



INCLUDING YOUTH IN THE SHAPING OF THE GLOBAL **BIODIVERSITY FRAMEWORK**



Lessons learnt from the Nordic co-operation

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Introduction

The following presents a summary of a Nordic initiative to engage Nordic youth in development and negotiations of the Global Biodiversity Framework, which was adopted in Montreal December 2022, together with an outline of the guiding principles for Nordic youth engagement to avoid tokenism, and lessons learnt.

The initiative has among other things resulted in Nordic Youth Position Paper, which contained **19 demands towards the Global Biodiversity Framework**.

The initiative has a unique anchoring in the political negotiations on national, regional and global level. Engaging MPs and ministers in youth deliberations has been essential.

Several of the demands from the Nordic Youth Position Paper are reflected in the Nordic environmental ministers' declaration 'Finalising the Global Biodiversity Deal – the Nordic approach', which was adopted six months prior to COP15.



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Background

New goals for protecting the biodiversity and natural resources of our planet must address the opportunities and living conditions of young people both today and in the future. Young people today are those who must develop the solutions of the future and handle the challenges that previous generations have inflicted on them.

In 2018 the conference of parties to the Convention of Biological Diversity (CBD COP) adopted a participatory process for the preparation and negotiation of the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, which urges parties and youth groups (among others) ‘.to actively engage and contribute to the process of developing a robust post-2020 global biodiversity framework in order to foster strong ownership of the framework to be agreed and strong support for its immediate implementation’ and ‘. to facilitate dialogues on the post-2020 global biodiversity framework...’^[1].

The Nordic Council and the Nordic Council of Ministers have adopted the UN Global Goals for Sustainable Development. The organisations are working at various levels to meet these goals, including Global Goal 16, which states that responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making must be ensured on all levels.

In 2019 the Nordic Council (Nordic parliaments) and the Nordic Council of Ministers (representing Nordic governments) of Norway, Sweden, Finland, Denmark, Iceland, the Faroe Islands, Greenland and Aaland (hereinafter referred to as the Nordic region) decided on a joint initiative aimed at giving young people in Nordic countries the possibility of influencing the development of the Global Biodiversity Framework, thereby creating ownership of, engagement in, and trust in the political processes.

1. [cop-14-dec-34-en.docx \(live.com\)](#)



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Purpose of Nordic youth engagement

The overall purpose of the joint initiative undertaken by the parliaments and governments in the Nordic region was to ensure the influence of Nordic youth on the development of a new global agreement on biodiversity. This included building bridges between youth movements and decision-makers and placing these issues high on the political agenda.

By mobilising young people throughout the region, they were given the opportunity to help set the level of ambition and contribute concrete content to the agreement, while setting ambitions for the future roles of youth in the implementation of the Global Biodiversity Framework.

Specifically, the initiatives aimed at:

- Developing a Nordic youth position paper on the Global Biodiversity Framework, and thereby giving Nordic youth a say in the future protection and management of biodiversity and ecosystems.
- Supporting the influence of Nordic youth on the development and negotiations of the Global Deal for Nature and People/the Biodiversity Framework.
- Giving Nordic youth a role in advocacy and possibility to influence national, regional, and global decision-making processes.
- Increasing awareness and understanding of biodiversity and international cooperation on biodiversity conservation policy.
- Developing the negotiation skills of young people.

The Nordic Council and the Nordic Council of Ministers support young people in their efforts to engage in the negotiation process on different levels:

- **National level**, through dialogue with government officials, ministers, and members of parliament on the development of the government's mandate.
- **Regional level**, through presentation and discussions of the Nordic Youth Position Paper at joint meetings with Nordic ministers and Nordic MPs, and by informing the EU working group on biodiversity and environment (WPIEI).
- **Global level**, through ad hoc meetings with ministers and lead negotiators of the Nordic region during interim and COP negotiations, and by joining forces with the Global Youth Biodiversity Network (GYBN).

Activities such as youth workshops and conferences, online debates and side events during climate COPs and CBD interim meetings in the Global Biodiversity Framework have included the participation of youth, ministers, and MPs to facilitate intergenerational dialogue and the exchange of views on the Global Biodiversity Framework.



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Guiding principles for youth engagement

The initiative takes a holistic approach which addresses both capacity building and awareness raising among young people as well as decision-makers by facilitating political and intergenerational dialogue.

Many different groups of young people have been involved, including young people with an interest in biodiversity, or who are merely curious about it and wished to learn more, and who wished to get actively involved in activities and negotiations. This included both individuals and organised youth groups who represented an organisation or movement (e.g., the Danish Youth Council, Sámi Youth Council and Arctic Youth, the Green Student Movement, student organisations in general, youth-led NGOs and Extinction Rebellion, etc.), NGOs with youth programmes or networks, the Nordic Youth Council and the Nordic Committee for Children and Young People, UN youth delegates and global youth organised through the Global Youth Biodiversity Network.

Some young people represented a larger youth group and were given a mandate by their organisations to participate in the initiative, while others participated as individuals. The primary focus was on people aged 18-35 years.

Acknowledging that young people in general are engaged in many other matters in their lives and so often partake for shorter or longer periods, a key element of the initiative was to reach out to young people on a continuous basis over the course of three years.

An indispensable principle of the initiative was that it had to be a youth-led initiative based on a bottom-up approach, while obtaining support from the established system in terms of securing funding and access to ministers, MPs, and experts, and with a view to an exchange of knowledge and best practices with experienced officials.



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Organization of the project

To facilitate youth engagement and youth ownership of activities, the initiative was built around the following organisational structure:

Steering committee: To develop and steer the implementation of the project, a steering committee was established. The steering committee planned activities and put young people in contact with networks, ministers, MPs, the UN, and the EU system (both the UN Convention on Biological Diversity and the Convention on Climate Change), as well as other stakeholders and experts.

The steering committee included representatives from the Nordic Council of Ministers, the Nordic Council, the Nordic Youth Council, the Nordic Committee for Children and Young People, Danish UN youth delegates, and Nordic youth from Sweden and Aaland. The youth representatives were appointed by the Nordic Youth Advisory Group.

Nordic Youth Advisory Committee: To further mobilise and engage youth and to develop a project based on youth priorities and ideas, a Nordic Youth Advisory Committee was established. Based on an open call to Nordic youth organisations and movements, as well as youth networks including the Nordic Committee for Children and Young People (Nordbuk), the Nordic Youth Council, Re-generation 2030 (youth movement for sustainability in the Nordic and Baltic Sea region), etc., young people were invited to join the Advisory Committee, which was open to any interested young people.

The Nordic Youth Advisory Committee consisted of approximately 15-25 young Nordic people (which varied over time) and was a dynamic group open to any young people with an interest in biodiversity and the Nordic youth engagement activities. The members took part in and/or took the lead in several activities, including the development of a [TOOLKIT](#) and [MANUAL](#) for youth engagement, organizing national and regional youth workshops, communication campaigns and outreach to youth networks, and summarising the outcomes of youth deliberations towards a Nordic Youth Position Paper.

Nordic youth delegation: The Nordic Youth Advisory Committee selected a delegation that participated directly in the development and negotiations of the Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF). The selection process was carried out by the Nordic Youth Advisory Committee, which reached out to the aforementioned youth organisations and networks. The youth delegation was selected on democratic principles from among young people who had expressed a qualified interest.

The mandate of the youth delegation was based on the Nordic Youth Position Paper, which had been developed through a comprehensive youth consultation process involving approximately 3,000 young people from the Nordic countries.

The delegation that participated in COP15 (the 15th Meeting of the Conference of Parties) included 18 Nordic young people, including Sámi youth and national UN youth delegates. The youth delegation was accredited through the Nordic Council and the Nordic Council of Ministers as observers to the convention, and members were able to express their opinions in a formal setting.



Photos: Unsplash and Andreas Omvik/norden.org

Building capacities on biodiversity and negotiation processes

One of the priorities of the initiative was to build capacity and raise awareness on biodiversity. Several capacity-building and networking activities took place:

- A Nordic youth kick-off meeting was held, with information about international cooperation on biodiversity conservation policy, the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), biodiversity targets and their implementation, etc.
- To facilitate youth decisions on biodiversity, a TOOLKIT 'Involving young people in setting targets for biodiversity, ecosystems and sustainable use' was developed, which included the current status on biodiversity and background information as well as relevant questions relating to the development of a new global deal for nature and people, and was made available to young people and translated into all Nordic languages, including Sámi ([Toolkit.pdf \(fni.no\)](#)).
- To support young people in the planning of youth consultations, a manual for organising youth consultations was developed and made available to young people and translated into all Nordic languages, including Sámi ([FULLTEXT01.pdf \(diva-portal.org\)](#)).
- A one-week EU youth workshop on biodiversity was held, organised by the Global Youth Biodiversity Network (GYBN).
- A webinar on biodiversity, with the support of the CBD secretariat and biodiversity experts.
- A webinar on coordination of international youth activities on biodiversity.
- Participation in the Trondheim Conference on the Global Framework on Biodiversity.
- A two-day Nordic capacity-building workshop was held in Stockholm.
- International online meetings on the coordination of international youth activities.



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Creating a Nordic youth position paper

To facilitate and support youth from different countries and cultural backgrounds, and to build their understanding of biodiversity and of why biodiversity is important, a TOOLKIT and MANUAL were developed and translated into all Nordic languages, including Sámi.

The TOOLKIT for involving young people in setting new targets for the protection and sustainable use of biodiversity and ecosystems provides up-to-date information on biodiversity, and on how the Convention on Biological Diversity works and is implemented. An overview of key issues and dilemmas to be discussed in relation to setting new biodiversity targets is also included in the TOOLKIT, along with a set of questions. The questions had been formulated in consultation with global and Nordic youth and helped to set the direction for youth consultation across the Nordic region. For further guidance on how to do this, a MANUAL for organising youth consultations was made available.

The above materials were also made available at international level through a notification issued by the CBD secretariat to the parties, and a side event on climate and biodiversity during climate COP25 was organised for the purpose of presenting the TOOLKIT and MANUAL to youth within the climate community, with an invitation to join forces in the development of the Global Biodiversity Framework.

The organisation of youth consultations in the Nordic region was led by young people with support from the Nordic Council of Ministers and the Nordic Council. The financial support varied across the region. In the case of Finland and Sweden the governments provided financial support, while in Denmark the government provided financial support in cooperation with the 15th June Foundation. For the North Atlantic workshop, the Nordic Atlantic collaboration NORA provided financial support. The Nordic Council and the Nordic Council of Ministers provided financial support for the Nordic youth workshop in Stockholm.

Youth deliberations

The young people from the Nordic countries (typically those who were members of the Nordic Youth Advisory Committee) initiated various youth deliberations at national and regional level. The objective of the workshops was to build understanding of biodiversity, facilitate discussions on the Global Biodiversity Framework, and support intergenerational dialogue with the participating ministers and MPs.

National workshops were held in Denmark, Sweden, Finland, the Faroe Islands and Greenland. A Nordic youth workshop on climate and biodiversity took place in Stockholm in parallel with UNFCCC COP25, and a Sámi youth workshop involving young Sámi people from Norway, Finland, Sweden and Russian was held in Norway. A North Atlantic youth workshop involving young people from Iceland, Greenland, Northern Norway and the Faroe Islands took place in Iceland.

National and regional workshops took place with the participation of ministers and MPs, who took an active role in discussing, listening to, and exchanging views with the Nordic youth in the Global Biodiversity Framework.

Nordic biodiversity SURVEY

The Nordic Youth Advisory Committee developed a biodiversity SURVEY in five Nordic languages (Norwegian, Swedish, Danish, Finnish and Icelandic).

This survey was largely distributed to Nordic and national youth organisations, networks, and movements, and via the social media to young people in general.

A major communication effort was launched to engage young people in the Nordic countries and get them to contribute to the Nordic Youth Position Paper. After a strong messaging campaign in five languages, created in cooperation with the Nordic Youth Advisory Committee, 2,200 young people responded to the biodiversity SURVEY.

The survey served as an important foundation for the Position Paper, in addition to the outcomes of the various national and regional youth workshops/conferences.

The Nordic Youth Position Paper

The outcomes of the various youth consultations and the biodiversity survey were analysed and synthesised into the Nordic Youth Position Paper, which contained **19 demands towards the Global Biodiversity Framework** ([Nordisk Ministerråd - Nord2021-038 \(norden.org\)](#)).

The Nordic Youth Position Paper was launched during a joint public event between young people, ministers, and MPs in 2021. This was followed by a presentation to the Nordic Council and the Nordic Council of Ministers, and was shared with Nordic environmental ministers and officials, as well as with the EU and its member states, and the Global Youth Biodiversity network.

The Position Paper served as the mandate for the Nordic youth delegation that participated in the final negotiations at CBD COP15 in Montreal in December 2022.



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Building political support for the Nordic youth demands

The initiative has a unique anchoring in the political negotiations on national, regional and global level. Engaging MPs and ministers in youth deliberations has been essential to all activities, such as workshops, debates, events, etc.

Several of the demands from the Nordic Youth Position Paper are reflected in the Nordic environmental ministers' declaration 'Finalising the Global Biodiversity Deal – the Nordic approach', which was adopted six months prior to COP15.

Activities supporting youth in their engagement and influence on the negotiation processes were put in place.

Intergenerational dialogue during international meetings

Several side events were jointly organised by young people, the Nordic Council and the Nordic Council of Ministers during the UNFCCC conference of parties (COP25, COP26, and COP27). The purpose was to engage with decision-makers and experts on the links between climate and biodiversity, as well as to invite young people from the climate community to collaborate with young people engaged in biodiversity matters.

During Stockholm+50 a round table with Baltic and Nordic youth and ministers was organized for the purpose of presenting the demands of the young people, addressing challenges relating to the climate and biodiversity crisis in the Nordic region. This event was part of another project targeting involvement of youth in the Stockholm +50 process where Nordic youth network created a youth position paper in the context of the Stockholm +50 conference.

Debates on political commitment and just transition

Young people presented their demands towards the Global Biodiversity Framework to Nordic MPs, ministers and experts at the Nordic Democracy Festivals and in online debates. The latter had a specific focus on 'Political commitment for a healthy planet' and 'Just transition on the path towards halting the loss of biodiversity' and included representatives from the CBD secretariat and the chair of the GBF. These debates were open to the public at both regional and global level.

Youth participation in global negotiations

The Nordic youth delegation participated in Open-Ended Working Groups II, III, IV and V on the Global Biodiversity Framework, and as well as in the Convention's twenty-fourth meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice and the third meeting of the Subsidiary Body for Implementation, and finally at CBD COP15 as observers to the Convention.

Eighteen young people from Nordic countries participated in the negotiations during COP15 in Montreal. Besides seeking to influence the negotiations, the young people served as ambassadors for Nordic youth involvement in the global youth network, attracting the attention of both the Nordic and international media.

During COP15, the Nordic youth, in collaboration with the Nordic Council of Ministers and the Nordic Council, organised events for the purpose of facilitating dialogue between decision-makers and young people. These included an event on the Nordic Youth Position Paper and nature-based solutions, and an event on 'Better Finance for Youth' with Nordic MPs, Nordic and global youth, together with representatives from the Global Environmental Facility (GEF).

Meetings between MPs, Nordic youth, the private sector, Nordic WWF and the Executive Secretary of the Convention of the Conservation of Migratory Species were held. Meetings were also held with the Greenlandic, Finnish and Norwegian ministers of the environment, as well as with Swedish, Danish and Norwegian MPs, to discuss the negotiations and push for the demands of the Nordic Youth Position Paper, together with a larger position formulated in coalition with the entire Global Youth Biodiversity Network.

Together with the Global Youth Biodiversity Network, the Nordic youth engaged closely in the negotiations of the Global Biodiversity Framework during COP15. This included building alliances with likeminded observers and parties.

A physical infographic was set up in the premises of COP15, communicating the Nordic and global youth demands towards the Global Biodiversity Framework.

Communication and outreach

Communication has been key in raising awareness about biodiversity, increasing political commitment and reaching out to young people from different parts of the region. The communication activities were aimed at giving youth a platform from which they could engage with decision-makers, other young people, and the public in general, and express their concerns about the biodiversity crisis and their demands towards the Global Biodiversity Framework.

Communication efforts have built bridges between the youth environmental movement and Nordic politicians in the field of biodiversity, making the language of activism and politics more mutually comprehensible, and supporting young people in their efforts to anchor their demands in the Nordic Youth Position Paper, both politically and among wider circles of young people. The communication efforts also helped to give international visibility to the Nordic youth project, as well as to the Nordic political position prior to the negotiations.

The communication efforts were realised in videos, campaigns on social media such as Instagram, Facebook and LinkedIn and the Nordic official webpage (www.norden.org), various tools relating to knowledge, podcasts, debates, press outreach, op-eds, a survey, networking, advocacy, news stories and events. An overview of the communication activities (articles, video, campaigns, etc.) is included in Annex 1.



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Lessons learnt

The initiative took place over the course of three years (2019-2022). Few young people participated for the entire period, and the turnover of young people became an essential part of how the initiative was organised and developed over time. Due to the continued turnover, clear communication channels needed to be in place to ensure the flow and exchange of information and supporting dialogue.

It has been important to maintain a flexible approach and to be willing to go outside the usual working procedures, as well as to establish partnerships that take different forms, due to cultural differences across the region and differences in how governments and officials work, and how consultations with youth people are understood and carried out.

Allocating resources and time to carry out outreach activities, pass on necessary information, mobilise youth and ensure the continuity of the initiatives is important, and can be achieved by having an organisational setup that allows for youth autonomy. This could include a project manager and assistants (preferably youth representatives) as well as clear points of contact between young people and the Nordic Council and Nordic Council of Ministers. It is helpful to set up contact pathways based on functions within the project rather than individuals (e.g., an email address to the project coordinator, independently of whoever currently fills this role).

Financial support

It is of vital importance to ensure that the financial means are available to support specific activities such as workshops, including travel arrangements, and participation in international meetings and capacity-building activities, as well as communication and outreach activities. The young people come from very different parts of the region and are often busy with education and leisure-time jobs which can place constraints on their continuous engagement over a long period.

Financially compensate young persons who play a leading and/or coordinating role should be considered, including the steering committee's youth representatives and

people who are strongly engaged in planning and organizing events, including the coordination of negotiation processes. Such remuneration could be time-limited or involve longer-term commitment.

Youth autonomy

It is important to provide the young people with a clear mandate that will enable them to influence the direction of the project at as early a stage as possible, whether as members of the steering committee or as other project participants/leaders. A clear mandate is also an enabler of youth autonomy.

Transparent nomination processes for youth participating in either the Nordic Youth Advisory Committee or in the Nordic Youth Delegation have been crucial, as despite democratic and transparent processes, there have been misperceptions concerning how the young people came to be part of the steering committee, advisory committee or delegation.

It is crucial that the young people have autonomy in creating their activities. Financial means and capacity-building serve as an enabling condition for autonomy, and entail playing an influential role in the project steering committee and being able to decide as freely as possible which activities to pursue. Such freedom includes both setting the topics to be raised and the formats in which to do so.

It is important that young people can formulate guidance documents, evaluations and other written documentation of the project, so that the purpose and results of the project are formulated in their own words. All activities, including the planning and execution of youth deliberations, materials such as the TOOLKIT, MANUAL and the biodiversity SURVEY were designed and developed jointly by the young people, the Nordic Council and Nordic Council of Ministers building on inputs from biodiversity experts.

Autonomy also means to allow the young people to prioritise activities based on their capacity and the relevance of the activities to the project, bearing in mind that young people often have limited time and resources to spend outside of their main occupations, e.g., studies or work.

To ensure that the project is adequately followed up, it is important to involve the young people in all stages, from the preparation of the project all the way to its implementation and follow-up of its conclusions.



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Building cross-national alliances and political commitment

Building a strong network among young people and efforts to ensure ownership and relevance to everyone was indispensable. It is important that the young people can meet physically, despite the digital opportunities to work and engage with each other online.

Outreach and collaboration with youth organisations within the environmental space at both national, regional and global level added value and facilitated strong international alliances among the young people, as well as permitting more efficient work within the project, since the established youth organisations often possess a lot of unused capacity and knowledge about the subject.

The young people also had an opportunity to meet other young biodiversity activists from all over Europe and globally and joined in a global youth effort to push governments, businesses, and citizens to act on biodiversity.

Through the Nordic Youth Position Paper, with its 19 demands towards the Global Biodiversity Framework, the Nordic youth were given a unique opportunity to act jointly on biodiversity and climate policy.

As an overall effect of the project, MPs and ministers from across the Nordic Region have broadened their knowledge and taken the opportunity to listen to and understand the priorities of the young people.

Through meetings and communication efforts, the Nordic governments and parliaments have been informed about the demands of the young people regarding the biodiversity crisis, which they can now pursue politically with the support of young people.

The youth people were able to establish a close cooperation with the Global Youth Biodiversity Network which has led to the project becoming a chapter in the Global Youth Biodiversity Network: the Nordic Youth Biodiversity Network was founded in 2020.

Capacity building

The young people were offered capacity building in both biodiversity and the UN processes. The Nordic youth have thus acquired an up-to-date understanding of biodiversity based on the latest science, and knowledge about the UN Biodiversity agreement, including the links between the climate and biodiversity. Capacity-building activities have been offered through the national and regional youth deliberations (workshops, conferences, etc.), by attending courses in biodiversity and UN processes organized by the Global Youth Biodiversity Network, as well as Nordic and global capacity-building activities.

Annex 1: An Overview of Communication activities

2019

[Help to shape the next vital global agreement](#)

2020

[We cannot know what will happen if it crashes](#)

[Ten facts about biodiversity in the Nordic Region](#)

[Young people speak the truth about the biodiversity crisis to the five Nordic prime ministers](#)

[UN Executive Secretary: Get everyone involved in the green transition!](#)

2021

[Take part in the survey on biodiversity and make your voice heard](#)

[Two interlinked global crises – The need for balancing and win-win actions for nature and climate](#)

[Young and concerned about the loss of nature and biodiversity?](#)

[Townhall webinar on Nordic Youth Biodiversity Survey](#)

[Launch of the Nordic Youth Position Paper](#)

[Nineteen demands by Nordic young people to save biodiversity](#)

[One Nordic voice in UN negotiations on biodiversity](#)

2022

[Young people put ecocide crime on the Nordic-political agenda](#)

[Young people set the Nordic agenda at COP27](#)

2023

Nordic Region present at UN summit on biodiversity, COP15 | Nordic co-operation

The first week of COP15: The hopes of Nordic young people for the effective protection of biodiversity.

The EU must stay strong during COP15 and not lose sight of its ambition

Time to use the new global deal on biodiversity!

About this publication

Including youth in the shaping of the Global Biodiversity Framework

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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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