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## Coping with global environmental change and the emotions it evokes considering the role of empathy

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INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE  
ON ENVIRONMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY

15-18 June 2025

Vilnius, Lithuania



FINAL PROGRAMME &  
ABSTRACT BOOK



## 15 June 2025 | Sunday

15-06-2025 | 13:00 - 19:00

### Registration

*Registration Desk*

15-06-2025 | 15:00 - 16:00

### Opening Ceremony

*Earth Hall Plenary*

Chair: Prof. Mykolas Simas Poškus (Mykolas Romeris University, Environmental Psychology Research Centre, Vilnius, Lithuania)

#### Welcome addresses:

Prof. Dr. Rita Žukauskienė

Conference Chair, Head of the Applied Psychology Research Laboratory, Mykolas Romeris University, Vilnius, Lithuania

Dr. Audra Balundė

Conference Co-Chair, Head of the Environmental Psychology Research Centre, Mykolas Romeris University, Vilnius, Lithuania

Prof. Dr. Inga Žalėnienė

Rector, Mykolas Romeris University, Vilnius, Lithuania

Anton Nikitin

Head of Sustainability, Vilnius Municipality / European Green Capital Initiative

Prof. Dr. Terry Hartig, Uppsala University

Past President of IAAP Division 4: Environmental Psychology

Prof. Dr. Sabine Pahl, University of Vienna

President, IAAP Division 4: Environmental Psychology

## 16 June 2025 | Monday

15-06-2025 | 16:00 - 17:00

### Opening Keynote Lecture by Anke Blöbaum (Germany)

Session Topic: CLIMATE EMERGENCY AND GLOBAL ISSUES (Climate change)



Teaghan Hogg<sup>1</sup>, Léan O'Brien<sup>1</sup>, Samantha Stanley<sup>2</sup>, Iain Walker<sup>3</sup>, Clare Watsford<sup>1</sup>, Marc Wilson<sup>4</sup>, Katharine Scutt<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>University of Canberra, Canberra, Australia, <sup>2</sup>University of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia, <sup>3</sup>University of Melbourne, Melbourne, Australia, <sup>4</sup>Victoria University of Wellington, Wellington, New Zealand, <sup>5</sup>Australian National University, Canberra, Australia

**Introduction:** Many people around the world feel anxious and worried about ecological crises—a phenomenon commonly referred to as 'eco-anxiety'. As the state of the planet further deteriorates without adequate action on climate change, it is expected that eco-anxiety will become more pervasive. Thus, we need to clarify what eco-anxiety is, who experiences it, and what role it plays in people's lives.

**Objectives:** This programme of research aimed to: 1) advance the conceptualisation and operationalisation of eco-anxiety, 2) situate it within a broader context of predictors and outcomes, and 3) investigate profiles (subpopulations) of eco-anxiety. **Materials and Methods:** We began by developing and validating a multidimensional measurement model of eco-anxiety, which we then used in subsequent studies to document how eco-anxiety relates to individual and contextual factors, and various indicators of mental wellbeing and pro-environmental behaviour. In a final study, we identified distinct eco-anxiety profiles that show unique wellbeing and behavioural characteristics. **Results:** Our research produced a novel conceptualisation of eco-anxiety and a robust measurement model that has since been validated in ten countries. We found that individual (risk perceptions) and contextual factors (direct exposure to ecological problems, how people engage with the media) play an important role in shaping people's experiences of eco-anxiety, and that eco-anxiety is implicated in both poorer mental health and greater pro-environmental behaviour. **Conclusion:** This work advances our understanding of eco-anxiety and may helpfully inform the development of climate-informed programs that meet the multiple needs of people experiencing eco-anxiety as ecological conditions worsen.

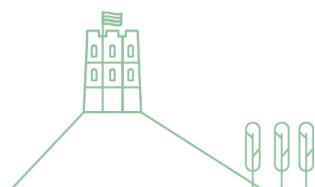
**Keywords:** climate change anxiety, eco-anxiety, ecological problems, mental health, pro-environmental behaviour

## **ID-1038: COPING WITH GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGE AND THE EMOTIONS IT EVOKES: CONSIDERING THE ROLE OF EMPATHY**

Marlis Wullenkord<sup>1</sup>, Maria Johansson<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Lund University, Lund, Sweden

**Introduction:** The climate and biodiversity crises are interconnected, unprecedented, existential threats that cause disturbing emotions, such as anxiety, grief, and anger. While there is increasing research about antecedents and outcomes of such eco-emotions, less is known about how to cope with them constructively, to benefit both mental health and pro-environmental action. **Objectives:** This study aimed to understand the role of empathy in private conversations about global environmental change as a way of constructive coping. More specifically, we investigated in how far the experience of empathy might buffer from more detrimental consequences of uncomfortable eco-emotions (i.e., impairments in mental health) and might enable pro-environmental action. **Materials and Methods:** We invited a random sample of N=7000 adults in the South of Sweden to participate in the study. **Results:** Using multiple



regression analysis, we found that the more people talked about global environmental change and the more they talked about their emotions in those conversations, the more pro-environmental action they engaged in. Furthermore, empathic understanding emerged as a moderator for some eco-emotions, i.e., strong emotions for which participants received empathy were associated with stronger pro-environmental action. Interestingly, none of the considered variables predicted mental health. **Conclusion:** We discuss these results and suggest implications for constructive coping with eco-emotions.

**Keywords:** climate change, biodiversity loss, eco-emotions, empathy, communication

### **ID-1039: VALIDATION OF THE INVENTORY OF CLIMATE EMOTIONS (ICE) IN A GERMAN SAMPLE AND ASSOCIATIONS TO PRO-ENVIRONMENTAL BEHAVIOR AND MENTAL HEALTH**

Stephan Heinzel<sup>1</sup>, Paula Blumenschein <sup>1</sup>, Felix Peter <sup>2</sup>, Myriam N. Bechtoldt <sup>3</sup>, Alexandra Lina Frisch <sup>1</sup>, Mira Tschorn <sup>4</sup>, Dorothea Metzen <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>TU Dortmund University, Dortmund, Germany, <sup>2</sup>State School Administration of Saxony-Anhalt, Halle, Germany, <sup>3</sup>EBS Business School, Oestrich-Winkel, Germany, <sup>4</sup>University of Potsdam, Potsdam, Germany

**Introduction:** The confrontation with the severe consequences of the climate crisis can provoke intense emotions in people. These so-called climate emotions play a significant role in motivating pro-environmental behavior, but they are also linked to negative mental health outcomes. **Objectives:** Given the substantial challenges we face, it is essential to comprehend the complex relationships between emotions, behavior, and mental health. **Material & Methods:** The Inventory of Climate Emotions (ICE) is the first validated scale designed to measure a range of emotional responses (such as anger, contempt, enthusiasm, powerlessness, guilt, isolation, anxiety, and sorrow) to the climate crisis. This pre-registered study aimed to translate and validate the ICE within a representative German sample (N = 966). **Results:** We confirmed the 8-factor structure, and all subscales demonstrated acceptable to good internal consistency. Additionally, we found a positive correlation between several climate emotions (powerlessness, guilt, isolation, anxiety, sorrow) and general symptoms of depression and anxiety. Furthermore, our findings indicate that climate emotions are generally positively correlated with pro-environmental behavior, with the exception of climate contempt, which showed a negative correlation with such behavior. **Conclusion:** In summary, we present a validated German translation of the ICE and provide evidence for the negative relationship between climate emotions and mental health, as well as the positive relationship between climate emotions and pro-environmental behavior.

**Keywords:** climate emotions, climate anxiety, pro-environmental behavior, mental health, scale validation

**17-06-2025 | 11:30 - 12:45**

### **S-054: Restoration and resilience through nature experience: From individual-level contingencies to social ecological complexities**

Session Topic: ENVIRONMENT, NATURE AND HUMAN HEALTH & WELLBEING (Restorative environments)

Earth Hall Plenary

