

# CAPACITY BUILDING



 Nordic  
Culture Point

 Nordic Council  
of Ministers

**Spreading, Empowering and  
Improving Green Habito network  
collaboration of Nordic-Baltic CSOs**

2023-2024

[www.unsdg.ee/cso-empowering/](http://www.unsdg.ee/cso-empowering/)

# Introduction

In our quest to forge a greener future for the Nordic-Baltic region, a visionary project emerged with the primary goal of bolstering Nordic-Baltic collaboration. This initiative was rooted in a commitment to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), aiming to catalyze sustainable lifestyle choices, green growth, and the empowerment of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs). It served as a beacon of hope and action, illuminating the path towards sustainability and collective empowerment. The project was designed to be a crucible of knowledge for NGO leaders, community members, young adults, and other key stakeholders who engaged with vulnerable groups. It sought to enlighten them on the importance of achieving the SDGs and the imperative to curb overconsumption due to its significant environmental and climatic repercussions.

## Project Partnerships:

- The project united partners from five Nordic countries and Estonia, encompassing educational, social, environmental, women's, and youth associations—all dedicated to the SDGs.
- These partners, along with policymakers, educational institutions, and green business representatives, formed a coalition of up to 100 individuals striving to be changemakers and facilitators within this vibrant network.

In essence, this project was a series of activities and a movement towards a more sustainable, cooperative, and empowered Nordic-Baltic region, where every stakeholder was a vital contributor to the green tapestry of our shared future.



# Project Activities



## I INTERNATIONAL TRAINING

Civil society ideas for the sustainable green future of Europe

26-28th May 2023, Tallinn, Estonia



## II INTERNATIONAL TRAINING AND STUDY VISIT

Empowerment of sustainability at local level by reducing overconsumption

12-15th October 2023, Helsinki, Finland



## III INTERNATIONAL TRAINING AND STUDY VISIT

Embracing circular economy by the empowerment of community sustainability

23-26th November 2023, Göteborg, Sweden



## SUSTAINABILITY CONFERENCE

Empowering CSOs and Communities for Sustainable Change: building the green future of the Nordic-Baltic region

3-6th March 2024, Reykjavík, Iceland

# I International Training

26-28th May 2023, Tallinn, Estonia

The Green Habito Training & Kickoff Conference 2023, titled “Civil Society Ideas for the Sustainable Green Future of Europe,” was a three-day event from the 25th to the 28th of May 2023. It encompassed an intensive program filled with high-level discussions, working groups, trainings and the development of civil society initiatives. This unique convergence of civil society representatives aimed to deliberate on the significant contributions of civil society and foster cooperation with the business and state sectors towards achieving sustainable development goals.

The conference served as a platform to elevate the international capacity and awareness of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) regarding sustainable lifestyles, environmental protection, and critical aspects of the green economy, such as the circular economy and the challenges of overconsumption. It was an opportunity to introduce good practices, innovative methodologies, and existing solutions, marking a significant step in promoting sustainable development across Europe.





In the conference a high level experts and guest have conducted a keynote speeches, participated in the panel discussions, conducted a trainings, workshops and working groups. we are grateful to the following experts for their contributions: Kaupo Heinma, Deputy Secretary General at Ministry of Climate of Estonia, Christer Haglund, Director of Nordic Council of Ministers´ Office in Estonia, Janne Rajala, President, Green Habito (Finland), Kaidi Tamm, Sustainable Development Programme, SEI Tallinn Jenni Kaupila, United Nations Association Finland Michael Søgaard Jørgensen, Aalborg University (Denmark) Tove Lund, Sustainable Living, The City of Göteborg (Sweden) Laufey Líndal Ólafsdóttir, Pepp, grasrótarstarfi fólks í fátækt (Iceland) Kristine Meek Stokke, Young ambassadors/Changemaker (Norway) Krista Kampus, European Green Capital 2023, Saandra Jaanika, Fridays For Future Estonia and many others. As results of the first project event: participants have been trained on project themes and developed own proposals for policy makers on circular economy and reduction overconsumption, improved CSOs capacity in SDGs; we developed a European Network “Green Habito” statement on the role of Civil Society Organisation for tackling green transition and sustainable development.





## II International Training

12-15th October 2023, Helsinki, Finland

The training covered two main topics: Introduction to the UN SDGs and responsible consumption, and capacity building in communication and networking.

Program included as training and discussion session, as study visit (meeting with UNA Finland work and visiting Helsinki green solutions and discovering urban space). Training provided participants with new skills and knowledge on CSO and community adaptation for a sustainable lifestyle, green transition and organisation resource efficient management, communication, digital society, advocacy and networking. Participants had as theoretical and practical approaches in the learning process. Communication is essential for raising awareness of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and mobilising people to take action to achieve them. The session on communication and networking taught participants how to communicate effectively about the SDGs to their communities and how to build partnerships (including sharing best practices and experiences of all engaged partners) with other organisations to promote sustainable living.

The visit to Helsinki focused on green solutions, and discovering urban space allowed participants to see firsthand how Helsinki works to become a more sustainable city. Participants visited several green projects, including a sustainable neighbourhood, a green roof, and a waste-to-energy plant. They also learned about Helsinki's urban planning process and how the city works to create a more livable and sustainable urban environment.





## III International Training

23–26th November 2023, Göteborg, Sweden

The training aimed to equip NGO leaders, community members, young adults, and other stakeholders working with vulnerable groups with the knowledge and skills necessary to champion sustainable development goals (SDGs). Training has been focusing on the promotion of sustainable lifestyle choices and green growth.

Participants understood the importance of reducing overconsumption and its detrimental impact on the environment and climate.

The 5R method served as a central focus of the training, providing a practical framework for participants to implement sustainable practices in their everyday lives and communities. Participants learned how to integrate the 5Rs (refuse, reuse, reduce, repurpose/rot, recycle) into their decision-making processes, from purchasing habits to waste management strategies and how to support CSO and communities adaptation for sustainable lifestyle and how to organise resource efficient management.

In the training we looked at two main conceptions: what is the circular economy and what does it mean for CSOs; how to embrace the 5Rs Sustainability Framework for driving sustainable change and living. Additionally to that we also looked on the Alternative to circular living and consuming issues, that was presented by Staffan Appelgren, Senior Lecturer, School of Global Studies, University of Gothenburg.

The training emphasized the importance of empowering local communities to drive sustainable change.





EMPOWERING CSOS AND COMMUNITIES FOR  
SUSTAINABLE CHANGE: BUILDING THE GREEN  
FUTURE OF THE NORDIC-BALTIC REGION

**Nordic-Baltic Sustainability  
CONFERENCE 2024**

3-6th March 2024, Reykjavík, Iceland

The conference delved deeper into how societies can actively contribute to a fair green transition by empowering Civil Society Organizations (CSOs). Participants explored actionable steps CSOs can take to lead the charge towards a more sustainable future.

The conference also offered activities promoting sustainable lifestyles, recognizing the importance of individual choices. Participants brainstormed ways to encourage communities to adopt greener practices, from conscious consumerism to eco-friendly habits.

High-level guests, including representatives of Nordic embassies, members of Reykjavik City Council and other stakeholders, shared their perspectives on existing problems and solutions that can be achieved through joint efforts.

The conference was divided into three parts: **a keynote speeches** **“Turning climate and environmental challenges into opportunities: Green and Just transformation”** by H.E. Ambassador Samcová-Hall Allen, Delegation of the European Union to Iceland

**“How do we encourage just and efficient green transition in Iceland”** – by the Auður H. Ingólfssdóttir, Director of Climate and Circular Economy Department, The Environment Agency of Iceland.

**“Let’s Create a Greener Future by engaging start-ups and communities”** by the Ásta Sóllilja Guðmundsdóttir, Executive Director of KLAK Icelandic Startups.





**The three panel discussions and working groups** served as the basis for the development of the final conference statement and local action plan. This statement, endorsed by all participants, outlines commitments to reduce overconsumption, promote sustainable practices, and amplify the role of CSOs. This message is powerful for stakeholders and decision-makers who will be crucial in driving the green transition forward. The statement and action plan was subsequently published on a webpage and distributed to stakeholders. As a practical part of the conference, a study tour to NGOs and companies was organised to learn about Icelandic green solutions. Additionally, cross-cutting themes such as gender equality, digitalization, and social justice were woven into the discussions, emphasizing a holistic approach to sustainability and proposed as part for social and sustainable change.

Beyond the panel discussions, networking sessions provided valuable opportunities for participants to connect across sectors. Government officials, NGO representatives, researchers, and private sector leaders exchanged ideas and explored potential collaborations.





The Nordic-Baltic Sustainability Conference 2024 concluded on a high note, leaving participants with renewed enthusiasm and practical tools to champion sustainability in their communities. It was more than just an event; it was a catalyst for change, reminding us that a greener future for the Nordic-Baltic region is within our collective reach.

The overall format of the events was rated 8.4 out of 10. Pre-events information and communications were rated 7.8 out of 10. The overall organisation during the events was rated 8.4 out of 10. The general evaluation of the project was rated 8.8 out of 10.

More information regarding trainings, study visits, educational materials and conference you could find on [www.unsdg.ee](http://www.unsdg.ee)





# STATEMENT

We are invigorated by a shared commitment to empowering Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and communities to build a sustainable future for the Nordic-Baltic region. Drawing upon the collective wisdom and innovative practices of Finland, Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Iceland and Estonia, we have crafted a unified vision for a greener tomorrow.

## Key Resolutions:

- **Finland's Technological Innovation:** We will harness Finland's technological innovation prowess to develop sustainable solutions that can be integrated into everyday life.
- **Sweden's Environmental Care:** Inspired by Sweden, we will enhance our environmental care initiatives, emphasizing the importance of biodiversity and the preservation of our natural habitats.
- **Denmark's Renewable Energy Focus:** Following Denmark's lead, we will aggressively pursue renewable energy projects to reduce our carbon footprint and promote energy independence.
- **Norway's Sustainable Development:** We will adopt Norway's approach to sustainable development, focusing on creating eco-friendly communities that prioritize the well-being of their inhabitants.
- **Estonia's Digital Transformation:** To embrace Estonia's digital transformation, we will leverage digital tools to foster transparency, efficiency, and participation in sustainable practices.
- **Iceland's Renewable Resources:** We will inspire our regional energy strategies by Iceland's expertise in utilizing renewable resources, particularly geothermal energy.

We pledge to support our CSOs and communities with the necessary resources, knowledge, and networks to drive sustainable change. Through collaborative efforts and shared responsibility, the Nordic-Baltic region will lead by example in the global pursuit of sustainability. In unity, we commit to transforming our ideas from this conference into concrete actions that will shape the green future of our region. Let us work hand in hand, ensuring that our collective actions today will create a lasting positive impact for generations to come.

Done in Reykjavík, on March 6th 2024

# LOCAL ACTION PLANS 2024–2026

The following local action plans for the years 2024–2026 are designed to harness the collective ideas and strengths from Finland, Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Estonia, and Iceland to empower Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and communities in building a sustainable future for the Nordic–Baltic region.

## **Finland: Technological Integration and Education**

**2024:** Launch a series of workshops to educate communities on integrating sustainable technologies into daily life.

**2025:** Implement community-driven pilot projects that utilize Finnish technological innovations for sustainability.

**2026:** Evaluate the impact of technological solutions and scale successful models across the region.

## **Sweden: Biodiversity and Natural Resource Management**

**2024:** Initiate biodiversity conservation programs and promote the sustainable management of natural resources.

**2025:** Expand environmental care initiatives to include urban areas, focusing on green infrastructure.

**2026:** Develop a regional biodiversity index to monitor and report on the health of ecosystems.

## **Denmark: Renewable Energy Expansion**

**2024:** Invest in renewable energy education and start community-based renewable energy projects.

**2025:** Increase funding for research and development in renewable energy technologies.

**2026:** Aim for a significant percentage of local energy needs to be met through renewable sources.

## **Norway: Eco-Friendly Community Development**

**2024:** Begin the transformation of urban spaces with eco-friendly planning and development.

**2025:** Introduce incentives for businesses and households that adopt sustainable practices.

**2026:** Achieve measurable improvements in community sustainability metrics.



### **Estonia: Digitalization for Sustainability**

**2024:** Deploy digital tools to enhance transparency and participation in sustainable practices.

**2025:** Host a regional conference on digital solutions for environmental challenges.

**2026:** Establish a digital platform for sharing resources and best practices among CSOs.

### **Iceland: Geothermal and Renewable Energy Research**

**2024:** Share Iceland's expertise in geothermal energy through educational exchanges and seminars.

**2025:** Collaborate on regional projects to harness geothermal and other renewable energies.

**2026:** Evaluate the feasibility of expanding geothermal energy use across the Nordic-Baltic region.

These action plans are a roadmap for our collective journey towards a greener, more sustainable future. By empowering CSOs and communities with the tools and knowledge derived from the diverse experiences of our Nordic-Baltic counterparts, we can make significant strides in sustainable development and ensure that our region remains at the forefront of environmental innovation and cooperation.



# Project Results

- Participants gained a profound understanding of how the SDGs could be realized on both local and international stages, and they articulated their role in this global endeavour.
- They acquired theoretical insights and practical skills necessary to foster sustainable lifestyles and reduce overconsumption within their communities.
- Formulated suggestion of strategies and policy change in addition also created a political statement for decision makers and local action plan for communities in achievement of SDGs by CSOs, active youth and policy makers/stakeholders.
- The project equipped civil society with the tools to develop and implement policies friendly to vulnerable groups, promoting sustainable development education, circular economy, and the empowerment of CSOs.
- Through this initiative, participants enhanced their capacity for contributing to a green transition, responsible consumption, climate change mitigation, gender equality, digital society, and the principles of good governance and sustainable welfare.
- A Kickoff meeting, three international trainings and the North-Baltic Conference on Sustainable Development were organised with the participation of 105 people.
- Project was supported by Nordic Council and project partners.

In essence, this project was a series of activities and a movement towards a more sustainable, cooperative, and empowered Nordic-Baltic region, where every stakeholder was a vital contributor to the green tapestry of our shared future.

