



Nordic Council
of Ministers

NORDIC YOUTH POSITION PAPER ON BIODIVERSITY

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Nordic Youth Position Paper on Biodiversity

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Presented here is a Nordic Youth Position Paper on biodiversity, sustainability, and the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework under the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (UN CBD).

The paper and its statistics are based on data and opinions collected from January 2020 to March 2021, through youth actions conducted as part of a project on youth engagement in biodiversity and the UN CBD by the Nordic Council of Ministers and Nordic Council. The actions include youth workshops in Denmark, Finland (with participants from the Åland Islands), Sweden, Iceland, Greenland, the Faroe Islands and Sápmi, as well as an online survey with over 2,200 youth respondents from all of the Nordic countries and autonomous areas.

This paper presents views and recommendations from the consulted Nordic youth regarding involvement, adequate education, fair transformation, ecological footprint, responsible production, and the upcoming Global Biodiversity Framework.

The time to act is now

We are living in an anthropogenic mass extinction with environmental degradation and failing life-sustaining systems as a result, all the while failing to meet our agreed-upon environmental goals. The consulted youth are aware of and affected by this: 4 out of 5 are very concerned about biodiversity loss. They highlight as the foremost reasons for their concern: the right of all living beings to exist, our need for ecosystem services, and the importance of biodiversity in preventing further irreversible climate change. To us, the climate and the nature crisis are fundamental threats, since their consequences undermine our wellbeing and that of future generations. Both crises require urgent, joint, and holistic solutions that are truly sustainable for both people and the planet.

A new Global Biodiversity Framework is currently being developed to succeed the Aichi Targets. It will set out the global goals and targets that the countries of the UN CBD agree to achieve by 2030 to halt biodiversity loss. Since none of the previous Aichi Targets were achieved¹ and the coming years are crucial for securing a healthy planet, the new agreement requires ambitious targets and adequate efforts. We therefore urge politicians and decision-makers to act in response to the biodiversity crisis.

1. <https://www.cbd.int/gbo/gbo5/publication/gbo-5-spm-en.pdf>

Involvement

Nature and the environment must be considered in all sectors of society.

Collaborations on nature and environmental issues must be strengthened within the Nordic region and between governments, civil society, and the private sector. The collaboration must be intergenerational, including youth in relevant political and legislative decisions. More than half of the consulted youth support youth quotas in decision-making. To increase involvement and youth engagement, funding must be secured as well as improved education on advocacy.

- Include youth representatives in decision-making on biodiversity by consulting youth-led environmental councils on local, national, and Nordic levels.
- Formalise and ensure future youth inclusion in the UN CBD and related processes, with national UN youth delegates.
- Fully and proactively involve Indigenous peoples in decision-making when designing environmental policies, especially when such policies impact indigenous land and water use.
- Recognize Indigenous and traditional knowledge in science and biodiversity policies.
- Increase funding for youth engagement in biodiversity, especially Indigenous, vulnerable, and marginalised groups.
- Provide capacity building and education on how to participate in and influence political processes.

Adequate education

Engagement starts with education. While more than half of the consulted youth consider themselves informed, or highly informed, of the state and causes of biodiversity loss, a majority feel insufficiently informed on ecosystem services (3 out of 5) and biodiversity politics and policies (9 out of 10). As a response, 4 out of 5 youth respondents wish for better biodiversity education to enhance youth engagement. Furthermore, adequate education must recognize Indigenous history and cultures, as the sustainable practices and intimate relationships with nature of Indigenous people provides valuable insights.

- Improve and prioritize education on biodiversity in the Nordic countries on all levels. This education must be interdisciplinary and integrated in all relevant subjects.
- Strengthen education on Indigenous culture and history as a part of the school curriculum.
- Integrate decolonializing perspectives in education.

A fair transformation

A truly sustainable transformation is needed to ensure human rights. We must consider the social impacts of the transition and strive not to leave anyone behind in the process. This is understood by the consulted youth, with 7 out of 10 stating that, in general, cultural interests should be prioritized over economic interests when these are in conflict.

We cannot neglect or oppress Indigenous peoples and local communities who live in closer harmony with nature. Therefore, people dependent on small-scale natural resource extraction such as fishermen, hunters and farmers need to be consulted and compensated if affected. Indigenous peoples need to be more included in various areas of politics, especially in matters relevant to their culture and way of life. Decisions concerning their territories must be taken with their free, prior, and informed consent with respect to their right to self-determination.

To economically ensure that international agreements succeed in protecting biodiversity, half of the youth prefer that the developed countries bear the main economic responsibility for the funding, while 1 in 3 prefer that the businesses who are exploiting natural resources should be the main contributors of the funding.

- Ensure a respectful and solidary transition, with full respect for human rights and the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities, and with recognition of local practices.
- Ensure responsible funding of the Global Biodiversity Framework Deal, meaning that wealthier countries must support less wealthy countries to a greater extent than today.

Facing up to our ecological footprint

The environmental impact of the Nordic countries is too high. The globally dominant economic system, which has profit as its main goal, is causing the degradation of nature. We need to urgently reduce our emissions and consumption by shifting to sustainable practices and lifestyles. Our consumption behaviour must transform, and growth in GDP abandoned as a measure of wellbeing. 8 out of 10 of the consulted Nordic youth support several behavioural changes: eating less meat and exotic foods, as well as repairing or buying pre-owned clothes, furniture and electronics. Furthermore, a majority of them support investing in sustainable funds, eating fewer dairy products and travelling less by car and air.

The youth identified their main barriers to sustainable consumption as sustainable alternatives being too expensive and difficult to acquire, and having too little knowledge about the alternatives. More can be done to meet youth's demand for sustainable consumption and production.

- Redefine wellbeing. The unrealistic demand for non-essential products must be abandoned.
- Stop unsustainable subsidies and incentives, and instead extensively promote and fund sustainable consumption and practices.
- Make it easier to consume sustainably: require transparency of a product's emissions and biodiversity impacts, introduce certifications creating awareness of this, and make sustainable products cheaper than harmful ones. Support services are needed for a circular economy, such as repairs and sustainable local businesses.

Responsible production

In our globalized world, a substantial portion of our environmental impacts are caused by multinational corporations, with their direct consequences nearly invisible to consumers. To combat this challenge, 9 out of 10 of the consulted Nordic youth support regulations as a necessary tool to ensure that private actors protect nature.

Furthermore, half of the consulted youth do not believe that the private sector is doing enough for sustainability. We need more severe consequences for breaching environmental laws, as well as a joint effort to address international companies and their emissions. Industries' externalities should be internalized according to a responsible "polluter-pays" principle. Mechanisms for compensation must have a careful ecosystem-based approach to ensure the integrity of biodiversity, and must be accompanied by strategies for minimizing resource extraction.

- Introduce taxes on activities and products based on their impact on ecosystems.
- Improve regulations on the environmental impacts of production, for example criminalizing large-scale environmental destruction by including ecocide in the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.
- Harmonize economic incentives and legislation for big multinational companies.

A successful global biodiversity framework

This decade is crucial to stopping the loss of biodiversity, halting the ecological crisis, and ensuring a safe future for people and the planet. Therefore, now more than ever, we need a comprehensive, just, and implementable framework. The Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework must ensure the safety and wellbeing of all life on Earth, and of both current and future generations.

According to the survey respondents, national governments and international actors bear the main responsibility for securing a sustainable future. However, the respondents do not consider their current actions to be sufficient.

Being among the wealthiest regions in the world, the Nordic countries have the means to successfully comply with the Global Deal and the obligations arising from the EU Biodiversity Strategy. 9 out of 10 of the consulted youth believe that these → international policies must be implemented through national laws and legally binding targets. Additionally, 7 out of 10 support the implementation of policies through regionally binding commitments within the Nordic region.

Failure to meet the new targets, as happened with the Aichi Targets, is not an option.

- The Nordic countries must advocate for an effective global implementation, and for responsive mechanisms that address and support parties struggling with implementation.
- All Nordic countries must establish national advisory panels to review and support the implementation of the Global Biodiversity Framework and national biodiversity strategies in practice, such as Klimatpolitiska rådet (Sweden) and Klimarådet (Denmark).

About the survey

The survey was developed by a group of Nordic youth active in the Nordic Youth Biodiversity Network, with support from the Nordic Council and Council of Ministers. It was distributed online in youth and environmental networks in all of the Nordic countries, directed at young people aged between 13 and 30. The survey was responded to by 2,263 youth from February to March 2021.

Number of respondents: Denmark 787, Sweden 512, Faroe Islands 37, Norway 265, Finland 541, Iceland 64, Åland Islands 16, and Greenland 12.

70% of the respondents were women, 26% men, 4% other and 2.1% preferred not to say. 72% have studied or are studying for a university degree, 24% have attended or are attending upper secondary school. 40% of the respondents live in an urban area, 24% in suburban areas and 33% in rural areas.

Denmark	Finland	Sweden	Norway	Iceland	Faroe Islands	Åland Islands	Greenland
787	541	512	265	64	37	16	12

About the youth workshops

In 2020, seven national youth workshops were conducted in Denmark, Finland (with participants from the Åland Islands), Sweden, Iceland, the Faroe Islands, Greenland and Sápmi. Three additional workshops were also held at a university and a folk high school in Norway. The workshops were independently based on the toolkit *Together Towards a Global Deal for Nature and People*,² which was written specifically to facilitate youth consultations on biodiversity and the UN CBD Global Biodiversity Framework.

Around 400 youth in total were consulted on their views regarding nature, climate, sustainability, and international agreements. The workshops were organised by youth and supported by actors such as the Nordic Council and Minister Council, WWF Denmark, the Government of Greenland, and the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency.

	Date	Participants
Denmark	9 January 2020	80
Finland and Åland Islands	24 January 2020	60
Faroe Islands	24 January 2020	29
Sweden	December 2019	25
	31 January 2020	50
Iceland and North Atlantic	21 February 2020	27
Western Norway University of Applied Sciences	16 December 2019	20
	24 February 2020	20
Sogndal Folk High School (Norway)	March 2020	25
Greenland	22 September 2020	35
Sápmi	26 November 2020	20

2. www.norden.org/sv/node/44855

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Nordic co-operation

Nordic co-operation is one of the world's most extensive forms of regional collaboration, involving Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, and the Faroe Islands, Greenland and Åland.

Nordic co-operation has firm traditions in politics, economics and culture and plays an important role in European and international forums. The Nordic community strives for a strong Nordic Region in a strong Europe.

Nordic co-operation promotes regional interests and values in a global world. The values shared by the Nordic countries help make the region one of the most innovative and competitive in the world.

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