



MLADINSKI
SVET
SLOVENIJE
NATIONAL
YOUTH
COUNCIL
OF SLOVENIA

MSS-125-11

Declaration

YOUNG PEOPLE'S SAY ON ENVIRONMENT

Representatives of young people in Slovenia,

- Whereas, as individuals, we constitute part of the social environment, and as society live we in a common natural environment to which we have equal rights and responsibilities,
- We define the environment as a set of interwoven factors of the natural and social environment, which means that the quality of the natural environment significantly impacts on the quality of the social environment and vice versa; in this document, we refer to natural environment as »environment«, and we consider it to be an indispensable element of the sustainable development concept¹,
- We are aware of the fact that human intervention in the environment is reaching forms and proportions that raise serious concern about the renewability of natural resources within our lifetime,
- We realise that the environment in Slovenia is particular in the global sense due to well-preserved natural environment, biological and geological diversity and regional diversity within a small geographic area,
- We notice that people are either not willing to give up comfort for the benefit of the environment or do not have the opportunity or possibility to adapt their lifestyle,
- We realise that we, young people with our lifestyle have a large impact on the environment; therefore, our proactive approach in the environmental area can significantly contribute to the improvement of the situation,
- We are aware of the scope and significance of climate change issues,

¹ Sustainability and sustainable development: a multi-dimensional concept based on equitable development of all three components: environmental, social and economic, and connecting the idea of development to sustainability in the sense of human progress in line with environmental guidelines. A sustainable society has an eco-centric view of the environment: the nature is equal to humans, nature-friendly lifestyle, ecological laws and criteria for the success of the society, long-term goals. (Source: Skoberne, Peter. 1995. Poklicna dejavnost varstva narave v Sloveniji. V *Aljančič, Marko (ur.): Varstvo narave na Slovenskem: Ob evropskem letu varstva narave, 80—84*. Ljubljana: Prirodoslovni muzej Slovenije; Bahor, Maja. 2005. Trajnostni razvoj v okoljski politiki (magistrska naloga). V *Meadowcroft, James. 2000. Sustainable Development: A New(ish) Idea for a New Century?* Political Studies 48(2): 370—87.).

- As generations, which will for decades live in the environment we are creating for our successors, we feel the duty to express our serious concern over current developments and over trends for the future,
- We are convinced of the need to take fast and effective measures to improve the situation in the area of protecting and preserving the environment in accordance with guidelines for sustainable development.

Based on the above, we wish, through this declaration, to:

- Emphasise the relevance, value and dimensions that the youth of today give to environment,
- Express our wish to regulate the system and to change the mentality and actions of citizens, in order to move towards an environmentally friendly society, in line with guidelines for sustainable development,
- Emphasise those parts of young people's lifestyle today, which affect the quality of the environment, and identify potential and possibilities to encourage an active pro-environment focus among today's youth and future generations and thus to put in place the conditions for a sustainable society of the future,
- Encourage young people to develop a more environmentally friendly culture and lifestyle and to establish a critical attitude to environmental issues,
- Call upon all actors, involved in decision making, to take faster and more adequate measures,
- Express our readiness to actively contribute to the preparation of strategies and their implementation, with the aim to achieve the transition to a more environmentally friendly society.

At this session of the Council of Members of the National Youth Council of Slovenia, on 8 December 2011, we adopt the declaration »Young People's Say on Environment«.

1. We, young people wish to live in an environmentally friendly society, which would set conditions for sustainable development in its widest sense.
2. Environment is a value and deserves the attention of the entire society.

3. Due to their global impact, environmental issues must be tackled at the international level.

4. Everyone is responsible for the environment, without exceptions: individuals, societal groups and decision makers.

5. A change in the social mindset is key to preserving the environment; it must go towards widening the understanding of development as a phenomenon which reflects the pro-environment stance of the society, in the frame of the concept of sustainability, not only of economic and technological progress.

6. Environment-related issues must, within our capacities and competence, be tackled daily, and must take account of our life circumstances, lifestyles and opportunities.

7. The contribution of young people to a more environmentally friendly society is feasible at the individual level as well as at the level of youth organisations.

8. Both young people and organisations in the youth sector must tackle the question of environment with responsibility, pro-activity and with concrete measures.

9. We, young people can significantly contribute to pro-environmental action, but at the same time the society and decision makers at all levels must ensure that the conditions to implement these aspirations are in place.

10. We call upon all those addressed here (young people, organisations in the youth sector and the state) to take into account the threats and opportunities stemming from the characteristics of modern youth and their lifestyle, when forming so-called »green measures«.

a) Young people as individuals can do our most:

- by striving to minimise the impact of our daily actions on the environment (young people are mobile, consumption-oriented and used to a certain level of comfort ...),

- by using our potential and capacity for the benefit of the environment (of all generations, young people are most engaged in education processes are creative and innovative, can think outside the box and are not burdened with the past ...).

b) As an important actor in young people's lives, organisations in the youth sector can greatly contribute to:

- implementing non-formal education programmes for youth in the area of environmental protection and sustainable development,
- render the programmes (project and education contents, etc.) and their realisation environmentally friendly,
- cooperate with decision makers on environmental matters related to youth,
- establish a sustainability-oriented system of work in the youth sector.

c) The state can do its best particularly by:

- educating and informing youth,
- taking account of the criteria for sustainable development when adopting decisions that directly or indirectly affect younger generations,
- enabling and encouraging active participation of youth in decision making processes that directly or indirectly affect them,
- supporting organisations in the youth sector, which lead environmentally friendly policies,
- adopting adequate environmental legislation and by its more coherent implementation.