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Empowering Youth Participation through the Bern Convention: Nature protection and biodiversity as enablers of rights, participation, and well-being

Report of the study session held by
Youth and Environment Europe

in co-operation with the
Youth Department of the Council of Europe

European Youth Centre Strasbourg
21 - 25 September 2026



This report gives an account of various aspects of the study session. It has been produced by and is the responsibility of the educational team of the study session. It does not represent the official point of view of the Council of Europe.

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List of Abbreviations

BC - Bern Convention, or Council of Europe's Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (1979)
CoE - Council of Europe
EYCS - European Youth Centre Strasbourg
EYR - European Young Rewilders
YEE - Youth and Environment Europe

1. Executive Summary

The study session "Empowering Youth Participation through the Bern Convention: Nature protection and biodiversity as enablers of rights, participation, and well-being" took place from 21 to 25 September 2026 at the European Youth Centre Strasbourg (EYCS). It was organised by Youth and Environment Europe (YEE) in co-operation with the European Young Rewilders, EUROPARC and the Youth Department of the Council of Europe (CoE).

The study session aimed to empower young people to engage in environmental governance and biodiversity protection through the mechanisms of the Bern Convention (BC), strengthening their capacity to advocate for its implementation and to participate democratically at local, national and European levels.

Over five days, participants learned how the Bern Convention works - including its case-file system and Standing Committee - and how it connects to their rights. Through expert inputs from the Bern Convention Secretariat and the Advisory Council on Youth, a theatrical simulation of a Standing Committee meeting based on a real case file, and sessions linking the Convention to CM/Rec(2016)7 on young people's access to rights and CM/Rec(2024)6 on young people and climate action, participants explored how young people can move from being stakeholders to recognised rightsholders of a healthy environment. Particular attention was given to including young people from rural areas and marginalised backgrounds, and to identifying what genuine - rather than tokenistic - youth engagement looks like in practice.

Participants identified shared challenges across Europe: threats to habitats and protected species, weak enforcement of the Convention by governments, and structural barriers to youth inclusion in environmental decision-making. Building on these findings, they formulated concrete recommendations for the Bern Convention Secretariat and its Parties on how to systematically embed youth participation, and developed personal action plans and joint follow-up steps to carry this work into their own communities and organisations.

The main practical output of the study session is a zine created by and for young people: an illustrated, youth-friendly guide to the Bern Convention and how to engage with it, from monitoring local species to filing concerns and organising community-based initiatives. The zine acts as a multiplier, giving young people across Europe the tools to understand, claim and exercise their right to participate in environmental decision-making.

By making the Bern Convention's democratic mechanisms accessible to young people, the study session contributes to the implementation of CM/Rec(2016)7 and CM/Rec(2024)6, and to the Reykjavik Declaration's commitment to empowering young people in democratic processes and climate action. It also builds on YEE's long-standing work promoting the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment and will feed into the organisation's continued engagement as the only youth observer to the Bern Convention.

2. Introduction

This document provides detailed information on the implemented programme, aims, objectives and outlines key findings, outcomes and insights resulting from the study session “Empowering Youth Participation through the Bern Convention: Nature protection and biodiversity as enablers of rights, participation, and well-being” organised by YEE in co-operation with EYR, EUROPARC and the Youth Department of the Council of Europe. It also provides a description of actions that will follow from this activity.

This study session is born out of YEE’s recognition that the accelerating triple planetary crisis is deeply affecting young people’s rights, well-being, and democratic participation across Europe. Yet, young people remain largely excluded from formal environmental governance mechanisms and legal instruments that directly impact their future.

The Bern Convention is a cornerstone treaty of the Council of Europe on wildlife and habitat protection, deeply connected with biodiversity issues and implicitly climate as well. When it comes to biodiversity, its goal is to safeguard habitats and species, thereby preserving the natural systems that absorb carbon, regulate local climates, and strengthen ecosystem resilience to climate change. Yet, it is under-recognised and under-utilised by youth. YEE has held observer status and has been attending its annual Standing Committee Meetings since 2023. It is the only youth organisation participating in the Bern Convention process. Through YEE’s involvement and mobilisation, it has been very clear that it is a matter of intergenerational equity to work on biodiversity conservation, as the shifting baseline syndrome is observed among younger generations: that is, the tendency for each new generation to perceive the environment's condition as normal, leading to the gradual acceptance of environmental degradation as the baseline state over time, therefore hindering effective conservation efforts.

There is a critical need to bridge the gap between environmental law and youth participation, especially for those from rural areas, marginalised communities, and socio-economically disadvantaged contexts, who are disproportionately affected by environmental degradation and democratic exclusion. The Bern Convention, covering areas that are virtually accessible to anyone in Europe, wherever they are, through the Emerald Network, can be a governance mechanism many European youths relate to by connecting local natural areas they know and depend on with broader European biodiversity and climate commitments.

Aim and objectives

Against this background, the study session was designed with the aim of training young environmental defenders on how to utilise democracy, human rights and the rule of law to achieve their advocacy goals. Its objectives were:

1. **Raise awareness among young people about the Bern Convention** as a key Council of Europe treaty for nature conservation, and its relevance to youth participation, rights and democracy.
2. **Equip participants with knowledge and skills** to engage in environmental governance processes, including policymaking, advocacy, and democratic dialogue on biodiversity issues.

3. **Foster inclusive youth participation in the Bern Convention/ wildlife conservation management and decision-making**, with a specific focus on engaging young people from rural areas, minority backgrounds, and other underrepresented or vulnerable groups.
4. **Encourage youth-led action** by supporting participants to design local follow-up initiatives that connect the Bern Convention with community-based biodiversity protection and democratic engagement, guided by the zine.
5. **Create a platform for intercultural learning and co-operation**, enabling participants from different countries to share experiences and build a network of young environmental advocates across Europe.

About the participants

The main target group for this study session was composed of young people who are already active in the networks of the three organising NGOs - YEE, EYR and EUROPARC -, aware of the importance of nature conservation and wildlife protection and may have been involved in advocacy or legal actions in their respective countries or local contexts. The participation of individuals from rural areas and marginalised backgrounds was prioritised. The final group of 25 participants exhibited a wide range of experiences, including both scientific, nature conservation backgrounds and young professionals with legal and policy expertise in the field. Overall, the group demonstrated a solid understanding of the European, national and local situation related to environmental issues and rights of nature, providing a clear picture of current and potential cases across Europe that are relevant to the Bern Convention, and species and habitats protected under it.

About the organiser

The main organiser of this study session was Youth and Environment Europe (YEE).

YEE is a pan-European youth network with 47 organisations across 22 CoE countries and Kosovo. Its main mission is to raise awareness and build youth capacity on the triple planetary crisis, enhance international co-operation and knowledge-sharing among youth organisations, strengthen youth participation in environmental decision-making and advocate for more ambitious commitments at local, national, European and international levels. Acknowledging civic liberties, public participation and a strong rule of law as fundamental preconditions for effective environmental action, YEE is committed to educate young environmental advocates about their rights under international instruments. Over the past few years, YEE has contributed to the CoE's work on environmental issues through the work of its Advisory Council on Youth (CCJ), actively supporting the Recommendation CM/Rec(2024)6 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on young people and climate action. Importantly, YEE is the only youth observer to the Bern Convention.

The other two organisations who supported the development and execution of the study session were the European Young Rewilders and EUROPARC.

The European Young Rewilders (EYR) is a youth network under Rewilding Europe that aims to empower young professionals across Europe to actively contribute to the rewilding movement. The mission of the network is to drive the recovery of ecosystems and wildlife in Europe by connecting and equipping a new generation of rewilders with what they need to

make Europe wilder. With more than 1200 members from 33 countries, the network fosters collaboration, knowledge exchange, and skill development through events, workshops, and field experiences. EYR also advocates for the inclusion of young people's voices and experience in decisions around rewilding, nature restoration and protection, and wildlife comeback and management (including in the framework of the Bern Convention).

Founded in 1973, the EUROPARC Federation is the professional network of Europe's protected areas, with over 400 members across 41 countries. It works to improve protected area management through international cooperation, knowledge exchange and policy work, including on the Bern Convention and the Emerald Network. Its key programmes include the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism, the Transboundary Parks Programme, the Junior Ranger and Youth+ Programmes, and the European Day of Parks. Guided by the EUROPARC Youth Manifesto, the Federation established the EUROPARC Youth Council in 2023. Its ten members serve two-year terms, and a Youth Representative brings youth perspectives directly to the EUROPARC Council.

Main themes of the study session and their connection with CoE

Young people are among those most affected by climate change and biodiversity loss in Europe, yet they remain largely excluded from the formal environmental governance mechanisms that shape their future. This includes decisions on nature restoration, nature protection and wildlife management, which in Europe are broadly regulated by the Bern Convention. The Bern Convention is a binding international legal instrument, with the goal to safeguard habitats and species, thereby preserving natural systems that absorb carbon, regulate local climates and strengthen ecosystem resilience to climate change.

However, this legislation is under-recognised and under-utilised by youth. As the controversial case of the downgrading of the wolf's protection status under the Convention has shown, civil society needs to be empowered to know the laws, be heard and hold governments accountable to take science-based decisions. In general, this reflects the value of the Council of Europe: human rights, democracy and the rule of law. Focusing on youth, young people advocate for a the right to a healthy environment and see in the Bern Convention as a perspective of intergenerational justice: biodiversity loss and environmental degradation are fundamental matters of equity between generations; young people will live longest with the consequences of decisions being made now, yet have little say in making them. Young people should not be involved only as a symbolic gesture, but as a genuine structural commitment.

For this reason, the study session introduced participants to the Bern Convention and its decision-making mechanisms and groups, including the Advisory Council on Youth. To deepen their understanding of the Bern Convention, participants simulated a meeting of the Standing Committee, where they played out Parties and Observers based on a real-life case. The Bern Convention was grounded in the local context through sessions that would connect it to local species/habitats and the current engagement in other environmental issues of each participant. The case of the wolf protection status was broken down and discussed, extending considerations to the EU context - where the decision was prompted.

After learning about the commitments of the Council of Europe towards young people, the study session explored what is actually meaningful youth engagement and reflected on

barriers and disingenuous involvement. The study session aimed to be as practical as possible, so participants were also introduced to advocacy types, skills and tips, in order to learn how to apply what they have been learning.

As output, participants developed a booklet capturing the key lessons and ideas emerging from the session, alongside personal action plans and joint follow-up steps. These tools are intended to help carry the momentum beyond Strasbourg and strengthen youth participation in European nature policy.

This study session hosted people from across Europe - from Ireland and Italy to Portugal and Azerbaijan - bringing expertise spanning ecology, animal science, law, policy, communications and fundraising. Their different cultural and professional backgrounds enriched the discussions and demonstrated the breadth of knowledge and experience young people can contribute to nature conservation. Time spent indoors was complemented by an excursion to the Robertsau Nature Reserve, offering a reminder of the nature these discussions ultimately seek to protect.

3. Results and conclusions

Main findings, conclusions and recommendations

During the study session, it became clear that 1) young people across Europe are concerned about similar environmental issues: extreme effects of climate change (wildfires, droughts and flooding), habitat degradation and fragmentation, pollution (water, soil, air) and biodiversity loss; 2) challenges for meaningful youth empowerment for nature protection/restoration are widespread and prevent long-term and sustained youth inclusion: above all sits the lack of money (meaning both not enough paid opportunities in the sector and no funding for attending activities where decisions are taken), but also absence of working mechanisms, tokenistic approaches without actual power given, and disinterest from other young people that stems from, among others, short-comings in education and alienation from nature; 3) governments fall short in implementing ambitious environmental policies and enforcing the Bern Convention.

On this latter point, participants flagged specific concerns from their local context. All participants coming from countries with wolves mentioned the push towards wolf hunting instead of the promotion of coexistence as worrisome. Furthermore:

- Italy: national hunting law reform to negatively affect species, unregulated beach concessions affecting dunal habitats and species, river regimentation (e.g. Tagliamento river).
- France: construction of motorways without correct environmental impact assessment (e.g. A412 in haute Savoie).
- Greece: legal permits for anti-flooding infrastructure impacting river ecosystems (e.g. river Kifissos in Athens).
- Germany: push for law to cull cormorants, BC Annex III species, whose de-protection is also being discussed in the EU and BC framework.
- Netherlands: unambitious policies for reintroductions, especially the European mink (BC Annex II species).
- UK: sewage dumping in waterways and marine dredging.
- Wales: motorway expansion in the Newport wetlands (affecting great crested grebe and otter, BC Annex III and II species).
- Armenia: mining near the habitat of the Persian leopard (BC Annex II species).
- Ireland: culling of badger, BC Annex III species.

Recommendations for positive measures to continue or to start to implement were discussed. They include: more involvement at all levels (from formal to informal) and as experts, when applicable, reimbursement and other financial support, including remuneration, for participating and carrying out activities, embedded and systematic structuring of youth involvement in institutions/organisations, and finally, mentorship and inclusion of youth in high-level tasks.

The study session also paid particular attention to marginalised and rural youth. The group first unpacked what "rural youth" actually means in the context of people active and interested in nature: being based in a (semi-)rural area no longer necessarily implies fewer financial means, nor does it imply a farming background or traditionally rural values - a perception

further complicated by the post-Covid trend of people relocating to the countryside. Many participants, for instance, live and work in and around Protected Areas and National Parks, which in some cases is even considered a privilege. Yet, geographical and social obstacles to reaching, engaging and empowering young people in nature persist. As a useful starting point, participants identified the creation of spaces built around a shared sense of belonging to nature - fostering education, peer connection and relationships in less formal ways.

Combining the two topics of nature protection and youth inclusion, the study session came up with ideas and recommendations for the Bern Convention Secretariat on better youth inclusion. The aim is to tackle the problem of accessibility and under-consideration of the youth perspective, which currently relies only on the presence of YEE as Observer, subject to funds. Importantly, if there is no youth present, youth are not directly taken into account in the decisions made at the annual meetings. As such, to better support youth, ideas and recommendations formulated through the study session by participants include:

- Financial support for young people joining the BC Standing Committee - whether YEE or national youth delegates - which includes, at a minimum, reimbursement of travel expenses and, ideally, compensation, considering that youth, contrarily to other delegates, generally join on an unpaid capacity.
- Advertise in greater capacity about how youth can be involved, for example mentioning YEE as an Observer organisation and how to reach out to the Advisory Council on Youth on the website.
- Remind BC Parties that they are accountable for youth inclusion following CM/Rec(2016)7 and invite them to be more proactive on the topic, for example by engaging national young delegates.
- Invite complainants to include youth when filing cases.
- Integration of a sort of “youth impact assessment” or young people in “shadow” roles.
- Hold regular mock Standing Committees for youth to facilitate the understanding of the Bern Convention processes.

Learning points for participants

Participants gained a deeper understanding of the Bern Convention, its functioning (with the mock Standing Committee being exceptionally useful), and how it can be used to advance nature conservation. They also learned about the Council of Europe and its values and resources, and opportunities to influence local organisations and policymakers. When asked, participants indeed expressed a renewed commitment to taking action within their organisations and communities.

By sharing experiences and contexts, participants learnt about environmental challenges that concern other young people (finding commonalities and differences), experiences in youth inclusions, types and examples of youth activism across the continent and the existence and work of other youth organisations and networks.

They felt better equipped to connect with other young people, build partnerships, influence decision-making and contribute to a more biodiverse, democratic and environmentally sustainable future.

This stems from the fact that participants left feeling inspired, motivated and empowered to take action. They recognised the growing involvement of young people in nature conservation and decision-making, as well as the many opportunities available to strengthen youth participation in environmental policy. This was a reminder of the fact that young people are not alone: there is a wider network of like-minded young people across Europe (culminating in events like this study session), where friendships are formed and potential partnerships identified - on the basis of a strong sense of international solidarity.

They took home practical ideas, advocacy tools and participatory learning methods, including discussions, energisers and interactive activities. They gained inspiration for applying the Bern Convention and other tools in their own contexts, creating content about it, developing new projects, and engaging young people in nature and environmental policy.

On youth inclusion, participants learnt that they are not only stakeholders but rightsholders (of a healthy environment), how to spot meaningful and genuine efforts and what to advocate for.

Contribution to the mission of the Youth Department

The study session contributes to **improving young people's access to rights** by making the Bern Convention - a binding Council of Europe treaty that is often unfamiliar to youth - accessible and usable. Participants learned which rights it enshrines and enables, including the right to a healthy environment and procedural rights to information, participation and justice; they experienced first-hand how to exercise these rights through the Convention's mechanisms, notably the case-file system and the Standing Committee; and they identified the legal avenues available to hold governments accountable for protecting species, habitats and the people who depend on them. In doing so, the session put into practice the Committee of Ministers' Recommendation CM/Rec(2016)7 on young people's access to rights.

This contribution does not stop with the participants. During the programme, the learnings, best practices and reflections of the group were compiled into a zine targeting young people across Europe. By explaining the Bern Convention and its democratic mechanisms in a youth-friendly, visual format - including step-by-step guides for local biodiversity advocacy and raising concerns with authorities - the zine acts as a multiplier for youth access to rights, giving young people the tools to understand their rights and how to use them, well beyond the week in Strasbourg.

The study session also contributed to revitalising pluralistic democracy. It showed that meaningful youth participation in environmental governance is a vital component of a healthy democracy, and that international instruments only deliver when civil society - including young people - can engage with them, be heard and hold governments to account for science-based decisions. Participants examined the barriers to genuine involvement, rejected tokenistic approaches, and asserted their role not only as stakeholders but as rightsholders. Their contribution is twofold: on the one hand, the session empowered young people to participate actively in the public space, from local protected areas to international negotiations; on the other hand, it produced concrete, youth-driven recommendations that could be useful for the Bern Convention Secretariat and its Parties for embedding youth participation systematically in the Convention's structures - inspiring the renewal and strengthening of democratic environmental governance with youth at its core.

4. Programme - inputs and discussions

Programme flow and thematic blocks

On the evening of **20 September 2026**, participants were welcomed to the EYCS by the course director and the preparatory team and engaged in icebreaker activities aimed at getting to know each other. The team also provided participants with practical information about their stay at the EYCS as well as the organisation of the following day.



On **21 September 2026**, the study session was officially opened by the course director and an introductory speech by Sulkhan Chargeishvili, Educational Advisor of the Youth Department of Council of Europe. This included the zine and personal action plans they would develop over the week. The team then presented the safeguarding and wellbeing framework and the code of conduct. Participants shared their expectations and mapped their own backgrounds and networks, along with the conservation and youth participation challenges in their contexts. The day ended outdoors with a sensory walk exploring participants' relationship with nature, followed by the first reflection groups.



The **second day (22 September 2026)** focused on governance and participation. In the morning, participants were introduced to the origins, purpose and structure of the Bern Convention, including the work of its Secretariat. They then explored the governance of protected areas and the role of young people in decision-making. Particular attention went to youth commitments and engagement mechanisms under the Bern Convention, and to the existing gaps in youth participation. Discussions were supported by the presence of guests directly involved in these processes:

- Marta Medlinska, Secretariat of the Bern Convention, Council of Europe
- Emilie Tamo, Advisory Council on Youth of the Council of Europe

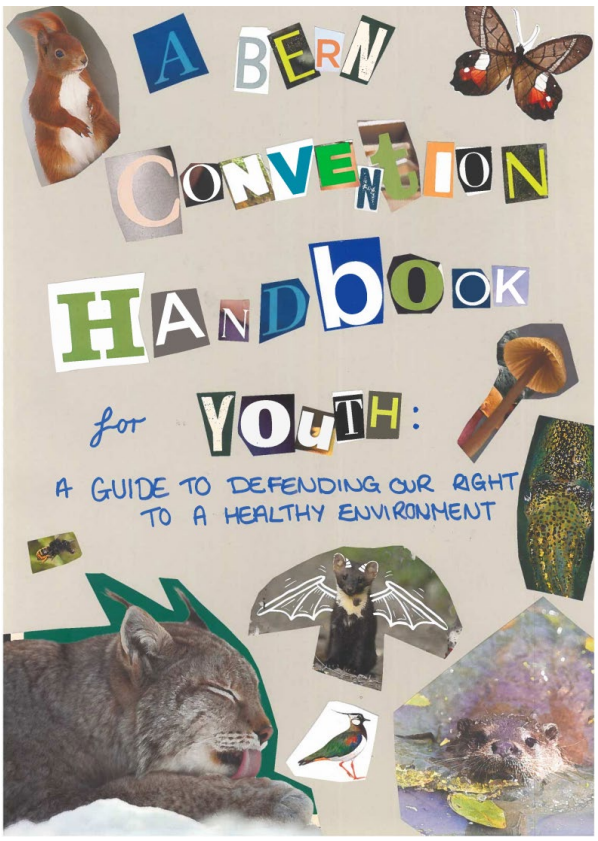
Participants also linked Bern Convention principles to species and habitats in their own countries, framing nature conservation and restoration as a matter of intergenerational justice. In the afternoon, they defined what meaningful youth engagement looks like and how to tell whether a law or consultation is genuinely youth-inclusive. A key insight emerged here: young people are still too often involved symbolically rather than given real influence. This led to the shared position that young people are not only stakeholders but rightsholders and professionals.

The **third day (23 September 2026)** turned to skills for advocacy and action. The participants learned about advocacy tools such as campaigning and storytelling. They then applied these tools in a theatrical simulation of a Bern Convention Standing Committee meeting, based on the 2017 case of the Vjosa River in Albania. Taking on the roles of Parties and Observers, they experienced first-hand the complexity of international environmental negotiations. In the afternoon, participants visited the Robertsau Nature Reserve in Strasbourg. This excursion offered a local lens on protected areas, alluvial forest ecosystems and the nature these policy discussions ultimately seek to protect.

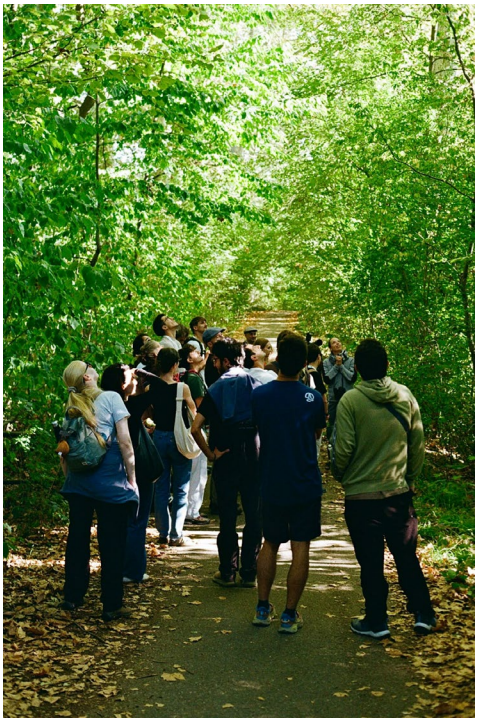




On 24 September 2026, we started with a session looking at inclusivity in youth participation. Participants filled in a Wheel of Power which allows you to understand your own privilege with individual reflection. This led into a full discussion on marginalised communities, namely rural youth, and how organisations can engage and reach these audiences. We looked around the room and asked ourselves who was not here and why, and how we can make change to ensure this is different next time. This conversation helped set the stage for the zine and how we can tailor the finished product to be accessible to broad youth audiences. The rest of the day was dedicated to developing the zine. In the morning, participants looked back at the learning of the previous days, gathered ideas on what the zine should include, and discussed its purpose and how it could be used in follow-up activities. They then brainstormed its structure, content and formats together. The rest of the day became a collective creative space. Working with collage, participants cut and combined images and text from magazines and other materials they had brought from their home countries, alongside their own writing and illustrations. This gave the zine a visual diversity that reflected the many backgrounds in the room. In this way, participants translated the knowledge of the week into texts, illustrations and practical guides, turning creativity into a tool for youth advocacy and making sure that every voice was represented in the final product.



On the final day **(25 September 2026)**, participants finalised the zine through editing and review, ensuring shared ownership of the final product. They then planned local and European follow-up, including personal action plans and recommendations to foster youth inclusion in the Bern Convention. The day closed with an evaluation of the learning and the programme, a closing circle, certificates and a celebration. Participants travelled back home on 26 September 2026.



As a result of the study session, participants produced the following outputs, which will be published by the organising team:

- **A zine on youth and the Bern Convention:** an illustrated, youth-friendly digital and printable booklet created by and for young people. It captures the key lessons, ideas and practical guidance from the session, so that participants can use it in follow-up activities in their own communities.
- **Personal action plans and joint follow-up steps:** these are designed to carry the momentum beyond Strasbourg and strengthen youth participation in the Bern Convention and in European nature policy more broadly.

5. Follow-up activities

The organisations behind this study session - YEE, EYR and the EUROPARC Youth Council - together with other organisations represented through the participants (Generation Climate Europe, GYBN Europe and Biodiversity Action Europe), form the core of youth-led biodiversity advocacy at the European level. An established process of intra-communication already exists among these organisations, enabling collective action when needed, as was the case during the wolf downlisting debate and advocacy campaign. The Bern Convention is a topic of current engagement through this channel. Follow-up activities to the study session are therefore embedded in existing work and priorities, with the added strength that the participants themselves are now equipped with deeper knowledge and understanding of the Convention.

Immediate and organisational follow-up

- **Communications.** Each organisation is producing social media content - online articles, Instagram posts and reels - highlighting what was learnt at the study session and raising awareness of the Bern Convention.
- **Direct engagement with the Bern Convention.** As the only youth observer to the Convention, YEE is looking to attend the annual Standing Committee meeting in Strasbourg in December 2026. Funding options to send a delegate are currently being

explored and, if secured, a strategy will be developed with the involvement of study session participants, who will support advocacy and inputs for the meeting.

- **Recommendations to the Secretariat.** The youth-inclusion recommendations developed during the session will be collated and sent to the Bern Convention Secretariat to support stronger and more systematic youth participation in the Convention's processes. In the long term, we hope to see more youth organisations invited as observers to Bern Convention meetings, to strengthen wildlife protection and mainstream intergenerational justice into decision-making.

Participant-led follow-up

- **Personal action plans.** Participants developed action plans including communication activities around the Bern Convention (including its case files) and on the rights of citizens and young people, making use of the collective zine.
- **The zine as an advocacy tool.** The zine, created collectively by participants, is now theirs to use as an advocacy piece in their local contexts, multiplying what was learnt at the study session. Participants have been asked to share how they are using it with the team and with each other.
- **Preparing for future cases.** The downlisting of the wolf was recognised as a major and controversial precedent, prompting the group to start preparing for a likely similar process concerning the bear. Communication campaigns, awareness raising and direct advocacy have been identified as the key actions in this scenario.
- **Taking the conversation to the EU level.** Participants from EU member states intend to take these commitments further by working on the implementation of the Bern Convention within the EU, connecting it to the Habitats and Birds Directives - potentially through a dedicated exchange on the topic.

Sustaining the network

The platform created as a result of the study session - currently an active WhatsApp group - is already thriving: participants continuously share updates on regulatory and legislative changes, news from their local contexts and nature areas, and meet-ups, including photos and insights from CBD COP17, the biodiversity COP. We foresee this platform remaining a vibrant space for knowledge sharing among participants across countries, building on what they learnt together.

In the long term, we hope that the connections made through the study session, its follow-up activities and related projects will foster stronger internetworks between the three organising youth networks, and stronger engagement of the 25 participants within these networks on topics related to the Bern Convention.

Appendixes

I. Programme of the study session

Sunday, 20 September 2026

Arrival of participants
18:00 Into the Habitat
– *Welcome activity*
19:00 Dinner

Monday, 21 September 2026

09:30 Welcome to the Study Session Ecosystem: Meet Your Fellow Nature Guardians!
– *Welcome participants into the study session, establish an inclusive learning environment and introduce the learning journey for the week*
11:00 Break
11:30 Planting the Seeds: Safeguarding, Team Building and a Collective Code
– *Explain Safeguarding, wellbeing, Code of Conduct; agree on Expectations and a moment for Team building*
13:00 Lunch
15:00 Bern Biodiversity Web: Who's in the Habitat?
– *Map participants' contexts, backgrounds and networks, to get to know who is in the room and where they are coming from*
16:30 Break
17:00 Field Guide: The Bern Convention Explained
– *Introduce participants to the Bern Convention, its purpose, content, goals and provisions with Marta Medlinska, Programme Manager in the Secretariat of the Bern Convention.*
18:30 Paws for Thought
– *Reflection group*
19:00 Dinner
21:00 Evening activity.

Tuesday, 22 September 2026

09:30 The Owl's view: Bern Convention in Your Backyard
– *Linking Bern Convention principles to your local context*
11:00 Break
11:30 The Wolf's Pack: Intergenerational Justice and the Bern Convention
– *Nature conservation and restoration as a matter of intergenerational justice*
13:00 Lunch break
15:00 Youth at the Table: Bern Convention, Democracy and Marginalised Voices
– *With Emilie Tamo, Elected Member of the Advisory Council on Youth*

16:30 Break
17:00 Wild and Wise: Spotting Real Youth Inclusion in the Bern Convention
– *What is meaningful youth engagement?*
18:30 Paws for Thought
– *Reflection group*
19:00 Dinner
21:00 Evening activity.

Wednesday, 23 September 2026

09:30 The First Howl: Basics of Advocacy
– *Introduction to advocacy tools - campaigning, storytelling*
11:00 Break
11:30 The Hive Assembles: Mock Session of a BC Standing Committee meeting
– *Mock exercise*
13:00 Lunch break
15:00 Into the Wild: Nature Reserve Robertsau Forest
– *What are we protecting and advocating for?*
16:30 Break
17:00 Into the Wild: Nature Reserve Robertsau Forest
– *What are we protecting and advocating for?*
18:30 Dinner out in the city

Thursday, 24 September 2026

09:30 The Beaver's Blueprint: Crafting a Zine
– *Activities and reflection on the things learnt over the last day*
11:00 Break
11:30 DeZine for Youth on the Bern Convention
– *Zine development*
13:00 Lunch break
15:00 DeZine for Youth on the Bern Convention
– *Zine development*
16:30 Break
17:00 Unleash the Zine: Showcasing Youth Advocacy for the Bern Convention
– *Showcasing zines & reflection on content*
18:30 Paws for Thought
– *Reflection group.*
19:00 Dinner
Free time

Friday, 25 September 2026

09:30 Spreading Wings: Youth included in the Bern Convention
– *Brainstorming recommendations for better youth inclusion in the Bern Convention*
11:00 Break
11:30 Back to Nest: a Personal Action Plan
– *Personal action plan on follow-up activities and ideas to implement in one's context*
13:00 Lunch break
15:00 The Beaver's Reflection Pool: Looking Back and Forwards
– *Evaluation of learning and the session*
16:30 Break
17:00 Closing the Bern Convention Trail
– *Closing circle, certificates, and celebration*
18:30 Preparation for farewell party

19:00 Dinner
21:00 Farewell party

Saturday 26 September 2026

Check out and Departure of participants

II. Online visibility

As the preparatory team was formed of members from all three youth environmental networks, each member was responsible for the development of a dedicated communication strategy, the creation and publication of social media content across each network, and joint collaboration, as well as photography.

Before the study session, the activity was promoted internally through the YEE, EYR and EUROPARC networks (mailing list, and targeted outreach), to allow for member organisations and individuals to apply.

During the event, the visibility of the study session was based on the daily publication of stories showing the different activities that were taking place that were also re-shared by the Instagram accounts of all three organisations. In addition, participants themselves shared their own Instagram stories mentioning the YEE and EYR account, which allowed us to share their experiences and increase the visibility of the project.

Two Instagram reels were also published during that week, referring to or directly showing the study session activities. One of the participants also published daily reels explaining her experience in collaboration with the organisation she belongs to.

Throughout the week, the event was also photographed. After the study session ended, a folder with a wide selection of photographs was shared with the participants, allowing several of them to publish the photos and promote the event.

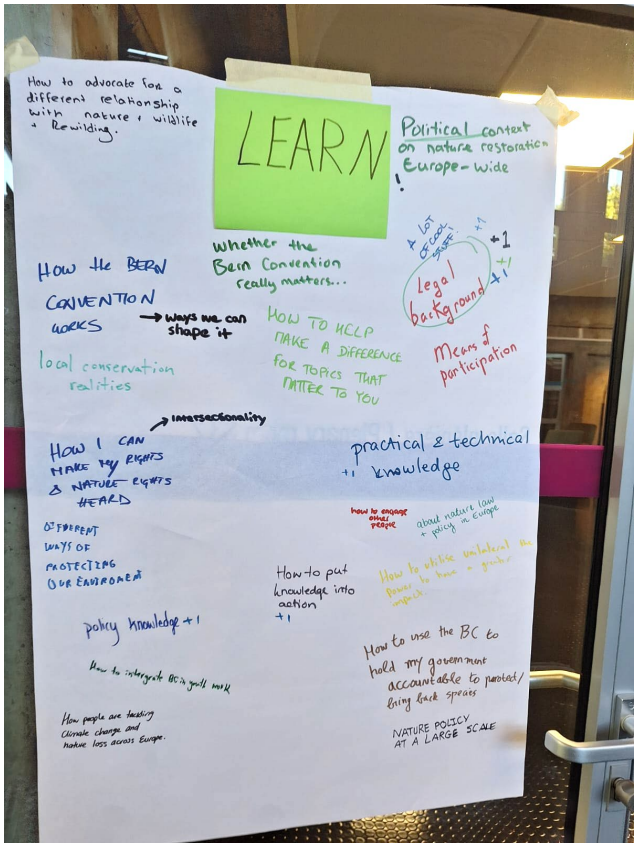
A total of 12 LinkedIn posts were written and shared by the participants after the study session. YEE published a longer article on YEE's website, detailing the activities and learnings of the study session, accompanied by social media posts on LinkedIn and Instagram. The study session was also featured as a news item by the EYR coordinator on Rewilding Europe's website.

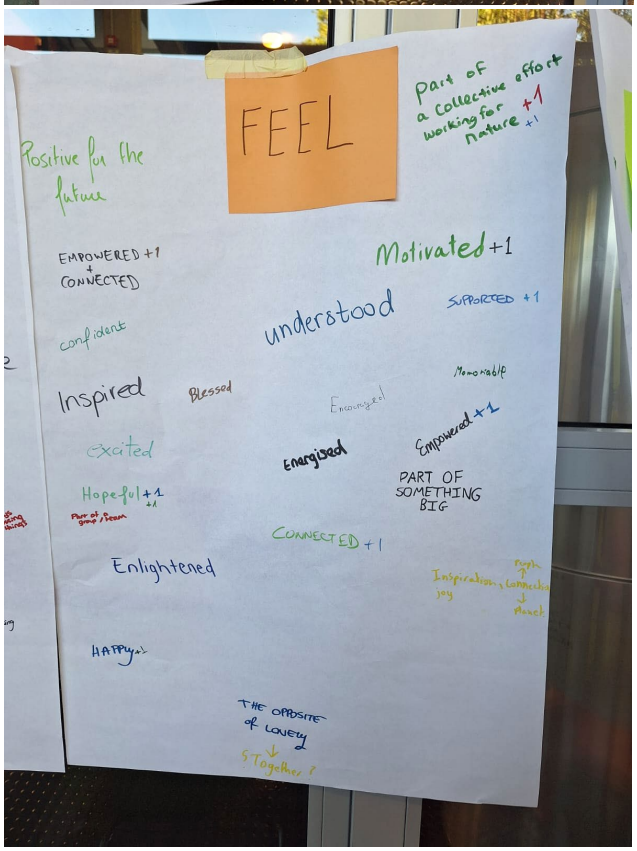
III. Collective Zine

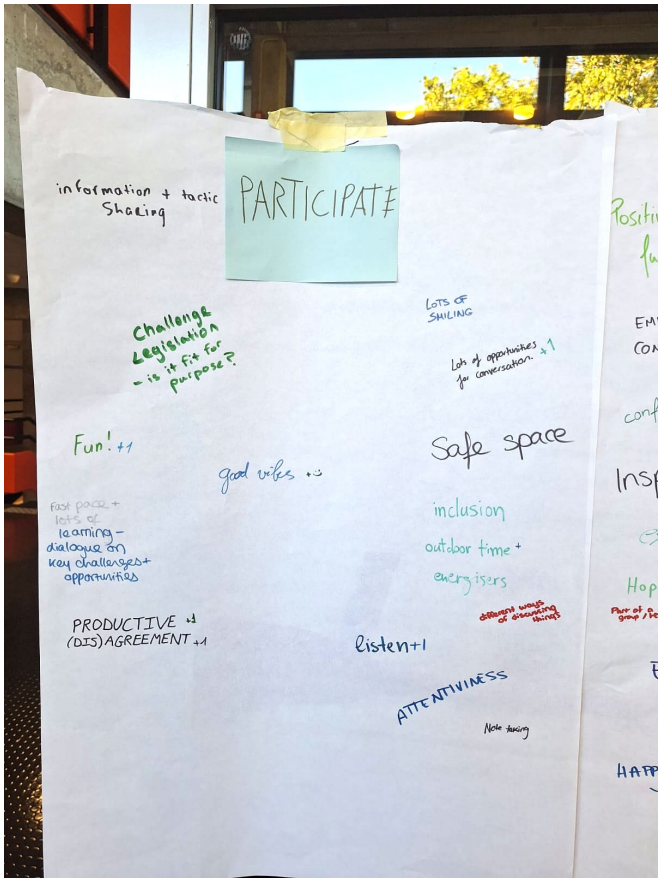
Our Collective Zine

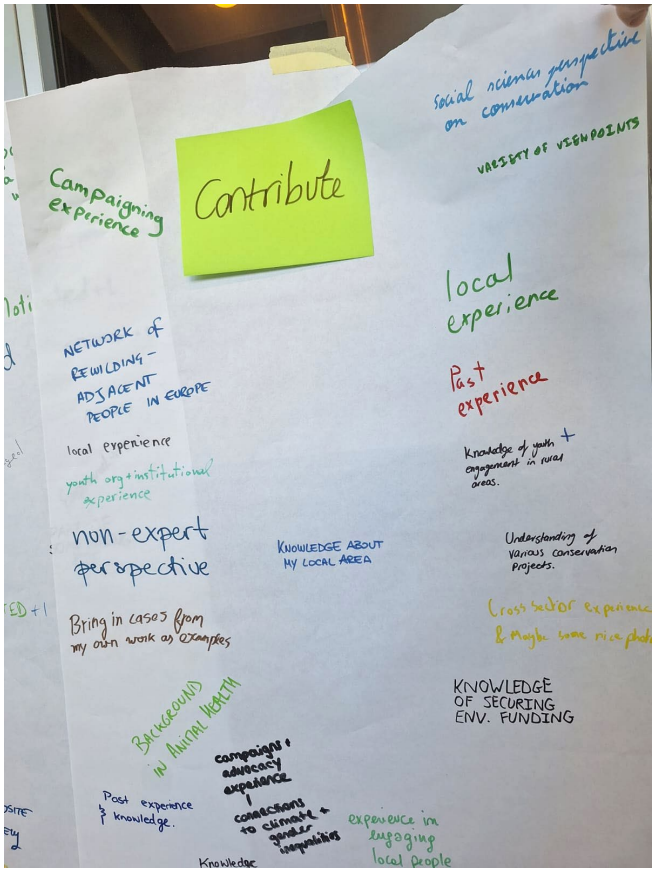
IV. Learning Materials Produced

Expectations


How to advocate for a different relationship with nature + wildlife + Rewilding.
LEARN
Political context on nature restoration Europe-wide
Whether the Bern Convention really matters...
How the BERN CONVENTION WORKS
ways we can shape it
local conservation realities
HOW TO HELP MAKE A DIFFERENCE FOR TOPICS THAT MATTER TO YOU
Legal background
Means of participation
intersectionality
How I CAN MAKE MY RIGHTS & NATURE RIGHTS HEARD
practical & technical knowledge
DIFFERENT WAYS OF PROTECTING OUR ENVIRONMENT
How to put knowledge into action
policy knowledge
How to use the BC to hold my government accountable to protect/bring back species
NATURE POLICY AT A LARGE SCALE
How people are tackling climate change and nature loss across Europe.


FEEL
part of a collective effort working for nature
Positive for the future
EMPOWERED
CONNECTED
Motivated
understood
SUPPORTED
confidence
Inspired
Blessed
Excited
Energised
Empowered
PART OF SOMETHING BIG
Hopeful
CONNECTED
Enlightened
HAPPY
THE OPPOSITE of LONELY
Together


information + tactic Sharing
PARTICIPATE
Challenge Legislation - is it fit for purpose?
LOTS OF SMILING
Lots of opportunities for conversation. +1
Fun! +1
good vibes +☺
Safe space
inclusion
outdoor time +
energisers
fast pace + lots of learning - dialogue on key challenges + opportunities
PRODUCTIVE +1
(DIS)AGREEMENT +1
different ways of discussing things
listen+1
ATTENTIVIMESS
Note taking


social science perspective on conservation
VARIETY OF VIEWPOINTS
Campaigning experience
Contribute
local experience
Past experience
NETWORK OF REWILDING - ADJACENT PEOPLE IN EUROPE
local experience
youth org + institutional experience
Knowledge of youth + engagement in rural areas.
non-expert perspective
KNOWLEDGE ABOUT MY LOCAL AREA
Understanding of various conservation projects.
Bring in cases from my own work as examples
Cross sector experience
BACKGROUND IN ANIMAL HEALTH
KNOWLEDGE OF SECURING ENV. FUNDING
campaigns + advocacy experience
Post experience + knowledge.
experience in engaging local people