

The first **Green Growth and Travelism Summer School** was the inaugural event for the Strong University Network (SUN). It was co-organised by Hasselt University, the Belgian national park Hoge Kempen and greenearth.travel. This intensive learning week gathered a highly diverse group of committed graduate students and professionals from the Travel and Tourism industry and other sectors which are part of its value chain. The event was centred at the University in the Limburg province of Belgium, with field trips to the National Park and the European Parliament.

Together with world class experts, participants explored the concepts of Green Growth, & Travelism in the context of climate resilience, sustainable mobility and biodiversity protection. A number of sub-themes were also analysed, including destination roadmapping, natural heritage "reconnection", accessibility, aviation, trade, big data modeling, crowdsourcing etc.

They learned, through interactive debates, in-class and on-site sessions, how the Travelism value chain can adapt to face up the pressing challenges of our time and turn them into opportunities.

The group reflected on the transformation impact of key global trends such as rising urbanisation, mega cities, hyper-connectivity, shifting geopolitical and market power, game-changing technologies, increasingly big data sets; inadequate impact metrics and the like.

It was recognized that while the sector had taken serious steps towards sustainability since the Rio 1992 Earth Summit much more was needed, much faster if we were to join the transformation mainstream, contributing to temperature stabilisation, avoiding acute biodiversity loss and responding positively to climate change. There is however growing recognition by government, industry and civil society recognition of the optimism in that respect, as some champions have already developed and implemented solutions that are affordable, accessible, effective and scalable.

Green Growth transformation will need a strengthened engagement across the travelism value chain and its stakeholders. It will also call for visionary strategies which encourage smart regulation, innovative market mechanisms and widespread behavioural change. It will require creative coalitions, out-of-the silos dialogues and hybrid thinking. It is a multi-decade strategy to successfully adapt all production, consumption and investment processes by 2050. It is a long journey that must start now.

Given the nature of Travelism – its size, scope, vulnerability to extreme weather, impact on natural environments, as well as its potential as a force for good, the sector can and should be in the front line of global change.

