

**MO1** MO Union of Young Democrats

Proposers:

Agenda item: 3. Chairing Member Organisation and Annual Agenda Applications

Why should biodiversity issues be considered a political challenge rather than solely an environmental one?

An opening topic to discuss how biodiversity is connected with the main pillars of CDNEE.

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## **Union of Young Democrats CoM Annual (2026/2027) Agenda Proposal**

### **Biodiversity Priority: Restoration and Protection of Baltic and Freshwater Ecosystems**

Lithuania is positioned between the Baltic Sea, the Curonian Lagoon, major river basins (Nemunas, Neris, Venta), extensive wetlands and forest ecosystems. Freshwater and coastal biodiversity are among the most threatened ecosystems in Eastern Europe due to pollution, habitat fragmentation, climate change, invasive species, and unsustainable land use.

Freshwater and coastal ecosystem restoration provides a clear link between environmental protection, democratic participation, economic resilience and social justice. It is also a shared challenge across Eastern Europe, making it highly relevant for CDNEE's regional mission.

Furthermore, healthy freshwater and coastal ecosystems contribute to food security, climate adaptation, public health, energy resilience and cross-border cooperation in the Baltic region. This allows Lithuania to present biodiversity not as a niche environmental issue, but as a foundation for sustainable and democratic societies.

### **Blue-Green Eastern Europe: Restoring Biodiversity for Democratic, Resilient and Just Societies**

#### **Vision**

To strengthen biodiversity protection in Eastern Europe by promoting the restoration of freshwater, wetland and coastal ecosystems as a tool for environmental sustainability, democratic participation, social justice, economic resilience, and regional cooperation.

#### **Objectives**

1. Build knowledge among young progressive activists on biodiversity restoration and ecosystem governance.
2. Promote democratic participation in environmental decision-making.
3. Strengthen regional cooperation on shared ecological challenges.
4. Advocate for nature-positive economic development and just transition policies.
5. Ensure that biodiversity policies deliver tangible social benefits for local communities and vulnerable groups.

#### **Political Priorities**

From a perspective of democracy, biodiversity governance raises fundamental questions about participation, accountability and stewardship of common resources. The management of natural ecosystems requires transparent decision-making processes that balance different interests and ensure that communities have a meaningful voice in shaping their environment. Biodiversity protection therefore strengthens democratic culture by encouraging civic engagement, fostering trust in public institutions and promoting long-term thinking in policymaking. In this sense, healthy ecosystems and healthy democracies rely on similar principles: inclusion, responsibility and cooperation.

Within the pillar of foreign policy and security, biodiversity increasingly constitutes a matter of strategic importance. Environmental degradation does not respect national borders, and the condition of shared rivers, watersheds and marine ecosystems depends on cooperation among neighbouring countries. At the same time, climate change, resource scarcity and ecosystem decline can exacerbate social tensions and undermine regional stability. Protecting freshwater biodiversity contributes to resilience by reducing environmental vulnerabilities and strengthening the capacity of societies to respond to emerging challenges. It also creates opportunities for constructive international cooperation based on shared environmental interests and common responsibility for natural heritage.

The connection between climate, environment and biodiversity is particularly evident in freshwater, wetland and coastal ecosystems. Biodiversity loss and climate change are mutually reinforcing crises that cannot be effectively addressed separately. Diverse and healthy ecosystems enhance climate resilience, support adaptation to extreme weather events and provide natural mechanisms for carbon storage and regulation. At the same time, efforts to mitigate climate change are more successful when they preserve and restore ecological integrity. A focus on ecosystem restoration therefore reflects an integrated approach that recognises biodiversity as a prerequisite for long-term environmental sustainability.

From an economic perspective, biodiversity should be understood as a foundation of prosperity rather than a constraint on development. Ecosystems generate essential services that underpin economic activity, including clean water, fertile soils, flood protection and natural resources. The degradation of biodiversity imposes significant costs on societies, while investments in ecosystem health contribute to resilience, innovation and sustainable growth. A biodiversity-centred agenda promotes an economic model that values long-term sustainability, recognises environmental limits and seeks to align economic development with the preservation of natural capital for future generations.

Finally, biodiversity is closely connected to social rights and questions of equity. Access to a healthy environment, clean water and functioning ecosystems is increasingly recognised as an essential component of human well-being. Environmental degradation often disproportionately affects vulnerable communities, exacerbating existing inequalities and limiting opportunities for social development. Biodiversity protection therefore contributes to social justice by supporting healthier living conditions, strengthening community resilience and ensuring that the benefits provided by nature are accessible to all. Protecting ecosystems is not only an environmental responsibility but also a commitment to fairness and quality of life.

Union of Young Democrats proposes to place **freshwater, wetland and coastal ecosystem restoration** at the center of the 2026–2027 mandate because it represents a unique challenge that connects all pillars of CDNEE in one or another way. By protecting rivers, wetlands, lagoons and coastal habitats, we can strengthen democracy through participation, security through resilience, climate action through nature-based solutions, economies through sustainable development and social rights through environmental justice. Biodiversity is not only about protecting nature—it is about safeguarding the foundations of democratic and prosperous societies for future generations.

**MO2** MO Green Youth of Serbia / Zelena omladina Srbije

Proposers:

Agenda item: 3. Chairing Member Organisation and Annual Agenda Applications

For the first Council of Members meeting, Green Youth of Serbia proposes:

“Who Decides the Future of Nature? Biodiversity, Democracy and Resilient Organising in Eastern Europe”

The discussion will explore how young people, local communities, and civil society organisations across Eastern Europe are responding to biodiversity challenges and what these experiences can teach us about democratic participation, environmental justice, and progressive political organising.

We believe that biodiversity is not only about protecting nature. It is about shaping the kind of societies we want to live in and ensuring that ecological sustainability, democracy, and social justice advance together.

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# **Green Youth of Serbia**

## **Application for Chairing Member Organisation of the Council of Members 2026/2027**

Green Youth of Serbia is honoured to submit its candidacy for Chairing Member Organisation of the Council of Members for the 2026/2027 mandate.

For the upcoming mandate, biodiversity has already been identified as the overarching priority of the network. We welcome this choice. Biodiversity loss is one of the defining challenges of our time, affecting ecosystems, communities, and economies across Eastern Europe.

However, we believe that biodiversity should not be discussed solely as a question of conservation. The way biodiversity is protected, governed, and affected by human activity raises broader political questions that are highly relevant to the mission of CDN.

For this reason, Green Youth of Serbia proposes an Annual Agenda that explores biodiversity through the lenses of democracy, foreign policy and security, climate and environment, economy, and social rights. We believe that these connections are essential if we want to understand not only how biodiversity can be protected, but also why it continues to be threatened and what political solutions are needed to address these challenges.

## **Living Landscapes, Living Democracies**

### **Political Priorities for Biodiversity in Eastern Europe**

Across Eastern Europe, biodiversity is increasingly shaped by decisions that go far beyond environmental policy. Questions about nature are often questions about power, participation, economic development, and justice.

Who decides whether a river is protected or exploited? Who benefits from resource extraction projects and who bears the environmental costs? How can societies pursue climate goals without reproducing new forms of inequality? What happens when communities are excluded from decisions affecting their environment?

These are the questions that we propose to place at the centre of the Council of Members' work.

### **Democracy: Biodiversity and Democratic Participation**

Within the biodiversity mandate, Green Youth of Serbia proposes a particular focus on democratic participation and civic engagement.

Across Eastern Europe, environmental movements have become some of the most vibrant examples of citizen mobilisation. Communities have organised to protect forests, rivers, agricultural land, and public spaces, often in environments marked by democratic backsliding and declining trust in institutions.

Biodiversity protection depends on transparent governance, meaningful public participation, and accountable institutions. The Council of Members should therefore explore how environmental decision-making can strengthen democratic culture, how communities can be included in decisions affecting their future, and how resilient organising can help defend both biodiversity and democratic values.

## **Foreign Policy and Security: Biodiversity in a Changing Geopolitical Landscape**

Environmental challenges do not stop at national borders.

The biodiversity of Eastern Europe is shaped by shared river basins, forests, mountain ecosystems, and migratory species that require regional cooperation and long-term thinking.

At the same time, biodiversity is increasingly affected by geopolitical and economic competition. Large-scale infrastructure, energy, and extraction projects financed by external actors, including growing Chinese investments in parts of Eastern Europe, raise important questions about transparency, environmental standards, and democratic oversight.

We believe the Council of Members should examine how biodiversity relates to regional cooperation, environmental security, and the growing geopolitical pressures facing our region.

## **Climate and Environment: A Just Green Transition**

The biodiversity and climate crises are deeply interconnected and cannot be addressed separately.

Healthy ecosystems strengthen climate resilience, support food systems, and help societies adapt to increasingly frequent extreme weather events.

At the same time, the transition towards a low-carbon economy raises difficult political questions. Across Europe, debates surrounding mining, critical raw materials, and renewable energy infrastructure are becoming increasingly prominent.

The controversy surrounding the proposed Rio Tinto Jadar lithium project in Serbia illustrates a broader challenge facing many countries: how can the green transition be implemented in a way that is democratic, environmentally sustainable, and socially just?

The Council of Members should explore how biodiversity protection can remain at the centre of climate action and how Europe can avoid forms of green colonialism that shift environmental costs onto local communities in the name of sustainability.

## **Economy: Beyond Extractivism**

Many economies across Eastern Europe continue to rely on models of development centred around extraction and short-term gains.

Whether through mining, unsustainable land use, or environmentally harmful infrastructure projects, biodiversity is often treated as a resource to be consumed rather than a foundation upon which long-term prosperity depends.

This question is becoming increasingly important as countries across Europe seek to secure critical raw materials, expand energy infrastructure, and attract investment. Too often, biodiversity is presented as an obstacle to economic development, creating a false choice between environmental protection and economic growth.

We believe the Council of Members should challenge this assumption. The real question is not whether development should happen, but who benefits from it, who bears its costs, and whether it can be sustained over the long term.

Biodiversity underpins economic activity by supporting agriculture, food security, water systems, public health, and climate resilience. When ecosystems are degraded, the social and economic costs are often transferred to future generations and local communities. Protecting biodiversity is therefore not only an environmental responsibility but also an investment in economic resilience and long-term prosperity.

Within the biodiversity mandate, we propose exploring alternative models of development that place sustainability, democratic participation, and community well-being at their centre. As Eastern Europe continues to navigate economic transformation, we believe biodiversity can help guide discussions about what a fair and sustainable economy should look like.

## **Social Rights: Biodiversity and Environmental Justice**

Environmental issues are also questions of social justice.

The consequences of biodiversity loss are rarely distributed equally. Vulnerable communities often face the greatest environmental risks while having the least influence over the decisions that affect them. Pollution, environmental degradation, and the loss of natural resources

frequently deepen existing social inequalities and disproportionately affect rural communities, low-income households, and other marginalised groups.

Access to clean air, clean water, healthy ecosystems, and green public spaces should be understood as fundamental elements of a fair society. Yet these benefits are often unevenly distributed, reflecting broader inequalities in political representation, economic opportunity, and access to public services.

For this reason, biodiversity cannot be separated from questions of justice and equality. Discussions about conservation and environmental protection must also consider who is included in decision-making processes, whose interests are prioritised, and how the benefits and burdens of environmental policies are shared.

Within the biodiversity mandate, we therefore propose a strong focus on environmental justice and the social dimensions of ecological crises. Protecting biodiversity also means protecting people's health, dignity, quality of life, and ability to participate in decisions affecting their communities.

For Green Youth of Serbia, a successful biodiversity agenda is one that not only protects ecosystems but also contributes to more equal, inclusive, and resilient societies. Environmental sustainability and social justice should reinforce one another rather than be treated as separate political goals.

## **Our Vision for the Council of Members**

As Chairing Member Organisation, Green Youth of Serbia would seek to make the Council of Members a space for meaningful political discussion and exchange.

Our goal is not simply to discuss biodiversity as an environmental topic, but to explore how biodiversity intersects with some of the most pressing political questions facing Eastern Europe today. By connecting biodiversity to democracy, social justice, economic transformation, climate action, and regional cooperation, we believe the Council of Members can contribute to a more ambitious and politically relevant conversation across the network.

We want the Council of Members to be a place where Member Organisations learn from one another's experiences, identify shared challenges, and develop progressive responses to the ecological and democratic challenges of our time.