the vital role of collaboration in driving forward the green transition during his speech at the conference. He emphasised the need for unity amidst differing national frameworks, and the importance of standing firm against any rollback on climate policies. Dr Marr underscored the significant progress made under the European Green Deal and the Fit for 55 package, stressing that the focus must now be on effective implementation across all sectors, including the lagging agricultural sector.



'We must stand united against any rollback on climate policy. The value of your work cannot be overstated. You are making an impact not just in your own countries, but right across Europe. As we move closer to 2030, our focus must be implementation, implementation, implementation.'

– Dr Simon Marr, BMWK

Success Stories and Insights



Panel discussion, f.l.t.r.: Moderator Marianna Evenstein, Adrianna Borowicz, Yassen Georgiev, Zsofia Pej, Aleksandra Szmurlik-Dominguez, and Dr Simon Marr

After the keynote, a diverse panel of experts shared their experiences and success stories from ongoing EUKI projects. **Adrianna Borowicz** discussed her work in journalism, highlighting projects that foster climate action awareness among the public. **Yassen Georgiev**, from the [Economic Policy Institute Bulgaria](#), presented a database of nearly 300 climate-related projects, showcasing best practices and lessons learned for improving the efficiency of EU funding. As he was keen to point out, 'we invited citizens to submit practices to our open-access database, making the process inclusive and transparent.' **Zsofia Pej**, Climate Program Leader at [Energiaklub Climate Policy and Applied Science](#), talked about a sustainable building renovation project in Hungary, focusing on peer-to-peer learning and the benefits of circular economy practices. She noted: 'The interest from local public authorities was greater than expected, and we saw some truly inspiring practices from German municipalities.'

Aleksandra Szmurlik-Dominguez, from [WiseEuropa](#), shared insights into increasing social acceptance of wind energy through stakeholder engagement and collaboration in Poland, Greece and Latvia. She reflected: 'Working with different sectors to find common ground has had a significant impact in terms of increasing acceptance.'

Dr Marr responded to these shared insights by underlining the significance of diversity and positive storytelling in driving climate action. He remarked: 'We need to bring out positive stories of how climate change efforts are paying off and of ways we can partner with those affected, treating them as equals. These stories highlight impact and innovation within the EUKI Community and underscore the importance of sharing successes to inspire further action.'

Digital Transformation and Innovation in Climate Action

This session offered a comprehensive exploration of how AI and digital technologies can enhance climate action efforts. The two speakers, Dr Lynn Kaack and Francesca Bria, also addressed challenges and ethical considerations. The full session can be viewed [here](#).

Marianna Evenstein opened the session, stressing the relevance of digitalisation and AI in the current climate action landscape. She acknowledged the rapid advancements in AI and the uncertainties surrounding its long-term impact, highlighting the need for climate action professionals to harness these technologies effectively.



Moderator Marianna Evenstein together with Dr Lynn Kaack answering questions from the audience

How to Use AI for Climate Action Keynote by Dr Lynn Kaack

Dr Lynn Kaack, Assistant Professor of Computer Science and Public Policy at the Hertie School, Berlin and Co-founder of [Climate Change AI](#), delivered an insightful keynote. She explained how AI, and machine learning in general, can be leveraged in various climate-related projects. She began by introducing some fundamentals and describing the difference between traditional computer models and machine learning, emphasising how the latter can infer functions from large datasets without predefined equations. She then provided examples of useful AI applications for climate action, such as monitoring crop health using satellite imagery, forecasting renewable energy production, and optimising heating and cooling systems to reduce waste. Taking an example from urban planning, Dr Kaack then highlighted how AI can assist in urban planning by providing real-time simulations for designing more sustainable and liveable cities. She concluded her presentation by discussing the limitations of AI, including the need for vast amounts of data, the necessity for tailored models, and the potential biases inherent in AI systems. ↓

Urban Data and Artificial Intelligence as Digital Commons

Keynote by Francesca Bria

Francesca Bria, Honorary Professor at the Institute for Innovation and Public Purpose, University College London (UCL) and Executive Board Member of Radiotelevisione Italiana (RAI), joined virtually to discuss the governance of urban data and AI as digital commons. She pointed to the need to align digital innovation with social and environmental sustainability, drawing on her experience of transforming urban environments in cities such as Barcelona. Bria accentuated the importance of urban data sovereignty and transparency when it comes to empowering citizens and ensuring that urban data serves the public interest. She stressed the necessity of participatory democracy, highlighting the critical role of involving citizens in decision-making processes to enhance the success of climate initiatives and ensure they reflect community needs and preferences. Additionally, she shared examples of successful urban data projects, such as the [Barcelona superblocks](#), which aimed to reduce car traffic, create green spaces and improve urban liveability.



'Involving citizens in the decision-making process around net zero and climate-neutral action plans is critical to their success. With today's digital tools and a hybrid method of online democracy and offline democracy, it is possible to extract collective intelligence from people and move towards a more participatory democracy.'

– Francesca Bria, UCL London

The session concluded with a Q&A segment, where audience members raised questions about the resilience of AI systems in the face of cyber-attacks, the applicability of AI in rural areas, and the customisation of AI models. Both Dr Kaack and Bria provided insightful responses, addressing the technical and strategic aspects of implementing AI in a climate action context. Their discussion also reaffirmed the importance of cross-disciplinary collaboration and a robust governance framework with regard to maximising the benefits of digital innovation for achieving climate goals. ●



Image created with AI

At the conference, the question arose as to how to pronounce EUKI. How would you pronounce it?

Needs and Potentials of the Industrial Decarbonisation

EUKICON24 featured an in-depth session focused on the needs and potential of industrial decarbonisation – a critical topic, given the substantial emissions generated by the industrial sector in Europe. Follow this [link](#) for the full video recording of this panel discussion.



Kateřina Davidov holding a keynote

Setting the Scene

Kateřina Davidov from the [Center for Transport and Energy](#) in Prague provided an overview of the emissions profile of European industries. She stressed that the industrial sector is responsible for more than a quarter of Europe's emissions, with significant contributions from hard-to-abate sectors such as steel, cement and chemicals. Davidov outlined the challenge of decarbonising these sectors, noting that many of the requisite technologies, such as hydrogen and carbon capture, are not yet used at scale.

Insights from Industry Leaders

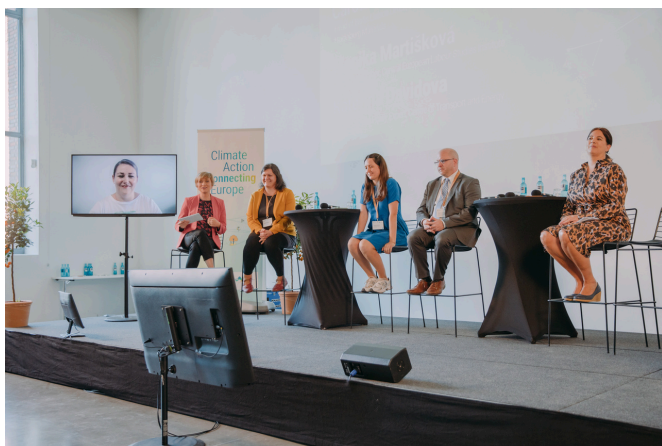
Carolin Boßmeyer of Heidelberg Materials described her [company's approach to decarbonisation](#). She emphasised the importance of leadership and a commitment to ambitious climate targets, highlighting the multinational German building materials company's goal of achieving net-zero emissions by 2050. Boßmeyer detailed the various strategies employed, such as improving energy efficiency, using alternative raw materials, and pioneering carbon capture and storage (CCS) technologies. 'We need solutions that are highly scalable to meet the demands of the global challenges,' she said. She also underscored the need for communication and collaboration with stakeholders to ensure societal acceptance and support for decarbonisation efforts.

Malte Bornkamm from the German Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action (BMWK) discussed the urgency of investing in the right technologies for climate neutrality. He noted that many industrial installations are due for reinvestment and that the European Union's Emissions Trading System (ETS) provides a carbon price incentive. Bornkamm pointed to the need for comprehensive policies, including carbon border adjustments and funding mechanisms, to support the transition and maintain competitiveness. 'In the medium to long term, we need what we call 'green lead markets'. These new goods, like green steel and green cement, have to be competitive on the market,' he stated. ↓

Challenges and Opportunities

Michaela Hletkova Ploszeková from Volkswagen Slovakia shared insights on the automotive industry's decarbonisation journey: 'Since 2013, we've only been using renewable energy.' She discussed the implementation of a circular economy project that recycles aluminium scrap, significantly reducing energy consumption and CO2 emissions. 'The use of secondary aluminium saves up to 95 per cent of the energy compared to primary aluminium,' Ploszeková explained. The environmental manager emphasised the importance of small, incremental steps alongside larger investments to motivate ongoing improvement and achieve substantial emissions reductions.

Monika Martišková from the Central European Labour Studies Institute (CELSI) addressed the social dimensions of industrial decarbonisation. She highlighted the need for multi-stakeholder dialogue and cooperation to ensure a fair transition for workers. Martišková noted that many Central and Eastern European countries have a high proportion of multinational companies, which can impact local engagement and social dialogue. She stressed the importance of reskilling and regional cooperation to support workers through the transition, explaining that 'employees lack information and a vision for the future.'



Panel discussion with Michaela Hletkova Ploszekova, Moderator Marianna Evenstein, Monika Martišková, Kateřina Davidova, Malte Bornkamm and Carolin Boßmeyer

Benefits of Decarbonisation

Kateřina Davidová returned to discuss the co-benefits of decarbonisation, citing studies that quantify the economic and health benefits of reducing emissions. She accentuated the fact that the cost of inaction is significantly higher than the cost of the transition. The latter offers substantial savings in health costs, improved agricultural yields and reduced strain on infrastructure. Davidová pointed out that the green transition could bring new jobs and economic opportunities, creating a positive overall impact.

This session underscored the complexity and urgency of industrial decarbonisation. Speakers emphasised the need for leadership, collaboration and comprehensive policies to drive the transition. The discussions highlighted both the challenges and the substantial benefits of decarbonisation, reinforcing the importance of continued efforts to achieve climate neutrality. ●

The conference guests were invited to round off the day with a buffet in the relaxed atmosphere of the neighbouring courtyard of Kindl Berlin.



DAY 2

Insights on EU 2040 Targets and Innovative Entrepreneurship

The second day of EUKICON24 focused on the EU's 2040 climate targets and the future of the energy and climate transition. After another full day of inspiring keynotes, panel discussions, and workshops, the EUKICON came to a close and was rounded off with a guided tour through Berlin's Neukölln district.



On the Path to Climate Neutrality: EU 2040 Climate Targets

The day began with an in-depth session on the EU's 2040 climate targets. This session featured a keynote address by Yvon Slingenberg, Acting Deputy Director at the European Commission's Directorate General for Climate Action, followed by an engaging panel discussion with climate policy experts. Watch the recording of the session [here](#).



Yvon Slingenberg holding a keynote

Aiming High for a Path to Energy Independence Keynote by Yvon Slingenberg

Yvon Slingenberg's keynote provided a comprehensive overview of the European Commission's recently published [communication and impact assessment report on the 2040 climate targets](#). She highlighted the Commission's recommendation for a 90-per cent reduction in net emissions by 2040, relative to 1990 levels. Shedding light on the background to and rationale for setting new climate targets now, just ahead of the upcoming European elections, Slingenberg spoke of the pressing need for strong mitigation and adaptation efforts.

She underlined the urgency of the situation for Europe as the fastest warming continent, with the attendant and pervasive climate risks threatening various sectors, including energy, food security and health.

Slingenberg called attention to the importance of continuity in policy and investment decisions to achieve the ambitious 2040 target. She also explained that achieving climate neutrality by 2050 requires significant action and investments now to avoid lock-in to carbon-intensive technologies and potential stranded assets. Reaching the 2040 target would boost energy independence, economic resilience and the EU's position as the leader in global clean technology markets, she stressed.

What it Takes to Achieve the EU 2040 Climate Targets

The panel discussion featured insights from several experts:



Dr Meyer-Ohlendorf in a panel discussion, to his right Christophe Jost and Martin Vladimirov

Dr Nils Meyer-Ohlendorf, Head of International and European Governance and Senior Fellow at the [Ecologic Institute](#), addressed the critical importance of differentiating between carbon removals and reductions: 'When I talk about reductions, I mean that we must leave fossil fuels – coal, gas, and oil – in the ground where they are. It's not about digging them out, burning them, and removing them. That is a risky strategy for many reasons.'👇

Meyer-Ohlendorf was also emphatic that relying solely on electrification and technological solutions is insufficient; emissions prevention is equally crucial for achieving climate goals.

Christophe Jost, Senior EU Policy Officer at [CEE Bankwatch Network](#), highlighted the financial challenges, mentioning the EUR 1.5 trillion annual investment needed to meet the 2040 target: 'That's a huge number. [...] We lack clarity about what comes next. I think it's important to start a debate now about what investments are needed in industry and for local authorities, but also what resources must be put in place. The European Commission will come forward next year with a proposal for the next multiannual financial framework.' He pointed out the importance of capacity building and technical assistance, particularly for Central and Eastern European regions.



F.I.T.R.: Christophe Jost and Martin Vladimirov in a panel discussion

Martin Vladimirov, Director of the Energy and Climate Program at the [Center for the Study of Democracy](#), emphasised the need to focus on industrial competitiveness and counter energy poverty risks, with a view to bridging the gap between the EU's proposals and member states' actual progress on implementation.

'The energy crisis between 2021 and 2022 may have raised energy poverty by around 20 million people across Europe. This is a key issue for us to tackle in terms of convincing member states to follow up on the implementation of the 2040 targets.'

The discussion also covered the critical role of public transport improvements and urban design in reducing greenhouse gas emissions, especially in Central and Eastern Europe, where full electrification might be challenging.



'It's all about looking and finding the investments that are going to modernise our economies, and, in particular, avoid lock-in into carbon-intensive technologies. Those investments would probably then lead to stranded assets.'

– Yvon Slingenberg, European Commission

The session concluded by shining a light on the EU's commitment to ambitious climate targets and the necessity of collective efforts across various sectors and regions. The importance of transparent and objective debate involving all stakeholders was underscored as the means of ensuring that the path to 2040 and beyond is both feasible and beneficial for all European citizens. This insightful session set the stage for further discussion in the subsequent workshops on how to implement these ambitious targets effectively and thereby ensure a just transition that leaves no one behind. ●

Bursting Bubbles for Climate Action

Future of the Energy and Climate Transition

Featuring keynote speaker Livia Kalossaka, this insightful session delved into innovative approaches and the critical role of entrepreneurship in advancing climate action. The inspirational speech and exchange can be viewed in full [online](#).



Livia Kalossaka holding a keynote

Innovation and Entrepreneurship for a Sustainable Future

Livia Kalossaka gave a perspective-shifting keynote. The Climate Lead at the [Creative Destruction Lab](#), EU Young Energy Champion of 2023 and PhD-trained materials scientist shared her unique journey from academia to entrepreneurship. Kalossaka emphasised the importance of innovation and the need to burst bubbles to foster collaboration and progress on climate action. She began her keynote by drawing an analogy with bubbles, explaining that society often functions within isolated bubbles that hinder comprehensive understanding and collaboration. Kalossaka addressed the perceived gap between the business sector and civil society when it comes to climate action. She called for greater cooperation and highlighted the importance of providing access to resources and networks to foster innovation across Europe.

Kalossaka noted: 'We need more networks, more accelerators and more incubators to help these ideas take shape.'

She accentuated the critical role of entrepreneurs in providing solutions rather than merely voicing critiques, stating: 'What entrepreneurs do is show a solution to this critique.'

Disrupting the Status Quo

Kalossaka stressed the significance of innovation and entrepreneurship in addressing climate challenges. Pointing out the need for disruptive innovations, she stated: 'We need disruptive innovations because we have lights, not because we're continuously improving on candles, right?' She shared examples of start-ups making significant headway with climate technology, such as Vultidis, which integrates solar panels into greenhouses to make farmers energy-independent, and Genomines, which uses bioengineered plants to extract nickel from soil.

Kalossaka also underlined the importance of policies that provide long-term stability for start-ups, enabling them to scale their solutions effectively. She recognised the attraction of Europe's regulatory environment and single market vision to start-ups, but also addressed the need for consistent long-term policies to support business decisions and investments. ●



'One thing we can do is to promote access. This conference is an excellent example of giving people access to resources. In the same way, we need to encourage people to take a leap forward and to be innovators.'

– Livia Kalossaka, Creative Destruction Lab

News for the EUKI Community

The audience received an update on the ongoing 8th EUKI Call for Project Ideas.

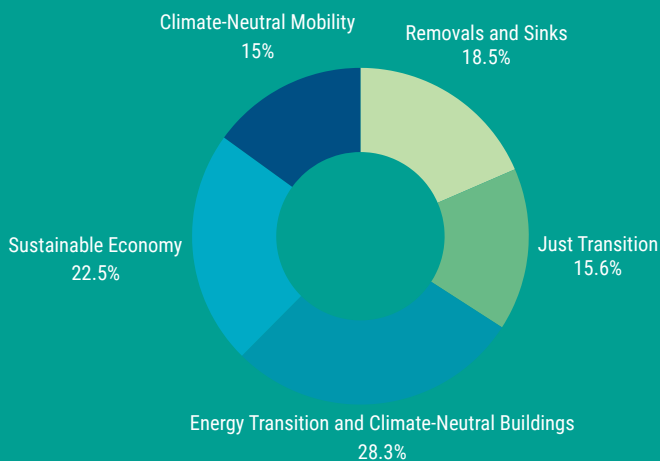
Audrey Mathieu, Policy Officer in the Division of European Climate Policy responsible for the European Climate Initiative at the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action (BMWK), informed the audience about the last call for project ideas. She shared that there were 231 applications from all over Europe, a 28-per cent increase compared with the last call. Besides the quantity, Mathieu also acknowledged the high quality of the project proposals. Applicants are expected to be informed about the decision in July. Shortlisted projects will need to submit their full applications by mid-August. The 9th call for ideas is set to be issued at the end of November 2024.



Audrey Mathieu and Elsa Benhöfer sharing news with the EUKI Community

Distribution of EUKI Topics

The submissions were fairly evenly distributed across the six EUKI topic clusters.



Elsa Benhöfer, EUKI Academy Coordinator, then informed the audience about several upcoming events designed to support the EUKI Community through knowledge-sharing and networking. 'The next EUKICON is scheduled for 2026, but in the meantime there will be multiple training courses, webinars, and regional/national conferences, the next one being a Polish networking event in autumn 2024,' she said. Another event is planned for Bulgaria and Romania in early 2025. 'We will also organise a second study tour to Brussels, a networking conference for the Western Balkans, and an event in the Czech Republic,' she announced. The EUKI Academy Coordinator urged the community to share their needs and take advantage of the Academy's offerings. Those interested in upcoming EUKI Academy events are encouraged to check the EUKI website regularly and subscribe to the EUKI newsletter, which will also publicise forthcoming events. ●

“Keep up the Great Work!”

Wrap-Up by Ulrike Leis

Finally, on behalf of the EUKI Secretariat, EUKI Deputy Director **Ulrike Leis** sincerely thanked all participants, speakers and organisers for making the event a great success. She noted the spirit of collaboration and innovation, and encouraged the inspirational participants to drive forward climate action across Europe. ‘In times of political uncertainty and the escalating threat of climate change, the EUKI Community stands as a beacon of hope and resilience. This conference has underscored the importance of coming together to exchange knowledge, forge partnerships and develop innovative strategies for tackling the pressing challenges of our time,’ said Leis in her closing remarks. For her, the diverse agenda of the EUKI Networking Conference 2024 highlighted the multifaceted nature of climate action, from policy discussions to local initiatives and technological advances. She urged the EUKI Community to retain a spirit of collaboration and innovation, using their strengths to accelerate the green transition and build a sustainable future.●



Ulrike Leis closing the conference

OUTCOMES OF THE EUKICON WORKSHOPS

The EUKICON included a series of interactive workshops, each providing valuable insights and recommendations on various aspects of climate action. These workshops were led by experts from EUKI projects, and you can find a summary of their key outcomes below. When sharing their workshop results on stage, the experts collectively highlighted the important role of community engagement, innovative solutions and robust policy frameworks in driving the transition to a sustainable, climate-neutral future.



Energy Community Impacts

This workshop emphasised the role of local energy communities in mitigating energy poverty. Facilitated by Ivan Duilo from the [Society for Sustainable Development](#) in Croatia, it featured key presentations on the goals and achievements of EUKI projects [LoGyCo](#) and [SunSharing](#). Participants engaged in group activities to design hypothetical energy communities, focusing on technology, funding and revenue distribution. The workshop underscored the importance of stakeholder engagement and demonstrated successful examples of smart technical solutions and financing models.



© EUKI



© Jem Sanchez | [Pexels](#): Windmills on the seashore

Unlocking Offshore Wind Potential

This workshop addressed the potential for generating offshore wind energy in the Baltic, Adriatic and Black Seas. Moderated by Stanislav Anastasov, Chairman of the Environment Committee at the [Bulgarian National Assembly](#), and Pawel Czyzak, Regional Lead at [EMBER](#), discussions centred on regulatory frameworks, environmental sustainability and infrastructure requirements. Participants identified key actions such as improving stakeholder communication, developing onshore infrastructure and addressing ecological risks.

Methane - Tackling the Invisible Threat to Our Climate

This workshop introduced participants to the sources and impacts of methane emissions, along with mitigation strategies. Facilitators Mihai Stoica and Raul Cazan from the association [2Celsius](#) invited guest speakers from the Environmental Defense Fund and Clean Air Task Force to share their knowledge. A significant part of the discussion revolved around using satellite data to improve emission inventories. An interactive SWOT analysis explored the potential of methane pricing in the energy sector, revealing general support for the idea, subject to consumer price burdens and other weaknesses being addressed.



© iStock : Methane production



© EUKI

Digital Innovation and Machine Learning in Energy Data Management

This workshop showcased the potential of AI and machine learning for improving energy management. It was led by Hanna Lewandowska from the [municipality of Bydgoszcz](#) in Poland and AI researcher Dr Lynn Kaack. Examples of AI applications included the use of robotic process automation (RPA) for energy data analysis in Bydgoszcz. Participants brainstormed ideas for enhancing similar systems with machine learning to optimise energy use and detect irregularities. They emphasised the need for continuous updates and collaborative frameworks.

From 10 to 55

This workshop explored how children and young people can contribute to climate neutrality in their communities through science, art and democracy. Workshop facilitator Evi Tzanakaki from the [Centre for Renewable Energy Sources and Saving](#) referenced EUKI project [Eleusis](#) as an example. Discussions highlighted the importance of empowering youth through local initiatives, schools and NGOs. Various tools such as local forums, competitions and digital platforms were identified, along with role models such as influencers and artists, with a view to engaging children on climate action. The ultimate aim is to build a climate-neutral future after the -55% emissions target for 2030.



© Laura Karlin | WWF Finland: Children Holding up Signs



© Renocally : Construction

Enabling the Renovation Wave - Renovation Passports and the Performance Gap

This workshop discussed the performance gap between predicted and actual energy savings. It was led by experts in building efficiency and EU policy frameworks. Facilitators and participants agreed on Building Renovation Passports (BRPs) as a solution for improving energy efficiency in public buildings. Participants discussed the challenges and opportunities for local authorities when it comes to implementing BRPs and recommended that priority be given to developing the capacity of local staff and securing sufficient financial support.

Shaping the Future for Coal Regions in Transition

Facilitated by Mateusz Kowalik from the [Polish Green Network](#), this workshop tackled the complex transition to a just phase-out of coal. Participants discussed strategies for a sustainable future in coal-dependent regions, focusing on political will, employment and effective communication. They emphasised the need for financial support for small enterprises, lifelong learning and robust NGO engagement to ensure a just transition.



© Wengen Ling | Getty Images Signature: Solar panels



© EUKI

Crafting Local Strategies for Climate Neutrality

This workshop was led by local government officials and climate policy experts Ewa Iwaszuk from [Ecologic Institute](#), and Iwona Korohoda and Izabela Kuśnierz, both from the [Association of Municipalities Polish Network "Energie Cités"](#). They provided strategies for local authorities to achieve climate neutrality. Key discussion topics included policy frameworks, stakeholder engagement and innovative local solutions. The workshop highlighted the importance of regional cooperation and shared successful case studies from various European cities.

Socially Fair and Ambitious NECPS

This workshop focused on identifying governance and stakeholder engagement deficits in the National Energy and Climate Plans (NECPs), addressing the energy issues exacerbated by Russia's war in Ukraine. It was led by Ruslan Stefanov from the [Center for the Study of Democracy](#). Participants ranked country-specific gaps, vulnerabilities and challenges, taking into account energy security and social aspects. The workshop provided insights into strengthening stakeholder engagement and enhancing inclusivity of public discourse on energy and climate policies. Key recommendations included holding early and more inclusive stakeholder consultations, promoting transparent and cost-effective measures, and ensuring transparency in data modelling.



© Klsa12 | [Freeimages](#): Wind turbines in the field



© Nadine Marfurt | [Unsplash](#): Smoking chimney against the sky

Enhancing Impact - Learning to Estimate Your Project's Emission Reductions

Facilitated by Stefan Wehner from the [greenwerk](#) and Sven Feige from [Perspectives Climate Group](#), this workshop centred on methods of estimating and reporting emission reductions for climate projects. Participants were divided into groups to discuss cases from their work, with the aim of leveraging collective expertise to address challenges in estimating emission reductions. Key topics included understanding direct versus indirect climate impacts, selecting suitable methodologies for quantification, and handling data availability issues. Practical case studies were used to illustrate these concepts, providing participants with concrete steps for improving their project's greenhouse gas mitigation assessment.

THANK YOU!



Audience applauding

Title: EUKI Networking Conference 2024 - Joining Hands to Drive the Green Transition Forward

Published by European Climate Initiative (Directorate: Nele Bünner and Ulrike Leis)

Written by Sofia Shabafrouz

Edited and Proofread by Elsa Benhöfer, Levin Kettler, Fabia Speth, Nele Bünner, Laura Müller

Language proof by Matthew Popplewell

Photos by Sina Goeschen

The **European Climate Initiative (EUKI)** is a project financing instrument of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action (BMWK), based on a decision of the German Bundestag. The Financing Programme EUKI is implemented by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH. It is the overarching goal of the EUKI to foster climate cooperation within the European Union (EU) in order to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions.