

Nordic Working Paper

Seniors and Climate Issues - For the Benefit of Both

A summary of the work and cooperation of seniors
in the Nordic countries in the field of climate issues

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in the field of climate issues

Environice
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Foreword

Iceland holds the chairmanship of the Nordic Council of Ministers 2023, and on that occasion, the Ministry of the Environment, Energy, and Climate initiated a Nordic project with the main goal of mapping and strengthening the work of older people in the Nordic countries in the field of climate issues. The idea was based on the knowledge that groups of seniors in Sweden had been active in this field and the belief that this activity could be further promoted by connecting more groups in all the Nordic countries, including in Iceland.

In recent years, the proportion of seniors in the population of the Nordic countries has been increasing, along with the rising average age and relatively low birth rate. People of retirement age tend to have more free time and are better off financially than younger people. In addition, older people are now generally in better health than their peers were a few decades ago, and these people also have a lot of experience and knowledge that can undoubtedly be useful in the climate debate. The active participation of older people in activities of this kind serves to enrich their own lives and, at the same time, improve the living conditions of future generations. The experience and knowledge of older people are resources that societies miss out on by not utilising.

The Ministry of the Environment, Energy, and Climate is, naturally, also the Ministry of Climate Issues in Iceland. However, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour Market deals with the affairs of the elderly, so it was decided that the ministries would work together on the project. The majority of the funding comes from the Nordic Council of Ministers in connection with Iceland's chairmanship programme.

The project in question is the first Nordic project in this field. The project contributes to the vision of the Nordic Council of Ministers for the year 2030, in particular to follow up on a strategy for a green Nordic region and a socially sustainable Nordic countries. Simultaneously, the project contributes to the Nordic countries approaching the twelve main goals that the Nordic Council of Ministers has set for the period 2021-2024.

The project will be completed in 2023 and is divided into three phases. First, there will be a summary of the parties, cooperation, and projects of seniors in the Nordic countries in the field of climate issues will be prepared, second, a seminar on seniors and climate issues will be held, and third, basic information, a summary from the seminar and recommendations to the authorities in the Nordic countries will be published in final report. The report published here contains the results of the first phase of the project.

Environice was commissioned to manage the implementation of the project under the direction of the Ministry of Environment, Energy, and Climate. and in cooperation with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour Market, as well as other parties. The project will end at the beginning of winter 2023.

Hvanneyri, June 2023.

Stefán Gíslason, Managing Director of Environice

Summary

This document contains the results of the first phase of three in the Nordic project *Seniors and Climate Issues – For the Benefit of Both*, which is carried out by Environice for the Ministry of the Environment, Energy and Climate in cooperation at the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour Market. The project is part of Iceland's chairmanship programme for the Nordic Council of Ministers and is financed by the Council of Ministers.

In Norway, Sweden, Denmark, and Finland, there are active organisations of older people, one or more in each country, that dedicate themselves to the fight against climate change. There are no such organisations active in Iceland, but a special environmental group was recently established within U3A in Iceland (University of the Third Age) that deals with climate and other environmental issues. At this stage, no organisations of this kind are known in the Nordic autonomous regions (Faroe Islands, Greenland and Åland.) Nevertheless, it may well be that some such activity exists in these areas.

It is interesting to note the difference in the focus of seniors' organisations in the Nordic countries, but the different environs, size, and location of the countries presumably have a great influence on which issues are considered the most important in each country. There is also a significant difference in the size of groups and organisations, but this difference seems largely independent of the population of the country in question. In Sweden, for example, there are more small groups than in Norway, where large organisations are at the forefront.

Several of the aforementioned organisations in the Nordic countries are members of the European seniors' cooperation network for climate issues. That cooperation seems to be growing; preparations are being made for a joint conference in Strasbourg, and the cooperation network's website should be up and running by the end of 2023.

The next phase of the project in question consists of organising a seminar in Reykjavík on the 27th-28th of September 2023. Representatives of all the organisation and groups discussed in this summary will be invited to the seminar. The seminar is intended to be a platform for sharing the experiences of seniors regarding climate issues, where people can share and gather useful information and experience with others, which can then be used in their domestic work when they return home. Furthermore, the hope is that the inspiration that the seminar participants receive from their peers from the neighbouring countries will encourage the possible creation of groups or organisations in countries and regions where no such groups are active.

The conclusions of the seminar will be used to present recommendations to the authorities in the Nordic countries about why and how they should support volunteer groups of seniors in the field of climate issues and how to promote and maintain Nordic cooperation in this field. These recommendations will be part of the project's final report which will be published by the Nordic Council of Ministers before the end of 2023.

1 Introduction

A large generation is now approaching retirement age, and is likely to change what retirement looks like. The life expectancy of these groups is greater than that of previous generations, their level of education is higher, and their health is presumably better than that of many previous generations. These groups' needs for activity and successful aging will be different than before and the ability to use new technologies in communication will be much more important than it has been.¹

A large proportion of volunteers is people of retirement age, as people that age tend to have more free time and are better off financially than younger people. In the past few decades, the number of older volunteers has also increased significantly due to the increased life expectancy and improving health of the older generations. The latest figures from Vive, a welfare research and analysis centre in Denmark, show that 28% more 67-year-olds and 43% more 77-year-olds do voluntary work today than 20 years ago.² A large part of these volunteers are well-to-do people with an extensive education and in relatively good health. People over the age of 65 are generally much healthier, more resourceful and more active now than their peers were 20 years ago, especially in the first years after they leave the labour market. Simultaneously, society's ideas about old age have changed. The idea that you should be of use, not just for yourself and your family, but also for society, has become more widespread since the 1990s. This is reflected in the voluntary work that pensioners are doing more and more of.

Volunteers are involved in various projects, but in recent years more and more such groups have become involved in discussions about climate issues. To some extent, this work is inspired by the Swedish activist Greta Thunberg, but what primarily drives people to participate in projects in this field is the ever-deteriorating future prospects in light of the slow progress that has been achieved in the fight to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from human activities on Earth. Climate activists are of all ages, but in recent times older people have become increasingly prominent in this field, not least in the Nordic countries and other Western European countries.

Taking into account the development that has been described here, the Icelandic government decided to make the work of seniors on climate issues a special focus project during Iceland's chairmanship of the Nordic Council of Ministers in 2023. The title of the project is "Äldre folk och klimat – Nyttä för båda två" (Seniors and Climate Issues – For the Benefit of Both,) which refers on the one hand to the great human resource and the extensive knowledge that resides in healthy people of retirement age, and on the other hand to the positive input these people can contribute to the climate debate - for the benefit of future generations.

As discussed above, the project in question is part of Iceland's chairmanship programme in the Nordic Council of Ministers, and is therefore, by its very nature, mostly financed by the Council of Ministers. The Ministry of the Environment, Energy, and Climate is managing the project on behalf of Iceland in cooperation with the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Labour Market. The University of the Third Age (U3A) was consulted in the preparation of the project, and the consulting company Environice (Umhverfissráðgjöf Íslands ehf.) was brought in to lead the project and oversee the implementation of its individual components.

According to the project description, the project in question aims to strengthen cooperation between groups of seniors in the Nordic countries in the field of climate issues. The project includes all countries and regions that are members of the Nordic Council of Ministers, i.e. the five Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden) and the three autonomous regions (Åland, the Faroe Islands, and Greenland.) The project's objective is to involve more older people in climate issues by creating a Nordic platform for the exchange of ideas, networking, inspiration, and inspiring role models, while promoting the permanent physical and mental health of the participants.

¹ University of the Third Age (U3A)

² De Frivilliges Hus (2022.)

The project is divided into three phases or work components:

1. Compile an overview of parties, collaborations, and projects of seniors in the Nordic countries in the field of climate issues.
2. Prepare, convene, and manage a seminar on seniors and climate issues.
3. Compile a report with basic information, a summary from the seminar, and recommendations to the authorities in the Nordic countries about what they could do to support the work of seniors in the field of climate issues.

The report that is published here contains the results of the first component of the project, i.e., an overview of parties, collaboration, and projects of seniors in the Nordic countries in the field of climate issues. The report is actually a working document, which is mainly intended to be useful as basic data in the second phase of the project, i.e., for the seminar that will be held in the fall of 2023. The information presented in this report will then also be published, and where appropriate updated, in the project's final report (component 3,) along with a summary from the seminar and recommendations to the authorities in the Nordic countries about what they could do to support the work of seniors in the field of climate issues.

1.1 Methods

In the preparation of this summary, results from the Google search engine were primarily used. Several different combinations of keywords were used (in the appropriate language) for each country to obtain the most search results. These keywords were "older, climate", "older, environment", "senior citizens, climate", "senior citizens, environment", "older, climate, voluntary work", "older, environment, voluntary work", and "grandmother, grandfather, climate".

In addition to Google, representatives of the Nordic Council of Ministers' Official Committee for Environment and Climate (ÄK-MK) were consulted, and direct contact was made with quite a few individuals in the network of participants in the project. The authors of the report hope that this search has yielded a good overview of the formal and informal groups of older people in the Nordic countries who have taken climate issues to heart.

2 Seniors and Climate Issues in the Nordic Countries

This section contains a summary of the main groups of seniors in the Nordic countries, both formal and informal, who have taken climate issues to heart.

2.1 Iceland

About 388,000 people live in Iceland, according to Statistics Iceland. Of these, 15.3% are over 65 years old according to figures from 2022.³ This group is gradually becoming more prominent in the climate debate. In Gallup's Environmental Survey in 2022, participants were asked whether they were very, somewhat, slightly, or not concerned about global warming. About 73% of respondents aged 67 and over said they were very or somewhat concerned, and 47% said they were concerned about the consequences that climate change could have on them and their families. In comparison, 79% of respondents in the age group 30-44 said they were very or somewhat concerned about global warming, and 62% in that age group said they were very concerned about the consequences that climate change could have on them and their families. Then 56% of 67-year-olds and older said they were willing to change their behaviour very much or quite a lot in order to reduce their impact on the environment and climate.⁴ From these results it is evident that a large proportion of older people in Iceland are aware of climate change and think about the effects they themselves can have and what the future looks like for their families.

2.1.1 University of the Third Age (U3A)

The University of the Third Age in Iceland is an independent non-profit organisation that can be traced to the preparation and participation of Ingibjörg Rannveig Guðlaugsdóttir in the World U3A international conference in Chitrakoot, India in 2010. The organisation in Iceland (U3A Reykjavík) was founded in 2012 and has around 900 members today.⁵ In accordance with its Articles of Association, the organisation intends to promote members' access to a diverse range of education without it being classified as formal schooling. The organisation also wants to promote activity and increased awareness among members and society about the importance of the third age, the opportunities it contains and the human resources that it contains. The education is mostly based on peer education where members of the organisation share knowledge, experience and skills. The organisation intends to achieve its purpose, i.e. by organising and managing lectures, trips, and visits and by fostering acquaintances with others inside and outside the U3A movement anywhere in the world.

A special environmental group was established within U3A Reykjavík in the fall of 2022 and has held quite a few meetings since then. The environmental group maintains an active Facebook page and has so far held two seminars. The subject of one of them was Iceland's nature and its protection in times of climate change, and the other was on biodiversity and sustainability. The goal of the environmental group is to educate and inform about threats to Iceland's nature, both the ecosystems on land, the ecosystems in fresh water, the ecosystems of the sea and geological monuments, as well as to draw attention to ways to protect the environment and nature and to take actions that improve the environment and combat climate change. Members are also encouraged to take environmental matters into their own hands, and the group publishes words of encouragement and suggestions for an environmentally friendly way of life.

U3A has not applied itself specifically to climate issues, but as can be seen above, climate issues are interwoven in various ways into the subjects of the organisation's environmental group.

2.1.2 The National Federation of Senior Citizens

The National Federation of Senior Citizens is an independent umbrella organisation that includes 55 senior citizen associations in Iceland with a total of around 30,000 members. The organisation promotes the

³ Knoema (2022c.)

⁴ GALLUP (2022.)

⁵ University of the Third Age

collaboration of senior citizen associations and that such associations are active in all municipalities in Iceland.⁶ The National Federation of Senior Citizens has not focussed particularly on environmental matters, but in 2019 the organisation participated in an environmental project with funding from the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources and smaller grants from other parties. This campaign was in the form of three trailers that were shown on television, on websites, and on web media. The trailers encouraged people to reduce the use of single-use plastic bags, not to throw medicines in the trash or the sink, and to go out and pick up trash.

During the preparation of this summary, several senior citizen associations around the country - all of which were members of the NFSC - were contacted to investigate whether environmental issues had been specifically on their agenda. None of the member associations that were contacted stated that they had worked with environmental issues as a subject, with the exception of one association where several speakers had been hired to give presentations on environmental issues, and the new chairman intended to make climate and environmental issues a firmer priority.

2.1.3 Friends of Icelandic Nature

Friends of Icelandic nature is a non-profit organisation.⁷ The organisation's funds are obtained through grant applications and voluntary donations from individuals and companies. The purpose of the organisation is to discuss current nature conservation issues in Iceland with a special emphasis on the harmful effects of invasive and alien species, and also to formulate proposals for improvements. The organisation holds meetings, organises actions for nature conservation, and shares information to the public through the media and on its website (natturuvinir.is) about the negative effects of alien species on the ecosystem and the appearance of Icelandic nature. The organisation also provides reviews of plans, including bills and government regulations related to nature conservation. The organisation promotes the provision of correct and reliable information, such as about carbon sequestration and carbon units. The organisation also emphasises that international certification systems are used in carbon sequestration with recognised requirements and criteria that simultaneously take into account Icelandic conditions. The organisation is not exclusively for older people, but many of the founding members and article writers of Friends of Icelandic Nature are university-educated retired persons.

2.2 Norway

About 5.5 million people live in Norway, of which 18.1% are aged 65 and over according to figures from 2021.⁸ Norwegians are increasingly concerned about climate change, according to a citizen survey for the University of Bergen. The survey has been conducted regularly since 2013, and for the first time in ten years, over 50% of participants aged 63 and over are "concerned" or "very concerned" about climate change. The results of the survey show that concerns are increasing the most among those over sixty.⁹

2.2.1 Besteforeldrenes klimaaksjon (BKA)

Besteforeldrenes klimaaksjon is a very large and active organisation that had a total of 6,870 members in January 2023. The organisation was established in 2006 and has grown year by year since then. Members pay for admission to the organisation and those membership fees cover the salaries of staff for general maintenance and organisation of education and events.¹⁰

Besteforeldrenes klimaaksjon have a very clear strategy and by collecting a membership fee the organisation can put money into marketing and the various issues they want to support. Among other things, the

⁶ The National Federation of Senior Citizens (2021.)

⁷ Friends of Icelandic Nature (2022.)

⁸ Trading Economics (2021.)

⁹ Besteforeldrenes klimaaksjon (2022.)

¹⁰ Besteforeldrenes klimaaksjon (2023.)

organisation wants to promote a lifestyle that leads to lower emissions. It wants Norway to guarantee that the population will be part of the climate solution (as stated in Article 12 of the Paris Agreement,) that the use of fossil fuels will be reduced, and that all oil and gas exploration in Norway will be stopped and production stopped. On the organisation's website, you can find educational materials about environmental and climate issues, information about subgroups of the organisation from around Norway and reports from the annual and national board meetings that have been held.

Besteforeldrenes klimaaksjon is part of a European network of seniors involved in climate issues (see below.)

2.2.2 Norges naturvernforbund

In preparing this summary, the authors were advised that Norges naturvernforbund (the Nature Conservation Society of Norway) has a special group for older people interested in climate issues.¹¹ The senior advisor of the Norwegian Nature Conservation Society informed the authors of this summary that they have a youth organisation dedicated to their younger members, but no special activities exist for the oldest members of the organisation. Even so, many of the most active members of the naturvernforbundet are older people, and the organisation's advisor believes this is due to the increased free time of that generation. The main focus of the organisation has been to mobilise younger members in adulthood.

2.3 Sweden

There are 10.2 million people in Sweden, of which 20.2% are 65 years old and older according to figures from the year 2022.¹² Swedes are very aware of climate issues and have increasing concerns about climate change and its consequences. Two out of three residents of Sweden are of the opinion that politicians need to do more to limit climate change, and more than half of the population feel that a cap needs to be placed on total greenhouse gas emissions in Sweden.¹³ The concerns of older residents (65-79 years old) in particular have increased in recent years, but around 63% of them think about climate change and the effects of greenhouse gases at least once a week.

Many environmental and climate groups are active in Sweden, but noticeably many new groups have been founded in the last year.¹⁴ Increased awareness around climate change seems to be as great among young Swedes as old and Greta Thunberg has had a huge impact in her home country. What started as a one person strike in 2018 has today become *Fridays for Future*, a global social movement focusing on climate issues and action that needs to be taken in that field. Greta is the inspiration and source of many of the Swedish climate groups that will be discussed below, but many of these groups share the same ideology and meet on Fridays to protest climate change and government inaction.

2.3.1 Grandparents for Future

The organisation Grandparents for Future in Sweden has around 850 members. They host all kinds of events, both online and in the real world, including coaching, demonstrations, diverse lectures, and education. The group believes that the words *grandpa* and *grandma* have a special value to underline the responsibility of older generations for the world that their descendants will take over and live in. They support Greta Thunberg and *Fridays for Future*.¹⁵

2.3.2 Grandmas for Future

Grandmas for Future is a small group of 20 people in Katrineholm, in Södermanland, southwest of Stockholm. Members of the group feel that climate strikes are important because politicians are not doing enough to meet

¹¹ Naturvernforbundet (2023.)

¹² Knoema (2022d.)

¹³ Gustaf Lind (2022.)

¹⁴ Sofie Björck (2022.)

¹⁵ Grandparents for Future (2023.)

the goals of the Paris Agreement. They think it's wonderful that there are strikes all over the world, but they also want to show the same at home in Katrineholm. They focus on protesting in their hometown in order to reduce the carbon footprint of long journeys.¹⁶

2.3.3 Gretas Gamlingar

Gretas Gamlingar is a nature conservation organisation with 1,300-2,500 members. The organisation is a platform for older people who want to show that they are passionate about Sweden's climate commitments. The organisation is involved in all kinds of activities that include climate reform and wants to show that young and old have common priorities in climate matters. Gretas Gamlingar are involved in *Fridays for Future*, where they meet once a week and protest the inaction of politicians on climate issues.¹⁷

2.3.4 Grand Panthers

The Grand Panthers are an organisation that protests climate inaction once a month. The organisation does not have a single leader, instead people take turns, some leave, and others replace them. Since the organisation does not have a permit to protest, people remain alone or in small groups during the protests. People from the group try to meet with politicians as often as they can to share their concerns about climate issues.¹⁸ They share a network with *KlimatSverige*, *Fridays for Future*, *Klimatsvaret* and *Våra barns klimat* which are all organisations who advocate for climate action. Grand Panthers is also part of a European network of seniors involved in climate issues (see below.)

2.4 Denmark

About 5.8 million people live in Denmark, of which 20.5% are aged 65 and over according to figures from 2022.¹⁹ Sustainability seems to be very important to older generations of Danes.²⁰ In a survey of over 1,000 Danes aged 60 and over, it was found that over 60% are very interested in climate issues and sustainability and would like to contribute to reducing pollution. About 76% of respondents were concerned about the impact of climate change on future generations.

2.4.1 Bedsteforældrenes Klimaaktion

Bedsteforældrenes Klimaaktion is a grassroots and activist movement, which brings together mature people aged 50+, who are concerned about the kind of world they are leaving for future generations. The movement seeks to spread the word about the right climate decisions and pressure politicians to take responsibility and push for a quick and effective green transition. The group meets regularly in nine cities across Denmark, where they gather to protest climate change, as well as take part in courses and education on climate issues and hold various events.²¹

2.4.2 Sammen om verdensmål

Sammen om verdensmål is a project of 30 libraries in Denmark that aims to engage people over 60 in work for the benefit of the United Nations' Global Sustainable Development Goals. The project is financed by the VELUX FONDEN and was launched in February 2021 and will end in December 2023. Activities are offered at selected libraries where residents can help develop ideas and solutions in their own town that fall under the Global Goals. The aim of the activity is for the participants to become active participants in the local impact of the Global Goals. The project is also designed to increase the well-being and quality of life of the target group, where people can use their own talents in new company, while the project is intended to promote the active and

¹⁶ Grandmas for Future (2022.)

¹⁷ Gretas Gamlingar (2023.)

¹⁸ Grand Panthers (2022.)

¹⁹ Knoema (2022a.)

²⁰ Line Marie Sommer (2021.)

²¹ Bedsteforældrenes Klimaaktion (2023.)

community-creating role of people aged 60 and over.²² Now that the project is coming to an end, it has received very positive attention in Denmark and two detailed manuals have been written for library staff on how to involve people in all kinds of project in libraries for the benefit of the Global Goals. Both manuals can be used to good effect by people outside the industry.

2.5 Greenland

About 56,000 people live in Greenland, of which approximately 9.8% are aged 65 and over, according to figures from 2023.²³ Contact was made with the National Association of Senior Citizens in Greenland and members of the network of the ministries responsible for this project. Following that, Greenland's Ministry of Agriculture, Self-Reliance, Energy and Environment also contacted relevant parties in that country who might have knowledge of the work of the elderly on climate issues or environmental issues in general. No answers were received to these messages, which can presumably be interpreted as the fact that in Greenland there are no organizations of older people working on climate issues and that there are no known individuals in the group of older Greenlanders who have devoted themselves to this issue.

2.6 Faeroe Islands

About 54,000 people live in the Faroe Islands, of which 17.9% are aged 65 and over, according to figures from 2021.²⁴ When preparing this summary, no information was found about senior organisations on climate issues in the Faroe Islands. The association of senior citizens (Landsfelag Pensjónista) was contacted, where it was confirmed that none of their groups had climate issues on their agenda. Certainly, there are older people who are active in environmental issues within nature conservation organisations, but these are not special organisations or groups for the age group in question here.

2.7 Finland

About 5.5 million people live in Finland, of which 23.3% are aged 65 and over, according to figures from 2022.²⁵ In a climate survey conducted by the European Investment Bank in 2021, it was found that 73% of Finns aged 65 and over believe that climate change and its consequences are the biggest challenge for humanity in the 21st century. It is interesting to see that 49% of respondents believed that they were more concerned about the climate situation than the country's government. Furthermore, 49% believed that the country will fail to reduce its carbon emissions by 2050, as promised in the Paris Agreement. Around 70% of those who participated in the survey said they were in favour of stricter measures by the government to force changes in people's behaviour (7% more than in a similar survey the previous year.)²⁶

2.7.1 Aktivistimummot

Aktivistimummot or Activist Grannies is a network of Finnish grandmothers (and some grandfathers) whose goal is to fight climate change and protect nature. This is not a public organisation, it has no membership registers, charges no membership fees and operates 100% on a voluntary basis.

A few grandmothers got together in 2019 and founded Aktivistimummot. The purpose of the movement is to influence the future of both our own grandchildren and the grandchildren of the world. A growing, multidisciplinary group of grandmothers is working towards this goal and the specific themes (#wisdom and #hope) defined by the founding grandmothers. The group organises various events and also puts a lot of focus on education on the group's website, Facebook page, and Twitter. A leadership group of fifteen to twenty people organises and coordinates the group's activities. The group has around 6,000-7,000 followers on

²² Sammen om verdensmål (2021.)

²³ Statista (2023.)

²⁴ The Global Economy (2021.)

²⁵ Khomea (2022b.)

²⁶ European Investment Bank (2021.)

Facebook. The group's website states that they consider themselves "*lucky that we live in a country with the best education in the world and therefore also the most educated grandmothers in the world*".²⁷

2.7.2 Ilmastoisovanhemmat

Ilmastoisovanhemmat is an organisation that monitors climate action both in Finland and internationally. The organisation's purpose is to work to curb climate change and protect biodiversity, as well as to promote an ethical, eco-friendly, and equal society. They also want to support the activities of children and young people and promote intergenerational justice.

Ilmastoisovanhemmat provides information, initiates community discussions, organises protests and events of various kinds, and collaborates with other organisations and parties that aim for the same goals. The organisation runs a blog and has a book club that meets online every month and discusses the book of the month, which always deals with environmental issues. The organisation also organises various kinds of protests where they have signs in six languages. Among other things, they meet and protests every Friday outside the Finnish Parliament. The organisation publishes an international newsletter in English, at least three times a year, with coverage of what similar organisations in Europe are doing. The organisation encourages politicians to change the law and is very active on the main social media platforms. This is a formal organisation with an appointed board and a chairman, secretary, interpreters, etc. A lot of effort is put into international cooperation and awareness raising in other countries.²⁸ Ilmastoisovanhemmat is part of a European network of seniors involved in climate issues (see below.)

2.8 Åland

More than 30,000 people live in Åland, but when compiling this summary, no figures were found on the percentage of people aged 65 and over in the total population. Åland has long been ahead of its time in environmental matters. In 2018, the Åland government set a goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 60% by 2030 compared to 2005²⁹. They also aim to become sustainable by 2051, largely with the help of wind turbines and hydrogen-powered ferries. When preparing this summary, no information was found about senior organisations on climate issues in Åland. The association of senior citizens in Marienhamn, the capital of the Åland Islands, was contacted but had no answers.

²⁷ Aktivistimummot (2023.)

²⁸ Ilmastoisovanhemmat (2023.)

²⁹ Medium (2020.)

3 European Network

All around the world, seniors have founded or joined climate organisations to try to influence policy, both regionally and nationally. In 2019, the European Union adopted the European Green Deal, which includes the goal of Europe reaching Net Zero by 2050. As a result, several European seniors' climate organisations decided to create a cooperation network focussing on the implementation of the Green Deal by sharing information, knowledge, and methods while supporting action across Europe. The cooperation network is self-organised and independent of political forces and connects many climate protection organisations in the countries involved.³⁰ Thus, the Danish organisation Besteforældrenes Klimaaktion, the Swedish organisation Grand Panthers, the Finnish organisation Ilmastoisoivanhemmat, and the Norwegian organisation Besteforeldrenes klimaaksjon are all part of this European network. There are also organisations from other countries on the European continent and from Great Britain. The organisation has held digital meetings and publishes a joint newsletter four times a year. The Norwegian organisation is currently working on setting up a website for the network to create a joint digital platform for these organisations. The website is expected to be ready at the end of 2023.

In autumn 2023 or spring 2024, a conference will be held in Strasbourg, France, where members of the European network from all over Europe will meet and work together to organise a meeting with the Commission or the President of the EU.

³⁰ European Grandparents for Climate (2023.)

4 Conclusion

The proportion of elderly people is increasing rapidly in the Nordic countries, and with the visible effects of climate change, we can count on increased participation of older people in non-governmental organisations and groups such as those discussed above.

It is interesting to note the difference in the focus of seniors' organisations in the Nordic countries, but the different environs, size, and location of the countries presumably have a great influence on which issues are considered the most important in each country. There is also a significant difference in the size of groups and organisations, but this difference seems largely independent of the population of the country in question. In Sweden, for example, there are more small groups than in Norway, where large organisations are at the forefront.

Even though little information was found during the preparation of this summary about the climate work of seniors in Greenland, Åland, and the Faroe Islands, it may well be that some such activity exists in these areas. The reason for the lack of such organisations or groups could be due to sparsely populated areas or small population. With the seminar in the second phase of this project, an effort will be made to mobilise participants from the autonomous regions to promote the possible establishment of groups or organisations based on inspiration from neighbouring nations with a similar way of thinking.

The next phase of this project consists of organising a seminar in Reykjavík on the 27th-28th of September 2023. Representatives of all the organisation and groups discussed in this summary will be invited to the seminar - more specifically, approximately two participants from each of the Nordic countries and one from outside the Nordic countries - to either give a lecture or take part in a panel discussion. The aim of the seminar is to create a platform to share the experiences of older people regarding climate matters. We will be looking for individuals with experience in the establishment of organisations of seniors who are active in climate issues or individuals who have experience of being a member of such organisations/groups. The purpose of this selection is to promote the sharing and gathering of useful information and experience from others, which can then be used in the participant's domestic work when they return home.

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