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.