



European Year of Youth 2022



## “Samen Blokje Omdenken”

# Life For Nature Manifesto

*The initiative Samen Blokje Omdenken (Rethinking Nature) #Gelderland has connected various young people from all corners of the Netherlands', province of Gelderland and beyond. We want to raise attention to issues that we find important, ranging from biodiversity to mental health. We encourage policy-makers in this European Year of Youth 2022 to take a stance and listen to our voices, in order to improve the world for future generations.*

### Considerations

1. Climate change is impacting biodiversity, and thus people. We note an increase in local heat stress, periods of droughts and extreme weather events. These have a severe impact on our ecosystems. The concern of young people for the viability of the Earth is increasing, so is our climate stress.
2. A relationship, underpinned by scientific research, between the decline of biodiverse areas and the decline of mental health is witnessed. A decline in mental health of young people around the world and also in The Netherlands and in Gelderland is noted. Seeking help for mental health issues remains in current times largely inaccessible, due to long waiting times and decreased governmental funding.
3. Biodiversity is declining globally, decreasing the resilience to climate change. This decline is speed up by climate change. However, other main drivers such as land use changes, over- exploitation and pollution should also be addressed.

4. Many young people are not educated adequately about humans as part of the ecosystems, and as a result they see humans and nature as separate worlds. Once we start integrating nature into our curricula at a young age, both mental health and biodiversity can receive broad social support and form an important part of the political agenda.
5. Energy use is still largely characterized by a reliance on polluting fossil fuels from often politically unstable regions. Aside from polluting the environment, this reliance also causes economic insecurity due to rising and volatile energy prices, seen currently due to the war between Russia and Ukraine. The use of fossil fuels leads to insecurity, poverty and pollution, affecting both mental and physical health.

### **Life For Nature Manifesto**

We, as the community of Samen Blokje Omdenken (Rethinking Nature), would like to see changes take place within our surroundings, as well as globally. We address this manifesto to the government of the province of Gelderland, the government of the Netherlands and the European Year of the Youth 2022, to undertake action and save our future.

These are our demands:
1. Involve young people in a serious and integral way in the decision-making spheres that decide on our future.
2. Improve the integration of aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems in urban and rural areas in order to create climate resilient and sustainable systems.
3. Invest, as part of #OneHealth #OneEarth more in healthcare, especially in mental health services and, where possible, integrate nature as a way of treating (mental) health issues.
4. Encourage the improvement of biodiversity in both urban and rural areas through government policy, with a focus on the initiative 'basic-quality of nature' proposed by Vogelbescherming (BirdLife) Nederland.
5. Integrate the ecosystem-services and the intertwinement of humans and ecosystems into educational curricula in elementary schools and high schools.
6. Stimulate cross-country learning by performing programs in which students and governments learn from other countries on how to integrate nature more in culture and day-to-day life.
7. Stimulate citizens to increase biodiversity around and in their own house and neighborhoods, and to live in a sustainable way. For

instance by bringing 'nature' back to the gardens of students houses and study facilities.

8. Increase efforts to adopt clean and sustainable alternatives for polluting and fossil fuels energy to become energy self-sufficient.

We, young people and the future of the Netherlands and the world, will do our part by, where possible, supporting nature conservation, connecting with others around the country and worldwide, and supporting policy-makers at all levels in their duty to help us.

This Manifesto was discussed and agreed in Sonsbeek park, City of Arnhem, the province of Gelderland, on 1 July 2022. It was decided to present the Manifesto to the Regional Minister for Nature of the Province of Gelderland, the State Secretary of Health, Welfare and Sport, and the National Coordinator of the European Year of Youth 2022.