



[26] Guimarães 26
European Green Capital

Environment Forum 2026

One planet cities: bringing science, policy and practice together
Guimarães, Portugal

YOUTH PANEL

PROGRAMME*

3-4 November 2026

*The Youth Panel will be a two-day track designed to enable a group of young participants to actively contribute to the 2026 Environment Forum held in Guimarães, Portugal. On 3 November, participants will take part in sessions from the main Forum programme, while 4 November will be dedicated to a tailored youth programme, as detailed below. Through designated rapporteurs, key messages and reflections from the Youth Panel will be reported back to the wider Forum, ensuring that youth perspectives are reflected in the overall discussions.

Background

1. Why a Youth Panel?

The transition towards One Planet Cities, cities that enable people to thrive within planetary boundaries while contributing to the goals of the Paris Agreement, requires more than technological solutions and policy commitments. As cities face accelerating climate change, biodiversity loss, resource pressures and growing inequalities, they must find new ways to connect local action with global challenges and ensure that sustainability transitions are based on science, and result in both environmentally effective and socially inclusive solutions.

As European Green Capital 2026, Guimarães has embraced the One Planet City approach by promoting stronger connections between science, policy and practice and by encouraging cities to shape their local transformation within a global context. Guimarães aims to become a One Planet City by 2050 and has launched a One Planet City Declaration, open for signature by other cities, built on five pillars: education, science, social justice, the green economy and culture. Through its climate residencies, Guimarães has fostered dialogue on how local action can contribute to global change.

Achieving the **transition towards One Planet Cities** requires a **stronger connection not only between science, policy and practice, but also between generations**. The knowledge and decisions of today need to be connected with the experiences, concerns and aspirations of those who will live with their consequences. Young people are not only affected by the choices made today; they are active contributors who bring valuable perspectives on the kind of sustainable, inclusive and liveable cities needed for the future.

Under the theme of the 2026 Eurocities Environment Forum, "One Planet Cities: bringing science, policy and practice together", the **Youth Panel** will provide a **dedicated space for young people from European cities to reflect, exchange perspectives and formulate recommendations for city leaders**. **Participants will explore what a One Planet City could look like in 2050, what barriers stand in the way of achieving this vision, and what actions cities should take today to make it a reality**. The discussion will **move from vision to action**, identifying concrete priorities and recommendations for cities while bringing a generational perspective to the debate on One Planet Cities.

2. What do we want to achieve?

The Youth Panel will:

- **Bring young European voices into the Environment Forum** and create opportunities for dialogue with city leaders, researchers and practitioners;
- Connect the **local experience of Guimarães** with the challenges and experiences of other European cities;
- Encourage young people to reflect on the relationship between **science, policy and everyday urban life**;
- Identify **barriers and opportunities** for accelerating local climate action;
- Develop a small number of **concrete recommendations for cities and city leaders**, as lasting output to be shared beyond the Forum;
- Encourage building a **network of young people** across European cities.

The central questions

What should cities do today to become One Planet Cities by 2050 and what role do young people want to play in making this happen?

How can local action contribute to global sustainability goals, and what changes do young people want to see in their cities to make this possible?

3. Format at a glance

Youth Panel	
When	4 November 2026, afternoon (morning: site visits as part of the Environment Forum)
Participants	Nominated among and by Eurocities member cities; working language: English
Format	Youth Panel workshop supported by the Landscape Laboratory and Eurocities, ending with a 15-minute intervention in the interactive feedback plenary sessions addressing political leaders
Preparation	Call for participants 1-16 October; 1 online meetings in late October, plus a short assignment
Main output	Youth Recommendations related to the One Planet City 2026 Declaration promoted by Guimarães, and a short Youth Panel report
Support	Accommodation provided by Guimarães (night of 3 November); travel covered by the participating cities or by participants own arrangements

The morning site visits will provide the starting point for the afternoon discussion. Rather than treating the visits as a separate activity, participants will use what they have seen as a concrete basis for discussing how local projects can contribute to wider European and global climate objectives. During the visits they will keep a short field notebook: what inspired me? what is missing in my city? what could be replicated?

4. Who can participate?

We invite Eurocities members to nominate young participants, ideally:

- Aged **between 18 and 25 years**;
- **Interested** in climate, sustainability, urban development, participation, science, innovation or related topics;
- **Willing to contribute** actively to an international group (working language: **English**);
- Available to **participate in two online preparation sessions** in late October, do a short **individual assignment** and attend the **full programme on 4 November** (attendance on 3 November is optional).

No specialist knowledge is required. The purpose is to bring diverse perspectives and experiences into the discussion, rather than to create a panel of technical experts.

We encourage cities to suggest representatives even if they don't fit all the criteria.

Guimarães will provide accommodation for participating young people (night of 3 November), subject to the agreed participation arrangements. Travel to Guimarães is expected to be covered by the participating cities or by participants own arrangements. Cities are also expected to take care of insurance and, when needed, parental consents.

Programme overview

Youth Panel	
Day 1 – Tuesday 3 November 2026 (optional)	
Venue: Jordão Theatre	
Time	Session
<i>Participants can attend sessions from the main Forum programme – see the general Draft agenda for more details</i>	
13.00-17.45	PM EEF 2026 welcome and scene setting - Coffee and registration - Official welcome - Keynotes - Political discussion - Eurocities policy updates <i>Official dinner at 19.00</i>

Day 2 – Wednesday 4 November 2026		
Venue: tbc, Guimarães		
Time	Session	Focus/outcome
9.15-12.30	Study visits	
12.30-13.45	Lunch and transfer to venue	
Venue: tbc, Guimarães		
13.45-15.45	Welcome & setting the scene	One Planet Cities 2050; the One Planet City Declaration; challenge for the Youth Panel; dialogue rules and values
	From the morning visits to the bigger picture	What did we see? What can other cities learn?
	Workshop 1: Imagine the One Planet City 2050	"Dream global, act local": dreams and fears, individually then in pairs from different cities. Future vision across people, climate & nature, economy & innovation, governance; mapped onto the five pillars of the Declaration
	Break	
	Workshop 2: From ambition to action	Barriers, opportunities and concrete recommendations. One sheet per table: problem · local action · support needed (city, EU, science)
	Youth priorities	Cluster and vote on the tables' proposals; agree 3 priorities + 3 recommendations + 1 proposed action
	Preparing the message	Consolidation and preparation of the political presentation; choose 2–3 spokespersons and a youth rapporteur; 3-4 slides, short rehearsal
15.45-16.45	Youth Panel presentation	15-minute presentation within interactive feedback plenary session, addressing political leaders

5. Workshop methodology

The afternoon will be highly participatory, using facilitated small-group discussions and visual exercises rather than presentations. It will follow three stages, moving from divergence to convergence:

- i) LOOK - What are we learning? Reflect on the morning's site visits and on participants' experiences from their own cities.
- ii) IMAGINE - What does a One Planet City look like in 2050? Develop a shared vision of the city of the future, starting from individual dreams and fears.
- iii) ACT - What needs to change now? Translate the vision into concrete recommendations for cities and decision-makers, then prioritise and present them.

6. Preparation and timeline

The process will start with an open invitation to Eurocities member cities in **early October 2026**.

Preparation and timeline	
1 October	Call for participants – cities nominate young people and provide basic participant information.
16 October	Call closes; each city validates its young participants. <i>Please note: The proposed timeline is indicative and may be adjusted to ensure sufficient time for outreach, selection and participant preparation.</i>
20 October	Final confirmation of participants and accommodation bookings.
Late October (week of 22 Oct)	Online meeting 1 – Welcome & onboarding (60 min): introduction to the One Planet City concept, the Youth Panel and workshop methodology; dialogue rules; “dreams and fears” exercise; pre-task.
Late October / early November (week of 29 Oct)	Online meeting 2 – Preparing the discussion (45 min): key questions, practical preparation for the site visits, expected outputs; sharing of assignments, forming groups, travel logistics.
3 November	Arrival (optional): opening session with the presentation of the One Planet City Declaration.
4 November	Youth Panel in Guimarães – site visits in the morning; Youth Panel workshop in the afternoon; presentation to political leaders in plenary feedback session.
November, post EEF 2026	Youth Recommendations report - preparation and validation of the short Youth Panel report; draft by 13 November, final version by 20 November.

Assignment (about 1 hour, individual): read the Guimarães One Planet City Declaration; write down one dream and one fear for their city in 2050; optionally ask 3-5 local young people for their views.

7. Expected outcomes

The Youth Panel will produce a concise set of Youth Recommendations for One Planet Cities, structured around:

- 3 priorities - what should cities focus on if they want to accelerate the transition towards One Planet Cities?
- 3 recommendations - what should city leaders and local governments do differently?
- 1 action - what concrete action or commitment would young people like to see initiated following the Forum?

These recommendations will be presented directly to the plenary audience, addressing political leaders and subsequently captured in a short Youth Panel report, documenting the participants, methodology, discussion and conclusions.

The report will provide a tangible legacy of the Youth Panel and a basis for further dialogue between young people, cities and Eurocities. It will be shared with the participating cities, Eurocities and the Municipality of Guimarães, as a contribution to the follow-up of the One Planet City Declaration.