10 YEARS

DAYLIGHT ACADEMY

Annual Conference & General Assembly 2026

28-29 May 2026
Centre for Health and Society (CSS)
Copenhagen, Denmark

Parallel sessions

General information

The conference programme features parallel sessions on both days. You can select one session per day. Please note that the number of participants per session is limited and places will be allocated on a first come, first served basis.

We thank you for your understanding and look forward to lively discussions!

Overview

Thursday, 28 May 2026
from 15:30 to 17:00

A. Light and molecular handedness: From physical origins to the asymmetry of life
B. Daylight City Walk
C. Daylight: a fundamental force in nature and a timeless fascination for humanity
D. Daylight as preventive infrastructure: Repositioning compulsory outdoor schooling for visual health and human development

Friday, 29 May 2026
from 11:00 to 12:30

E. Daylight your city – How can we promote community, culturally and geographically specific daylight solutions in urban environments?
F. What ecosystems know about daylight – and what we don't yet
G. Towards a right to daylight: The art of campaigning
H. Exploring personal exposure to near-infrared in daylight –
   A measurement workshop
I. Advancing daylight science: Introducing the DLA topical collection in Photochemical and Photobiological Sciences (Springer Nature)

Parallel Session A

Light and molecular handedness: From physical origins to the asymmetry of life

Thursday, 28 May 2026
from 15:30 to 17:00

Leads
Prof. Burkhard König, University of Regensburg, Germany
Prof. Brian Norton, Tyndall National Institute, University College Cork and Technological University Dublin, Ireland
Dr Cornelia Meinert, Université Côte d'Azur, Nice, France

Description
This session explores the fascinating interplay between light and molecular handedness—also known as chirality—and its implications from fundamental physics to the origin of life. We will examine how light can induce or detect asymmetry in molecules, how this phenomenon is applied in modern science and technology, and what it may reveal about the emergence of biological asymmetry on early Earth. The session is designed to be accessible to an audience from diverse disciplines.

Objectives

- Introduce the physical principles of polarized light and how it interacts with chiral molecules.
- Highlight current applications of polarized light and chirality in chemistry, materials science, and medicine.
- Discuss potential consequences for the origin of life and the emergence of biological asymmetry.
- Foster interdisciplinary discussion and connect fundamental science

Parallel Session B

Daylight City Walk

Thursday, 28 May 2026
from 15:30 – 17:00

Leads
Dr Carlo Volf, New Interventions in Depression (NID) Group, Denmark
Prof. Em. Stephan Mäder, Zurich University of Applied Sciences, Switzerland

Description
During this session, participants will be divided into three groups and will have the opportunity to go outside and explore the city of Copenhagen in different tours:

- Route A – Medieval City planning
- Route B – 20th Century Urban planning
- Route C – 21th Century Urban planning

The tours will take place simultaneously; each group can consist of up to 10 people and will be accompanied by a guide. The guide will measure light exposure using wearable light sensors and the data will be analysed. The tours will be conducted on foot and will last 30 minutes. Following the tour, participants will be asked to provide feedback on their experiences along the route using a semantic 8-item questionnaire.

Meeting point is at 15:15 in front of the conference venue 'Centre for Health and Society (CSS)' (see here). The final destination for all routes is the conference hotel 'Copenhagen Strand Hotel' (Google Maps). Transportation to the conference dinner venue will be arranged.

Objectives

- Measure the light exposure for each route, located in different parts of Copenhagen using a wearable tracking device.
- Measure the different light levels in exactly the same photo period 15.30 – 16.00 under exactly the same daylight conditions
- Measure how different urban planning affect us, when it comes to measurable daylight levels, and last but not least when it comes to experienced daylight levels and the overall quality of the urban surroundings.
- A paper is planned to be published, following up on an earlier project "Daylight and Green Cities" (see article here).
- Describing the results of the field studies and documenting how different urban planning affect daylight and support outdoor activities under similar daylight conditions
- "Daylight City Walks" this year is studying urban planning at 56th N latitude. The plan is to include other cities in the following years, making daylight city walks a repetitive activity in the future, studying how latitudes and urban planning relate to each other.

Parallel Session C

Daylight: a fundamental force in nature and a timeless fascination for humanity

Thursday, 28 May 2026
from 15:30 – 17:00

Lead
Prof. Christoph Kueffer, OST Eastern Switzerland University of Applied Sciences, Switzerland & Department of Environmental Systems Science, ETH Zurich, Switzerland
Prof. Helga Schmid, University of Applied Science Potsdam, Germany

Description
Daylight links planet Earth to the sun and the universe. It drives diverse physical and chemical processes, and is the main source of energy and a crucial means of information of most life on Earth from bacteria to humans. It thus shapes fundamental processes in human biology, in species across the plant and animal kingdoms, and in ecology.

In this session we build on the knowledge shared among DLA members to dive into the fascinating science of daylight at the most fundamental levels. We ask ourselves how the Daylight Academy through its projects can contribute to further understand and communicate about daylight as an inspiration for scientific curiosity.

Objectives

- Shape the future: Bring your expertise on new ideas related to the conference theme – what nature knows about daylight and what we can learn from it across different fields and disciplines
- Co-create initiatives: Work in interdisciplinary teams to turn ideas into concrete initiatives
- Build momentum: Develop motivating kick-off plans to pursue beyond the conference towards DLA proposals or other impactful initiatives. DLA projects can apply for funding of up to CHF 25,000.

Parallel Session D

Daylight as preventive infrastructure: Repositioning compulsory outdoor schooling for visual health and human development

Thursday, 28 May 2026
from 15:30 – 17:00

Leads
Dr Oliver Stefani, Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts, Switzerland
Dr Melanie Glaettli, SILVIVA Foundation, Switzerland

Description
How can we pool the insights and experience gained from chronobiology, environmental neuroscience, environmental psychology and educational science in order to not only combat myopia, but also strengthen holistic child development at the same time? Can we teach kids without damaging their eyesight?

A rapidly expanding body of international evidence demonstrates that regular exposure to natural daylight – proposed are around two hours per day – is among the most effective and cost-efficient strategies to prevent and slow the progression of myopia in children. Beyond visual health, findings from chronobiology, environmental neuroscience, and environmental psychology show that daylight is a fundamental regulator of circadian rhythms, sleep, cognitive performance, and emotional well-being. Parallel research in outdoor education indicates significant benefits for students' cognitive, social, and creative development.

This convergence of evidence invites a paradigm shift: daylight should not be treated merely as an architectural parameter, but as a form of preventive infrastructure embedded in everyday institutions. Compulsory schooling – reaching virtually all children across socio-demographic contexts – represents a uniquely powerful and equitable setting for large-scale implementation. Yet the translation of daylight research into educational policy and practice remains underdeveloped.

This interactive workshop at the DLA Annual Conference 2026 positions the Academy at the forefront of this transformational agenda. Using design thinking methodologies, participants will collaboratively explore how daylight-rich outdoor learning can integrate visual health prevention, educational quality, and systemic feasibility. Through stakeholder mapping, problem reframing, and rapid concept development, the workshop will identify leverage points and outline pilotable intervention models.

Objectives
The session aims to initiate a transdisciplinary working group within the DLA network dedicated to advancing daylight-informed school innovation across Europe– strengthening the Academy's mission to translate cutting-edge daylight research into tangible societal impact.

Parallel Session E

Daylight your city – How can we promote community, culturally and geographically specific daylight solutions in urban environments?

Friday, 29 May 2026
from 11:00 – 12:30

Leads
Dr Michael Walczak, ETH Zurich, Architecture and Urban Design, Switzerland
Prof. em. Stephan Mäder, Mäder+Mächler Architekten ETH BSA SIA, Switzerland

Description
This workshop shall collect first, a curated set of scalable best practices, concrete case studies, and transferable methods / digital tools for daylight in urban areas, supporting communities in reimagining their environments through region-specific, daylight-focused urban design.

Secondly, this workshop shall give a guidance to define a framework for evaluating urban daylighting practices by translating SDG principles into measurable indicators. This will ensure that the selected cases not only advance daylight quality and access but also contribute to broader sustainability objectives such as health and well-being, climate action, inclusive urban development, inside/outside daylight, across scales (national, urban, local), across densities, artistic practices, and perception. The working group established under this proposal will define how these quantitative and qualitative indicators/list of criteria's are to be balanced and made comparable.

The set of selection criteria shall recognize that different projects, regions, and disciplines may require different approaches. Not every project needs to meet all criteria; instead, options should allow for validation of quality, complexity, interdisciplinarity, transdisciplinarity, users, project maturity (including initial concepts and AI-generated ideas), and comparison of challenges and opportunities. These criteria could also be linked to the DLA Award, connecting the platform to selected DLA Award recipients.

This workshop is covering the DLA Societal Topic of "Daylight versus Urban density" and the SDG 11 Sustainable Cities and Communities (Reference: https://doi.org/10.3390/books978-3-03897-871-8).

The parallel session aims to prepare for a DLA project proposal building towards an interdisciplinary research hub/library and interactive 3D online platform.

Objectives
Discussions in the working group, in preparation for this proposal have identified many possible activities and outputs, far beyond the scope of this call, and so they have been prioritised. The outputs to be delivered within this proposed workshop include:

Gather a diverse portfolio of exemplary initiatives, case studies, and transferable methods—including digital tools—that demonstrate concrete, innovative, daylight-focused approaches to urban design in specific latitudes, highlighting both challenges and opportunities. This workshop will kick-off this initiative as well as foster exchange across disciplines, geographies, and scales, emphasizing replicability and adaptability to different urban contexts.

Each workshop entry will be documented in a standardized, comparable format to highlight scalability, transferability, challenges, and impact. As part of this proposal, the selection process will undergo one iteration, while the imagined platform will be designed to allow future expansion and adjustments.

A first draft report outlining the SDG-based selection criteria and measurable indicators for evaluating daylight-related urban initiatives. This will serve as a methodological reference for researchers, practitioners, and policymakers.

Parallel Session F

What ecosystems know about daylight – and what we don't yet

Friday, 29 May 2026
from 11:00 – 12:30

Lead
Prof. em. Peter Edwards, ETH Zurich, Switzerland

Description
Daylight is one of the most fundamental forces shaping the natural world. Ecosystems – from forests and water bodies to soils, coastlines, and urban green spaces – have evolved in intimate relationship with light: its quantity, quality, timing, and variability. And yet, across the many disciplines that study these environments, the role of daylight often remains implicit, underexplored, or siloed within individual fields.

This session invites researchers from across the environmental and natural sciences – and beyond – to reflect on what we know, and what we don't, about daylight in ecosystems. Forest and aquatic research offer rich examples of how light structures living systems, but the conversation is deliberately open to other ecosystems and disciplinary perspectives. Where are the gaps in our understanding? What questions remain unanswered? And where might cross-disciplinary dialogue open new directions?

Rather than presenting finished research, this session is designed as a space for exchange and curiosity – a starting point for collaborations that could bridge the environmental sciences with fields such as architecture, human health, or data science.

Objectives

- Share perspectives on how daylight shapes ecosystems across different environments and research traditions, using forest and aquatic contexts as anchors for broader discussion.
- Surface knowledge gaps and open questions where daylight in natural systems remains poorly understood or underrepresented in research.
- Foster connections across disciplines by exploring where environmental science perspectives on daylight can enrich – and be enriched by – other fields represented at the conference.
- Identify promising directions for future collaboration and lay the groundwork for potential new project ideas emerging from the session.

Parallel Session G

Towards a right to daylight: The art of campaigning

Friday, 29 May 2026
from 11:00 – 12:30

Lead
Dr Micaela E. Martinez, Ecologist, Environmental JusticeAdvocate, USA

Description
This interactive workshop will build on the emerging Daylight Academy initiative to advocate for a Right to Daylight – understood as a fundamental condition for human wellbeing, ecosystem health, and the integrity of life on Earth.

Initial reflections have outlined a possible conceptual framework, including the idea of daylight as both a human right and a right of nature, as well as key pillars and directions for advocacy. The workshop will take these first elements further by exploring how such a vision could be translated into a concrete and effective campaign.

Guided by an expert in environmental advocacy, participants will be introduced to the core elements of successful advocacy – from framing a compelling narrative to identifying target audiences and defining strategic entry points.

Working in an interdisciplinary group, participants will contribute their perspectives to shape the foundations of a potential campaign. The workshop will explore how scientific knowledge, design, policy, and cultural approaches can come together to articulate why access to daylight matters – and how this can be communicated in ways that resonate across sectors and societies.

Rather than aiming to finalise a campaign, the session is designed as a hands-on exploration of the Right to Daylight. Participants will brainstorm and come together to help determine the individual and collective principles to form the base of the campaign, the mission and vision of the campaign, and entry points for advocacy at grassroots, local, national, and international levels, offering both a first step in structuring the Right to Daylight initiative and practical insights into the art of campaigning for complex, cross-cutting topics. Participants will be encouraged to approach daylight from a holistic, multidisciplinary, and multi-sector lens. For more on the holistic view of daylight, please refer to recent publications of the Daylight Academy, Daylight Matters (https://daylightmatters.org/) and Lumi's Delight (https://tscnlab.github.io/LumisDelight/).

Objectives

- Brainstorm key elements of a Right to Daylight campaign, including its core narrative and framing
- Identify priority audiences for the first 1-2 years of the campaign and potential advocacy pathways (e.g. policy, built environment, and social awareness)
- Translate scientific and interdisciplinary knowledge into compelling messages for different target groups
- Explore the role of different disciplines (science, architecture, art, policy, communication) in shaping and supporting the campaign
- Lay the groundwork for future working groups by identifying key questions, contributions, and next steps

Parallel Session H

Exploring personal exposure to near-infrared in daylight – A measurement workshop

Friday, 29 May 2026
from 11:00 – 12:30

Leads
Prof. Yvonne de Kort, Eindhoven University of Technology, Netherlands
Dr Mandana Khanie, University College London, UK
Dr Martine Knoop, TU Berlin, Germany

Description
Almost half of the solar radiation that reaches Earth lies in the infrared. Its presence in daylight varies with latitude, time of day and year, and weather conditions. Uniquely, near infrared (NIR) range (750–1100 nm) can pass not only through clothing but also penetrate up to a few centimetres into human tissue, where it may affect cellular metabolism and support beneficial health processes. Recent developments highlight promising clinical applications of NIR—from wound healing and skin rejuvenation to treatments for depression, cardiovascular conditions, and Alzheimer's disease.

Although the underlying mechanisms are not yet fully understood, it is increasingly important to characterize personal exposure to NIR in both indoor and outdoor environments, and to explore potential relationships between everyday exposure (or its absence) and health outcomes. Notably, most modern artificial light sources emit no radiation outside the visible spectrum, and many buildings now use NIR-blocking coatings to improve energy performance. A major barrier to advancing research on daylight's potential health effects via NIR is the calibration and comparability of dosimeters.

The workshop begins with a short introduction to NIR, its measurement, and an overview of the planned activities, after which we will conduct measurements with a variety of devices, both indoors and outdoors. Indoors, we will examine artificial NIR sources using a flexible testbed that allows participants to place their instruments and expose them to several NIR sources under semi-controlled conditions. Time permitting, this setup will also allow measurements through selected glazing and fabric samples.

We will then move outdoors to perform joint measurements across different spatial contexts. This will allow us to explore how personal NIR exposure changes when moving from indoor environments to transitional zones and fully outdoor settings, from direct sunlight into shade, and between different shading conditions. Outdoors, we will compare the shade cast by built structures with that of tree canopies and vegetation, which are reported to reflect rather than absorb NIR.

We hope for broad participation from DLA members and look forward to hands-on measurements and lively discussions. Everyone is encouraged—where possible—to bring any devices they have for generating or measuring infrared radiation. After the workshop, collected data will be cross-validated and shared among participants.

Objectives

- Raise awareness of recent interest in near-infrared radiation in relation to health
- Explore the NIR component of daylight in relation to spatial conditions

- Cross-characterise measurement devices used by participating researchers
- Characterise the NIR sources currently available within the research community
- Test NIR transmission through glazing and clothing

Parallel session I

Advancing Daylight Science: Introducing the DLA Topical Collection in Photochemical and Photobiological Sciences (Springer Nature)

Friday, 29 May 2026
from 11:00 – 12:30

Leads
Prof. Michael Heinrich, UCL School of Pharmacy, UK
PD Dr. Kristjan Plaetzer, University of Salzburg, Austria

Description
The forthcoming Topical Collection in Photochemical and Photobiological Sciences (Springer-Nature) is dedicated to daylight-related research. It will be a focal point for diverse multi- and transdisciplinary approaches to daylight and its multiple effects. During this year's DLA Annual Conference, we aim to catalyse collaborations and encourage contributions ascertaining that the topical collection is known in multiple disciplines. Therefore, it is essential that collaborations between diverse fields of research are facilitated. Over the course of 90 minutes, participants will engage in a structured process that combines idea generation, team formation, and the development of preliminary abstracts and outlines for journal submissions.

Following a short introduction by the guest editors outlining the thematic clusters, publication scope, and editorial expectations, participants will collaborate in small groups to identify shared research interests and define potential paper topics. Guided writing and peer-review segments will facilitate the development of coherent research proposals aligned with the scientific standards of *Photochemical and Photobiological Sciences*.

This session aims to translate the Academy's interdisciplinary expertise into tangible publication plans and to strengthen the network of researchers contributing to the scientific understanding of daylight from multiple disciplinary perspectives.

Objectives
(1) Communicate the aims, scope, and editorial requirements of the Photochemical and Photobiological Sciences Topical Collection of the Daylight Academy.
(2) Facilitate the generation of interdisciplinary research ideas that reflect the diverse expertise of the Daylight Academy.
(3) Support the formation of author teams and the preparation of preliminary abstracts and outlines for potential submissions.
(4) Promote scholarly exchange and strengthen research collaboration within the DLA with a view toward producing high-quality, peer-reviewed outputs.