

Climate Governance Programme • Austria & Germany

Where global climate policy is designed and delivered — an undergraduate immersion in the UN's European climate infrastructure

The architecture of global climate governance is designed on two axes in continental Europe. Vienna hosts the United Nations Industrial Development Organization and the International Atomic Energy Agency — the institutions that translate climate policy into energy, industry and technology transitions. Bonn hosts the Secretariat of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change itself — the institutional heart of every COP negotiation since 1995.

The Climate Governance Programme · Austria & Germany places undergraduate delegates inside both. Over ten days, delegates move from Vienna to Cologne to Bonn — with a working visit to Germany's international cooperation agency (GIZ) in Frankfurt — engaging directly with the officials, negotiators and applied scientists who are actively shaping how the Paris Agreement is implemented.

This is the flagship undergraduate offering within the GYLDC Climate & Environment pillar. Delegates who distinguish themselves in the programme are nominated for the annual COP youth track and other UN convenings on climate action.

PROGRAMME AT A GLANCE	
PILLAR	Climate & Frontier Science
PRIMARY TIER	Undergraduate
AVAILABLE FOR	All tiers (separate cohorts)
DURATION	10 days
NEXT ITERATION	August 2027
LOCATION	Austria & Germany
LANGUAGE	English
COHORT SIZE	25–35
CERTIFICATION	GYLDC + GSLDC



◎What Participants Experience

The programme opens in Vienna with structured engagement at the UN Office at Vienna, UNIDO and IIASA, focused on the applied science and industrial dimensions of climate transition. Delegates then move to Cologne and Bonn for the core UNFCCC immersion — including a formal engagement with the UNFCCC Secretariat and dedicated sessions on the COP negotiation process, loss-and-damage finance, and climate adaptation. The programme concludes at GIZ in Frankfurt with a focused session on how Europe's largest development cooperation agency delivers climate finance in partner countries.

◎Why GYLDC

This programme has been delivered in partnership with Guangdong University of Foreign Studies since its launch. The 2024 iteration engaged UNIDO, IIASA, GIZ, UNFCCC, UN-Habitat, UNOPS and IHEID — a partner roster that few undergraduate programmes anywhere in the world can match. Delegates enter Bonn and Vienna with GYLDC's institutional credentials, meeting officials who are rarely accessible to outside groups.

◎WHO THIS IS FOR

This programme is designed for undergraduate students whose academic or career trajectory intersects with climate policy, energy transition, international development or environmental governance. The programme is deliberately cross-disciplinary — it welcomes students from technical, social science and humanities backgrounds alike.

◎LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the conclusion of the programme, participants will have:

- Developed a working knowledge of the global climate governance architecture — the UNFCCC process, the Paris Agreement implementation framework, and the roles of UNIDO, IIASA and adjacent institutions in translating policy into action.
- Established direct professional relationships with UNFCCC Secretariat officials, UNIDO programme managers, IIASA researchers, and GIZ climate finance specialists.
- Completed and defended a proposal for a COP side event or intervention on a topic of the delegate's choice, evaluated by UN officials in the actual working setting of the UNFCCC campus.
- Built cross-cultural fluency in navigating European institutional environments — from Vienna to Bonn to Frankfurt — a competency directly transferable to graduate study, internship and career settings in international organisations.

◎COMPETENCY FRAMEWORK

The programme develops six core competencies:

- ✓ **Systems Thinking**
- ✓ **Decision-making**
- ✓ **Communication**
- ✓ **Climate Policy Literacy**
- ✓ **Collaboration**
- ✓ **Negotiation**

◎CURRICULUM ARCHITECTURE

The programme unfolds in three sequenced phases. Pre-programme online modules establish the substantive foundations; the on-site immersion translates that foundation into direct institutional experience across two countries; and the capstone crystallises the learning into a defensible output — a COP side event proposal presented at the UNFCCC campus itself.

PHASE 1	PHASE 2	PHASE 3
Pre-Programme Online Module	*On-Site Immersion — Austria & Germany*	*COP Side Event Capstone*
2 intensive online days · month before departure	**10 days on-site · Austria & Germany**	**Day 9 · presentation in Bonn**
▸ The UN climate architecture and the Paris Agreement ▸ Global governance under multipolarity — opportunities and challenges ▸ Women's leadership in global climate governance ▸ UN internship and career paths — a shared experience session ▸ Delivered by former UN USG Fabrizio Hochschild, former ASG Janos Pasztor, and Peking University climate faculty ▸ Two intensive days online in the month prior to departure	▸ Vienna: UN Office at Vienna, UNIDO, IIASA ▸ Vienna: multilateral diplomacy roundtable at the UN campus ▸ Cologne: University of Cologne — climate and sustainable campus ▸ Bonn: UNFCCC Secretariat — dedicated engagement ▸ Bonn: UNOPS, UN-Habitat, UNITAR, UNESCO-UNEVOC ▸ Frankfurt: GIZ — European climate finance in developing countries	▸ Team-based capstone: propose a COP side event or intervention ▸ Coaching by UNFCCC officials and GYLDC faculty ▸ Presentation at the UN campus in Bonn ▸ Feedback and evaluation by UNFCCC and GIZ specialists ▸ Winning teams nominated for the COP youth track

◎SIGNATURE INSTITUTIONAL PARTNERS

UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)

The Secretariat that coordinates every COP negotiation; delegates receive a dedicated engagement at the UN campus in Bonn, including sessions on the COP process, loss-and-damage finance, and climate adaptation.

UN Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)

Vienna-headquartered UN agency for inclusive and sustainable industrial development; delegates engage on the industrial dimensions of climate transition — from clean energy to green hydrogen to sustainable supply chains.

International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA)

Vienna-based independent research institute providing scientific analysis to UN and national policymakers; delegates receive dedicated academic and capability training on integrated assessment modelling for climate policy.

◎SAMPLE ITINERARY

DAY	FOCUS	SIGNATURE ACTIVITIES
Day 1	**Arrival — Vienna**	Arrival in Vienna; check-in; welcome briefing on the multilateral system in continental Europe.
Day 2	**UN Vienna**	Full-day at the UN campus (VIC); UNIDO briefing on inclusive industrial development; UN roundtable on multilateral diplomacy and stakeholder engagement.
Day 3	**Vienna University**	University of Vienna — climate and sustainable campus session; Vienna city investigation on climate-resilient urban design.
Day 4	**IIASA & Cross-Cultural**	Full session at IIASA on integrated assessment modelling; academic and capability training; peer exchange dialogue on China–EU relations.
Day 5	**Vienna to Cologne**	Rail transfer to Cologne; arrival and orientation; evening cultural programme.
Day 6	**Cologne — Old City & Uni**	Investigation of Cologne's climate-resilient urban design; University of Cologne — climate and sustainable campus session.
Day 7	**Bonn — Cross-Culture**	Transfer to Bonn; Bonn Museum Quarter — cultural understanding; Bonn central station district investigation on climate-adaptive urban design.
Day 8	**Bonn — UN Agencies**	Successive briefings: UNOPS on project delivery; UN-Habitat on human settlements; UNITAR on training and research; UNESCO-UNEVOC on TVET.
Day 9	**UNFCCC & Capstone**	Dedicated engagement at the UNFCCC Secretariat; youth dialogue on climate leadership; capstone presentations on COP side event proposals; closing ceremony.

DAY	FOCUS	SIGNATURE ACTIVITIES
Day 10	**Frankfurt & Departure**	Transfer to Frankfurt; GIZ session on European climate finance in partner countries; farewell dinner; departure preparations.

◎WHAT PARTICIPANTS RECEIVE

Formal Certification

Certificate of Completion co-signed by GYLDC and GSLDC, valid for academic and professional credit recognition.

Letters of Recommendation

Selected participants receive personal letters of recommendation from senior UN officials — the strongest possible credential for graduate school and career applications.

COP Youth Track Nomination

Priority nomination for the annual COP youth track, including the current COP host country's dedicated youth programming.

Publication Opportunities

Winning capstone proposals published in the International Journal of Youth & Sustainability (ijys.org), with editorial support from GYLDC faculty.