

Keynote:

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### **Connectedness as the Spiritual Basis of Religious Education for Sustainability**

We must urgently recognize the situation facing humanity as a planetary emergency. The IPCC report's scientific data (IPCC, SYNTHESIS REPORT OF THE IPCC SIXTH ASSESSMENT REPORT (AR6, 2023) show that a far-reaching cultural and structural change is necessary given the ecological challenges. This can only happen with a fundamental change in values and awareness – religions and religious education have an outstanding responsibility in this regard. The guiding role of education for sustainable development (ESD) stands for this transformation of civilization history. In order to profitably combine ecology, economy, and social issues in line with the three-pillar model of sustainability, we ask how we can empower individuals to lead responsible lifestyles in their societies.

Based on the current religious pedagogical discourse – primarily in the German-speaking context – the discourse around religious education for sustainable development will be examined, whose impulses lie in religion-specific justification contexts, spiritual dimensions, and practical concretions. How can religious education contribute to sustainability in an interdisciplinary way so that it is convincing and profitable?

First, it requires a self-critical look at the causes of the ecological crisis, which are also religious – especially concerning the Christian tradition – and have consequences for previous religious pedagogical designs and their reception.

Based on these – scientific and practical – desires, possible religious-didactic approaches that can advance a forward-looking transformation will be identified in a constructive perspective. In particular, the previous neglect of the importance of the emotional dimension of religious education, which has fostered the obvious ‘mind-behaviour-gap’, will be highlighted here. In addition, this perspective provides insights into the spiritual dimensions of education for sustainable development. It is precisely here that a religious approach that integrates aesthetic natural approaches, reverence, and empathy could strengthen sustainable learning.

Finally, with the keyword of 'connectedness', the spiritual dimensions of religious education are linked to sustainability: which opportunities exist in religious didactics that focus the relational dimension – as a spiritual connection – based on our relationship with God in respect for our fellow human beings and in respect for nature as a living planet?

Finally, the potential of interreligious education to strengthen the prospects of sustainable learning in a global context will be demonstrated by the example of the Erasmus-Plus-Project 'Facing Global Challenges: Environmental and Peace Education in Interreligious Cooperation for Teacher Training' (2023-2026).