

THE NORDIC YOUTH VISION

Introduction

The Nordic region consists of Denmark, Faroe Islands, Finland, Greenland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, and Åland Islands (including the Sami region). The Nordic region includes all youth living in the Nordics. The Nordic countries have a lot in common with regards to culture, history, welfare, values, and economic systems, and languages. The Nordics also share common values such as democracy, trust, peace, sustainability, and equality, which provide a strong basis for equal co-operation across borders.

The Nordic countries already cooperate closely, and the Nordic Youth Councils work with the overall goal that all Nordic children and youth should have the opportunity to be able to impact the society we live in. We, the children and youth in the Nordic countries, share a common vision of making the Nordic Region the world's most integrated region.

In this vision, we focus on issues that we jointly consider important to ensure a future where young people thrive and are more involved in the development of society. Cooperation between the Nordic countries has to be strengthened in areas that involve children and young people, so young people gain more opportunities to learn more about each other and where volunteer associations play a key role in the development of sustainable democracies in the future.

Democracy

Young people in the Nordic countries live in democracies and societies that, to a large extent, are characterized by a strong sense of community in organizational life, which also extends to young people across countries. Still, not all youth have had the opportunity to engage in civil society through organizations, in school or by being included in public decision-making processes, which is a problem because engagement in these activities educate people in a democratic mindset. Every generation must be trained to think and act democratically.

Therefore, our vision is that:

- all young people should have the sufficient knowledge, support, and opportunities to be involved in youth organizations and young people should have access to and be included in, public decision-making processes. This for us to influence the development of society and feel ownership of a thriving democracy.
- the right to vote and be elected for 16-year-olds should be introduced and access to voting in elections in general needs to be made easier, so that young people can influence the democratic systems on all levels. Strengthening school mock elections can be a way of ensuring that young people are introduced elections and thus how the democratic system works.
- it is important to strengthen spaces for civil society (e.g., through partnerships) and avoid shrinking spaces both in the Nordics and abroad to safeguard the right for democratic youth organizations to influence society.
- ensuring trustworthy and transparent information is essential to safeguard the democratic dialogue, especially in terms of news, social media, and algorithms.
- all young people can engage in democratic dialogue offline and online without fearing or experiencing hate speech, smear campaign or the like.



- it is important to strengthen global youth involvement to ensure that young people are represented in, and can influence, international forums like the UN and Nordic forums like the Nordic Council of Ministers and NORDBUK, e.g., by encouraging the creation of youth delegate programs both in the Nordics and in the rest of the world.

Youth engagement in civil society

Youth organizations are important for democracy in the Nordic countries. Therefore, it is important that they have the right framework to function well. This requires opportunities for public funding, easy access to public buildings, and administrative support, as well as governments who ensure meaningful ways for how young people and youth organizations can participate in the development of society both on a local, national, and global level.

Therefore, our vision is that:

- all national youth councils are independent and have sufficient funding so that they can fulfill their role and obligations towards young people and society.
- there must be a focus on making it easier, more attractive, and relevant to volunteer in youth organizations or to establish new democratic youth organizations, e.g., by removing barriers to ensure easier access to fundamental structures like boards and bank accounts.
- children's and youth organizations must have easier access to public buildings throughout the year.
- youth participation in civil society should be respected and that participation should be made easier and more accessible, e.g., by ensuring that schools, workplaces, and governmental bodies are required to accommodate participation.

2

A Nordic region without borders

The Nordic Region is one of the world's most integrated regions, but there is still great potential to further improve conditions for citizens. Freedom of movement, both physically and digitally, is one of the cornerstones of Nordic cooperation and the Nordic Youth Councils support initiatives that will make it easier for young people to have access to cultural content from all over the Nordic region and to be able to move to another Nordic country to volunteer, study, work or live. To ensure the strengthening of cooperation between youth organizations in the Nordic Region, more funding opportunities are needed. There is a lack of better opportunities for operating grants and for the establishment of new networks and projects.

Therefore, our vision is that:

- it is important to break down prejudices and fight discrimination, increase mutual knowledge, and create strong ties between children and young people in the Nordic region through cultural exchanges, partnerships, and access to knowledge on Nordic intercultural understanding.
- mobility across the Nordic region must be increased to make it easier to volunteer, live, study, travel, and work in other Nordic countries.
- young people can learn and use their own language as it's an important prerequisite to be able to form their identity.
- geo-blocking between the Nordic countries' public-services must be removed so that young people can watch content owned by the public-services from all over the Nordic region.



- the framework for Nordic cooperation between youth organizations must be improved, among other things by ensuring funding for better opportunities for grants for the establishment of new networks, and activities.
- people can speak their own languages in official Nordic cooperation (e.g., by ensuring interpreters upon request and by necessity), thus ensuring that everyone have equal footing in the formal cooperation.

A good life for young people

A good life for young people requires quality education, respect for young people's rights, and hope for the future. For this to happen, young people need to be able to believe in a better future in which we influence our current life and society more broadly speaking. In addition, we see sudden political agendas like climate and education issues that will affect especially children and young people as they have great consequences for our future life well-being.

To give an example, we see that the climate crisis comes with dire consequences. Therefore, it is especially important to be able to influence and be heard by decision makers when we see young people being in the front of the call for climate action, green transition, and sustainability. Moreover, studies show a decrease in many children and young people's well-being, which is also of crucial importance for young people's social and professional development, as well as their life opportunities. Furthermore, it's important to ensure good living conditions and meaningful youth participation regardless of whether young people live in urban or rural areas.

Therefore, a solid foundation must be created to make sure that young people will have a good life in which they can both thrive and influence the development of society in the areas that are meaningful to them.

Therefore, our vision is that:

- young people must have access to meaningful and engaging communities, where they can feel accepted for who they are, no matter their physical or mental conditions.
- young people in rural areas should have access to education, youth engagement and organizational life, transport opportunities, cultural life, and other things that can ensure that young people can live a meaningful life in rural areas.
- good education, early intervention, and accessible support is important for the mental health of young people.
- all young people should be guaranteed the freedom of expression.
- national governments and private actors who must secure a sustainable future, e.g., by ensuring that international agreements are kept and by ensuring a green transition.