

Winter School (WS)

Health, Environment and Sustainable Development: Rights, Principles and Rules

Palermo, 23-27 February 2026

Workshop for PhD students

Call for abstracts

University of Palermo – Department of Law – Aula “L. Chiazzese”

INTRODUCTION

The Ph.D. Programme in “*Human Rights: Evolution, Protection and Limits*” of the University of Palermo is organizing a *Winter School (WS)* entitled “*Health, Environment and Sustainable Development: Rights, Principles and Rules*”, from 23 to 27 February 2026.

The WS is funded by the European Union through the PNRR as part of the TNE-DESK project “*Developing Shared Knowledge in Innovative Materials and Digital Transformation for Sustainable Economy and Green Transition*”, led by the University of Bari Aldo Moro in partnership with other Italian and Foreign Universities (<https://www.tne-desk.org>).

This is the second International School of Advanced Interdisciplinary Training directed by Professor Cristiano Celone and funded by the TNE-DESK Project on sustainable development, in partnership with the Federal University of Paraná in Curitiba, Brazil. The first school was held on 5 and 6 June 2025 and focused on the protection of biodiversity and ecosystems.

TOPICS AND OBJECTIVES

The *Winter School* is dedicated to environmental, social, and economic sustainability, as well as intergenerational solidarity.

The latest “*State of the Environment Report in Europe*”, published on 29 September 2025 by the European Environment Agency (EEA), defines Europe’s sustainability challenges as still complex and systemic, emphasizing the need to rethink the relationship between the economy and the natural environment, also in the interests of future generations.

In October 2025 - also in the lead-up to the 30th Conference of the Parties (COP 30) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, significantly held in the following November in Brazil in Belém, gateway to the Amazon Forest (the largest green lung of the Earth and a symbol of planetary emergency) - the European Institutions highlighted the importance for the energy sector to become largely fossil fuel-free well before 2050, and the need to achieve a fully or predominantly decarbonized global system by the 2030s. Such result would be able to provide multiple benefits, including those for sustainable development, human health and air quality, job creation, and energy security. Recognizing that the cost of inaction far exceeds the cost of timely and effective climate action, it was emphasized that climate action is a prerequisite for better water security, sustainable food systems, affordable energy, and the protection of tangible and intangible cultural heritage. Moreover, such actions generally act as a driver for innovation and economic competitiveness. Calls were therefore made for fair and equitable green and digital transition pathways that respect planetary boundaries and focus on people, leaving no one behind.

The main topics to be explored by academic experts include:

1. Environmental ethics and the rights of future generations;
2. Democracy, climate sustainability, and food security;
3. Gender equality;
4. Sustainable cities;
5. Integrated protection of health and environment;
6. Right to time for caregiving;
7. Circular economy;
8. Energy transition;
9. Carbon pricing and carbon border adjustment mechanism;
10. Digital cohesion;
11. Sustainable public procurements;
12. Sustainable use of marine resources and the role of international Courts.

Through the interdisciplinary exchange between Italian and Brazilian legal scholars, the *Winter School* aims to offer a broad and diverse overview of reflections on the complex issues and challenges related to the selected topics.

Through seminars led by experts, the participants will have the opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of the factors influencing sustainable economic, environmental, and social development, as well as of the possible solutions to best ensure it.

These meetings will provide a valuable opportunity to establish a constructive dialogue between young Ph.D. candidates and academic experts, sharing knowledge, experiences, and best practices to develop common strategies to address environmental challenges and promote concrete actions toward a more equitable and just society.

METHODOLOGY

The *Winter School* is organized into sessions, during which the various topics mentioned above will be addressed from different theoretical and practical perspectives, to effectively integrate methods and solutions.

The *Winter School* will conclude in the afternoon of the final day, **27 February 2026**, with a *Workshop*, during which Ph.D. students, selected by the Scientific Committee, will present their work.

ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS

To join the *Workshop*, students enrolled in a Ph.D. program at an Italian or foreign University, whose research project relates to the topics of the *Winter School*, are invited to submit, by **28 December 2025**, an **abstract** in **Italian and English**, each one of no more than **500 words**, on their research topics consistent with the School's themes.

The Scientific Committee will select the best proposals received, based on the following criteria:

- originality of the research topic;
- clarity and coherence of the analysis;
- knowledge of relevant national and international legal sources and scientific literature;
- variety of topics and academic disciplines represented in the public discussion.

The selected Ph.D. students must attend all days of the *Winter School* and will be required to give a concise presentation of their work during the *Workshop*. The final contributions will then be evaluated for potential **publication**.

The participation in the *Winter School* is free of charge, upon submission of a request to the e-mail address: **winterschool2026palermo@gmail.com**, by **February 2, 2026**.

WORKING LANGUAGES

The activities of the Winter School will be conducted in **Italian and English**.

DEADLINES

- Applications by **28 December 2025**: send an email to **winterschool2026Palermo@gmail.com** with the subject line: “Call for abstract_Winter School “Health, Environment and Sustainable Development: Rights, Principles and Rules”_Name and Surname of the PhD student”, attaching an abstract of no more than 500 words, including: title, name and surname, university and Ph.D. Program of belonging, email address, and a provisional outline of the topics to be discussed. Applicants should also include five of the most relevant sources used in preparing the paper.
- Notification of selection results by **12 January 2026**: Ph.D. students who participated in the call will receive an e-mail informing them whether their work has been selected for public discussion.
- Final paper submission by **1 February 2026**: The paper, no more than 8 pages, Garamond 12 font, 1.5 line spacing, and final bibliography, must be sent to **winterschool2026palermo@gmail.com**, with the subject line: “Call for abstract_winterschool2026palermo_Name and Surname of the PhD student_Final paper”.
- Public discussion on **27 February 2026 (afternoon)**.

CERTIFICATES OF PARTICIPATION

At the end of the *Workshop*, upon request, participants will receive a certificate of participation.

FURTHER INFORMATION

For any additional information, please contact: **winterschool2026palermo@gmail.com**.

SCIENTIFIC DIRECTOR OF THE WINTER SCHOOL

Cristiano Celone

SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE

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