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Shared Green Societies: A European Forum connecting practice, policy and research



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Societies**
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September 2025

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Strategy document

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1. Introduction: the need to integrate societal aspects into green policy transitions

Across Europe, the need for a just and inclusive green transition has never been more urgent. Despite a proliferation of local innovation and a growing body of Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH) research, efforts toward this transition remain fragmented, and critical links between academic insights and grassroots action are often missing. Civil society actors, local authorities, and communities working at the frontlines of sustainability challenges may face difficulties in accessing, applying, or influencing research. At the same time, researchers need to better understand realities ‘on the ground’ and are looking for opportunities to connect their findings with real-world impact. In this context, there is a pressing need for **a forum that bridges the gap between evidence, practice, and policy**, and fosters collaboration across sectors and disciplines.

This strategy document outlines our vision for creating a forum (i.e. a collaborative community) that responds to these needs. The strategy emerged from a process of co-creation with stakeholders, partners, and European Commission actors¹. It defines a shared vision for a dynamic, participatory, and interdisciplinary forum that enables mutual learning, supports community-led initiatives, and amplifies the voices of underrepresented groups in shaping Europe’s green future. The forum sets out to become a vital connector: translating research into action, turning lived experiences into knowledge, and aligning grassroots innovation with policy transformation.

The **Shared Green Societies Forum** will be officially launched in January 2026 and will run until at least 2030. The forum is seed-funded through the European Commission²; a number of funded forum activities up till 2027. After that date, a sustainability plan will be put in place, under the leadership of the European Association for Local Democracy (ALDA Europe) and Anglia Ruskin University’s Global Sustainability Institute.

1 Described in more detail in the accompanying Annexe document: Martin, B., 2025. Shared Green Societies: A European Forum connecting practice, policy and research. Annexe – Co-creation process, Cambridge: SHARED GREEN DEAL. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17141645>

2 The Forum’s origins connect to the Horizon 2020 project, [SHARED GREEN DEAL](#), which primarily focuses on different experimental and participatory approaches to engaging stakeholders, at local and regional levels, in pursuit of the EU’s Green Deal objectives. It is coordinated by Chris Foulds and Rosie Robison, of the Global Sustainability Institute, Anglia Ruskin University, UK.

2. Mission Statement



Shared Green Societies is a European forum that connects civil society, local and regional actors, and SSH (Social Sciences & Humanities) researchers to transform social research into community innovations for an inclusive, just, and green transition.

The forum will be built on the idea that meaningful progress toward an inclusive, just, and green transition requires close collaboration between communities and researchers, and its main added value lies in strategically bridging research and practice. On one hand, it aims to create a space where NGOs and local actors can access findings, outputs, and tools from Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH) research³, to more effectively support their communities. On the other hand, the forum facilitates constructive dialogue between SSH researchers and those with lived experience on the ground, fostering mutual learning.

Ultimately, the forum aims to integrate SSH more fully into policy and practice discussions related to societal transitions, ensuring these processes are informed by a deeper understanding of social dynamics, human behaviour and real-world evidence, as well as by forum discussions themselves.

Our forum will also take equity, diversity and inclusion matters seriously. Meaningful participation and social innovation require the recognition and inclusion of a broad range of perspectives, including those from different backgrounds, with different identities, or living in different circumstances. In line with this core belief, Shared Green Societies will make efforts to engage individuals and organisations who are currently underrepresented in political decision making on the green transition. We welcome interaction with groups who similarly appreciate the diversity and inclusion necessary for this work to be effective, and are exploring ways that members can share their inclusivity-related policies, to support the work of the forum.

³ Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH) research relating to sustainability concerns investigating how people and societies may influence (and be influenced by) the challenges associated a changing world. There may be a focus on e.g. experiences, perceptions, engagement, participation and understandings. The Social Sciences would traditionally include disciplines such as Human Geography, Sociology, Psychology, Economics, etc., and the Humanities would include disciplines such as History, Philosophy, Theology, etc.

3. Key goals

To fulfil its mission, the forum focuses on three key strategic goals aimed at **advancing green transitions**:

1.



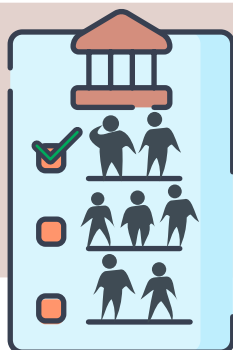
Supporting citizen and/or professional participation - through well-designed community-led initiatives.

2.

Promoting mutual knowledge flows - ensuring that NGOs and local actors benefit from SSH research insights, while researchers gain from the lived experiences and practical knowledge of communities.



3.



Advocating for inclusive public policies - leveraging academic insight and grassroots experience together to help shape just policymaking

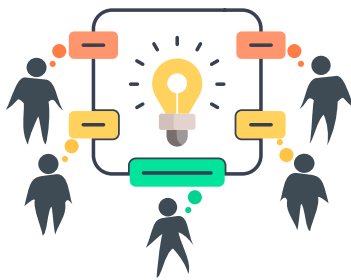
3.1. Supporting citizen and professional participation



The forum places **local, community-led participatory actions** - related to inclusive, just, and green transition, at its core. By creating spaces for dialogue, co-creation, and capacity-building, it aims to encourage individuals and groups to actively shape the transition processes that impact their lives. In order to achieve this goal, the forum will offer training, workshops, and peer-learning opportunities.

Recognising that barriers to participation often exist - such as language, access to resources, or institutional constraints - the forum aims to identify and, where possible, reduce these obstacles. It values the participation of structurally excluded groups, who share an inclusive and human-rights based vision, to ensure that the green transition is socially just and leaves no one behind. Attention will also be given to how disadvantaged groups can benefit from the forum, such as through targeted fundraising support, or the sharing of funding opportunities to jointly sustain and scale their initiatives.

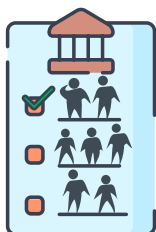
3.2. Promoting mutual knowledge flows



One of the key aspects of the forum is to **encourage and facilitate at least two-way flows of knowledge**: ensuring that NGOs and local actors benefit from SSH research insights, while researchers gain from the lived experiences and practical knowledge of communities.

On the one hand, the forum can help bridge the gap between research and practice by working with NGOs, local and regional authorities, and grassroots organisations to identify relevant academic insights and co-develop ways to apply them in concrete contexts - for example, through toolkits, guides, or workshops. On the other hand, it can offer researchers access to practical experiences and pilot initiatives, enabling mutual learning and helping to ground academic work in the real-world complexities and lived realities of practitioners.

3.3. Advocating for just and community-based public policies



Another key goal of the forum is to advocate for **more just and community-responsive policies**. Specifically, different communities are affected differently by the climate crisis and associated policies, and we want to strengthen those groups who have been disproportionately and negatively affected in this regard. We aim to do so by connecting the perspectives of civil society organisations, researchers and local actors and by bringing together academic insight and grassroots - a form of social capital that has been historically undervalued.

Building on the SHARED GREEN DEAL Project, the forum's advocacy efforts will be grounded in both academic evidence and documented grassroots experience. This will help shape policy debates and initiatives in a way that is just and responsive to the proven needs of local communities.

4. Who is the forum for?

Shared Green Societies aims to reach civil society, local and regional authorities, and academic institutions (especially those focused on SSH). Regarding civil society and local and regional authorities, the focus lies primarily on engaging **networks of such organisations**, partnering with them to reach local actors and organisations working directly on the ground.

Shared Green Societies is designed to be open and adaptable, allowing for different levels of participation. This flexible approach can ensure that the organisations and individuals can contribute meaningfully, in ways that are in line with resources and ambitions.

Three levels of participation are foreseen: from highly active involvement as ‘Forum Members’, to consultative or exemplary roles as ‘Forum Champions’, to more occasional, supportive engagement as ‘Friends of the forum’.

Read more about how you can get involved below:

4.1. Become a ‘Member’

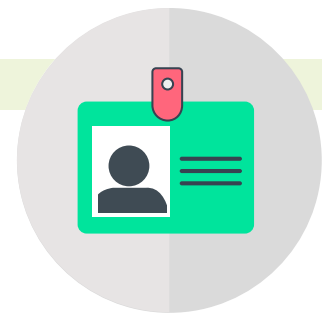
Forum Membership is the highest level of involvement, with the active participation of the organisations that can have strategic influence within the forum.

Membership is open to:

- **Network Organisations** representing a number of Civil Society Organisations, Local or Regional Authorities, Citizen groups, Marginalised Communities, etc. These Organisations can bring expertise and experience in ‘local realities’ and lived experiences. *Country-specific organisations are eligible if they cover multiple initiatives and ensure broad representation.*
- **Research organisations, University departments and Institutes, or Networks of Research Institutes**, focusing on *Social Sciences and Humanities research on issues of sustainability*, e.g. relating to the EC’s broad goals on the green transition.

Being a Forum Member offers a number of optional opportunities, including but certainly not limited to:

- Participating in and, where possible, co-creating dedicated forum activities in 2026-2027 including: two **large-scale events** including stakeholders from practice, policy and research, activities dedicated to NGOs, policy roundtables, online workshops and funding recommendations.
- Feeding into the co-creation of **policy briefs**. There are already five policy briefs planned for 2026, with audiences including e.g. European Commission policy officers, MEPs, municipalities, and business and industry. These will issue recommendations for action and cover topics such as clean energy, circular economy, efficient renovations, sustainable food, sustainable mobility, biodiversity, climate action and pollution.



- Each policy brief will be discussed at a series of dedicated invite-only, high-profile **policy roundtables** in 2026, which members will also be able to attend should they wish.
- Acting as judges for the annual **SSH Research Awards**, which seeks to showcase excellent and rigorous work done by PhD and Early Career researchers working on matters of European sustainability and society. Members are also welcome to simply attend the short, virtual awards ceremony to hear more about best practice initiatives that relate directly to the network's key goals.
- Connecting with other contacts of the forum to **explore potential synergies**, including co-hosting events, pooling networks for mutual benefits, and finding partnerships and support for the application to EU funding programmes.
- Participating in **fundraising efforts** for 2027 onwards (note that the forum will follow a dedicated Sustainability Plan, but welcome opportunities from members).
- Joining the **Forum Board**, to help shape the forum's overall collaborative direction in the coming years and ultimately get to know the forum's founding members better.

Furthermore, as a Forum Member, organisations also have the opportunity to make new suggestions for collaborations and engagement work. Indeed, we welcome such suggestion and dialogue; we are keen for the Forum's core activities to be responsive to the needs and interests of its members.

Organisations interested in becoming members will be able to submit a short application via the forum website: www.sharedgreensocieties.eu. All membership applications are reviewed by the Forum Board to ensure alignment with the network's mission and this strategy.

4.2. Become a 'Champion'

Forum Champions can be organisations or individuals – including individual local/regional authorities, individual researchers or small teams, and businesses whose work relates to one of the eight Green Deal topic areas⁴ – who are interested in strong, innovative practices in inclusive and sustainable transitions. Champions are engaged in the forum on one hand by sharing insights, approaches, and lessons learned, offering inspiration and practical knowledge to others. On the other hand, participation in the forum can support them in promoting their work more broadly and access outputs and opportunities.



Unlike Forum Members, Champions are not able to take part in governance decisions, but they play a vital role in fostering mutual knowledge flows and enriching the wider community.

Organisations or individuals interested in becoming 'champions' will be able to submit a short application via the forum website : www.sharedgreensocieties.eu. All applications are reviewed by the Forum Board.

4 Clean Energy, Circular Economy, Efficient Renovation, Sustainable Mobility, Sustainable Food, Preserving Biodiversity, Climate Action, Zero Pollution.

4.3. Become a 'Friend'

Friends of the forum are stakeholders who want to stay in dialogue with the forum, and are highly relevant to it, but may not be able to take up a formal role. They may participate in a more occasional or observer capacity, including contributing their expertise or/and connections.



These include:

- European Commission staff, who due to their institutional relevance can provide advice and visibility, and gain insights from the forum for their policy-making work.
- European or International Institution staff, who can help align the forum with broader institutional agendas (e.g. European Parliament, EU Agencies, Committee of the Regions).
- Individuals from other key organisations with whom collaboration is valuable and desired (e.g. think tanks, philanthropic foundations, industry associations).

Becoming a Friend of the forum will be by invitation.

*Thank you for your interest in the
Shared Green Societies Forum,
do get in touch with any comments or questions*

5. Acknowledgments

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We are grateful for colleagues from Shared Green Societies Forum Board, for their kind review comments. Colleagues are based at: ALDA - European Association for Local Democracy; ARU - Anglia Ruskin University; IIED - International Institute For Environment And Development (GEC - Green Economy Coalition); ECIT - Energy Cities/Energie-Cites Association; ICLEI (European Secretariat); IEEP - Institute For European Environmental Policy; ISI - Fraunhofer Gesellschaft Zur Foerderung Der Angewandten Forschung; ICS - Instituto De Ciencias Sociais; WECF - Women Engage For A Common Future; SFYN - Slow Food Youth Network; MIO - Mediterranean Information Office For Environment, Culture And Sustainable Development Association; BWN - CEE Bankwatch Network; DRIFT - Dutch Research Institute For Transitions; CERC - MIB Developpement Ecole Des Ponts Business School; ACC - Acento Comunicación.



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