



FRILUFTSLIV I NORDEN  
**NORDIC  
OUTDOOR LIFE**

RECOMMENDATIONS  
FROM THE PROJECT



NORSK  
FRILUFTSLIV



Friluftsrådet



SUOMEN LATU



Friluftsrådenes Landsforbund



Svenskt Friluftsliv

SUPPORTED BY:



norden

Nordisk ministerråd

« A passion for nature cuts to the heart of what Scandinavians call friluftsliv (pronounced free-loofts-liv). The expression literally translates as 'open-air living' » **QUOTE FROM BBC**

## INTRODUCTION

This report is a response to a challenge received by the Network of Outdoor Organisations in the Nordic Countries (NON\*) and the Committee for Knowledge and Culture in the Nordic Region, through the 10/2014 recommendation on "Outdoor life for children and young people in the Nordic countries".

The main objective of the project has been to prepare a set of recommendations to secure a high focus on friluftsliv\*\* (outdoor life) in the Nordic region in the future, with a particular focus on promoting the perspectives, participation and influence of children and young people.

Four workshops have been organised throughout the project period, one in each country. The workshops have been centred around dialogue, experience sharing, and presentations by relevant researchers and organisations.

NON suggests developing a joint Nordic action plan for friluftsliv. A joint Nordic action plan will contribute to bring friluftsliv on the agenda, based on the following recommendations:

- 1 Strengthen the cooperation between the Nordic outdoor organisations
- 2 The right of public access must be preserved and secured
- 3 Enhance the use of Nature based integration
- 4 Prioritize friluftsliv in schools as a means of improving public health, and better learning environment
- 5 Green spaces must be given higher value in land management and spatial planning

\* Network of Outdoor Organisations in the Nordic Countries (NON) (Friluftsrådet- Denmark, Svensk Friluftsliv- Sweden, Suomen Latu- Finland, and Friluftsrådernes Landsforbund and Norsk Friluftsliv- Norway).

\*\* "friluftsliv" is now frequently used in English language, we therefor choose to use the Scandinavian term in this report.



## MAIN MESSAGE TO DECISION-MAKERS

For centuries, our relationship to nature has had a special place in the lives of people in the Nordic region. Nature has been our livelihood, given us an identity and an experience of belonging. We have learned to live with great variations through the seasons, and friluftsliv has helped forge a cohesive Nordic “we” mentality. In recent decades, major changes have taken place in settlement patterns and the composition of the Nordic populations. More and more of us live in urban areas, and the Nordic region has included many new inhabitants from other parts of the world who are unfamiliar with our natural surroundings and have little knowledge of how to move about outdoors during the cold months or teach their children to experience nature through the seasons.

**At the same time**, there have been dramatic changes in the health of the Nordic population. Lifestyle diseases caused by improper diet and a lack of physical activity are growing rapidly, with corresponding growth in healthcare costs. An

ageing population also entails higher health costs and a relatively smaller proportion of the population in the workforce. Increased physical activity can reduce illness, keep more people working and postpone the need for health and care services for the elderly. Friluftsliv plays a key role here because it is a low-threshold activity, costs far less than most comparable pursuits, is sought as an activity for many and can be practised throughout one’s lifetime. Outdoor recreation’s most important resource is outdoor spaces that are accessible, facilitative and attractive.

« Lifestyle diseases caused by improper diet and a lack of physical activity are growing rapidly, with corresponding growth in healthcare costs. »



**The voluntary sector in the Nordic region** will play a key role in increasing activity in the population. There is already a large number of organisations, associations and hiking groups that organise physical activity in our local communities. Many people struggle with loneliness and want to do activities with others. By bolstering the voluntary sector, this work can be further strengthened.

**The tourism industry** is growing rapidly. While national tourism constitutes the larger share, we are currently experiencing strong growth in tourism from Europe and Asia. Attracted by our stunning scenery and natural treasures, many come to experience our friluftsliv. There is great potential for facilitating nature experiences that promote friluftsliv in our own population, enhance tourism and create a large number of new jobs in the years to come.

**Climate change** is part of the political agenda in all Nordic countries. Climate change is not just a part of our future: it is something we are already experiencing. An increasing

environmental awareness and willingness to make environmental choices that also take us out of our comfort zone are crucial for solving the challenges and for providing our descendants with good living conditions. People who spend all their time indoors and in cities become alienated from nature and its challenges. When more people regularly enjoy the great outdoors, their understanding for preserving nature will also increase.

**Even though Nordic landscapes** vary in and among the Nordic countries, we still have many common features as far as challenges go, a fact that this project has highlighted. A common Nordic approach can strengthen the individual country's efforts and ability to succeed, not least through the exchange of experience and professional cooperation between countries. In this collaboration it is also important that the volunteer community participates, and is a driving force in sharing experience and implementing best strategy in each country.



# WHO ARE THE KEY DECISIONS MAKERS?

## :::: THE NORDIC COUNCIL/NORDIC COUNCIL OF MINISTERS

The Nordic Council plays a key role promoting outdoor activity as a part of our common Nordic culture, and facilitating the exchange of experiences, knowledge and common strategies for friluftsliv, nature management and physical activity. The Nordic Council should also stimulate Nordic cooperation among voluntary organisations, common strategies for nature-based tourism within the Nordic region as a destination, and research programmes of obvious benefit to several Nordic countries.

## :::: DOMESTIC GOVERNMENTS

Governments have a special responsibility for following up common Nordic strategies and developing national strategies and action plans for sound nature management, facilitation of friluftsliv and improving public health. Domestic governments must also develop plans for inclusion of groups that are less active and strengthen knowledge and skills in groups with little experience of outdoor recreation. It is also important that each country has a good volunteer policy that promotes the role and efforts of volunteers in local communities.

## :::: MUNICIPALITIES

Municipalities play a key role in identifying important local challenges, being a local public health coordinator, promoting measures that are particularly effective for local communities and developing outdoor areas that are suitable and attractive for inhabitants and outdoor and nature-based tourism. The municipalities must also have a good overview of local actors and organisations that can help promote local outdoor activities and physical activity. They must ensure that a wide range of organisations are consulted when the municipality is to prioritise measures. Municipally organised activity councils can be a useful tool to strengthen the position of outdoor activity in the local communities. The activity councils' main goal is to enhance physical and mental health through more outdoor activity.

## :::: VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS

Voluntary organisations have a special responsibility for assessing how, by building on their own characteristics and values, they can provide social benefits such as activity and quality of life for the inhabitants. Voluntary organisations have an important responsibility for recruiting people for



volunteer efforts, giving volunteers good social networks and the experience of having an impact on others. Recruiting, training, motivating and retaining volunteers are the most important task of the organisations. Organisations must also be in dialogue with local and national authorities about national and local needs, and about how they can contribute within the scope of volunteering.

#### :::: SCHOOLS AND KINDERGARTENS

Kindergartens and schools have a unique opportunity to reach all children, regardless of social backgrounds. Research shows that outdoor recreation and physical activity enhance the ability of children to learn and concentrate. As many parents do not have the prerequisites for fostering nature-based physical activity in their children, schools have an important task to teach these fundamental values.

#### :::: TOURISM

The tourism sector plays an important role in collaborating with authorities and local communities on developing attractive nature experiences that benefit both tourism and local outdoor recreation. Tourism must also contribute to

promoting environmentally friendly and sustainable tourism products, and adapt activity so that the burden and wear and tear on natural assets do not harm the environment.

#### :::: RESEARCH

There is a great need to provide common Nordic knowledge about what promotes friluftsliv and everyday activities in the population and what factors make this as cost-effective as possible. Research must also assist domestic and local authorities in prioritising what kind of spaces and types of facilities are needed. Research communities must promote good applications, and the authorities must facilitate the provision of adequate research in outdoor recreation, nature-based learning, inclusion, and tourism.



## RECOMMENDATIONS:

### **MAKE A JOINT NORDIC ACTION PLAN FOR FRILUFTSLIV**

Friluftsliv is an important cultural heritage in all the Nordic countries. Facilitating outdoor activity is also one of the most crucial factors in enhancing public health. The Nordic network of outdoor organisations suggests developing a joint Nordic action plan for friluftsliv. A joint Nordic action plan will contribute to put friluftsliv on the political agenda,

based on the following recommendations: ▶▶▶



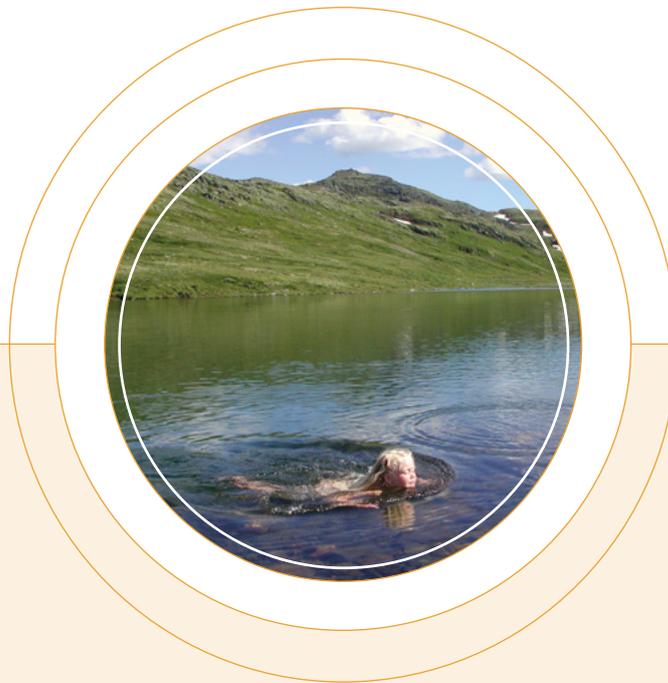


## 1 STRENGTHEN THE COOPERATION BETWEEN THE NORDIC OUTDOOR ORGANISATIONS

The knowledge and traditions of friluftsliv are embodied and promoted by many outdoor organisations. To keep this cultural heritage alive it is important to have a strong national voluntary sector. But there is also a need for strong NGO bodies working across borders. To accomplish this, there is a need to stimulate and fund cooperation between outdoor organisations on the Nordic level. The Nordic Outdoor Network (NON) is an important arena for supporting and enhancing the Nordic policy on outdoor recreation, exchanging experiences and supporting and strengthening conditions for friluftsliv. It is therefore important to create an economic platform on a Nordic level – so that NON can strengthen its efforts to develop and maintain cooperation across borders.

### WE RECOMMEND:

- Organising a Nordic Outdoor Life Year in 2020 based on the experience from “Friluftslivets år” (Outdoor Life Year) in Norway. It should focus on outdoor activity close to where people live and on voluntary work, especially amongst children and youth.
- Establishing a Nordic campaign to recruit young people to do voluntary work, and applaud those who already are doing this, by showing the importance of young volunteers and what they do.
- Providing financial support to the Nordic network of outdoor organisations in order to promote outdoor recreation as beneficial to health and well-being through environmentally friendly activities.



## 2 THE RIGHT OF PUBLIC ACCESS MUST BE PRESERVED AND SECURED

The right of public access is part of the Nordic cultural heritage and a fundamental value of friluftsliv. The right of public access gives everyone the right to explore nature regardless of who owns the land. However, the principle of free movement is under pressure. Developments that stop free movement, such as fencing and the introduction of payment solutions are challenging the right of public access today in all Nordic countries. Conflicts are increasing between different user groups that share the same space (e.g. walking and cycling, skiing and fatbiking). Another challenge is the increased number of tourists that want to take part in friluftsliv with little knowledge or preparation. Lack of knowledge about Nordic nature and weather conditions coupled with an overrated opinion of one's level of fitness has led to an increased number of rescue operations, giving rise to questions about the right of public access. Developing of the outdoor life sector in cooperation with a sustainable tourism sector have however a great potential for developing outdoor areas attractive for both foreign and domestic tourists, preserving of cultural monuments, more local value creation and more jobs.

### WE RECOMMEND:

- Incorporating the right of public access into the UNESCO heritage list.
- An increased number of tourists and local people seek experiences in nature in holidays and in their leisure-time. To ensure future good natural experiences for all and prevent damage of Nordic nature and the right of public access, a Nordic strategy for nature-based tourism must be developed.

« The right of public access gives everyone the right to explore nature regardless of who owns the land. »



### 3 ENHANCE THE USE OF NATURE BASED INTEGRATION

The Nordic countries are becoming steadily more multicultural with immigrants from distant countries. Nature-based activity has the potential of being a tool for better integration. More and more outdoor organisations are working to develop activities to enhance nature-based integration. There is increased evidence of the positive benefits of natural and rural landscapes on human health and social, psychological and physical well-being.

**WE RECOMMEND:** \_\_\_\_\_

Establishing a Nordic network for nature-based integration to

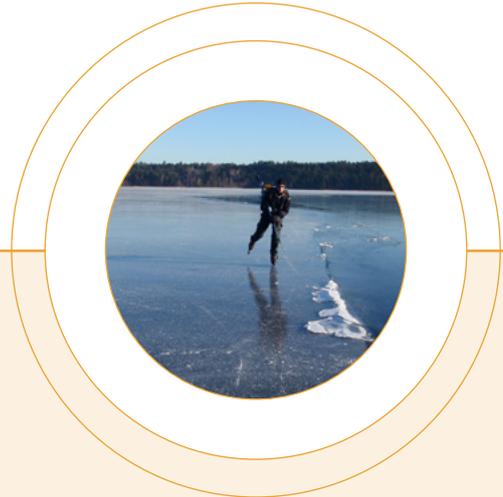
- Ensure that everyone who is new to the Nordic countries is introduced to the joy and benefits of outdoor recreation, and is given the tools to take part in its practice and enjoyment.
- Recruit immigrants to key roles such as role models, volunteers, and staff in outdoor organisations, both to raise knowledge about inclusion of other cultures in the organisations, and to create an environment that other cultures can appreciate.

### 4 PRIORITIZE FRILUFTSLIV IN SCHOOLS AS A MEANS OF IMPROVING PUBLIC HEALTH, AND BETTER LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Outdoor education and learning must be made a compulsory part of the education of primary school teachers, so that all teachers have the basic skills to teach children about friluftsliv and can use nature as a classroom in various subjects. The importance of friluftsliv must also be strengthened in the education of kindergarten teachers so that they can use nature for play and learning. This will ensure basic outdoor skills for lifelong use for future generations. Research shows that in schools that also use nature as a learning arena, there is a better learning environment among the pupils.

**WE RECOMMEND:** \_\_\_\_\_

- Including the right to public access and physical activity/motor skills in the future school curricula in the Nordic countries.
- Including friluftsliv in schools. This will also raise awareness about climate change, conservation of nature, enhance good public health long term and gives better learning environment.



## 5 GREEN SPACES MUST BE GIVEN HIGHER VALUE IN LAND MANAGEMENT AND SPATIAL PLANNING

Everyone should have access to nature and green spaces to be able to do outdoor activities near where they live. The closer you are to a walking path, the easier it is to be physically active. The availability of areas for outdoor activities is therefore an important factor in public health. There is a need to facilitate wider involvement, including children and young people in the spatial planning process.

« The closer you are to a walking path, the easier it is to be physically active. »

### WE RECOMMEND:

- Passing laws to include green spaces in new neighbourhoods, and building paths and bike lanes from local neighbourhoods to the forest. There is also a need for green spaces near schools to facilitate outdoor education and learning.
- All municipalities with cities and urban areas should adopt a long-term development limit to set aside nature and wooded areas. Nature areas close to cities and towns are very widely used hiking areas and are of great importance for the opportunity to frequently partake in outdoor activities, and maintain health. At the same time, many cities and towns are experiencing major relocation and developmental pressure, and that important urban green spaces are being rezoned for development. It becomes important to highlight the importance of defining permanent limits for development.



## BACKGROUND OF THE PROJECT “NORDIC OUTDOOR LIFE”

The “Nordic Outdoor Life” project is based on the Nordic Council’s 10/2014 recommendation on “Outdoor life for children and young people in the Nordic countries”. In this recommendation the Council suggested to implement a joint Nordic “Friluftslivets år”. The idea was that the year would be organised by the Nordic Outdoor Network (NON), and that it would have a primary focus on children and youth, health and movement, including street sports.

In the recommendation, the Nordic Council stated that there are many reasons why it is important to strengthen outdoor life: It is important that we maintain our use of nature and outdoor recreation for exercise and experiences, knowledge of nature and focus on nature tourism.

« It is important that we maintain our use of nature and outdoor recreation for exercise and experiences, knowledge of nature and focus on nature tourism. »

Norway, represented by Norsk Friluftsliv (Norwegian Outdoor Council), took charge of the project. Between 2016 and 2017, four workshops/work meetings were completed, with a total of 128 participants. In total 51 organisations and 8 researchers participated in the workshops. In addition, NON has conducted regular meetings about the project.

The main objective of the project is to prepare a set of recommendations that will ensure a high focus on outdoor life in the Nordic region in the future, with a particular focus on promoting the perspectives, participation and influence of children and young people.

The project has been well received by outdoor recreation organisations in the participating countries. Prior to each gathering, each country consciously recruited young people between the ages of 16 and 29, and attendance at the gatherings from all the countries has been good. The representation of young people between the age of 16–29 years has varied from 2 to 15 people per gathering.

The workshops have been centred around dialogue, experience sharing, and presentations by relevant researchers and organisations.



## OBSERVATIONS FROM THE PROJECT

The project has primarily focused on recruitment to outdoor activities in the Nordic region, including among multicultural groups. On a parallel track, the project has observed the potential of outdoor life for local value creation and new jobs.

**The Nordic countries** desire a climate policy aimed at persuading Nordic citizens to spend more holidays closer to home. At the same time, the influx of tourists from other countries is growing. Outdoor recreation, nature experiences and a desire for active holidays are important to those who choose to spend their holiday in the Nordic countries. Strengthening outdoor recreation and facilitating good nature experiences will therefore stimulate further growth in outdoor recreation-based tourism, and create many new jobs. This value creation comes in addition to gains from better public health, etc.

**In all countries** involved in this project, outdoor life is becoming increasingly restricted by physical barriers and attempts to limit the right of public access. New policy measures are therefore needed to secure the right of access and encourage more people to take advantage of the opportunities for a rich outdoor life in the future.

« The natural and cultural heritage of the Nordic countries has to be managed for the general welfare and benefit of present and future generations. »

**Fostering an interest in outdoor life** in children has traditionally been the preserve of families. However, social change such as women's increasing participation in the workplace and the institutionalisation of children's daily lives through kindergarten, school and after-school programmes (SFO) call for new approaches. Activities carried out by outdoor organisations have accordingly become a steadily more important means of stimulating interest in the outdoors among children and young people.

**Modern technologies**, and perhaps especially social media, where many people can be reached in a short period of time, also contribute to recruitment to the outdoor way of life.

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