

## Youth participation in issues related to multiple use of forests and sustainable development of local communities



2022

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Länsstyrelsen  
Västerbotten



SKOGSSTYRELSEN



region  
västerbotten

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## Summary

As a part of its mission to support sustainable development through forests, The Regional Forest Programme of Västerbotten aims to foster capacity building among youth to enable their participation. A group for youths connected to the forest programme would be useful for this purpose, as it would enable youth perspectives on rural development issues relevant for the programme.

A previous study has shown that youth moving away from rural areas is a common problem for many landscapes in the Barents Region, which sets a promising precondition for international exchange for the youth perspective (Barsk & Esselin 2022). A county-based youth group would therefore also create a context where the knowledge from such exchanges can be spread and utilised locally.

Research shows that youth are rejecting traditional forms of political engagement in favour of more spontaneous engagement around specific topics. This is partly because youth generally perceive traditional arenas, such as youth councils established by local authorities, as inadequate arenas for making their opinions heard. The literature therefore points out important factors for such top-down implemented youth arenas to succeed with its purpose, such as a clear connection to a decision-making body, transparent processes, and sufficient support for the participating youth. Another important factor is that the activities and agenda of the group should be formed by the youths themselves.

Even though there is no youth group in Västerbotten focusing solely on rural development issues related to forests, forest issues are relevant for several youth organisations in the county. Representatives from these organisations share some success factors for engaging youth and recommend including participants with a variation of backgrounds to prevent polarization around the topic of forests.

The report ends with a recommendation of a youth organisation connected to the Regional Forest Programme of Västerbotten. The group is proposed to have the structure of a working group, which is an established concept in the programme. The group is also proposed to be youth-led with 2–3 youth leaders employed for the task. The group would function as an advisory organ for the forest programme, as well as enable youth to familiarise with different values of forests.

## Introduction

A study made by Barsk and Esselin (2022) shows that different rural landscapes in the Barents Region have many common challenges and opportunities. For instance, the areas included in the study have a negative demographic trend, with young people moving to more urban areas. Discussions about sustainable development of these areas therefore require inclusion of the youth perspective. Youth engagement and involvement regarding forest issues are important to discuss in a local and regional context. It is also important to consider youth exchange between the landscapes and the countries in the Barents Region. Such exchange could enable youth to discuss similar problems from many perspectives. An important base for a fruitful exchange, however, assures a context where the knowledge can be spread and utilised locally.

The Regional Forest Programme of Västerbotten, Sweden, is a platform for developing the forest sector in Västerbotten county by focusing on all different values of the forest. The forest programme operates from a conviction that enhancing the different aspects of forests is an opportunity for rural development, and it gathers organisations and people from all lines of forest businesses and organisations. However, today the programme lacks youth participation and thus is missing young people's knowledge, perspectives, and opinions. Consequently, there is a will within the Regional Forest Programme of Västerbotten to foster capacity building among youth and enable youth participation. A youth group associated to the Forest Programme could be valuable in a regional as well as an international context.

The typical political engagement among youths today is spontaneous, without an affiliation to a specific organization, and centred around specific topics. Meanwhile, the number of members in traditional youth organizations is decreasing. One of the challenges in constructing a platform for young people in the Forest Programme will therefore be to make the platform relevant in a current youth context. To learn from the experience of other types of youth organising, this report revisits different types of youth organisations, and gathers helpful experiences from youth organizations in the specific area of Västerbotten.

## Purpose and delimitations

The purpose of this report is to

- Describe and analyse examples of organisations that have an ambition to engage and involve young people in discussions, decision-making processes and activities related to sustainable development of local communities.
- Propose a suitable organisational platform for youth engagement and involvement that can be related to the work of the Regional Forest Programme of Västerbotten, and advance cross-border collaboration activities between youth groups in the Barents Region.

The overview of organisations in this report is limited to Västerbotten county, but research on other Swedish organisations has been done in a minor pre-study to this report (Appendix II).

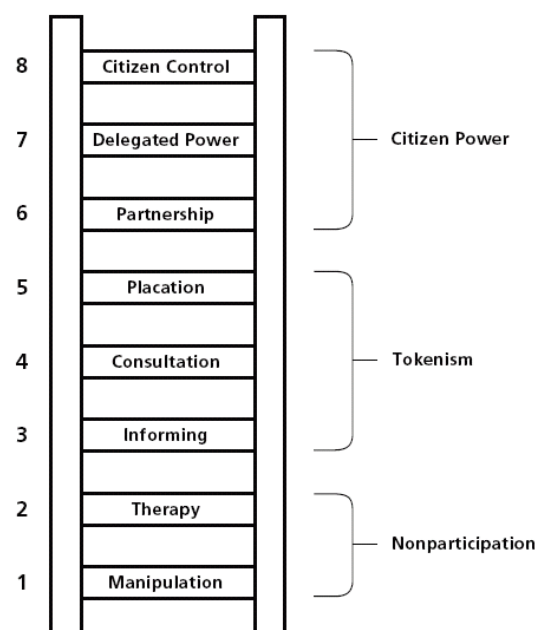
## Defining youth participation

Because of a growing concern for a decline in youth participation in economic, social, and political processes, youth participation has gained a growing interest in both policy making and research during the last few decades (Bečević & Dahlstedt 2021). A deficient youth participation means deficient democratic processes, since it is likely that decision makers will undervalue the views and needs of youth if the youth themselves are not engaged (Barrett and Pachi 2019, 6).

Researchers argue that this development does not mean that youth are more passive than they were before, but that they instead are engaged in different, non-conventional forms of political participation (Barrett and Pachi 2019, Bečević & Dahlstedt 2021). The participation of youth today usually takes place on a case-to case basis and is carried out through special interest groups rather than formal political institutions. Initial engagement takes place on the internet and social media, where information is found, and only then is the organization contacted offline (Barrett & Pachi 2019, 9). Young people often perceive that the political institutions have little interest in them and their views, leading them to seek alternative forms for their engagement (Barrett & Pachi 2019, 6). The rural youth in Sweden does, in a lesser degree than their urban counterparts, feel included in the democratic system in general. Svensson (2017) argues that this development is not surprising considering that the urban norm stating that youth who want to be seen as modern and progressive need to move to big cities is generally accepted even among the rural adults. This, in turn, affects their views of rural decision-makers on the youth that stay (Svensson 2017, 105).

A challenge for the political participation of youth is that it is conditioned by adults. It is not unusual for adult politicians to make themselves spokespersons for the youth and formulate policy with consideration for young people, but without letting youth give their own perspectives. This way of working treats youth like an unpolitical actor, solely to be fostered by society instead of seen as subjects with experience, competence, and a will to act (Andersson 2015, 10).

## The ladder of participation



**Figure 1.** Ladder of Citizen Participation (Arnstein 1969)

Defining youth participation is challenging, as the term *participation* cannot stand on its own. It is popularly illustrated by different levels, such as ladders and steps (fig. 1). A classic example of this is Arnstein's ladder of citizen participation (1969). In addition to different degrees of participation, the ladder also illustrates certain states of non-participation: manipulation and therapy (Figure 1). These stages correspond to instances where instead of involving a group of citizens in a change process, attempts are made to make them accept their situation or convinced to perceive a situation in another light. This gives us an important reminder to the situation with the youth attitude towards forest related issues or towards their rural identity: true participation does not equal trying to simply impose the attitudes of the older generations on the youth, they must be allowed to form them by themselves. Grading models, such as the ladder, imply that the higher up on these steps and ladders a form of organization gets, the more desirable a form of participation it has. However, it is worth noting that all forms of youth participation are not desirable in all kinds of situations, but that participation must be evaluated according to its purpose (Wong et al 2010).

### Youth councils

A form of youth representation that has local examples all over the western world is *youth councils*, enabling youth participation in relation to governing bodies. In Sweden, youth councils are forums that are established in municipalities and regions with the purpose of including youth in political decision-making processes. These bodies are mainly used by municipalities and regions for consultation and information, with a civil servant responsible for coordination, education, and support for the youth council. According to research, however, these youth councils often lack real opportunities for influence. Partly because it is highly dependent on the good will of the politicians and civil servants, and because they often are purely consultative organs where, furthermore, youth only are asked about "youth-issues" specifically (Andersson 2015, 6-7). In the literature, an alternative to this kind of inclusion is *Youth organizing*.

### Youth organizing

Youth organizing means a free-standing and voluntary organization. The distinguishing features of youth organizing in relation to youth councils are that the issues are chosen and driven by the youth themselves, and with some support from adults the youth adopt suitable strategies to conceive societal reform (Andersson 2015, 7). Pittman et al (2007) have compiled four principles for effective youth organization:

1. *Opportunity*: Youth need authentic access to decision makers, but also to the broader youth community
2. *Capacity*: Youth need the training and tools to be able to participate fully in the processes.
3. *Motivation*: Youth need time to learn about community issues and then decide what issues to address.
4. *Foundation*: There needs to be a solid organisation to foster membership, continuity and a supportive work environment for the youth.

### Youth-led change

Some scholars emphasize that the associated youth organization also should be youth-led. The youth have the best knowledge of their own issues and needs and are therefore their own best

spokespersons. They should play central roles in shaping initiatives, and adults can be supportive and allies in youth-led change (Delgado & Staples 2007).

## Youth participation in forest issues: The case of Västerbotten

The background setting for the requested youth group is very specific. Its setting among the issues of sustainable development in a rural region, with many issues related to forests, forestry and climate puts the youth group in the middle of issues that are highly relevant and political. This section therefore illustrates a handful of examples of youth organizations that are active in Västerbotten today and that deal with forest related issues. These organizations are of different sizes, have different organizational structures and goals. They do however, all operate in the same regional setting and value forest issues from different positions.

### LRF Ungdomen

LRF Ungdomen (lit. The LRF youth) is a youth organization associated with the Federation of Swedish Farmers, which represents individuals, enterprises, and cooperatives in the Swedish agricultural and forestry sector. All members of LRF who are younger than 36 years are automatically members of LRF Ungdomen. The youth organization has both a national level organization that covers issues with relevance to its members, and regional organizations that organize educations, excursions, and such. The youth organization in Västerbotten has 740 members.<sup>1</sup>

The youth association of LRF mainly organises youth with a tight connection to the agricultural practices, including forestry. Most members are recruited through so-called family memberships. If a parent acquires a family membership in LRF, the name of the youths in the family appears in the registers. In addition to these indirect members, the LRF youth mainly directs its recruitment toward students of vocational agricultural educations.

There are no requirements for prior knowledge when becoming involved in the youth organisation. Especially the regional organisations work a lot with education, excursions and networking. LRF Youth is completely run by its members and the organisation chooses what topics to work with during the year. The age range of the organization is, however, broader than in most youth organizations: up to 36 years. The reason for this is that the transfer of agricultural properties is usually done when the heir is around their thirties. This does, however, often lead to the general opinion in the youth organisation being visibly influenced by the older members.

The challenges of the organization mirror the development of the trade in Sweden. The trade is getting smaller, which affects the expected number of new members. There are also lots of organizations and tasks in the rural areas that expect youth involvement, but there are not enough engaged people to take on these tasks.

The interviewee (see Appendix I, informant 2) advises that the composition of a youth group dealing with these topics should be broad enough so that the participating youth do not have to carry a certain position or represent a certain aspect of the forest. Forest issues are a sensitive topic. The members of LRF youth are immediately coupled with heavy industry in the debates. That would be the downside of recruiting youth from organizations that so obviously already bear a political connotation: the youth would feel obliged to defend their organizations.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.lrf.se/mitt-lrf/regioner/vasterbotten/lrf-ungdomen/> (accessed 10/02/2022)

## Fältbiologerna

Fältbiologerna (the youth organisation of the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation) is a youth organization that was established in 1947 and is involved in political topics related to nature and sustainable development: agriculture, climate, forests, waters, mining, large carnivores and environmental justice. Everyone between the ages of 6–26 can become members, but the average age of the members is 17 (Esselin, unpublished pre-study, see Appendix II). The organization has local sections where members arrange local activities and excursions.

A central part of the activities of the organization are camps, where youth do nature-based activities such as birdwatching, and projects for facilitating political opinions, such as “Stop the death of species” (Stoppa artddöden).

The central organization is led by youth under the age of 27. The board members and the future orientation of the organization are decided on the annual meeting, where all members are welcome (Esselin, unpublished). Membership in the organization is free between the ages 6–25 years, and there is an obvious strive towards making activities that are free of charge also.

## Barents Regional Youth Council

The Barents Regional Youth Council (BRYC) is a youth infrastructure within the Barents Cooperation, consisting of youth representatives from the northern regions of Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia. The 15 members of the youth council represent the 14 member regions of the Barents Cooperation, as well as the indigenous youth. The council has two meetings a year to discuss activities, spread information and plan their annual youth event. In addition to these, the BRYC takes part in other youth events across the Barents region and creates projects of its own.<sup>2</sup>

The exact function of the group varies between chairmanships, thus whether youths are mainly consulted with specific questions or have a wider possibility to form the agenda of the Cooperation. During the 2019–2021 Västerbotten chairmanship for the regional council, youth issues was a priority. The cooperation invested quite a lot into youth engagement and worked to involve the youth in decision making, for example with a youth summit. The youth engaged in the youth council can report their interest to participate in any of the ordinary working groups within the regional council, such as forestry, culture or climate.

In many of the regions involved in the Barents Cooperation, there are local youth councils connected to counties or municipalities, engaging youths around upper secondary school age. These groups are often also politically affiliated. In these regions, the representatives are also recruited from these councils. In Västerbotten, no such council existed, but recruitment was made on personal basis.

The youth are compensated for travels and time for their involvement, which is an important factor enabling involvement of youths. The informant (see Appendix I, informant 3) also said that the young people all have different pre-knowledge. The biggest challenge for participation in the Barents youth council is therefore to be recruited in the first place, especially in the regions with no youth council as a natural way forward. It is also important that the meetings are held in a reasonable time, i.e. when the youths have a possibility to participate.

The informant says that it is an advantage that youths often do not have the same prejudices or locked positions as adults engaged in these issues. Therefore, discussions with youth about forest

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.barentsyouth.org/what-is-bryc.268291.en.html>

issues, sustainability and climate are open and creative. According to the experience of the informant, youth are interested in a wide variety of issues, from sustainability to culture, which also reflects in the scope of the discussions among youth. A recommendation for a future youth group from the informant is to include youth from different backgrounds to get the open climate of discussion.

### Vindelälven-Juhtátahkka Biosphere Reserve

The staff of the Vindelälven-Juhtátahkka Biosphere Reserve has identified a limited knowledge of the biosphere reserve as a challenge for its development. Thus, it has started a project with purpose to reach young people within its area of operation. The project includes visits to upper secondary schools in the biosphere reserve, mainly those with programmes focused on forest related activities.

The youth are told about sustainable development and the purposes of the biosphere reserve. The visits also include workshops, where the youths discuss what kind of development they want to see in their local communities. Representatives from the municipalities have been invited to these occasions as well, to hear the opinions of the youths.

The biosphere reserve organization wants to develop youth involvement in its activities, and these school visits have been a first step in that direction. A specific group for associated youth is currently not being developed. The priority lies in establishing biosphere councils in all biosphere municipalities, where stakeholders can discuss the development of the area. The ambition is to have at least two youth representatives in each of these councils.

There are several opportunities to engage youths in the activities of the biosphere reserve. The youths that have participated during the school visits are interested in discussing and working with sustainable development but have no suitable platforms. Establishing groups would also enable international exchanges, for example through the Erasmus programmes. There is also an interest among adults to involve youth in these discussions. There is a risk however, that the older generations believe that they are giving youth space for participation, when in reality there are social and organizational obstacles present that should be processed in different ways.

According to the informant (see Appendix I, informant 4), the main challenge for Vindelälven-Juhtátahkka Biosphere Reserve is that the concept of it is non-existent for many young people.

### Project: Youth Participation in Democracy

Lycksele municipality is a pilot area for the project called *Ungas Delaktighet i Demokratien* (lit. Youth participation in democracy) launched by the Swedish Agency of Youth and Civil Society. The aim of the project is to enable youths who normally are not involved in the political process to do so. The rural youth of Lycksele is a prime example of such a case, and the municipality completely lacks a presence of youth political organizations.

The municipality has earlier worked with youth councils, similar to those found in other municipalities of the country, but in the interview with the leader of the project (see Appendix I, informant 5) it was stated that the team in Lycksele wants to take another route this time. The youth councils and similar constellations are parallel structures to the ordinary political process. The councils have no true power, as they are consultative organs. The youths who participate are usually engaged in other organisations as well, which is contradictory to the purpose of the project to include youth from a multitude of backgrounds. Instead, the project team wants to involve the political parties and their youth sections to work more openly towards the youth.

The project started in 2021 and is supposed to run until 2025. The project has started to develop a method and scope, communicated with youth organizations in the county as well as grounded the project among the local politicians. A workshop with politicians and civil servants has also been arranged, but the project has yet (as of January 2022) not resulted in any practical measures. However, the interviewee has already gotten a good feel on the challenges and opportunities.

One thing is that the distance between the youth organizations and the youth needs to be shorter, which is a challenge today. Whether or not to let youth organizations visit the school is up to each headmaster to decide, and as of today the organizations are not welcome. When this has been made possible, a working group between the youth organizations, the school and civil servants should be launched. However, the team is aware that the desired development is a long-term effect. It is important to build up the structures that facilitate youth involvement, developing the platforms where youth and politics meet in the everyday, but it cannot be expected to work immediately. It will, however, strengthen the democracy in the long run.

## Discussion and conclusions

The organisations included in this study have different backgrounds and purposes, hence their forms vary. In terms of the ladder of citizen participation, the organizations can be placed on different levels. However, as noted in the literature overview, all forms of youth participation are not desirable in all situations. But one should be aware that the structure of the youth organization sets the preconditions for the engagement of youth.

Even though youths experience that they are not taken seriously in adult processes, the concept of youth inclusion is not controversial among the adults, quite the contrary. Youth representatives are wanted for a multitude of organizations, and the youth perspective is expected to add an understanding what youths need in terms of local development or what should be done to make the rural areas or activities interesting for the youths. However, in many of the most usual forms of youth participation, the point of departure is decided by the adults and youths are only consulted on an agenda that has already been set. This inhibits youths from forming their own ideas that perhaps do not fit the concepts or constraints of the adults. It is therefore the steadfast opinion of this report that the best way of incorporating the issues of the forest programme is to form a youth working group, and perhaps a youth council in the longer run, in a way that allows the youths to form own agendas and incentives rather than merely being consulted on certain issues. In the terms of the ladder of citizen participation, the youth working group/council should reach the steps in the level of "Citizen power", as in that the working group/council has actual, agenda-setting power, but that the decision-making power still lies with the steering group of the regional forest program.

It should not be a purpose of the youth working group to be a polarizing platform, but a platform for opportunities. Thus, it is important that the structure of the group does not cement possible prior positions. The recruitment of youth representatives should come from a neutral ground, for example schools, instead of recruiting from existing interest organisations. The question of recruitment and representation is important as it sets the conditions for involving youths. The established youth organizations that have been interviewed have established recruiting methods but focused on certain groups.

The purpose of this report is to suggest a structure for a youth participation that does not yet exist. A lively and engaged form of youth participation is difficult to create by demand, which is the case for more established youth organizations as well. Especially when the implementation is top-down, it could take some time to create a structure that functions on its own, without the patronage of the adult organization. However, without a basic structure in place, there is also no opportunity for gradual development.

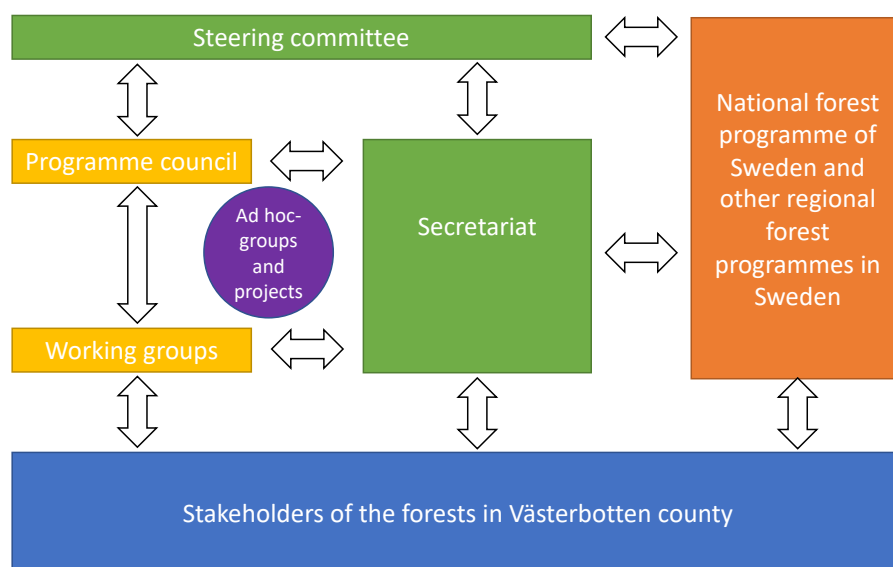
Most of the established organisations have a thorough education for their new members assuring that no prior knowledge is needed in order to be fully able to participate in the organisation. This factor is important and has also been established by research. Since there is no prior youth organisation, it is important that the associated adult organisation arranges a suitable education for the new members, makes sure that there is enough time for the youths to feel comfortable in their role, but that there is opportunity to get more responsibility when ideas come up. The course of ideas should also be transparent, so that the youth see that their opinions are taken seriously. The importance of positive feedback is raised by many interviewees and is the main motivator.

There are many possible ways to organize youth participation and many ways of including youth in decision making processes. The fact that the forest sector wants to include youth in related issues is in line with both the democratic rights of youth, and also beneficial for rural development. It is,

however, important to proceed with a clear objective, so that the will to include youth does not simply result in tokenism and a structure that is of no use for the youth or the adult institutions.

## Future prospect

The purpose of the recommended organisation, i.e. a youth working group associated to the Regional Forest Programme of Västerbotten, is to enable youths from all around the county of Västerbotten to share their perspectives on local development from forests, as well as familiarise with different activities and values related to forests. A long-term goal of the youth working group should also be to enable international exchanges within other youths and youth organisations in the Barents Region, as has been requested in the pilot study by Esselin and McTaggart (2021). With the background literature in mind, the best preconditions for a youth working group would be if it is given the opportunity to form its own agenda and leadership. However, it still needs clear ties to the regional forest programme, both in order to communicate various issues but also in order to get education and support for the activities that the group wants to engage in.



**Figure 2.** Organization of the Regional Forest Programme of Västerbotten. To start with, a youth working group is established, complementary to three already existing working groups. This working group can in the longer run perhaps be developed into a youth council.

Research points to the importance of a clear connection to a decision-making body for motivating a commitment to a youth group connected to an adult organisation. The process of handling these inputs should be transparent to work as a good feedback system. It is therefore important to place the youth group in an appropriate position of the current organisation.

The Regional Forest Programme of Västerbotten operates within the frame of the National Forest Programme but is adapted to regional preconditions. The steering group has the utmost responsibility for setting the direction of the work within the regional programme, and the secretariat is responsible for the practical implementation of the forest programme. Stakeholders are gathered in the programme council which gives directions to the working groups about what kind of projects and activities they want to see. The working groups also consist of stakeholders from different backgrounds and are centred around different topics and projects. The Regional Forest programme of Västerbotten is a collaborative project with a purpose to unify different kinds of stakeholders in the development of the forest sector in the county. Therefore, as can be seen from figure 2, the purpose of the organization is supposed to facilitate exchanges of ideas among the different levels. There is a clear line of responsibility, but ideas and initiatives move back and forth

between the levels. This is, not least, because of the function of the secretariat which gives it a wide range of contacts.

With that in mind, the secretariat is the most natural organ of the programme to work closest with the youth working group, as it already does with established working groups within the programme. By designating a member of the secretariat as responsible for the youth working group, the group is guaranteed a contact for their opinions. Initially, the youth contact in the secretariat should be responsible for presenting any opinions of the youth group in the programme council and project ideas in the other working groups. In the long run, however, the youth group should have 1–2 representatives in the programme council, so that the activities in the youth group will not be entirely dependent on the youth contact in the secretariat.

As has been recommended in the literature, the youths are the best choice for leading their own organization. To get the project rolling, at least two and up to four youths should be employed to work with it. The role of these youth leaders would be to:

- Come up with ideas of activities that would be interesting to carry out within the youth project
- Pitch the ideas for the secretariat
- Attend monthly meetings with the youth contact in the secretariat
- Inspire, attract and enrol new youths in the youth working group
- Lead activities
- Administer social media

The youth working group is therefore to consist of both youth leaders (youths who get paid to arrange activities for the group) and youth participants (youths that participate in the activities). While the youth participants should be recruited quite freely, the youth leaders could be pinpointed. Especially youth attending university studies would be motivated for such a task, as it truly gives them useful experience for future work. The age limit should be 16–25 to begin with, so that the relevance of the forest issues will be more relevant and tangible.

An important element that motivates individuals to stay engaged in youth groups is the possibility to gain knowledge as they go. Many youth organisations provide basic education about relevant topics for their members, which is important in enabling youths from all backgrounds to participate fully. Group building activities are also important in order for the group to get to know each other and minimizing the fear of having a different opinion than the majority.

## The vision

There is a widely recognised and inclusive platform that encourages and enables youths to influence issues related to rural development from forests. This platform is a youth working group/council that:

- Is an independent organisation with established routines for recruitment of members and planning of activities
- Represents the youth of Västerbotten county in discussions within other organisational parts of the Forest Programme of Västerbotten
- Has an established and flourishing cross-border collaboration with other youth groups in the Barents Region

## Objectives year 1 (2022)

- 2–3 youth leaders are employed (app. 5 h per week and employee)

- A routine for planning activities for youths is established
- A routine, including a communication plan, for recruiting members to the youth working group is established
- Ten additional members are recruited to the youth working group
- 2 regional activities for the youth working group planned and implemented

#### **Objectives year 2–3 (2023–2024)**

- 5 regional activities planned and implemented per year
- 25 participants in the youth working group
- The youth working group is represented in the programme council
- Contact with other youth groups within the Barents Region established, and 2 international cross-border collaboration activities planned and implemented
- A method of progressional recruitment established

#### **Challenges**

- Lack of interest among youths
- Lack of motivation among youths
- Lack of funding for a long-time activity
- Lack of variation among the participants, i.e. poor representation of different interests

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## Appendix I: Informants

1	Maja Adolfsson	Umeå University, Dep. of sociology
2	Anton Öhrlund	LRF
3	Maria Grånemo	Norra skog, Vindelälven-Juhttátahkka Biosphere Reserve, Barents working group of youths
4	Daniela Nedelcheva	Project manager Vindelälven-Juhttátahkka Biosphere Reserve
5	Adrian Lundkvist	Project manager Lycksele municipality

## Appendix II: Pre-study

In a minor pre-study to this report, a student (17 years old) was employed a couple of weeks to research a handful of youth organisations, and, in the absence of youth organisations, adult organisations with an ambition to engage youths<sup>3</sup>. As a complement, the student also did an Instagram survey directly addressed to young people.

Examples of findings in the pre-study (Joel Esselin, unpublished):

- Issue at stake and/or organisational goal is important for youth engagement, but just as important are activities, friends and a feeling of participation and community.
- Young peoples' interests and attitudes must be viewed as a fresh produce as it changes with each generation. A focus on what interest young people today will attract more young people, and at the same time possibly generate ideas, perspectives, and knowledge that adults won't come up with.
- Young people use social media every day and have a different approach and a different way of expressing themselves compared to adults. Thus, it is important that messages in social media that focusses young people are formulated by young people. Young people don't want to be addressed as kids, but young people also do not want to be addressed as adults!
- A youth organisation often needs the support of adults in the beginning, but when the youth organisation is up and running it is recommended that the youths are allowed to organize and lead their own organization.
- A crucial factor when starting a youth organisation is to employ and pay a few young individuals to lead the way. The employment can be a few hours a week to come up with ideas, plan activities and engage/recruit more young people. Starting a youth organization with the help of employed youth will probably be more effective than letting adults sit and guess how to engage and inspire young people.

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<sup>3</sup> Hillsong Youth (a youth organisation of a Christian congregation), Moderata ungdomsförbundet (a youth organisation of one of Sweden's major political parties), Fältbiologerna (the youth organisation of the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation), three Swedish biosphere reserves (Blekinge arkipelag, Kristianstad Vattenrike and Vombsjösjönsänkan), the Swedish Sportfishing Association, Kävlingeåns vattenråd (lit. The water council of Kävlingeån), and Skogen i skolan (lit. "The forest in the school").