



NORDIC YOUTH DIALOGUES

Building a Nordic strategy for meaningful and inclusive co-creation and dialogue with young people in socio-economically and geographically marginalised areas



Nordic society today faces complex social challenges that we are unable to resolve without involving young people themselves. Challenges like social exclusion, segregation, unequal voting participation, vulnerability to populism and radicalisation, as well as lack of trust in the democratic system all necessitates strengthened local democratic platforms.

But how do we avoid the opposite happening, that the participatory models contribute to social exclusion and disillusionment? And what are the necessary long term strategies needed to build an inclusive Nordic model for youth participation and youth dialogue at the local level?

In autumn 2018, MUCF, the Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society, organised the conference Nordic Youth Dialogues within the framework of NORDBUK and the Swedish presidency of the Nordic Council of Ministers. It brought together experts, strategists and practitioners from research, civil society and the public sector from all the Nordic countries and autonomous regions to a highly interactive cross-sectorial Nordic exchange. The conclusions of the conference were summarized in 12 concrete suggestions covering 6 thematic fields that we have passed on to the Swedish presidency of the Council of Ministers, the Nordic Council of Ministers as well as the governments, regions and the municipalities in the Nordic region.



How can we empower young people for equal participation in marginalised areas?

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Mandatory and regular youth inclusion certification for all people working in the public sector and also open to everyone working in the private and civic sector. Young people themselves should lead this education process.

2. The appointment of local youth inclusion ombudsperson offices with diverse representation that work with a municipal strategy for youth inclusion and empowerment. The office should ensure that

- a quota of local young people with diverse representation are hired for youth-related work
- youth under 25 y/o have access to transportation that is free 24/7
- there are resources for physical and digital safe spaces created by and/or for the youth
- there is a long-term cooperation between the public and civic sector.

How can we empower municipalities and regions to create meaningful and inclusive dialogues?

RECOMMENDATIONS

3. The Nordic Council of Ministers should initiate a Nordic centre for youth participation providing education for politicians, civil servants and young people. Using existing European resource centres

and funding it should encourage municipalities and regions to create a youth strategy.

4. The Nordic Council of Ministers should initiate investigation/mapping of local, regional and national Nordic networks in the youth field and support them to become more open and inclusive for all.

How can the youth perspective become an integrated part of the public sector?

RECOMMENDATIONS

5. Develop measurable indicators on highest guiding level to ensure a defined youth perspective in the public sector. This is upheld by

- creating an online tool for education and evaluation
- appointing a strategic function within public sector organizations with the mandate to ensure a youth perspective.

6. Ensure that the defined youth perspective is mandatory in guiding documents for the public sector. For implementation at all levels, sustainable central state funding should be made available.

How do we secure that youth are seen as diverse groups of individuals?

RECOMMENDATIONS

7. People working with youth, or questions regarding youth, need knowledge and experience



of diversity and power relations/inequality. This is something that can be attained for example by using youth as mentors for adults. These youth mentors need training on how to be brave and diplomatic in dialogues. We also need to use communication through appropriate language and a variety of channels to build relationships and trust with young people, for example through youth ambassadors.

8. To create inclusive and diverse youth dialogues we need to use a diversity of methods to meet different needs, and include plural perspectives. Methods should be norm critical/anti-oppressive and created in cooperation with a variety of young people. We need to create systems that enables/supports sharing power with young people, and encourage the sharing of success-stories and new innovative solutions.

How can we empower civil society and make them more inclusive?

RECOMMENDATIONS

9. Civil society organizations need to become better at addressing the needs of youth from different backgrounds and supporting their initiatives. This can be done for example through cooperation and learning about youth inclusion in local cross-sectorial networks.

10. Empower civil society by giving youth better access to both long-term strategic funding and seed-funding. Funding must be easily accessible and sustainable in order to involve all youth, including those most marginalized.

How can we share spread and utilize methods that are already working?

RECOMMENDATIONS

11. Provide smart funding. In order to share, spread and utilize already working methods we recommend differentiating public funding into three categories:

- a. innovation
- b. documenting and spreading methods
- c. implementation and use of existing methods.

We recommend the funding to be long-term and based on local decisions.

12. We recommend to support the development of an initiative, on a Nordic level, where the youth, public and civic sector co-create minimum standards for youth dialogue and participation. For example including common vocabulary and tools for evaluation and inclusion.

