

## Sustainable Development at the Local Level

### Explore Sustainable Development in Europe: Hungary & Austria

Online Preparatory Meeting: 03 June, 2026, 14.00 CET

Study Visit: 08–11 June, 2026

The Robert Schuman Institute (RSI), in cooperation with the Eduardo Frei Foundation and the Hungarian Office of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung is organizing the following event for local politicians and like-minded NGO representatives of the European Peoples Party's family from Albania, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Hungary, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and Slovenia.

#### MAIN VISITS AND TOPICS

The 2026 Sustainable Development Study Visit introduces local, regional and cross-border sustainability models in Hungary and Austria through an action-learning approach that links real problems with practical solutions. Participants develop their own project concepts while meeting local heroes—mayors, small producers, family businesses and community organisers—who demonstrate sustainability in practice. The programme offers immersive experiences in western Hungary and Burgenland, highlighting community-driven initiatives, women's employment and the preservation of built cultural heritage. It reflects the European People's Party's view of sustainability, balancing environmental, social and economic dimensions.

*08 June* – In the morning at **ZalaZONE in Zalaegerszeg**, (source: <https://zalazone.hu/en>, <https://www.zalazonepark.hu>) introduces participants to cutting-edge mobility research, university–industry cooperation and large-scale innovation infrastructures that drive regional development and strengthen local resilience. In the surrounding **Zalavidék localities**, the focus shifts to how major investments affect nearby municipalities, offering insight into rural development, community responses and local leadership..

#### Local Hero visits:

**Nagypáli** – the “energy village”. A pioneering renewable-energy community with its Renewable Energy Innovation Eco-Centre, showcasing biomass, biogas, solar and wind solutions. Source: Website: <https://www.nagypali.hu>

**Zalai Falvakért Egyesület** (Association for the Development of Zala Villages) – a long-standing rural development association strengthening small villages through community building, volunteer programmes and local initiatives. Source: Website: <https://www.zalaifalvak.hu>

*09 June* – **Kőszeg**, source: [Kőszeg rád vár!](https://www.koszegradvarl.com), the **Institute of Advanced Studies** (iASK) presents an integrated approach to sustainability that connects cultural heritage, regional identity, social

innovation and cross-border cooperation, demonstrating how knowledge institutions can anchor long-term local development. KRAFT (Creative City – Sustainable Region) Source: <https://iask.hu/en>. Participants will also learn about the EU **Balkans Observatory**, whose analysis of political, economic and social trends provides a natural point of connection for delegates from the Western Balkans. Source: [EU–Balkan Observatory Highlights 2024–2025 - iASK - Institute of Advanced Studies Kőszeg](#)

**Local Hero visit:**

The role of **local currencies** – discussion with key figures in Hungary’s local-currency movement (e.g., Kékfrank), promoting community-based economic resilience.

**10 June – The Austrian field day in Burgenland** provides a multi-layered understanding of sustainability. Source: <https://www.burgenland.at>

In **Illmitz**, participants learn about biodiversity, water management and agri-food systems. Source: [Biologische Station Neusiedler See – Seevorgelände 1 | 7142 Illmitz](#)

In **St. Andrä am Zicksee**, they examine social inclusion through the example of Roma and Sinti communities; in **Kittsee**, they see how regional branding and quality certification support sustainable agriculture and cross-border cooperation (Source: <https://kittseer-marille.at/genussregion/>)

While **Parndorf** showcases a family-run renewable energy enterprise as a model for local energy transition, **Apetlon** highlights sustainable supply-chain management in practice. Sources:

<https://www.puespoek.at/ueber-uns/die-geschichte>,

<https://www.weingut-adrian.at/heurigenhof/die-laberei/>

**11 June – Szombathely** (Source: [www.szombathely.hu](http://www.szombathely.hu)): The final day in Szombathely brings the week’s insights together by examining how cities, universities and business networks collaborate on sustainable urban and economic development. The programme culminates in a workshop where participants develop their own sustainability-focused project concepts. Contributions from the **City of Szombathely’s Council for Urban and Economic Development** and the **Pannon Business Network** provide practitioner-level perspectives on local development strategies, innovation ecosystems and city–business cooperation. Source:

<https://www.pbn.hu/main.php?Lang=EN>

**Local Hero visits:**

**Pornóapáti Biomass Heating Plant** – Hungary’s first community scale biomass district-heating system, a model of local renewable-energy transition. Source: Website: <http://www.pornoapatitavho.hu>

**Pannon Helyi Termék** (Pannon Local Product)- A regional initiative supporting local producers, short supply chains and high-quality artisanal products across Western Hungary. Source: <https://pannonhelyitermek.hu>

**In the afternoon**, the action-learning cycle culminates in a workshop where participants develop the core of their sustainability-focused project proposal—potentially suitable for Erasmus+, city partnerships or peer-review visits—and present their concepts to peers and experts.

## PROJECT DEVELOPMENT PHASES

Before the visit, online sessions help participants define the real-world problem their project will address. Short quizzes and reflection activities during the trip reinforce learning and help organise insights. By recalling key points immediately after each visit, participants identify what matters most for their project. This ensures they arrive at the final Szombathely workshop ready to finalise a coherent, fundable concept.

## PROGRAM FRAME

**Online Preparatory Meeting - 03 June 2026, 14:00 CET.** Introduction to the programme's history and values, SDG-based project development, and expectations toward participants.

### Study Visit

**Meeting point and departure: RSI Office, Budapest, Hungary, 07 June 2026, 15:00 CET**

**Departure** from Szombathely for RSI Office: **12 June 2026, morning**

**Accommodation:** artis Boutique Hotel, Address: 9700 Szombathely, Hefele Menyhért u. 2.  
<https://www.artishotel.hu/en/> **Stay: 07–12 June 2026**

## APPLICANTS

The ideal candidates are 16 motivated young people who are ready to learn, contribute and share as politically engaged individuals, NGO activists, party members or media representatives. They should be committed to acting sustainably in their communities and prepared to develop a project concept based on the insights gained during the visit. Priority will be given to RSI alumni and to candidates working in rural local development, city management or small-town administration.

### Pre-requisites

- Age: 22–35
- Good command of English
- Existing relevant function or role at regional, municipal or community level
- Letter of recommendation from the international secretary of the party, as well as a recommendation from a local politician or NGO
- Short personal motivation video on their own project

### Guidelines for the Personal Motivation Video

Applicants must submit a short motivation video introducing themselves and explaining why they wish to join the study visit. They should present the real local problem or development goal they want to work on, outline their initial project idea, and describe what they hope to learn from the Hungarian and Austrian sustainability cases. The video should show how they plan to apply these insights at home and how they see themselves contributing to the group. This will form the basis for the online project-development sessions after selection.

**Application Form:** [access here](#)

**Application deadline:** 01 June 2026, 17.00 CET

**Conditions of Participation:** Each participant is required to attend the event from beginning to end.

The Robert Schuman Institute is responsible for all organisational matters and inquiries during the application process.

**Contact person**

Imre RIMÓCZI, Project Coordinator – [imre.rimoczi@schuman-institute.eu](mailto:imre.rimoczi@schuman-institute.eu)

**Financial Arrangements**

The cost of the course—including lectures, trainings, full board and accommodation, as well as bus travel during the study visit—will be covered by the organisers. Participants will be accommodated in twin rooms.

Participants should have their international and local travel costs to the RSI office and back to their country of residence covered by their delegating organisation/NGO or by themselves.

Should you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact us.

**Gábor Berczeli**

Director