

Climate, Youth and Gender

Inclusion strategies for Nordic
youth movements



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pub.nordregio.org/r-2024-19-climate-youth-and-gender

Foreword

The Nordic Council of Ministers has adopted a vision that the Nordic region will be the most sustainable and integrated region in the world by 2030. Based on that vision, Sustainable Living in the Nordics was initiated in 2021, a cross-sectoral programme running through 2024 including six projects. The overall aim is to develop tools and guidelines that can make it easier to live in a climate-friendly way in the Nordic Region – and to make sustainable choices the new norm.

Among the six projects, one has focused on gender aspects of lifestyles, consumption and commitment, related to sustainable development. A first report from the project was published in September 2022, *Climate, Gender and Consumption*. A research overview that summarized the current state of international research in seven different areas: Food; Housing and energy; Clothing and consumer goods; Transport; Work and time use; Culture and tourism; and Activism and influence.

The first report showed that people's attitudes towards climate change and consumption behaviors are influenced by norms and ideals that relate to either care giving or technology, and that these norms are associated with either femininity or masculinity, which in turn impacts a person's climate engagement. Among other things, the report shows that a caring ideal can be an important key to accelerate the green transition.

The report at hand is a more in-depth study of young people's commitment to sustainable development, examined through gender and intersectional analysis. The patterns in young people's involvement can be understood as a matter of gender, but education level and geography (urban-rural, migration background etc.) are also relevant factors. Through interviews and a survey, the study examines how youth organisations for sustainability can relate and respond to the challenges of inclusion and diversity. The report concludes with a discussion and seven key takeaways that can be useful for organisations that want to tackle these challenges.

The study has been produced in collaboration between Nordregio and Nordic Information on Gender (NIKK), for the Youth project within the Sustainable Living Programme. NIKK is a knowledge centre under the Nordic Council of Ministers for Gender Equality and LGBTI, located at the Swedish Secretariat for Gender Research at the University of Gothenburg. The report has been written by Jimmy Sand, an analyst at the Swedish Secretariat for Gender Research.

Introduction

Young people are vital agents for a just green transition, but participation varies across social identities and backgrounds. Men and boys tend to be less interested in both sustainability and gender equality. How can organisations strengthen the conscious and committed, while also bringing underrepresented voices to the table? This report analyses experiences of young people in Nordic nonprofit organisations from a gender and climate perspective. It identifies clear patterns and obstacles and considers key approaches to enabling more inclusive youth movements.

Studies have shown that young people tend to worry about climate change to a greater degree than adults and are often more committed to sustainable development (Hickman et al., 2021). However, there seem to be differences in involvement between girls and boys that roughly reflect the patterns between women and men (e.g. Dzialo, 2017; Haugestad et al., 2021). Gender is not a simple explanatory factor, as there are differences within women as a group and men as a group that may be due to other social factors such as education, income, place of residence (urban/rural), race or ethnicity and so on. Gender is formed in a complex and sometimes contradictory process where those different categories interact to create differences in identity, living conditions and influence (Kaijser & Kronsell, 2014).

A recent research overview of gender perspectives on sustainable lifestyles has pointed to a connection between orientation towards caring values and behaviours on the one hand and commitment to reduced environmental and climate impact on the other. While caring is coded as feminine and, through socialisation, tends to characterise girls and women to a greater degree than boys and men, this association can be seen in individuals regardless of their sex. While traditional forms of masculinity can be considered an obstacle to sustainable lifestyles and a green transition, with the preference in food (meat) and means of transport (fossil-powered motoring) being prime examples, more care-oriented boys and men also tend to be more inclined to sustainable lifestyles than other boys and men (Sand, 2022; cf. Hultman & Pulé, 2018).

In the aforementioned research overview (Sand, 2022), studies are lacking overall on gender aspects of young people's engagement in the field of sustainable development. The overview raises several relevant questions – related to patterns of engagement in the climate and sustainability field among young people – where gender is a relevant aspect alongside factors including regionality (urban/rural), class background, ethnic background and migration background. In connection with that, it is also of interest how environmental organisations for young people relate to issues of gender, equality and inclusion. It is against that background that the present report has been written. In the following section, the mission and the working method are briefly described.

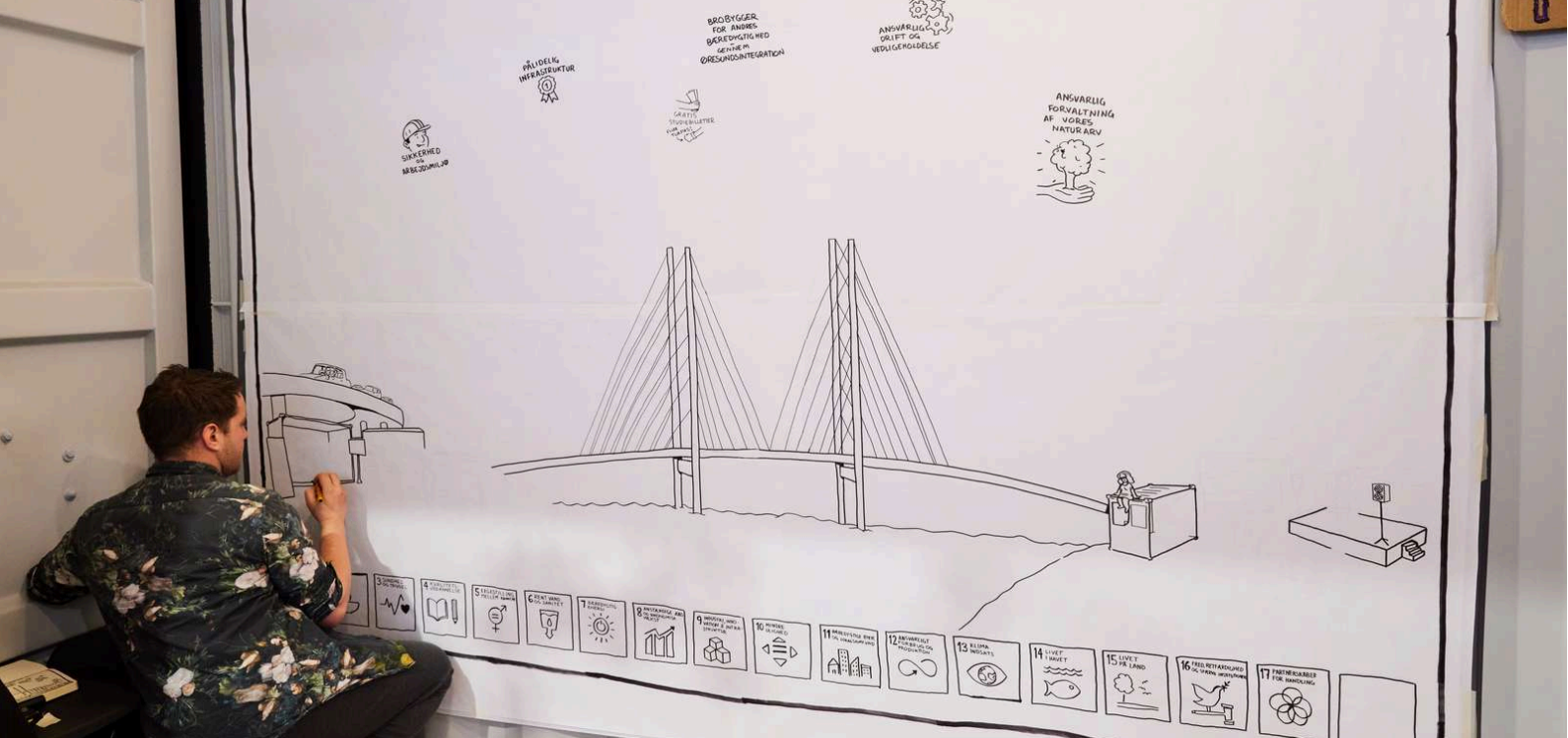


Photo: Andreas Omvik / Norden.org

Aim and research method

Based on the vision of the Nordic Council of Ministers that the Nordic Region will be the most sustainable and integrated in the world by 2030, a cross-sectoral **programme for sustainable living** is being implemented in 2021-2024.^[1] That includes projects on sustainable cultural events, increased use of the Nordic Swan ecolabel, education for sustainable living, sustainable food systems, gender aspects of green transition and young people's perspectives. The latter two are conducted by Nordic Information on Gender (NIKK) and Nordregio respectively. In the course of the projects, synergies were identified, leading to the study whose results are presented in this report.

The mission was to identify and discuss patterns in young people's engagement in the field of sustainable development, regarding gender and other categories, as well as to provide examples of how environmental organisations for young people relate to those patterns when it comes to inclusion and campaigning. For that purpose, various sources of empirical material were used.

To investigate how various organisations have chosen to work on gender, equality and diversity within their organisation or in their outward-facing activities, a search was done for policy documents and reports, which through close reading formed a knowledge base for the study. **Interviews** were conducted with representatives of

1. See the programme's website for more information:
<https://nordregio.org/sustainable-living/>

six organisations in the five Nordic countries, namely Frej (Denmark),^[2] the Finnish Agenda 2030 Youth Group (Finland),^[3] the Icelandic Young Environmentalist Association (Iceland),^[4] Spire (Norway),^[5] Future Minds (Sweden)^[6] and ReGeneration 2030^[7] (based in Åland, with members in the Nordic and Baltic countries). The organisations are intentionally of different types, namely grassroots organisations with numerous members, networks whose members are also active in other organisations, idea-based and nonprofit enterprises, as well as committee-like groups initiated and recruited by the government. The interviewees also included individuals with experience of activism in the scope of Fridays for Future and similar movements.

Furthermore, a **workshop/focus group** was held on 13 August 2023 in Mariehamn, Åland during ReGeneration Week, the biggest annual youth sustainability event in the Nordic and Baltic Sea region, organised by ReGeneration 2030 Network. The author of this report also participated as an observer in the Nordic youth conference titled "Youth Empowerment in Climate Action: Ensuring Gender Equality and a Fair Transition in the Triple Planetary Crisis", which was held by the National Council of Swedish Youth (LSU), together with UN Women and the Nordic Council of Ministers, in Copenhagen, Denmark, on 27 October 2023. Of particular interest was a workshop on the topic of "Just and Inclusive Transition".

Finally, based on the conclusions of the aforementioned focus group, a **survey** was sent out to board members of national youth councils in the Nordic countries (the Danish Youth Council, DUF,^[8] the Finnish National Youth Council, Alliansi,^[9] the National Youth Council of Iceland, LUF,^[10] the Norwegian Children and Youth Council, LNU^[11] and the National Council of Swedish Youth, LSU^[12]), as well as the youth councils' member organisations. When the survey closed on 12 April 2024, a total of 218 responses had been received, with fairly even representation from among the five Nordic countries.

The following section outlines the background to the issue of gender patterns in young people's involvement in sustainability and climate issues, with references to research and other literature.

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2. <https://www.taenk-frej.dk/>
 3. <https://kestavakehitys.fi/en/agenda2030-youth-group>
 4. <https://www.umhverfissinnar.is/>
 5. <https://www.spireorg.no/>
 6. <https://futuremindssweden.se/>
 7. <https://www.regeneration2030.org/>
 8. <https://duf.dk/>
 9. <https://nuorisola.fi/>
 10. <https://luf.is/>
 11. <https://www.lnu.no/>
 12. <https://lsu.se/>



Photo: Tania Malrechauffe / Unsplash.com

Background – youth movement for a sustainable future

When the Swedish, then year-nine pupil Greta Thunberg began her sit-in protests at the entrance to the Swedish Parliament on Friday 20 August 2018, after a summer marked by a heat wave and many forest fires, it marked the beginning of one of the largest and most talked about youth movements in history: Fridays for Future. Demanding that governments live up to their commitment under the Paris Agreement to reduce emissions to limit global warming (UN, 2015), the movement quickly grew and came to organise school strikes around the world. Greta Thunberg herself was invited to both the World Economic Forum in Davos and the UN General Assembly in New York. Fridays for Future received support from thousands of scientists who believed that their demands were legitimate and in line with the best available climate research (Warren, 2019). Given the large turnout among young people, Generation Z (born approx. 1997-2012) soon began to be referred to as "Generation Greta", young people more concerned about climate change than any previous generation and more eager to do something about it (cf. Tyson et al., 2021).

A comprehensive global survey of 10,000 children and young people aged 16-25 showed that a majority were extremely (59%) or at least moderately (84%) concerned about climate change. Furthermore, in relation to governments' taking responsibility for the issue, respondents reported a greater feeling of betrayal than

of reassurance (Hickman et al., 2021). However, it is important not to form an overly simplistic picture of young people's attitudes and behaviours in relation to climate change. There are those who let their anxiety express itself in active engagement for change. Others are anxious but combine that with passivity based on a sense of powerlessness, while still others are characterised by different types or degrees of denial. In fact, studies have shown that the same individual can experience climate change distress, while still expressing climate change denialism (Veijonaho et al., 2024).

Although there are studies that have observed gender patterns in people's attitudes and behaviours in relation to the environment or the climate (see e.g. Dzialo, 2017; Arora-Jonsson & Ågren, 2019; Krange et al., 2019, 2021; Vowles & Hultman, 2022), it is less common for studies of young people to make gender analyses of the findings. Research has pointed to **a connection between adherence to traditional masculine ideals and a lower degree of commitment, or even opposition, to the concept of climate-neutral ways of living or "sustainable lifestyles"**. On the other hand, there seems to be a connection with traditionally feminine ideals, such as a focus on caring attitudes and behaviour, and a greater inclination to adapt one's lifestyle to climate neutrality (Sand, 2022). Studies in other areas, such as on gender-based educational and career choices (e.g. Chavatzia, 2017; Jansson & Sand, 2021), have shown that norms associating caring values with femininity and an interest in technology with masculinity, for example, are consolidated at relatively young ages in order to shape individuals into women and men respectively. With all that in mind, there is a need for more studies on behaviours and attitudes towards sustainability at the intersection of age and gender, as well as studies on how youth organisations address norms on gender and sustainability.

When the Swedish School Inspectorate, a government agency, investigated how schools in Sweden perform Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), interviews with teachers, headteachers and pupils revealed there to be a clear gendered pattern in pupils' interest in the issues (Gabrielsson, 2023). Although the individual differences between pupils are described as being more marked than between girls and boys as groups, the interviewees expressed the opinion that girls are generally more engaged in issues related to sustainable development, have more developed reasoning and are more knowledgeable than boys in general. A common explanation voiced is that girls at the age in question (approx. 13-15 years) are generally more mature than boys. Another explanation given is that boys tend to engage more readily in discussions where they can form an opinion without extensive prior knowledge (Gabrielsson, 2023). A third explanation is that the interests and values of certain groups of pupils can be difficult to reconcile with a sustainable lifestyle. For example, teachers perceive that some pupils, especially boys, have strong preferences for meat and a negative view of vegetarian food. It has also been shown that **there are pupils who are not only uninterested in sustainable development, but also strongly opposed to measures for sustainable**

development or to the environmental movement and that those pupils are mostly boys (Gabrielsson, 2023). One of the recommendations in the report is to include a greater awareness of norms associated with sustainable development within ESD, to work on gender patterns in schools and to investigate whether gender roles can act as a limiting factor in terms of interest and involvement in issues related to sustainable development (Gabrielsson, 2023). In order to pursue a transformative, sustainable education that, using Stephen Sterling's terminology, does not *sustain unsustainability* by uncritically reproducing norms, such efforts can be absolutely crucial (cf. Jónsson et al., 2021; Sterling, 2001).

In the next section, the results of the various study elements—the focus group, the interviews, and the survey—are presented and discussed according to three dimensions: patterns of engagement in nonprofit organisations, learnings from organisations for sustainability, and approaches to inclusion.



Photo: Robert Bednarczyk / Norden.org

Gender and youth engagement in sustainable development

Patterns of engagement in nonprofit organisations

Focus group learnings

On 13 August 2023, a workshop was held with the involvement of 21 young participants (four of whom identified themselves as male) during ReGeneration Week in Mariehamn, Åland, to discuss issues of inclusion in youth organisations that focus on climate change. The participants came from ten different countries, namely Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Sweden. A large majority identified themselves as belonging to their country's majority culture (two identified themselves as belonging to a minority culture and one as foreign-born). While there was a relatively even spread across places of upbringing (from rural areas to capital areas), a relatively small proportion (5) had parents with an academic background and most (16) identified their parents as working class.

The discussion in the focus group revolved around three main questions: 1) The participants' own motives for getting involved in the climate movement, 2) Why

others with a similar background do not get involved and 3) What steps the movement can take to recruit and include people from groups that are not already committed. There was consensus in the group that diversity is a prerequisite for solving the challenge of climate change, for example through wider representation in teams. Part of the problem lies in the fact that many people do not have their voices heard; that mainly concerns categories other than gender, although there is also underrepresentation of men, which is deeply rooted in masculinity.



The traditional masculinity culture is a big challenge globally and works against empathy and caring values. It is anti-emotion and anti-environment and all about sustaining an unsustainable lifestyle, using big petrol-driven cars, eating meat etc. We need to show alternatives for men and encourage emotions!

While the participants' own motives for getting involved could be anything from the nature of their upbringing (mindful parents, closeness to nature etc.), university studies or new like-minded acquaintances through to growing anger towards "the system" (injustice, lack of equality, climate change) and a desire to change society (frustration/hope), various types of barriers were also addressed. To a large extent, involvement is related to social class and regionality. Educational background plays an important role, but so too does having the financial means to spend the time required to be involved in a movement. (At the same time, it was emphasised that there are many privileged students who are not prepared to change their lifestyle.)

Cultural exchange and meeting people with different experiences and ideas can inspire change. That is less easy to achieve in rural areas or in smaller towns. Some argued that while farmers may be experiencing the consequences of climate change, they tend to complain about policymakers failing to see their problems and needs, rather than get involved in the climate movement themselves.

Survey results

The issues raised in the focus group were further investigated through a survey in spring 2024, with 218 respondents from the five Nordic countries, all of whom were involved in various youth organisations.^[13] In terms of age, the largest group of respondents was in the 18-25 age range (69%), followed by 26-35 years (24%) and under 18 years (6%).^[14] There was a relatively even gender distribution among the

13. Denmark n=49, Finland n=35, Iceland n=17, Norway n=53, Sweden n=62, other n=2.

14. The UN definition of young people is 15-24 years, while for statistical purposes it is common to define young adults as those aged between 18 and 34. In 2024, people belonging to Generation Z are approximately 12-27 years old (cf. Tyson et al., 2021).

respondents, with 49% identifying as female, 44% as male, 6% as non-binary and 1% preferring not to say.

Likewise, there was a relatively even distribution of **places of upbringing** among the respondents; 23% had grown up in a rural area, 28% in a small town (below 15,000 inhabitants), 29% in a relatively large town (over 15,000 inhabitants) and 19% in a capital area. By contrast, a large majority (79%) identified themselves as belonging to their country's majority culture, a significantly smaller proportion (15%) as belonging to a minority culture and even fewer (6%) as foreign-born. Interestingly, the distribution between those three categories was very similar to that of the focus group. It is striking that the proportion of foreign-born people in particular is far below the average for the population in the Nordic countries.^[15]

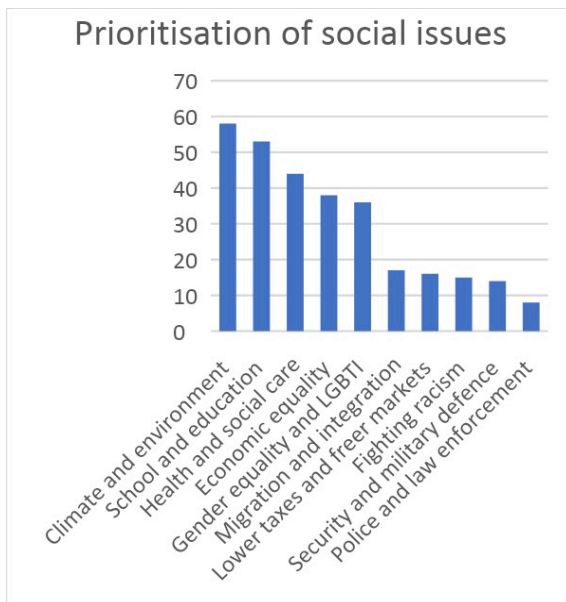
While there was very even distribution among the respondents between those whose parents had an academic **educational background** (49%) and those whose parents were identified as working class (51%), the respondents themselves can very much be described as highly educated (82% were attending or had attended an academic education, while 18% were attending or had attended a vocational secondary school). Among those in higher education, the largest proportion were studying social sciences and humanities (43%), followed by science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM, 20%) and business, economics and law (19%).^[16] In that sense, the respondents are not representative of the population of the Nordic countries, but that is not surprising. Those findings are consistent with previous studies, which have indicated that educational level is statistically an explanatory factor behind involvement in sustainability issues (Sand, 2022). The large proportion of respondents from the field of social sciences is something that is also highlighted in the interviews (see the following section). **There seem to be norms and patterns around educational choices that need to be examined more closely – related to gender and other categories**, as well as to attitudes and commitment to sustainability issues – given that a higher proportion of women than men participate in higher education in general, but men account for the largest proportion within STEM subjects in absolute terms (within the social sciences the gender distribution is relatively even, while more women than men study humanities) (Jansson & Sand, 2021). It could be that norms and perceptions associated with social sciences correlate with an interest in and commitment to sustainability issues among both men and women to a greater extent than norms and perceptions associated with STEM.

When the respondents were asked to choose three out of ten societal issues that were most important to them, the ranking was as follows:

15. The latest data for the Nordic countries on the proportion of foreign-born individuals is 14% in Denmark, 8% in Finland, 20% in Iceland, 17% in Norway and 20% in Sweden. See *State of the Nordic Region 2024* from Nordregio. <https://nordregio.org/publications/state-of-the-nordic-region-2024/>

16. Other fields were medicine, psychology and nursing (8%), teacher training (5%) and arts and crafts (5%).

1. Climate and environment (58%)
2. School and education (53%)
3. Healthcare and social care (44%)
4. Economic equality (38%)
5. Gender equality and LGBTI (36%)
6. Migration and integration (17%)
7. Lower taxes and freer markets (16%)
8. Fighting racism (15%)
9. Security and military defence (14%)
10. Police and law enforcement (8%)



Broken down by gender, 63% of female respondents ranked climate and the environment among their top three issues, compared to 54% of males and 43% of those who identified themselves as non-binary. That can be compared with figures from Sweden. In its generational report, the *Youth Barometer* presented sex-disaggregated results based on its survey question about which social issues young people (n=16,295, age 15-24 years) prioritised. While environmental and climate issues were considered the second most important issue overall, after healthcare and social care, the **difference between female and male respondents** was among the largest (both environmental and climate issues and healthcare and social care at 19%, after gender equality at 40%, which females accorded a higher priority to and energy policy at 21%, which males accorded a higher priority to) (Hoffman & Åkerström, 2023).

It is possible that the 218 results from this report's survey mainly say something about who responds to such a survey, but they may also reflect the representation

of different groups in society among those involved in the organisations. It should be emphasised that the organisations in the survey were not limited solely to environmental organisations, but also included sports, outdoor, cultural and student associations, organisations for the promotion of women's, LGBTI and disability rights, as well as political and religious youth associations and more. It would undeniably be interesting to follow up the findings of this survey with more thorough studies of young people's involvement in such nonprofit organisations in terms of categories such as gender, class, migration background and cultural affiliation.

The respondents' motives for getting involved in their organisation and staying involved differ. For some respondents, the reason for staying involved differed from what got them involved in the first place. For some, getting involved happened by chance and they continued on that path because it felt meaningful or stimulating, while others joined – some at a very young age – because their parents, older siblings or friends were involved.

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It was somewhat of a spontaneous decision. I was invited to a general meeting to fill a spot. During the voting for new board members, the only person to run for treasurer was not voted in, so the position was not filled. After a lot of thought, I decided "why not" and went up and gave an improvised speech. In no way do I regret my decision and I think it's one of the best things that has happened to me.

There are those who became involved out of concern about climate change or because of injustice and discrimination that they had either suffered themselves or seen in society, with the desire to contribute to social or political change being the motive for starting out on that path.

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Because I come from a rural area and from a family of farmers and factory workers, I have always known that the only way you can make a change is to organise and do it yourself. Our local village suffered cuts in finances when I was young and at one point my local school was shut down. Seeing my parents engage in the battle to keep the school made me realise the importance of organising and working politically to change society. Growing up in a working-class home, alongside many immigrant friends, also made me aware of how unfair the world truly is, even in one of the richest countries in the world ... In recent years, I have also discovered that I am of forest Finn descent and this heritage has fuelled me to keep fighting for equal rights and against environmental change.

Others saw the commitment as a way to gain experience and learn new skills, a way to put their education into practice or to make contacts and acquire credentials for their CV. In some cases, involvement is for reasons of personal development, making new friends or having the opportunity to practice music, sports or other interests, as well as a way to contribute to making other people's lives better and more meaningful.

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There were of course multiple reasons for joining. One of the main ones was the craving for a feeling of doing SOMETHING in the "service" of people. I also wanted to educate myself by joining my organisation: by being involved weekly in topics that I wanted to educate myself in, I would surely have growth in understanding.

Learnings from organisations working on sustainability

In parallel with the focus group and the survey, six interviews were conducted with representatives of youth-oriented organisations active in the green transition across the Nordic region. Unlike long-established, nature-oriented organisations

such as the scout movement or associations for nature conservation these were formed after the turn of the millennium, most of them during the last decade. They all differ in various respects, both in terms of type of organisation and way of working, ranging from large membership organisations to networks, committees and nonprofit enterprises. Hopefully, those differences can help to clarify different ways of tackling challenges related to gender and engagement. The findings of those interviews are presented below. First a description is given of the structure, activities and outcomes of their work, followed by their approaches to inclusion and recruitment of volunteers or members in a separate chapter.

Frej (DK)

Frej (*Tænk tanken Frej*), is a nonprofit association that was established in 2016 with the aim of helping to make Denmark a more ecologically sustainable food nation by engaging young people ("generation sustainability") in dialogue with food producers. Frej has its roots in a student association at the University of Copenhagen, which organised debates on food policy topics across various fields of study and fought to replace the silo thinking of individual studies with broader collaboration. Today, Frej consists of more than 40 volunteers and a secretariat of 18 employees, a board of directors, an advisory board and a partnership network consisting of more than 60 partners for sustainable action. Among those partners are large companies, smaller businesses and producer organisations, as well as nonprofit organisations devoted to climate, environmental and animal welfare issues.

A large part of the organisation's work involves engaging young people. The employees at the secretariat provide a framework for those concerned to develop and run various projects. That may involve organising events such as panel debates and workshops, participating in democracy festivals (*folkemøde*), running a podcast or producing other awareness-raising materials in the form of videos or texts for the organisation's website (*Vidensunivers*). The organisation is also strongly engaged in social media, especially Instagram. Its marketing to attract more young people is aimed at people who are thought likely to take an interest, for example those who have just moved to a bigger city or have just started their university studies. Most of the volunteers are women, well-educated and city dwellers; those studying natural sciences or economics, for example, are a minority. It has been a deliberate priority to target the young "generation sustainability", rather than trying to convince those who do not already have an interest.



The best ambassadors are the volunteers themselves; peer-to-peer communication is the most effective. Volunteers are passionate and that is the most persuasive.

One important activity that Frej organises is that of networking meetings with stakeholders. Companies and associations in the food sector meet with volunteers to discuss sustainability issues. The meetings take place every Monday evening and are of great value to stakeholders as they allow them to hear the opinions of young people. Moreover, young people gain access to potential future employers. It has proven to be a forum where different actors in the sector can meet, even though they may otherwise be on opposite sides (as in the legal case between Danish Crown and Danish Vegetarian Association).

An example of the outcomes of such meetings is the pamphlet produced by Frej with recommendations on how the food industry can become more sustainable. An event to hand out the pamphlet was held at Christiansborg (the building in Copenhagen housing Denmark's Parliament, the Prime Minister's office and the Supreme Court), with participation of the responsible minister and separate meetings arranged with other politicians.

A challenge faced by Frej is that the farmers who are the primary food producers operate out in the countryside, while the volunteers are in cities like Copenhagen and Aarhus, which is also where the organisation's activities take place. It is not always easy to get the farmers involved and the potential influence that the organisation has is through networking. However, just as the volunteers are the best ambassadors among young people, the farmers know which other farmers might be interested.

The Finnish Agenda 2030 Youth Group (FI)

The Agenda 2030 youth group was launched in 2017 by Finland's National Commission for Sustainable Development under the leadership of the Prime Minister. The purpose of the initiative is to increase youth participation in the national planning and implementation of Agenda 2030, as well as to offer a platform for young people who are interested in sustainable development.

Young people aged 15-28 can apply to the group. The mandate lasts two years. The youth group is composed of 20 people and the aim is for members to be from different backgrounds and from all over Finland in order to achieve broad geographical representation. A criterion for participation is to have a network by already being active in other organisations. The application process is run by the Finnish National Youth Council, Allianssi. The members have two main tasks, namely 1) acting as advocates for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) in their own regions, organisations or workplaces and 2) participating in national

planning and implementation of the SDGs. The members receive invitations to various stakeholder meetings in the ministries and other organisations to participate in workshops, discussions and other events on sustainable development. Furthermore, the youth group has a small budget, enabling it to organise activities such as study visits and workshops.

Regarding geographical spread among the participants, it has proven easier to recruit from Helsinki, Turku and southern Finland. Marketing of the recruitment of new members is mainly performed through the communication channels of Allianssi and the various social media channels of the group and its members. Most members are women and are often university students, typically majoring in the social sciences; fewer are studying technical subjects and few are in vocational education. Some have a background in teacher training and nursing training, but there are few if any in upper secondary and vocational education. That last point has been a topic of discussion and the youth group has identified the need to promote the group to students studying in vocational schools. The group has been promoted to vocational schools and universities of applied sciences to some extent, but it is acknowledged that more needs to be done.

Environmental policy and international relations are areas of interest that have engaged some participants. Several members are interested in climate and global justice. Besides getting the voices of young people heard, for some members being a member of the group has turned out to be beneficial when searching for internships and work. Indeed, active participation in the group provides valuable experience, allowing individuals to expand their skill set and knowledge of sustainable development. **For those young people who must earn a living during their studies, it can be more challenging to find time to perform volunteer work.** Increasingly inflexible arrangements requiring students to complete their studies faster can also hinder students from becoming involved in mechanisms and activities that promote youth participation.

The Icelandic Young Environmentalist Association (IS)

The Icelandic Young Environmentalist Association (*Ungir umhverfissinnar*) is a non-governmental organisation founded in 2013 as a forum for young people in Iceland to influence the way society interacts with nature. As of April 2024, the association has over 1,500 members, of whom around 50 are particularly active. There is a central board composed of eight people on which the four thematic committees for the organisation's work are represented: education and awareness raising, climate, nature conservation and the circular economy.

The organisation clearly states that natural science findings on the environment and climate form the basis for the policies it pursues. However, it also highlights experiences of injustice, i.e. that climate change affects different groups in society differently due to social structures. In addition, those who get involved may have a sense of guilt or responsibility for the issues concerned. Internally, social dimensions

are often discussed, as they form the basis for participants' commitment, but it is not always easy to reach out to the public on those grounds. The media focus is primarily on the need to reduce emissions, even though there is awareness in the organisation of both the negative impact and social benefits for various groups in relation to climate policy. **There is now high awareness of the climate issue in the population, but a lesser inclination for behavioural changes.** In the public debate there is much focus on the economy, such as in relation to inflation and energy issues. The latter topic could be linked up with the climate, but that is rarely done and even then it is mainly discussed in relation to technology.

Women are more active than men in the organisation and there are a small number of non-binary people. There is a mix of different educational backgrounds, including both natural scientists and social scientists, with that background often determining the nature of the participants' engagement. For example, natural scientists are often responsible for content, while social scientists and people with a creative focus are responsible for design. Many have come from an interdisciplinary environmental programme at the University of Iceland.

Alongside the gender patterns in engagement, the organisation also perceives regional challenges in relation to membership recruitment.

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We see a gap between urban and rural areas. It has become more difficult in general to get people involved and it is especially difficult in rural areas. Online meetings are one possible approach, but it is a difficult balance as it is not always easy to run projects that way. During the pandemic, more people could be reached in the countryside and also abroad. We managed to increase the number of members thanks to online meetings, but the number of people active in running projects did not increase.

In 2023, the organisation adopted a new policy, both for internal work and the thematic areas. In the process of developing that policy, larger meetings were organised in four parts of Iceland the capital area, north, south and east linked to each topic and with thorough discussion of how the organisation should work on inclusion and diversity. Under the new policy, the organisation commits itself to creating a safe place for everyone to express their opinion in line with the policy against discrimination based on various grounds. It is up to the organisation's confidants and the board to address any issues should they arise. If deemed necessary, the confidants may seek professional advice or support outside the association. The organisation also has a strategy to develop collaboration with

experts, teachers and curriculum coordinators, with a focus on the primary and secondary level in the school system.

Spire (NO)

Spire was formed in 2004 as a youth organisation for the Development Fund (*Utvecklingsfondet*), a Norwegian NGO active in the field of development aid in the last 40 years. A group of committed young people came together with the aim of creating a youth organisation focused on the connection between the environment and development. Spire currently has over 1,300 members, mainly aged between 18 and 30. There is a central board consisting of nine people on which four thematic committees are represented: climate and environment, food security, sustainable urban development and international trade.

Focusing on those four topics, the organisation's goal is to change the social structures that maintain unfair distribution and mismanagement of rights and resources, as poverty can be both a cause of and a result of environmental degradation. Spire works on information campaigns and political influence to create change together with young people in the Global South. Most of the activity revolves around creating greater awareness and increased knowledge among people in Norway about North/South issues, with special attention to how Norwegian policies are affecting the whole world.

Of particular interest to this study is the campaign that Spire developed and worked on in 2017-2018 about how Norway can become a clear and strong voice on the connection between climate and gender equality. The idea was raised during a collaboration with partners in Malawi, where for some time work had been carried out on gender aspects of climate change, for example concerning the vulnerability of women and girls, as well as efforts for the empowerment of women and girls to change the situation. The proposal was made to conduct a campaign to learn more about the issues and to carry out political influence work in Norway. Initially, the proposal met with some resistance.

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When we worked on the campaign, some were downright negative, afraid that it would take focus away from “more central” issues (both in environmental and women’s organisations). Others thought it was important but that it was an issue for someone else, while still others thought it was exciting with a new way of looking at it, since they hadn’t thought of it that way (traditional focus on rich/poor, North/South).

The campaign was carried out, with its activities including an exhibition illustrated by Jenny Jordahl that told the stories of three Malawian women and their climate struggle in their local communities. It was shown at Youngstorget, a square in central Oslo where political demonstrations are often held, as well as in front of Parliament. A policy brief was drawn up regarding the contradictory nature of Norway's **self-image as a model for gender equality policy and, at the same time, a major oil exporter that thereby contributes to climate change, which particularly affects women and girls** in the Global South. Spire contacted other organisations, including those within the women's and environmental movements, with the aim of creating a petition to influence Norwegian government policy. Eighteen organisations backed the petition, which was handed to the environment minister and the minister of development in the then conservative government. In addition, gender and climate were made a slogan on International Women's Day, 8 March 2018, with the demonstrations attracting many new participants, including environmental organisations.

When Spire started its campaign, the links between gender and climate were not an issue in the public debate, but that is no longer the case. While specific measures may still be somewhat lacking, the campaign on gender and climate is among those that Spire has received the most requests for and awareness has been raised of the links between the two.

Many of the people active in Spire are young women in their twenties studying social sciences, but there are some differences with respect to the various topics: it is mostly women who are engaged in the climate field, while the picture is more mixed in urban development. On the topic of food, there are not only social scientists, but also some participants who are more practically oriented. The patterns depend to some extent on the issues concerned. Within development aid, there is also a greater mix of activists from different countries compared to in purely environmental organisations.

Future Minds (SE)

Future Minds has been run since 2019 as a nonprofit public association, with its origin in the "We Change" project, which started out at Fryshuset in Stockholm in 2011 as a platform where schools, authorities, municipalities, companies and other social actors could meet young people to discuss sustainable development. One factor behind its establishment was growing climate anxiety among young people and the concept that a good way to respond to that could be to give teachers support and tools for their work with young people, especially in secondary schools. Today, Future Minds has developed into a national collaboration scheme for 18 upper secondary schools throughout Sweden. The association provides interactive educational materials about sustainable development and then hosts hackathons together with students to develop innovative solutions to local sustainability challenges. One aim is to democratise knowledge about sustainable development and, above all, to empower young people to create solutions and be the change.

The secondary schools that are part of the collaboration are spread from Malmö in the south to Piteå in the north, with even distribution between municipal schools and independent schools, as well as between larger and smaller schools. However, theoretical university preparatory programmes are over-represented compared to practical, vocational programmes. Natural and social science programmes dominate, but there is growing interest among schools with economy programmes focusing on entrepreneurship and also among schools with technical programmes to some extent. Practical programmes, in fields such as childcare or construction, are less represented, with electricity and energy forming an exception to a minor extent (perhaps thanks to the focus of the public debate on green jobs). Sometimes the interest differs depending on how much teacher training programmes were focused on sustainable development, especially earlier, because often the whole collaboration is initiated by teachers getting in touch, even if it is the headteachers who ultimately decide.

Considering the gendered patterns of involvement in sustainability issues, which is also noticeable among those who work with Future Minds, various methods are used to increase interest among not only women and girls. For example, the hackathons that are organised in participating schools seem to attract more boys and young men.

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The polarisation in society is reflected in the young. The ability to source critical views or evaluation of information is not always that developed – there is a tendency that is not so much about the substantive issues (the climate, for example) and can be described as being “tired of woke”.

Those who are committed (to sustainability) are a small clique, as well as those who are extreme in the other direction. That is visible not least in the school elections in connection with the parliamentary elections. But there is a large mass in the middle who are just trying to survive the teenage years and figure out what they want to do with their lives. How do we reach them?

The hackathons and other school activities are based on the involvement of young people, who are the ones who need to be seen and noticed. A needs inventory was made among students and teachers, focusing on what creates engagement. It pointed to a number of factors, including being able to perform real tasks for a real recipient, as opposed to school tasks for the teacher. Other aspects can be to have one’s voice heard, for example by exchanging letters with politicians and other

decision-makers. Future Minds is therefore trying to level up cooperation with schools to also include the host municipalities and local companies through a network of partnerships, so that potential future employers can provide various cases (sustainability challenges) for the students from the participating schools to work on.

ReGeneration 2030 (AX)

ReGeneration 2030 was founded in 2017 as an initiative of the Nordic Council of Ministers. As of 2020 it is an independent, youth-led organisation consisting of young people from the Nordic and Baltic countries, as well as Germany and Poland, aged approximately 15-30. It is not a membership organisation in the traditional sense, but rather a foundation registered on Åland and an open network that volunteers can join for free. The activities are led by a team consisting of a board of seven people and a secretariat of four people. Most identify as she or they. There is broad representation from different countries.

The organisation started top-down to get young people more involved in sustainability issues, with a particular focus on the 2030 Agenda and SDG 12 on sustainable production and consumption. Since then, a new strategy has been developed, as over time there has been a shift towards a more pronounced focus on system change. It also attracts more people who are committed in a different way, who perhaps see themselves more as activists demonstrating rather than working on policy issues in an organisation. There are fewer differences between different countries in this regard, although there may be experiences from different school systems and economic systems.

The main activity involves organising ReGeneration Week, a youth summit for sustainability that has been held annually in August since 2020. An important element of the summit, appreciated by all parties involved, is the intergenerational dialogue, where politicians and decision-makers are invited to engage in dialogue with young people. In addition to the summit, the secretariat has designed an online education programme for climate awareness and activism among young people. The team at the secretariat also participates in other relevant youth conferences to advocate for climate and sustainability and is engaged in maintaining and expanding the network.

As in many sustainability organisations, the trend is mainly for young women to be involved; a minority of those involved are men or non-binary. That tendency has been much discussed and is largely related to norms and structures in society at large that the organisation wants but struggles to influence.

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We can work on representation outwards, try to get even gender distribution, at least one guy on the board. If guys see it, maybe more people will think it's not so silly. But you don't want to give that space just for the sake of it – give a bigger platform than is deserved. In various movements guys tend to end up in positions of power, which may happen subconsciously. The boys do not hesitate to contribute their opinions even if they are new, while girls have a greater tendency to end up in the background – which means that boys and men, despite being a minority, can be heard a lot and have power. Maybe not so much in our organisation, but in the environmental movement in general.

The majority of those who participate in the activities are 18 years of age or older; they have completed secondary school and are continuing their education, mainly in subjects related to sustainability issues and especially within the social sciences. The organisation endeavours to cater to that. As a result, ReGeneration Week is organised before the start of the school and university semester and participants can apply for travel grants and free accommodation.

The systems perspective will characterise operations going forward to a greater extent, with prioritisation of capacity building, skills development around theory of change, climate justice etc. While there is considerable consensus with respect to gender equality, there may be differing views when it comes to other aspects of social justice, such as the Global North-South dimension (cf. Braff & Nelson, 2022).



Photo: Andreas Omvik / Norden.org

Approaches to inclusion

During the examination of patterns in young people's involvement in sustainable development – which relate to gender, as well as other interacting factors – questions were also asked about strategies and methods to disrupt the patterns in engagement, to reach out to new groups, to increase social diversity in the organisations and to work on internal hierarchies and tackling discrimination. The following is a summary of findings in that field, based on the focus group, interviews and the survey.

A small number of those who responded to the survey opposed the idea of increasing diversity in organisations, arguing for example that "homogeneous groups work better together". Another small group of respondents stated that their own organisation was already "the most embracing" organisation they could imagine. However, many of the respondents, interviewees and focus group participants had personal experiences and ideas about ways to improve inclusion.

In the following list, their input has been categorised into five different approaches: putting the issue on the agenda, adopting a code of conduct, creating a safe space, working on recruitment and outreach and lowering the thresholds for engagement.

1. Putting the issue on the agenda

If an organisation wishes to work on diversity and inclusion, it must start with awareness that the problem exists. However, it is not enough just to put the issue on the agenda. A long-term, systematic strategy is needed (“an understanding that things won’t happen overnight”). That may be based on an analysis of the potential benefits of diversity and inclusion. For example, one respondent believes that if different backgrounds and perspectives were valued more highly, it would make many organisations grow (in quality as well as quantity). Some respondents point out that the work must start from within, i.e. through leading by example, and that the organisation must be inclusive before trying to achieve diversity.

An important measure could be to **analyse what scares people away**. The first step might be to examine which members are the most normative in the group (for example, on a board) and address the tendency to like/welcome/choose people who are similar to oneself.

A method that was highlighted by several respondents was to **work together with other organisations**, to be inspired by those who have already started to take successful measures to promote inclusion or those who represent groups that are underrepresented in their own organisation.

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Increasing diversity can be a really hard endeavour for an organisation. However, I think firstly and most importantly they must not discriminate based on any diversity factors. If an organisation (which does not discriminate) wants to increase their diversity, it has to be a very focused effort. Often the best solution will be to contact organisations which already cater to the group you are trying to incorporate. Then you need to hold events they would like to come to and slowly you can integrate them into your organisation.

In addition to learning from how other organisations have worked on the issue, the need for internal training in the organisation is also highlighted. Alongside educating the entire organisation on critical thinking about norms and structures, there is emphasis on the importance of actively working on various development programmes around the issues that the organisation or a consulted third party has identified as the issues that it needs to address in order to become more inclusive. It is important to be able to discuss openly how discriminatory societal structures affect the organisation.

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Educating the organisation on gendered issues, as well as indigenous and minority struggles, is important to create common grounds of understanding for the various struggles we face in our political battles.

2. Adopting a code of conduct

Another aspect of measures for inclusion concerns policy and organisational culture.

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Making sure that there is a code of conduct in which it is written how the organisation views diversity as a way of strengthening the organisation and puts policies in place to ensure the local leaders are familiar with those initiatives.

That aspect also includes **policies against discrimination and harassment**, procedures to follow if such behaviour is discovered or reported, as well as policies regarding **representation** in decision-making groups and, if relevant, paid assignments. It is about “actively noticing their own biases and working against them”, as one respondent put it, and “having clear rules on what to do in case of any kind of harassment”.

Some organisations have set requirements for approximate gender balance in elected steering groups and committees, while others have developed diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) guidelines for all levels of the organisation. Being aware of how minorities are represented in leadership positions can have an impact further down the line, as well as influence how new members from underrepresented groups are attracted to the organisation. Some mention leadership schemes as a way to disrupt existing structures, while others propose affirmative actions in day-to-day organisational life.

Several respondents argue that the challenges around gender and other categories may differ, as well as how the organisation can address them.

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Regarding gender equality, there are already rules in this country that you have to have a certain gender diversity, so the organisation already follows them and has at least two women or two men on a board of five people at each time. Regarding general diversity (lgbtia+, racial etc.), the organisation needs to make it clear that it's open to everyone interested in the subject, regardless of other factors.

3. Creating a safe space and a culture of openness to different views

One of the aspects highlighted by most respondents concerns organisational culture, perhaps involving working from the inside out, for the organisation to “make it clear that it's open to everyone”.

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Diversity in an organisation (or lack thereof) often lies in the culture. It is difficult to mention specific actions other than to have an open-door policy for everyone, be curious and welcome everyone. It also means trying out new approaches and new ideas rather than always keeping the same ideas in place.

And another view of the matter:

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Acknowledge the strength that comes from diversity of perspectives. I do in fact believe there is a slight difference between the average man and the average woman's personality and mindset (one more practical, the other more emotional for instance), but that both perspectives can be equally important for an organisations' success. The same goes for different nationalities etc.

Part of this is about cultivating an **inclusive meeting culture**, for example by including members in decision-making and procedures, having open board meetings, using inclusive forms of address during meetings, as well as such factors as a non-exclusive use of language in internal communication (e.g. avoiding abbreviations and jargon). However, it is also about ensuring that all members feel that there is a safe environment where they can express varying opinions, ideas and ways of looking at the world.

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Being aware and transparent about the issues. Making sure that people can express concerns and complaints in a safe space. Taking the claims seriously. Making sure that the people who are affected are part of changing the environment for the better.

One suggestion is to have a working group in the organisation that works specifically on inclusion and diversity. Another observation is that inclusion may sometimes require different groups within the organisation – based, for example, on gender or ethnic minorities – to be given the opportunity to have their own forums to discuss issues based on their perspectives and experiences.

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To increase diversity, I think it's important to create a safe space for everyone ... I also believe that creating separate rooms and forums for different groups can be important, because of how important it is to be able to discuss the issues you are facing with groups that understand your own struggles. I think many (and especially environmental) organisations are so hung up on creating a broad movement that we forget or even turn a blind eye to the fact that majority and minority groups face completely different struggles. We often avoid discussing those topics because we don't want to upset any group and drive them away from the movement. Sadly, I do believe that makes a lot of minority people refrain from joining the movement, as they do not see it as a safe space for them.

4. Working on recruitment and outreach

A pivotal aspect of an organisation's work on diversity naturally concerns recruitment of new members or candidates for tasks within the organisation. Some respondents suggest measures like headhunting or partnering with other organisations where there are members from groups that do not resemble a majority of the existing member base. It is an obvious advantage if the organisation has analysed which obstacles there are for newcomers and endeavours to understand better the underrepresented groups and the reasons for not joining.



*Recruit where minority groups are.
Talk with minority groups about the issues that concern them
and realise that all engagement is part of the same cause for
a more fair world, regardless of whether that engagement is
expressed through anti-racism, feminism, climate action etc.*

Some of the respondents point to the importance of organising a range of **different activities in various locations** in order to attract a wider range of people who may be interested in different aspects of the issues the organisation works with. It may also be helpful to think through the use of **language** and which symbols the organisation uses in its communications. Representation in the organisation's decision-making groups and the people visible in outward-facing work may also affect identification.

In many ways, membership recruitment goes hand in hand with the design of campaigns for the issues that the organisation pursues. It is important to be open to organising activities that attract new target groups, to engage members in smaller communities or in places where the established members do not live. In that case, it may be important to use inclusive language that avoids jargon and to design activities so that they are accessible. If there are members who speak minority languages, it is important to use them. More communication could be in English.

Sometimes it may simply be important for the organisation to be visible in more arenas and channels.

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As an immigrant myself, I was unfamiliar with this type of civil society and didn't know of the possibility to be active and engaged, so just being visible to a broader section of the population is really important.

An apt comment concerns the fact that it would be much easier if society were not so segregated.

5. Lowering the thresholds for engagement

There are also various proposals that may remove unnecessary obstacles to getting involved. The following two quotes can serve as examples of that.

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Travel reimbursements, visits and outreach in underprivileged schools, accessibility and anti-discrimination action plan for events, trainings, anti-discrimination code of conduct, [including special] needs on [registration] forms for events.

In other words:

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Strategic approaches to recruiting. Eliminating barriers to participation, such as finances, language, access to information and accessibility. Being conscious about promoting a diverse culture.

In addition to hurdles including **financial, linguistic and physical barriers**, some of the respondents focus on the demands placed on those they want to recruit.

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Lower the thresholds to get involved by easing up on the requirements. The focus should be on the individual's passion for the task and not their previous skills.

Sometimes a certain **skill** is highly relevant, but it can easily become a requirement profile that in itself creates obstacles to diversity in recruitment. If there are procedures for learning within organisations, the skills or knowledge that are already present in the organisation do not necessarily need to be a requirement for new members as well.



Photo: Anita Cavalcanti / Unsplash.com

Discussion

Based on the various kinds of sources (desk study, focus group, interviews, survey), this study has sought to direct attention to challenges at the intersection of climate commitment, gender and other categories, especially young people in the Nordic region. Some clear patterns emerge, consistent with previous studies of attitudes and behaviours related to the climate issue: **women as a group are more engaged than men as a group** (see e.g. Dzialo, 2017). That is evident from representation among those active in youth-oriented environmental organisations, as well as when young people are asked to rank societal issues based on how important they consider them to be.

However, it goes beyond that. Generally, those committed to climate action and sustainability tend to be more highly educated than the population at large, with social sciences dominating in terms of their education. That may be related to gender norms, as women are generally more highly educated than men in the Nordic countries. It appears to be **a real challenge to reach young people in vocational training**, or with an interest in vocational training rather than academic studies, as well as in applied sciences. That is also a challenge for the education system, perhaps to an even larger degree than for nonprofit organisations (cf. Gabriëlsson, 2023). The report provides examples of cooperation between the two.

The study also indicates **strong underrepresentation of foreign-born young people** or young people with a migrant background among those active in environmental organisations. It is difficult to draw any specific conclusions about that based on

the results, but it is undeniably an important area for future research. Some organisations in the study highlight regional or geographical challenges, in particular difficulties in reaching young people outside urban areas. In some cases, resources need to be deliberately prioritised. It is also conceivable that the **urban/rural challenge** is connected to the education issue, specifically to reaching those with no experience of university studies. There are also examples of strategies to disrupt those patterns.

A dilemma arises from various perspectives regarding the issue of focusing on encouraging young people who already have an interest in the climate issue and are committed to it, versus trying to influence those who are not yet interested or committed. One aspect of that is the prioritisation of resources. One path can be capacity building and **working with ambassadors, who in turn can influence their peers**. Several organisations choose that route and it has certain advantages, but also limitations that the organisation needs to be aware of and work on strategically. Examples of that approach can be found in the report.

Another aspect is representation and how much space is given to people in underrepresented groups. For example, men are a minority among climate activists, but some of **the men who are there tend to take up more space than is representative** (cf. Arora-Jonsson & Ågren, 2019). Nonprofit organisations are not free from the norms and structures that exist in society at large, for example within the education system. That raises a dilemma for an organisation that wants to recruit more men but may be wary of giving the men power at the expense of the greater number of women who are involved.

Finally, the study points to two parallel challenges. One concerns representation and recruitment – who (in relation to gender, education, urban/rural, migrant background etc.) is getting involved? In that regard, the report points to various patterns described above. Proposals are also presented regarding how organisations can work on those issues. The second concerns the social dimension of climate or sustainability itself and how organisations relate to those issues in society at large. In other words, how does climate change affect different groups (depending, for example, on gender, class, ethnicity etc.), **who benefits or loses from certain climate policies**, the connection between climate and gender equality etc.? And what are young people's attitudes and knowledge regarding this?

Considering that men are less interested in both gender equality and climate issues than women (cf. Hoffman & Åkerström, 2023), it is not self-evident that campaigns about gender and climate would increase commitment among men. They may also have the opposite effect. Possibly, **a campaign that integrates other aspects besides gender – social class, geography, etc. – would prove more effective** and might interest men and other underrepresented groups. As we have seen, gender and climate are interrelated within the social dimension of sustainability, but the just green transition also has other aspects that relate to urban/rural, social class, and different minority groups (see e.g. Cedergren et al., 2022; Kraft & Qayum, 2023; Lundgren et al., 2023).



Photo: Andreas Omvik / Norden.org

Key takeaways

- The study shows patterns in young people's commitment to sustainable development that are consistent with previous studies. Those patterns are related to gender, as women are overrepresented among those involved, but also education – both in terms of level of education (highly educated) and the field of studies (social sciences). Foreign-born individuals appear to be underrepresented, but more studies are needed.
- In the survey for this report, youth were asked to choose three out of ten societal issues that were most important to them. The ranking was as follows: Climate and environment (58%); School and education (53%); Healthcare and social care (44%). The gender divide on the first item was nine percentage points.
- There seems to be a connection with traditionally feminine ideals, such as caring attitudes and behaviour, and a greater inclination to adapt one's lifestyle to climate neutrality. While adherence to traditional masculine ideals is associated with a lower degree of commitment, or even opposition, to the concept of climate-neutral ways of living or "*sustainable lifestyles*".
- There are two parallel challenges for youth-oriented organisations: on the one hand, inclusion and diversity among those who get involved and, on the other hand, how social dimensions are integrated into environmental and climate issues. Due to gender norms on sustainability, there might be trade-offs between the two challenges.

Five approaches emerged from this study when it comes to reaching new groups of young people and increasing social diversity in youth organisations:

1. **Put the issue on the agenda.** Strategic initiatives for inclusion and diversity in organisations need to be based on an analysis of norms and structures that keep underrepresented groups out. It may be wise to seek help from other organisations and knowledge-raising efforts may be needed.
2. **Adopt a code of conduct.** Policies around discrimination and harassment are an important aspect. Good procedures are needed in order to take action if such behaviour is discovered or reported. Requirements for representation in decision-making are something that can be considered, along with guidelines around norms about taking up space, speaking time and attention.
3. **Create a safe space and a culture of openness to different views.** There is widespread emphasis on the importance of cultivating safe spaces and a culture of openness to different perspectives, as well as inclusive language usage that avoids jargon and similar phenomena. Sometimes separate rooms within the organisation may be required.
4. **Work on recruitment and outreach.** In both recruitment and campaign work, it can be wise to look beyond established patterns and be active in various arenas, districts, and channels or work together with other organisations in order to reach out to new members and target groups.
5. **Lower the threshold for engagement.** Formal barriers – of a financial nature or in the form of a lack of accessibility – may be worth reviewing. Diversity in recruitment can also be hampered by strict requirements as to certain skills or knowledge; such requirements may not always be necessary.

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About this publication

Climate, Youth and Gender

Inclusion strategies for Nordic youth movements

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Nordregio report 2024:19

ISBN 978-91-8001-116-7 (ONLINE)

ISBN 978-91-8001-117-4 (PDF)

ISSN: 1403-2503

<http://doi.org/10.6027/R2024:19.1403-2503>

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Layout: Kotryna Juskaite, Nordregio

Cover Photo: Iris Dager

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