

An Arctic policy for young people

The youth panel's input to the Government's white paper on the Arctic





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North Norway, 02.11.2020

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Figure 1.2 The youth panel was appointed by the Government in the spring of 2020 to provide input to the work on the white paper on the Arctic. The panel was made up of 50 young people from North Norway ranging from 16 to 28 years of age. Panel members had diverse backgrounds and came from all parts of the region. Illustration: Reibo AS.

Content

Figure 1.9 Young people want to be able to participate when members of the Government visit the north. Prime Minister Erna Solberg and Minister of Children and Families Kjell Ingolf Ropstad talking to young people at a café in Tromsø on 19 September.
Photo: Office of the Prime Minister



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An Arctic policy for young people

A good Arctic policy does not have to be lofty, but must be targeted more specifically towards the people in North Norway. The focus should not just be on climate change and the environment in the Arctic, on fish quotas or on espionage. Norway's Arctic policy should focus on those of us who live here. It is the young people in North Norway who are the region's future. There is a need for discussion about what it will take to make us want to stay here. We need more than just idle chatter and events. Young people in the north need things to look forward to, things that take place at regular intervals, not just one-off events full of pomp and ceremony where everyone just leaves afterwards. Measures and activities must be of a more permanent nature.

We must create jobs where the industries are. The region's natural resources must benefit those of us who live here. We cannot have a situation where resources are extracted and used by the south while North Norway is portrayed as a drain on the public purse rather than a contributor to the Norwegian economy. Our natural resources must be refined here in the north. It is no good to us that there are large amounts of fish along our coastline if all the raw materials are sent to China.

Many young people are seeing increased centralisation in the north. This does not motivate them to stay here. Young people want to live in places where they feel that they are part of the community and can take part in decision-making processes. When we see services and activities get moved out of the outlying districts, we see it as a lack of knowledge of conditions in the north. If the Government wants to develop North Norway, this centralisation must stop. The county reform has been demotivating for people in Troms og Finnmark county and has not been good for our relationship with Oslo. We have felt that the reform

has been forced on us and that we were not invited to take part in the discussions leading to such an important decision. The counties may have merged, but they are more divided now.

We are pleased to have been able to give our opinions in connection with the work on the new white paper on the Arctic. We have enjoyed participating and have learned a lot. The panel members are also very happy with the comprehensive, broad and positive process that has been undertaken to incorporate our opinions. But it is also important to us that we are able to exert real influence and that our input is listened to. The Prime Minister said at Agenda Nord-Norge 2019, an annual event that brings together leaders, thinkers and other stakeholders, that the youth panel will help to make the new white paper on the Arctic a white paper for young people too. We are excited to see what will happen after the white paper has been presented. That is what is most important to us. Real youth participation is when our opinions are translated into practical policy.

When designing a good policy for the north, it is important that everything hangs together. Infrastructure, the business sector, education cannot be discussed as separate topics because they all merge into each other. The same is true of value creation, climate change and the environment, health, integration, Sami issues, identity and culture. In this input from the youth panel all these topics are equally important and interlinked.



Figure 1.20
In its recommendations, the youth panel has highlighted the importance of involving young people in international cooperation. Here Foreign Minister Ine Eriksen Søreide and Danish Foreign Minister Jeppe Kofod meet members of the youth panel in Tromsø on 14 August.
Photo: Ministry of Foreign Affairs



Figure 1.5 The youth panel organised a public meeting in Tromsø on 19 September. Prime Minister Erna Solberg, Minister of Foreign Affairs Ine Eriksen Søreide, Minister of Children and Families Kjell Ingolf Ropstad and then Leader of the Liberal Party Trine Skei Grande took part.
Photo: Office of the Prime Minister

The youth panel's input to the Government's white paper on the Arctic



Figure 1.7 The youth panel pointed out that Sami life and culture must be seen as a natural part of Norwegian culture. Panel member Inga Márjá Andersdatter Lango asked the visiting Government ministers questions about reindeer husbandry at the public meeting in Tromsø on 19 September.
Photo: Office of the Prime Minister

Young people must be invited to participate...

... and must be taken seriously

Politicians must involve young people actively in debates, meetings and decision-making processes and must ensure that there is an ongoing dialogue. Young people must be given opportunities to speak. Information, flexibility and goodwill are important in order to include young people and ensure that proposals from us do not just disappear under piles of paper in offices around the country. Real youth participation is achieved when young people are actively sought out by politicians who explain things in ways that we can understand and want to hear our opinion about matters that affect young people. We must be given the chance to put forward proposals, ask questions and raise issues at municipal council meetings. Being sent links to the municipality's website with 700 pages of documents and a short deadline for reading them is not what youth participation is about. Nor do we want to just be there for decoration when politicians need a selfie in a newspaper. Young people must be involved at an earlier stage of processes, so that we actually have a chance to influence decisions. It is important that we are not just invited to sprinkle a bit of glitter on the proceedings when things have really already been decided. There is no point in going to municipal council meetings if all the decisions have already been taken at group meetings beforehand. Everyone who is responsible for dealing with important issues that affect young people should phone up a young person. It is important to us to feel that we are regarded as intelligent people who can give good advice. The Nye stemmer project, a project supported by SpareBank 1 Nord-Norge that involved gathering the views of 100 young people on how North Norway should be developed, and the report from the project, which outlines challenges and solutions, have shown that it is possible to achieve real results by listening to a wide range of young people.

The project has shown that we can provide information that can help secure a good future for North Norway. It feels more genuine and right when the conversations are on our terms, when we are not under pressure to be so correct or say things that are expected of us. Politicians and others must not be afraid to encourage young people to get involved. There is no harm in asking us. Most young people know more than they think they do; sometimes we just need a push in the right direction.

We want to have communities where young people are in the driving seat and where it is not only adults who get to make decisions and focus on issues they think are important. There is a great deal of talk about the importance of making the region an attractive place to live. To make this happen, youth centres, sports halls, cultural centres and modern schools need to be built. These are the kinds of things that will make us stay. When we are able to thrive, we do not feel a need to move away. Communication with pupil councils and youth councils should be mandatory when important decisions are being made. It is not only the voices of those of us who are actively engaged in our communities that should be heard, but also the voices of young people who are not usually politically active or do not usually put forward their views.

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Recommendations

- The secretaries of the youth councils must be given enough resources and training to be able to run dynamic youth councils that can have real influence and make a real impact.
- The regional forum for dialogue on Arctic policy should be open to young people, so that we have a direct line of communication to the Government.
- We want to have more projects like SpareBank 1 Nord-Norge's Nye stemmer project where we can participate on our own terms and influence North Norway's future.
- A youth coordinator for the Arctic should be appointed with responsibility for following up the municipalities' work on youth issues. The requirement to have a youth council is followed up in very different ways.
- Meetings with young people should be an obligatory part of the programme when Government ministers visit the north so that we have a real opportunity to influence policy.
- Sami young people must be included in all efforts targeting young people.
- Architects, urban planners and road authorities must talk to young people, and things must be designed and constructed on our terms. It is this that is real youth participation.
- Political committees should involve youth councils and pupil councils in matters that affect young people.
- A national youth council should be established, and North Norway should be represented on it.
- When future white papers on the Arctic are being prepared, youth panels must be established to ensure youth participation throughout the process. The youth panel must be made up of young people from all parts of North Norway.



Figure 1.4 A number of meetings with members of the youth panel have been held in connection with the work on the white paper on the Arctic. Here Minister of Defence Frank Bakke-Jensen is talking to three young people from Kirkenes. Photo: Ministry of Defence

A broad range of attractive cultural activities ...

Politicians who do not invest in culture do not invest in young people. We need to feel that things are happening around us. Cultural activities are very important to create dynamic, attractive communities. We need good meeting places where young people feel welcome. Cultural activities help to create a good social environment because they get people involved and make them feel like part of a team, which can help prevent exclusion and bullying. Participating in festivals, film workshops, revues, and architecture and design activities helps to build optimism, team spirit and a sense of belonging. Participation in cultural activities enables young people to give each other support, get to know each other better and learn from each other. Cultural activities give us an arena on our own terms, which generates a sense of well-being and acceptance. Cultural activities teach young people how to express themselves, and can give those who do not excel in other ways a chance to shine. Therefore culture is also important for integration. Low-threshold, alcohol-free cultural events for young people mean a lot, especially in small communities. There are not enough suitable cultural activities being offered in the outlying districts. Small municipalities should work together on common activities so that these can take place more frequently. Transport arrangements need to be considered as well. Events should be developed over time, so that young people can build a sense of ownership to them. And there must be continuity in order to establish traditions. Adaptation to different age groups is also important. Young people range in age from 10 to 28 years old. Teenagers in particular experience rapid growth and change in terms of maturity and personality development. Cultural arenas need to be targeted so that young people can meet others with the same needs and interests.

The larger cities also have a responsibility to invite young people from the outlying communities to their activities. Art and music festivals such as Rakettnatt, Winterland, Varangerfestivalen and Midnattsrocken are already good at doing this. The major festivals and events that receive government funding must be encouraged to target activities towards young people. The European Capital of Culture should not be just for Bodø, but for all young people in the north. It is important to remember that culture is not just about music. It includes visual art, the performing arts and film, and more should be invested in these in the north. Design and architecture are also important for communities that want young people to thrive. Many people do not understand how important design can be to us and how it can lead to a better sense of well-being.

Sami culture is important across North Norway and is the young people of the region identify closely with it. Contemporary Sami joik (chanting songs), modern Sami design and Sami art are very popular and we are proud of them. Sami musicians like Ella Marja and Sami influencers on social media are important to young people. The fact that the film Frozen II was inspired by Sápmi, the homelands of the Sami people, meant a lot to Sami youth. Arenas that bring together young indigenous people, like the Riddu Riđđu Festival, are also very important to us.

“Low-threshold, alcohol-free cultural events for young people mean a lot, especially in small communities. There are not enough suitable cultural activities being offered in the outlying districts.”

... will encourage more young people to stay in the north

Recommendations

- There is a need for better knowledge and a better funding framework to ensure there is an adequate range of cultural activities in the outlying districts.
- Festivals that are held in the outlying communities, such as the Riddu Riđđu Festival and the Træna Festival, should be given more funding.
- A dedicated cultural fund should be established that targets young people in North Norway, and can be used to support young performers and to arrange courses and workshops. We would like to see more youth centres established along the lines of the Tvibit cultural and creative hub, which provides a wide range of activities for young people.
- We want to see the Sami culture as a beacon, not as something that is withering away. Cultural institutions in North Norway should feature Sami history, art, traditional food culture, kofta (traditional dress) and joik (chanting songs) more prominently.
- Knowledge about duodji (traditional Sami handicrafts), joik and traditional Sami cooking is not always passed on through the family like it used to be. Activities related to these should be made available through a Sami cultural centre.
- Culture is more than just music. The Government must give more support to visual art, the performing arts and film in North Norway.
- A digital overview of cultural activities should be made available via a user-friendly app.
- Performers from the north should be used more in identity-building and branding activities for Norway.
- The North Norway Design and Architecture Centre (NODA) should receive funding to provide courses for young people in the north. There needs to be a greater focus on design and architecture in the north to increase the well-being of young people.
- Concert halls and other cultural buildings should be given priority in growth centres in North Norway.
- A culture pass that gives young people in North Norway discounts on public cultural activities should be introduced.

A wide range of sports activities is very important...

... for young people in the north

Sports activities are important for well-being, for developing friendships, and for learning and mastering new skills. They also provide a very good arena for practising inclusion and integration. Playing sports helps people to get to know others quickly and make new friends. Many learn a great deal and develop themselves through sports activities – as players, coaches and referees. There is a need for a systematic effort to organise sports activities targeted towards young people, not just children. Events and tournaments mean that things are happening. Municipalities can cooperate more on working together, such as by creating joint teams in small communities. It is important to make an extra effort to provide sports activities for girls. There must also be other sports activities than just football available in outlying districts – things like climbing, handball, martial arts, gymnastics and dance. Many young people are interested in eSports. Programmes for these should be made available.

There is a lot of talk about lighting in homes, but lighting in sports halls is just as important. There is a need to build good quality halls that are up to the standard expected in 2021. This will improve the well-being of young people and make them want to stay in the north so their children can experience the same things. Nor should it be necessary for top-level athletes to move south to develop their abilities. It must be possible for athletes to hone their skills in North Norway regardless of where they come from. The surfaces, air quality and equipment that are necessary for their sports activity must be of a good enough standard. For example, we need good quality artificial turf pitches, goal nets, balls, and a ventilation and heating system that allows participants to enjoy a refreshing and fun training session!

Being allowed to combine school and sports has great value for the many children and young people who are interested in sports. It is important to have and expand good school opportunities in North Norway, such as those provided by Norway's top-level sports high schools. This will allow pupils and students from North Norway to follow their sporting dreams in this region.

Sports activities involve more than just competition, sweat and training. They also give young people a chance to get to know the business sector and open the door to new opportunities. The Jakten på bolyst project initiated by Finnmark football district is an example of this. This project is designed to highlight all the good things about living in the north. It has produced a sense of pride and belonging in small communities and has involved both politicians and businesses. More of these kinds of initiatives should be encouraged, so that the energy and team spirit from sports activities can be used to even greater effect.

It is important to combat racism and harassment in sport. This is unacceptable behaviour. There should be awards available that can be presented to clubs and organisations that work systematically to combat racism, homophobia, hate campaigns, harassment and other undesirable behaviour.

International cooperation in sports builds confidence and provides a good learning arena. Training and competing with other countries helps us to further refine our skills. Barents cooperation projects in the north, like the Barents Games, are very important to young people.

Recommendations

- A fund dedicated to sports halls in the north should be established, as this is crucial for encouraging young people to stay, and for motivating families with children to settle in North Norway.
- Sports activities should be used as an arena for inclusion and integration in communities in North Norway. There should be specific awareness-raising projects to combat harassment and hate campaigns. Clubs and organisations that carry out successful efforts in this area should be rewarded. The authorities should give some recommendations for measures to reduce harassment. What is an appropriate punishment and how many people should it encompass?
- Local projects can help to reproduce the energy and solidarity inspired by sports activities on a broader scale in small local communities. There should be more initiatives of this kind.
- Norwegian sports associations (the Norwegian Olympic and Paralympic Committee and Confederation of Sports and the department for top-level sports, Olympiatoppen) must be allocated resources at both central and local levels to allow young people to participate in top-level athletics in North Norway. As many as possible should be able to develop within their disciplines for as long as possible without having to leave our region.
- A fund should be established for computer gatherings, LAN parties and eSports, so that participants can apply for grants to start up LAN gaming and eSports tournaments in their local areas. The Barents Games should include eSports as an event. The digital distribution platform Discord should be used more actively to bring young people together.

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International cooperation in the Arctic is important...

... to young people in the north

Many young people in the north, for instance in the town of Sør-Varanger, have experience with international cooperation because we live near the borders to Russia, Finland and Sweden. People-to-people cooperation is important, and many of us have grown up with frequent interaction with other young people from neighbouring countries. This breaks down walls of prejudice and builds trust between people, such as between inhabitants of the border areas of Norway, Russia and the other Nordic countries.

The Barents cooperation is an important platform for many young people. We learn a lot from taking part in the projects and the work of the Barents Regional Youth Council. The Arctic cooperation, where we can meet young people from the USA, Canada and the EU, is also exciting and helps us to see the Arctic as an attractive place. Initiatives for young people, such as Arctic Frontiers Young and Emerging Leaders and the student conference High North Dialogue are vital for providing experience from international cooperation. This kind of contact opens up opportunities for young people in the Arctic. It is rewarding for young students

“It is rewarding for young students in the north to be involved in cooperation with other countries. We also learn a lot from contact through cultural and sports activities with young people in other countries. This is an aspect of living in the north that should be communicated more widely at the national level.”

in the north to be involved in cooperation with other countries. We also learn a lot from contact through cultural and sports activities with young people in other countries. This is an aspect of living in the north that should be communicated more widely at the national level. This could make more people want to study here. For young people from the Sami community, the international aspect is very important because our people extends across national borders and we find support in indigenous young people from other countries. We learn from one another, we inspire each other.

Sometimes young people in the north will be invited to hold presentations for guests from abroad. We think this is interesting and it should be a regular part of Ministry of Foreign Affairs programmes, for instance. The Arctic Frontiers initiative has given young people an opportunity to voice their opinions to the most important politicians taking part. There should be more of this type of participation by young people at international meetings.

Many young people are frightened by media reports on conflict and escalating military activity in the Arctic. It is important to us to be informed about what is happening in ways that help us to understand the big picture of international politics. Politicians should have special talks with young people about this. We should be given more information about the Arctic Council that is targeted towards young people.

Young people think it is reassuring to have an armed forces presence in North Norway. It is a good feeling to see that the garrison of Porsanger is being developed and prioritised. It would be helpful if the Government could speak to young people more about military issues, so we can understand what is going on.

Recommendations

- Efforts should be made to increase international cooperation for young people in the Arctic. Educational institutions and conferences that work with this should be given more support so that a greater number of people can participate.
- More information should be communicated about the many places in North Norway where it is possible to take part in international work. This is an advantage of living in the north that could attract young people.
- We should be given more information about the Arctic Council and be able to take part in some meetings about it.
- The Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry should hold special orientation meetings for young people when they are in North Norway. The same applies to the Armed Forces.
- There must be an increase in support for projects for young people under the Barents cooperation and the Barents Games. A support scheme should be established for young people looking to create projects that provides us with courses and instruction in how to apply for funding from the Norwegian Barents Secretariat.
- Steps should be taken to create a Barents network for young people, as either an app or a website where organisations or individual actors can announce openings for their Barents projects.
- Young people should be invited automatically when guests from abroad visit North Norway. This is a good learning opportunity for us and a good way to promote the participation of young people.
- A seminar-based exchange programme should be established for young people in the north, in cooperation with leading countries in technology, innovation and industry.

“Young people should be invited automatically when guests from abroad visit North Norway.”



Figure 1.11 The youth panel is made up of young people with different backgrounds and from all parts of North Norway. Here Beate Marie Hægdahl Paulsen gives a presentation at a meeting with Minister of Foreign Affairs Ine Eriksen Søreide in Hammerfest. **Photo:** Trond Ivar Lunga, iFinmark.

Quality of life ...

... for young people in the north

It is important for young people to have a good environment to grow up in, and to have prospects for a good education, apprenticeships and secure jobs. It also means a lot to have good municipal services, to know that the police will answer when we call, that rescue helicopters are on call so we can get to hospital and receive the necessary help in an emergency. We need proper housing and reliable internet. Young people in the north need to know that the school they attend follows modern standards with up-to-date books and IT equipment and that its buildings satisfy the quality requirements of today. The tools and equipment used in vocational programmes need to stay up-to-date with society today as well. Car mechanics cannot be stuck fixing 1980s models, they need contemporary vehicles. Outdated tools and equipment can also be dangerous! The equipment needs to be modern so that vocational trainees can receive a future-oriented education that society needs.

Capable teachers who do not miss a lot of school must be recruited. Too much teacher absence at small schools has a negative effect on instruction. There is more bullying and exclusion when pupils are left to themselves. When a school is weak, and pupils do not receive the follow-up they are entitled to, it is up to the parents to provide

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for the children’s necessary academic development. In those cases, pupils who have parents with the most resources will fare best. This creates inequality and leads to a class distinction we cannot accept in Norway in 2021.

Physical and mental health is a key issue for young people in the north, particularly considering the COVID-19 situation, with already remote communities in the north experiencing even greater isolation. Many young people are struggling with this. We need effective measures to safeguard mental health among young people in the north. This applies especially to boys, who we know have a higher threshold for seeking help. Many young people feel great loneliness as a result of the current situation, and little is known about the impacts this will have.

A good, secure childhood is of the utmost importance. Local recreational activities and social meeting places play a vital part in young people’s well-being. Youth centres where everyone feels welcome and that offer a variety of services, such as youth health services, are vital. These centres will be well worth the investment since they help to prevent drug abuse. Young people who are bored with no place to go end up in situations where they hang around at shopping malls or other places until they are chased away. Activities should be provided so that young people do not end up in unhealthy environments with drug abuse as a part of their daily life. Follow-up by attentive adults is crucial. Services for those who are struggling, such as outreach youth workers and low-threshold counselling teams, must be available as well. The outreach youth workers in Tromsø, for example, offer activities such as climbing and meal service, but above all they are always available. They can provide many with the assistance and security they do not get at home, and they have come to the aid of many young people.

Low-threshold services must also be provided for young people living in the outlying districts.

The municipalities should have better cooperation so that they can work together on services. Disabled young people must not be forgotten either, as they are entitled to the same services as anyone else. Particularly in the outlying districts, it appears that this is not being adequately followed up.

Counselling schemes and courses for young parents are also important, as well as brochures and additional tailored information. It can be difficult to be a young mother. Maternity groups for young mothers should be organised, and not just for those with mental health or addiction problems. It should be a positive thing to have a child, but there are preconceived notions about having a child too young. It is important for young mothers to know they can still get an education and have opportunities. Good day care services are essential.

Bullying is a growing problem in society, particularly for those who are different somehow. Bullying can take place online, in the schoolyards and other places. It may be about appearance, sexual orientation, ethnicity or religion. Many young people do not dare to be themselves out of fear of being different. Bullying can be one of the things that triggers mental health problems in many young people. Efforts to prevent racism, harassment and bullying from the early school years are essential to create a tolerant society where young people can thrive.

Priority must be given to building strong local communities. We must not end up with unnatural commuter communities with workers who are always just passing through and do not care about getting to know the local people.

Recommendations

- People who come to North Norway from other countries must not be placed in introductory classes where they do not learn Norwegian.
- The counties must create more meeting places. It is motivating to meet others from the same county at the youth county council and cultural programmes for young people.
- There should be more recreational activities that are free of charge, such as the youth activity card concept. Youth centres following the model of the Tvibit cultural and creative hub should be established at more locations, and municipalities must cooperate on this.
- As in the Tvibit model, there should be greater focus on drop-in health centres where a public health nurse or psychologist is available to young people free of charge.
- We need better and more readily accessible low-threshold counselling services for young people who are struggling with psychological issues so they can get the help they need more quickly; it is important to minimise waiting periods.
- A North Norway version of the Helsesista/Helsebro social media help lines should be established as one of many measures to help promote good mental health in young people in the north.
- More resources must be targeted towards preventing bullying and all forms of harassment.
- More public support should be available to young people who want to buy a residence in North Norway.

Identity and pride:

It is important to young people to feel proud of their part of the country. We want to feel that North Norway is given recognition by the rest of the country. There is a clear need for a nationwide distribution of more information about North Norway. People need to know that we are a high-tech, developed part of Norway and not just a field of ice. Many people from the south do not even know that we lack a railway line here. They are so used to good infrastructure and trains that they are unable to imagine what things are like for us up here. It is important that we are not forgotten and left out. That can diminish the feeling of national pride among young people in the north.

There is an unnatural distinction between south and north in Norway that should be eliminated. Textbooks should have more information about the history and culture of North Norway so that we learn about the place we come from, not just about other places. It is important to talk about all the war heroes of the north as well, for instance in Finnmark, not just the resistance movement in the south. And it is important that everyone knows how much North Norway suffered during the war, with the forced evacuations, for instance, and that much of this part of the country was burned to the ground and had to be rebuilt from scratch.

The authorities and media must think about how they portray North Norway. We often do not recognise ourselves in the pictures presented of us. Efforts should be made to change negative images and stereotypes.

The story about North Norway must have a positive angle. Young, capable people will not be drawn to the north if they are always told everything is harder in North Norway. Many believe it is worse than it really is and move away for that reason.

The media and politicians should make sure to talk about good joint projects, nice things that happen and encouraging stories as well. Young people need to hear more good news about people starting up businesses. There is so much here that is good that we need to take care of and be proud of. If North Norway were presented in a more positive light, it would also be possible to encourage new people to move here from other parts of Norway, for example young people in creative industries looking for jobs in unique places. There is a lot of talk about the population declining, but it is important that young women know there are other reasons to stay than just to get married and have children.

There should be cooperation and dialogue between the counties in the north and between the municipalities. Adults must take responsibility for speaking together constructively. They can learn from youth politicians who are less concerned about party lines. Lots of arguing and disrespect has a negative impact on young people. No one wants to be described as merely whiny and difficult, which is how the north is often presented. People in the ministries must get to know North Norway better. We must have more people from North Norway in national government positions.

"Young, capable people will not be drawn to the north if they are always told everything is harder in North Norway."

We must talk about the north in a different way

Recommendations

- The Government must use 'we' and not 'you' when speaking about the north.
- Campaigns for informing people about the north. More feel-good stories in the media.
- The counties and municipalities must acknowledge their responsibility to promote positive issues.
- There should be more information about North Norway, including Sami life, in the national school curricula. War history should more clearly reflect the efforts in North Norway.
- The regional cooperation schemes should be strengthened. Every region should have a regional youth council such as the one in Nord-Troms district to increase cooperation and exchange experience across municipal boundaries.
- There should be a joint effort between decision-makers and young people in the north to define five focus areas for the North Norway of tomorrow. What do we intend to be the best at? What do we plan to focus on? Examples of this are: 'Create the Silicon Valley of North Norway' or 'North Norway will become a world leader in renewable energy and the green transition' or 'North Norway will become the world's largest exporter of fisheries and aquaculture products.'

"The Government must use 'we' and not 'you' when speaking about the north".



Figure 1.16 The first meeting of the youth panel was a digital meeting held on 1 July. Prime Minister Erna Solberg took part. Akkaradet Sateev, Kevin Berro and Hamerton Omondi gave a joint presentation from Tvibit youth centre. **Photo:** Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Young people in the north need good jobs ...

... and favourable conditions for innovation

Local businesses and industry and good jobs are a key factor if young people are to stay in the north. We need industries that are suited to local resources. Vocational training is important. Young people should be able to find secure jobs.

There is a need for better contact between schools and businesses, and more concrete actions. It is important not to spend more time and resources on evaluations than on actually doing something. Combining work and school, like in the Steigen model with its four years of on-the-job paid learning, is a good solution. Not all young people have work experience. Businesses should be encouraged to cooperate with young people; it does not need to cost much. It would benefit them to cooperate with us and get new ideas.

Good jobs are not enough to attract bright young minds. Good housing and something to do after work hours are also needed. In order to get couples to settle in the north, it is important that the partner is able to find a job, too, and that good family services and activities are available.

We should promote more labour immigration because this is very important for economic development in the north and thus for all of Norway. We need to be more aware of how we respond to this group of immigrants and how we accept them in our communities, so that we can keep key workers with necessary skill sets.

We need innovative companies that create value and new jobs. The new jobs we need cannot all be provided by the public sector. But innovation does not happen on its own. There is too little capital available in the north. Nearly all successful entrepreneurs go to Oslo to find financing for their projects. This must be reversed so that it is profitable to be innovative in the north. This would make it possible to establish a start-up community that would be large enough to have ripple effects and create value. Pursuing innovation and business ideas should be more widely encouraged. North Norway could be a pilot for new solutions. The ferrosilicon plant Finnjord AS, with its vision of becoming the world's first CO₂-free production plant, is inspiring and shows that great things can happen in the north.

"... innovation does not happen on its own. There is too little capital available in the north. Nearly all successful entrepreneurs go to Oslo to find financing for their projects. This must be reversed so that it is profitable to be innovative in the north."

Recommendations

- There is a need for better information about job openings, for instance in a job app.
- There is a need for more systematic support for apprenticeships, for example by setting up apprentice councils.
- There is a need for summer jobs for young people in their home municipality.
- Young people in the north should have ready access to information about how to start their own businesses. There is a need for advisory services on this at educational institutions.
- A school of entrepreneurship should be established, and courses for entrepreneurs should be held at various locations in the north so that more young people can learn how to start their own business locally.
- Steps must be taken to make it more attractive for private investors to invest in start-ups by young people in the north, so that the focus is not on public financing alone. Private investors from throughout the country and abroad need to be informed of these investment opportunities. The ministries and embassies should be involved in this work.
- An investment fund for young people in North Norway should be established.
- There should be greater awareness of the importance of labour immigration for the development of North Norway. Diversity at the workplace in this region should be supported by business and trade associations.



Figure 1.18
The 50 members of the youth panel come from different places and have different backgrounds. What they all have in common is that they have opinions about the future development of North Norway. In several meetings, Parahini Parabaran from Karlsøy emphasised the importance of preventing bullying and racism.
Photo: Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Education

Young people in the north are very concerned with their education and skills development.

It is important for the future of North Norway that educational institutions in the north are dynamic and competitive. Labour markets, housing policy and education all need to be viewed as parts of the same whole. There needs to be a dialogue with the business community about which kinds of qualifications will be relevant. Pupils should have the opportunity to get practical experience with businesses, and there should be business day events held at the schools to encourage thinking about innovation and ideas from early on. Flexible solutions for education closer to home would motivate more people to stay in the north. Decentralised upper secondary education and easier access to higher education are part of the democratisation of knowledge.

Climate and the environment are also very important to young people. The educational institutions need to make sustainable choices and invest in solutions for the future.

The grants for upper secondary pupils and students are not good enough. The living allowance is so small it does not even cover housing expenses. This can create a class distinction where some decide they do not have the money to attend upper secondary school or study at university. It should be possible to pursue an education and attend upper secondary school close to home, because that is where you have your personal life. Many pupils have to commute for hours on bad roads to the nearest upper secondary school. This is a hardship and puts them at a disadvantage. They have less time to do their homework, hang out with friends,

“Upper secondary schools must ensure that young people learn everything they need to know about respecting sexual diversity and about gender and identity.”

and play sports and such. Often they need to get up very early in the morning and end up with problems sleeping and a disrupted sleep cycle. Having a good day or not can depend on whether you got that extra hour of sleep on the bus. Employees receive compensation for travel expenses. Pupils should get something similar. Then more people would complete upper secondary school and pursue an education, which would help to keep expertise in the north.

The LOSA scheme for local remote teaching for first-year upper secondary students so they can continue to live at home is really good. Moving away from home at 15 makes it more likely that pupils will not return home after completing their schooling. As a result, the ones who remain are those without education. It is also important to promote and encourage vocational paths to working life. Academics are not necessary for everyone. Vocational programmes at upper secondary school and vocational technical colleges are very valuable.

School is very important as a meeting place. Much can be achieved through schools as an arena, for example, when it comes to mental health, integration or preventing bullying. Sexuality is a topic that gets left behind along the educational path. Sexuality education should be integrated in some form from day care, through primary school and especially at lower secondary school. Sexuality education should be provided by young adults and not 60-year-old teachers. Upper secondary schools must ensure that young people learn everything they need to know about respecting sexual diversity and about gender and identity. Schools create culture, and this is where we need a complete overhaul to fight stigmatisation.

The Government should also consider larger-scale measures for preventing drug use through schools. Drugs cause many pupils to drop out, whether from using them themselves or related family matters. This is a major problem not just for individuals but for society in the long term.

It is important to improve services in the north to help those with learning difficulties and dyslexia.

The same programmes for assistance should be available across the country. School buildings in the north need to satisfy modern standards as well. If young people are ashamed of run-down schools and buildings, they will not stay. People who had a difficult time at a bad school as a child will not want to send their own children to that same school.

Given the increasingly rapid pace of change, and with the objectives of the national skills reform for lifelong learning in mind, steps should be taken to establish broader programmes for re-education. This is of great importance to development in the north.

Recommendations

- There should be a report on or a renewal of the school structure to prevent drug abuse, homophobia, racism, harassment and bullying.
- Universities in the north should establish smaller campuses at multiple locations.
- There is a need for study centres in the outlying districts. We must be able to sit together and study in groups or online.
- Upper secondary schools should have a system for closer follow-up of pupils who commute.
- Schemes for room rental with resident landlords and free meals should be established. This would improve the well-being of pupils living away from home.
- It should be possible to study technical subjects – a North Norway version of the Norwegian University of Science and Technology.
- Initiatives where businesses and vocational study programmes cooperate to provide vocational training and local recruitment to the business community should be continued, in order to encourage young people to remain in this part of the country.
- The framework for Arctic-oriented educational programmes at UiT - The Arctic University of Norway and Nord University should be strengthened.
- Absence limits for upper secondary school need to be considered case-by-case instead of so rigidly that it pushes out those who are most vulnerable.
- The Speak for yourself project has meant a lot to many young people and should be offered more widely to strengthen integration and inclusion and prevent drop-out from upper secondary school.
- A stable corps of teachers is important. Wide-spread teacher absence opens the door to bullying and an unhealthy school environment. Individuals having trouble at school need help from professionally trained teachers and not just substitute teachers without proper training.
- Programmes from the organisation MOT, which works to prevent bullying, should be introduced in more schools.
- The authorities should map whether all children and young people in North Norway receive the swimming instruction they are supposed to get.
- It must be possible for people to renew their skills throughout their lives. The Government should support educational programmes that people can follow while continuing to work. If for instance a young nursing assistant wants to study to become a midwife while still working, this should not be difficult to accomplish.

Infrastructure

We will not get very far with strategies and initiatives unless infrastructure is part of the plan. The roads have to be good enough. We need to have buses that run, and that correspond with the ferries. There is no point in providing good jobs in fisheries, for instance, and top-notch concerts and lots of great activities if all the boat services stop running and young people have no way of getting there. It is not easy to start upper secondary school at the age of 15 if you are unable to get home on weekends, or have to leave late Friday night, go back early Sunday morning, and spend a total of 10 hours on a bus every time you visit your family. In many areas, cutting back on public transportation is the same as planning for people to move away.

Port development and road construction must be given priority. The roads have to be good enough for businesses to invest and for fisheries to get their fish to market. The network of airports with short runways is also vital. Fare prices mean a lot for young people. It must not be more expensive to travel within North Norway than to take a trip to Oslo.

“Many view this project as being 200 years behind schedule, since the first railway line in Norway was built 200 years ago. And many point out that building this line would not only provide an environmentally friendly mode of transport and improve connections between the north and the rest of the country; it would also be a signal of political willingness to invest widely in the north”

The distances in the north are vast. But we must look into how we can reduce them. Digital solutions are particularly important, and the coronavirus pandemic has shown that virtual platforms open up new opportunities. Digital infrastructure, such as access to broadband, must be given top priority.

Nearly all young people in the north are keen to see the railway line extended as far north as Tromsø. Many view this project as being 200 years behind schedule, since the first railway line in Norway was built 200 years ago. And many point out that building this line would not only provide an environmentally friendly mode of transport and improve connections between the north and the rest of the country; it would also be a signal of political willingness to invest widely in the north and show confidence in North Norway's future as a region. A lot of young people think that this railway line should be built because it will open up opportunities for the region, for families, for businesses, for students and for commuters. Those in favour of this project believe that the railway could be a good way of linking together the counties and providing connections to Finland and Russia, and would result in fewer foreign trucks on the roads and fewer traffic accidents. But these supporters also say that it is essential to build the railway line in dialogue with reindeer herders.

It must be pointed out that not all members of the youth panel support the expansion of the railway line to Tromsø. Some believe that it is much more important to build roads and develop ports, and that a new railway line should not be given priority. Young reindeer herders do NOT want the railway line to be built, because it would ruin so much grazing land and the trains would be dangerous for reindeer and other animals.

Recommendations

- Young people in the north must be included in dialogues about infrastructure development. Transport solutions are important to keep us in this region.
- Public transport must be planned to allow young people to live in the outlying areas without being stuck there.
- Fares for young people on all modes of transport must be reduced. A new youth fare scheme should be introduced allowing young people in the north to travel on public transport in the entire county where they live for a fixed low price.
- A new bus card should be issued for all of North Norway that makes it possible to travel across counties without having to buy a new ticket.
- The number of airports with short runways should be increased, not reduced. Good airports in the north are essential.
- Investments in expanding broadband services in the north must be continued, to make access available throughout the region.

“Public transport must be planned to allow young people to live in the outlying areas without being stuck there.”



Figure 1.22
Achieving real youth participation is a key topic in the youth panel's recommendations. This message was communicated to Minister of Children and Families Kjell Ingolf Ropstad in Svolvær on 18 September. Here Mr Ropstad is engaged in a lively discussion with Marthe Øijord and Max Gårdvik Hoffman.
Photo: Ministry of Children and Families

Climate change, the environment, sustainability



"Value creation is important but not at any cost. We must not over-consume resources so that today's young people have to pay the price in the years to come."

Figure 1.24
Infrastructure, culture, design and targeted work on youth issues by regional and local authorities are among the priorities in the youth panel's recommendations and were key topics at a meeting with Prime Minister Erna Solberg in Bodø on 18 September. The Prime Minister had an interesting discussion with Maliken Vembre, Øyvind Johan Olsen, Maren Saedi and Nicole Natalie Furnes.
Photo: Office of the Prime Minister

All young people are concerned about climate change and the environment and want to ensure that the North Norway of tomorrow is built on sound, sustainable solutions. Climate change is frightening, and fast action is needed. It is important to pursue an ambitious climate policy. The politicians of today are the stewards of our future, and there is no time to lose in restructuring society and finding green solutions. Value creation is important but not at any cost. We must not overconsume resources so that today's young people have to pay the price in the years to come. Mining, wind farms and oil and gas recovery are not necessarily good choices.

The polar ice is melting and the climate is changing. This has an impact on reindeer husbandry. Predators are a major problem. These are not only problems for the Sami people, they affect a vital part of Norway's culture and business sector. We must use our own resources, such as reindeer meat. The COVID-19 pandemic has shown us that it is beneficial to be self-sufficient. It is also more environmentally friendly. We cannot sit here in the middle of our resources and not know how to use them. Berries, fish, reindeer, farming – we know a great deal about these and our insight should be used.

Recommendations

- All young people are interested in climate change and the environment. Politicians: take care of what we are to live on when we become your bosses!
- Norway must adopt a more ambitious climate policy for the Arctic.
- Green restructuring needs to happen more quickly. It is essential to create green industry in the north, along with green jobs.
- It is important to design schemes to motivate and encourage investment in environment-friendly solutions.
- Better public transport services and more infrastructure for bicycling in urban areas.
- Reindeer meat is environmentally friendly and healthy; there is a need to take steps to enable more people to eat it.
- We must prevent food waste and make it common practice to use all parts of a product. The entire fish or reindeer needs to be utilised.

"Politicians: take care of what we are to live on when we become your bosses!"

Sami life ...

... is a part of who we are

The ownership of Sami life and culture that young people in the north feel is part of our identity. The authorities must not think they can just place all the responsibility on the Sámediggi (Sami parliament) and that will take care of all Sami issues. It is important to provide resources for language instruction for all young people in the north who want to learn Sami, and that there is greater awareness of the need to build language skills. We must preserve knowledge about Sami life and make sure we do not lose the knowledge that is not written down in books, that has to be learned. We have lost enough as it is through the Norwegianisation policy.



Figure 1.28
Skills development and good educational programmes are a key element in the youth panel's recommendations. At a meeting at UiT - The Arctic University of Norway on 19 September with Prime Minister Erna Solberg, Minister of Foreign Affairs Ine Eriksen Søreide, Minister of Children and Families Kjell Ingolf Ropstad and then Leader of the Liberal Party Trine Skei Grande, dentistry student Anna Bjørn made it clear that strong educational institutions are vital.
Photo: Office of the Prime Minister

Reindeer husbandry is a key industry in the north. Traditional reindeer husbandry is sustainable and environment-friendly and provides fantastic meat. This is important for future food production. Reindeer husbandry is affected by major development projects, such as the Nussir mining company, cabin communities and wind farms. These developments are discouraging to young reindeer herders. This is a breach of trust between the state and the Sami people. But it meant a lot when the state helped us to feed the reindeer last winter. That makes us feel that we are important and that our industry means something for Norway as a whole. We would like to see this development continue.

The Sami community is extremely diverse. It is important not to try to force it to fit into a collective perspective. Mental health measures for the Sami population must be prioritised and must be based on cultural insight. More systematic efforts to prevent domestic violence are needed.

Young Samis want to feel proud of Sami life and culture, not ashamed. The film *Frozen II*, our joik (chanting songs) in the Stjernekamp music contest, with Sami musicians like Ella Marie and Vegard on prime-time TV, and the Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation's Sami-language, slow-TV documentary about reindeer husbandry have meant a lot to us. We want more things like that. It helps young Samis to feel included. Sami life must be a natural part of Norwegian culture as a matter of course, and not presented as a kind of pseudo folklore.

Recommendations

- There must be good schemes available to help young people who wish to be reindeer herders. This is important both for ensuring the future of a valuable industry and for continuing our common cultural heritage.
- We want more projects like the reindeer husbandry documentary. This is important for young Samis and increases understanding about Sami culture throughout Norway.
- More support must be provided to the reindeer husbandry industry, which has been sustainable and profitable for so many years.
- Sami cooking traditions need to be given a higher profile at food festivals, and Sápmi, the homelands of the Sami people, must be promoted as a food destination.
- Modern solutions and technology such as drones must be implemented in reindeer husbandry on the industry's terms.
- Development of other industries must not take place at the expense of reindeer husbandry. Sustainable land-use planning is vital; there must be dialogue early in the change process.
- There is a need for measures to increase competence and cultural understanding in public agencies. The rights of reindeer herders must be more clearly communicated to the municipalities.
- Solutions must be devised to make it possible to study the Sami language online, in apps and through other modern methods.
- It is particularly important to have high-quality schools in Sápmi (Sami homelands) in light of what has happened historically. Disorganisation in the municipalities and school systems in Sami areas leads to greater stigmatisation and more young people wanting to leave.
- Sami language instruction should be offered to all pupils in the north as an alternative to Norwegian Nynorsk.
- Sami National Day should be observed as a public holiday. For those who wish to observe it, this day should be exempt from being counted as part of the absence limit as long as it remains a regular school day.

"We must preserve knowledge about Sami life and make sure we do not lose the knowledge that is not written down in books, that has to be learned. We have lost enough as it is through the Norwegianisation policy. "

”The Arctic offers a wide-range of development opportunities of importance to the country as a whole. The white paper aims to set out a policy for safeguarding Norwegian interests in the Arctic and ensuring strong, vibrant communities in North Norway. To succeed, we need to know what motivates young people to pursue an education, settle and work in the north. I am very pleased to have received input from such a broad-based, insightful youth panel”

**Prime Minister
Erna Solberg**



The youth panel’s input to the Government’s white paper on the Arctic

A youth panel was appointed in the spring of 2020 to provide advice and insight to the Government in connection with the work on the new white paper on the Arctic.

The youth panel consists of a diverse group of young people from the counties of Nordland and Troms og Finnmark. Participants range from 16 to 28 years of age. Some of the members are politically active, some are active in sports or cultural arenas, while others are entrepreneurs. What unites these young people is that they all have clear views and ideas about what is needed to develop the communities in the north.