

# PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE ACTIVISM: THE NORDIC YOUTH CONFERENCE

YOUTH CASE STUDY: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL NORDIC SECTIONS



## SUMMARY

The Nordic Youth Conference is an annual event which brings together youth activists from Finland, Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Iceland and the Faroe Islands. Founded in 2005 and organized by Amnesty International offices in the Nordic region, the conference provides an annual platform to build youth networks and promote sustainable activism.



## DESCRIPTION

For four days each August, the Nordic Youth Conference allows youth activists to come together, build relationships and learn from each other. Each year, 44 youth activists between the ages of 16 and 25 attend. The participants are selected for the conference based on the likeliness of continued activity, thereby building a regional network and promoting sustainable youth activism. The conference features interactive sessions as well as sessions with plenary speakers and combines human rights education with sessions on tangible activism skills. Each conference includes a public action relevant to a current Amnesty International campaign which is planned and carried out by the conference participants. It serves as an opportunity for youth leaders to come together and build their capacity and skills which they will take back to their own sections. One participant shared: "I feel I've learnt a lot and that I feel more certain about what to do as the group leader back home." The Nordic Youth Conference is a great example of how we can build youth networks and support youth activists and leaders!

"The public action and interviewing refugees left my spirit wanting to continue doing such great work. I felt that we can truly affect change."

## OBJECTIVES

- Build youth activist networks and communities.
- Promote sustainability within youth activist structures.
- Educate and train young people on topics of Amnesty International campaigns.
- Strengthen leadership skills.
- Share concrete methods and tools to carry out activism.



## IMPACT

- Each year, 44 youth activists between the ages of 16 and 25 attend.
- Many activists who participate in the conference go on to be leaders in their local groups and movements.
- Youth coordinators report more activist involvement after having attended the conference.
- Activists use their new skills to lead groups. For example, two participants from the 2016 conference started a new youth group at Amnesty International Finland.

## TIPS AND TRICKS

- *Combine Human Rights Education with concrete activism workshops!* The public action for instance allows participants to put their activism into practice and apply their new skills.
- *Organize collaboratively!* This event rotates between Finland, Sweden, Denmark and Norway allowing the organizers to share responsibilities and mutually support accountability.
- *Encourage and utilize youth feedback!* Participants evaluated the conference and organizers plan to incorporate this feedback and further involve youth in the planning and design of the conference.
- *Track your success!* The organizers are in the process of developing defined measures of success in order to better track the successes of the conference.



“Meeting fellow activists from the Nordic region was a life changer. I have attended conferences with the UN association before but I have never had that life changing feeling until now.”

## ANDREAS IN THE SPOTLIGHT

*Andreas Canvin* was the leader of the youth group at his school since fall 2015 and participated in the Nordic Youth Conference in 2015. He has represented many of Amnesty International’s campaigns in the local press in his city. Recently, he organized a demonstration for transgender rights within the Danish healthcare system. The demonstration was covered by local press and television news. Andreas has now graduated and has just founded a local activist group.

“I feel I’ve learnt a lot and I am more certain about what to do as the group leader back home.”

## STAKEHOLDERS

- *Amnesty International Finland, Denmark, Sweden and Norway* are the primary actors who collaboratively organize this project.
- Each year, external speakers are invited to take part in the conference. For example, in 2016 the *Finnish Refugee Council* provided a speaker for a rights holder’s Q&A session.
- Youth activists across the Nordic region gain skills and experience from the conference, strengthening the movement.

## LEARN MORE!

- See videos from the conference [here!](#)
- Contact Pernille at Amnesty International Denmark for more information at [pbjensen@amnesty.dk](mailto:pbjensen@amnesty.dk).

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