

Youth Forum 2022: Beyouthsphere

Report

May 2022



LE GOUVERNEMENT
DU GRAND-DUCHÉ DE LUXEMBOURG
Ministère de l'Énergie et de
l'Aménagement du territoire





Abstract

A program by **Minett UNESCO Biosphere (MUB)** and in collaboration between **ProSud, Ville de Differdange, the Ministère de l'Énergie et de l'Aménagement du Territoire (MEA), UP_FOUNDATION, Youth For Climate Luxembourg, Youth4Planet, natur&émwelt** and **Administration de la Nature et des Forêts (ANF)** offered the chance to a group of young adults to participate at the Youth Forum on the 23rd and 24th April 2022. During this first youth forum in the biosphere reserve in the historic mining village of Lasauvage, the international group (LU, FR, GER, IT) consisting of 17 students and/or young professionals participated in several workshops aiming at working together and elaborating clear solutions to the current environmental issues in the Minett UNESCO Biosphere region along with creative specialists. At the end of this journey, their ideas were presented to key decision-makers in order to incite discussions on their form of implementation!



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Aim

The objective was to unite motivated Youth aged between 17 and 29 and encourage youth participation through the design thinking method “Design for Change” in the development and evolution of the Biosphere Reserve. In addition, the Youth Forum gave the participants the opportunity to develop concrete proposals for facing the known challenges in the Minett biosphere by conserving and improving the region's biodiversity and presenting them to stakeholders and political decision makers of the PRO-SUD syndicate and the City of Differdange.

Outline Youth Forum

Expert Rallye

By environmental experts: Jan HERR – ANF, Georges MOES – natur&ëmwelt, Sören SALVATORE – natur&ëmwelt

The event began with a rallye across Lasauvage, where the participants received an introduction of the professional and environmental insights of the Minett region by 3 invited specialists. During the rallye, the young adults met experts who are used to facing concrete problems in the field of environmental protection and biodiversity conservation. This part of the Forum became later a direct link between the identified challenges and the developed solutions, which will result in the implementation of small-scale projects with the potential of becoming large-scale changes as the outcome of the Youth Forum.

Topic introduction

- Jan Herr - Natura 2000 area manager, focused on the behavioural signs in the Minett UNESCO Biosphere and protection of reserve areas. He presented the signs that can be found in the protected areas, how to read and interpret them, the species that can be found and the threats anthropogenic behaviour is causing to their survival. He illustrated the example on how a rule breaking behaviour can endanger certain ground-nesting bird species living in the Biosphere reserves and lead to disasters like fires and habitat loss. In addition, to make the participants aware of which initiatives have already been taken, he distributed the guidebook “Déi fréier Dagebaugebidder am Minett - Op wat passen ech op?”.
- Goerges Moes - Representing natur&ëmwelt, is an agronomist who set the focus on the crucial importance of non-genetically modified seeds and the issues coming along with the currently monopolised seed market. With the help of his own personal



experience, he illustrated the impact of urban growth on citizen gardening behaviours and urban infrastructure throughout the last 50 years. This being strongly intertwined with degrading biodiversity and increasing food market demand within the cities, Mister Moes enhanced today's need for a transition "back" to home-growing/collective sustainable horticulture initiatives even within urban areas. One of the given examples was the already existing SEED a.s.b.l., an organisation aiming at preserving endemic seed variations to increase vegetation resilience and biodiversity.

- Sören Salvatore - Biologist for *the Centrale Ornithologique du Luxembourg* at natur&ëmwelt, presented his project *Urban Birds* with the focus on swallows and explained the importance of vegetation, nutrition needs and habitat in the cities to the participants. Identified challenges were their loss of habitat, the lack of human awareness towards the swallows, the lack of nutrition due to a lack of biodiversity, soil degradation, soil compaction and soil sealing. The discussion revolved mainly around the increasing sequestration between wildlife and urban areas during the past 30 years, which could, however, be reversed by bringing biodiversity and anthropogenic activities and infrastructure closer together again through surface and façade greening, endemic vegetation, less soil sealing (green patches), artificial nests etc.

Workshop 1: Design for Change

By UP_FOUNDATION: Silke ADAMS, Sue SCHMIT

A workshop based on the international design thinking method *Design for Change*. Design for Change aims at empowering, motivating and guiding children and young adults to become active and engage in societal change.

Through 4 steps FEEL, IMAGINE, DO and SHARE, they start by taking insight and *feeling* challenges they would like to tackle in their personal daily lives or while helping others and/or the environment. Further on, they dig deeper in order to identify the root cause of their challenge and continue by *imagining* all the solutions that would help improve the challenge while focusing on the root problem. From here, one solution is picked through brainstorming on what scale the solution would impact the identified challenge. As they proceed, their solution-based project becomes clearer and more structured by making a plan of action and/or a prototype. The DO-Step represents the actual implementation of the project, whilst the SHARE-Step intends on communicating their *Story of Change* through different mediums with the aim of inspiring other young adults throughout the world to "become the change". In this particular case through a short movie, a collage, this report as well as the sharing through social networks and the platforms of Minett UNESCO Biosphere, UP_FOUNDATION, Design for Change Luxembourg and Design for Change Global.



Workshop 2: Creative workshops

By Jan HOLLER – Youth4planet, Alessandra BARALE – graphic designer, Youth4Climate

With the help of the video artist Jan Holler and graphic designer Alessandra Barale, the proposed solutions to these problems were summarised in short videos and posters, which can be used to apply on the resulting proposals.

Jan Holler - Storytelling Videomaking



Alessandra Barale - Storytelling and Experimental Posters

This workshop was designed into two parts. The first half was based on project pitching techniques like the elevator pitch. This technique is designed to catch the audience's attention and enables the presentation of a project in a clear way using only a few words. Participants were taught on how to write taglines and loglines that would make the heart of their story accessible to everyone. This can be achieved by breaking the idea down to the essential, which helps them to keep it front-and-centred in their mind. To create this, storytelling tools were used to enable them to design a world around their work making it possible for the audience to project themselves into the result. These several steps were conceived to prepare the participants to the actual presentation of their projects in front of the stakeholders.

The second half of this workshop was then based on a more creative and experimental design process. The main aim here was to put their words into images, illustrating the core concepts. Going from a problem to a solution, participants were asked to create a two-image storyboard representing the issue and how it can be solved. Sticking to the storyboard, they were then requested to shape by the means of a collage using upcycled materials the problem solution scenes they had envisioned.

Leisure

In the evening, the participants were invited to a free public concert of the two Luxembourgish music acts "Culture the Kid" and "Le Vibe" in the cultural centre "Aalt Stadhaus" in Differdange.



Presentation

The ideas and results of the workshops were presented on the second day of the Youth Forum. In a lively and positive exchange of opinions, the concerns, requests, and ideas of the participants were discussed with the following representatives:

- Ann-Kathrin Wirth, Representant of the Ministry of Spatial Planning
- Christiane Brassel-Rausch, mayor of the City of Differdange.
- Tom Ulveling, elderman of the City of Differdange
- Catherine Decker, Member of the Luxembourg Commission for Cooperation with UNESCO
- Frenz Schwachtgen, member of the PRO-SUD board
- Gaëlle Tavernier, General Manager of the PRO-SUD syndicate and the Minett UNESCO Biosphere
- Anouk Boever-Thill, president of the PRO-SUD syndicate

In conclusion, the Minett UNESCO Biosphere will determine ways to carry out the ideas and solutions together with its partners in the upcoming months. This will be done in close cooperation with the scientific partners and member municipalities of the biosphere reserve.



Challenges and solutions

1. Revision of the behavioural signs in the Minett UNESCO Biosphere: Artistic, interactive and engaging info signs within the biosphere

Problem: Problematic and non-engaging signs because they are not being respected by the population, e.g. barbecues or cigarette buds are a common cause of wildfires and free roaming dogs often disturb the ground-nesting birds populating these areas.

Solution: Alerting the population of the impact of their behaviour in these protected zones is mandatory for raising long-lasting awareness and action-based behaviour. For the signs to raise awareness, they should therefore focus less on pointing out the prohibitions (although they should still be mentioned), whereas they should focus more on the “why” with the help of explanations on how anthropogenic behaviour could harm the protected areas. To achieve this, the signs should be designed in easy language combined with pictograms, pictures or graphic designs while at the same time having an interactive character, i.e. a QR-code that invites hikers to log in rare fauna and flora that they encountered. The idea behind this is for by-passers to increase the information-bank linked to these signs, making them richer and more complete over time. The signs would then have the effect of *a.* information given to the population, *b.* diversified and completed by the population and *c.* for the population.

Outlook: While keeping in mind the need for creativity concerning the behavioural signs, the participants suggested to organize a graphic-designer-contest during which the aim and framework of the desired signs are clearly stated. The contest should help to gather a diverse range of perspectives and ideas for the signs. With cooperation of MUB, ANF and natur&mwelt, the explanatory texts could be recited and with the help of an IT-specialist, a platform/website could be created with the



aim of sharing the information about the protected areas and allowing interaction between the signs, the by-passers and new information.

2. Facilitate/Promote sustainable building in the Minett UNESCO Biosphere: Centralization of ecological housing resources and expert services (exchange of competences, natural building resources, advice etc.)

Problem: Lack of information for people intending an active transition to live more ecologically while considering their natural resource management and carbon dioxide footprint. More precisely, pragmatic information on how to build or renovate zero-emission houses/buildings is hard to find. Whereas motivational incentives such as financial aids in form of subsidies are being offered on a national basis, the concrete “how” to do it, with which professionals/firms, with which materials and with which budget remains merely inexistant.

Solution: A national platform containing the above needed information is necessary. The gathering of professionals and firms in the eco-build sector, expert advice, DIY incentives, suggestions of sustainable building materials as well as preliminary carbon footprint and budget calculators would allow an all-around, easy-accessible service on a centralized (internet) platform/website called *EcoBuild*

Outlook: *EcoBuild* should be a national platform and work complementary to already existing platforms representing one of the above aspects (e.g. professionals of the building sector). For this to happen, a collaboration between different municipalities, associations and ministries should be put in place for all the sectors and people involved in sustainable development and building to become visible. E.g. Ministère du Logement, Ministère de l'Énergie et de l'Aménagement du Territoire, Ministère de l'Environnement, du Climat et du Développement Durable, Ministère de l'Économie etc.



3. Preservation of traditional varieties of fruits and vegetables: Improvement of access to heritage seeds, garden resources and spaces

Problem: Companies monopolising the seed-market whilst genetically modifying their reproductive characters and/or cross-combining varieties. As a consequence, endemic plant species are being lost and the seeds' and plants' resilience is decreasing - especially while being confronted to climate change and extreme weather occurrences. At the same time, the annual sprouting of the seed¹ encourages consumerism to the extent of making it nearly inevitable for farmers and horticulturalists to legally purchase different and endemic seed varieties as the free market forbids it due to company-owned patents. Hence, farmers' and horticulturalists' prosperity and health are being jeopardized. Whereas small-scale exchange might even already exist, the legislation still forbids the purchase of diverse and native seed varieties, thus empowering monocultures and invasive plant species instead of increasing biodiversity through polyculturalism.



Solution: Empower locally based and small-scale seed exchanges. These bottom-up initiatives could take place on green rooftops, in community supported agricultures, gardener gatherings etc. In this situation, parallel actions between bottom-up and top-down initiatives are necessary as only a system-change (top-down) as well as a mentality change (bottom-up) can solve this biodiversity problem. The issue covering the content of the Sustainable Development Goals² 1, 2, 3, 8, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16, and 17, the legalisation of seed purchase and selling should have a strong argument against the pure economic growth of patent-owning companies.

Outlook: Motivating the exchange of seeds could be promoted on a national basis as no law is being broken by the mere exchange of seeds. The Ministère de l'Agriculture, de la Viticulture et du Développement rural as well as the Ministère de l'Environnement, du Climat et du Développement Durable could do pioneer work by outing their support of seed

¹ They can grow once but not reproduce fertile seeds, i.e. new seeds need to be bought every year instead of harvesting some seeds and resowing these the following year, thus creating dependence

² <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>



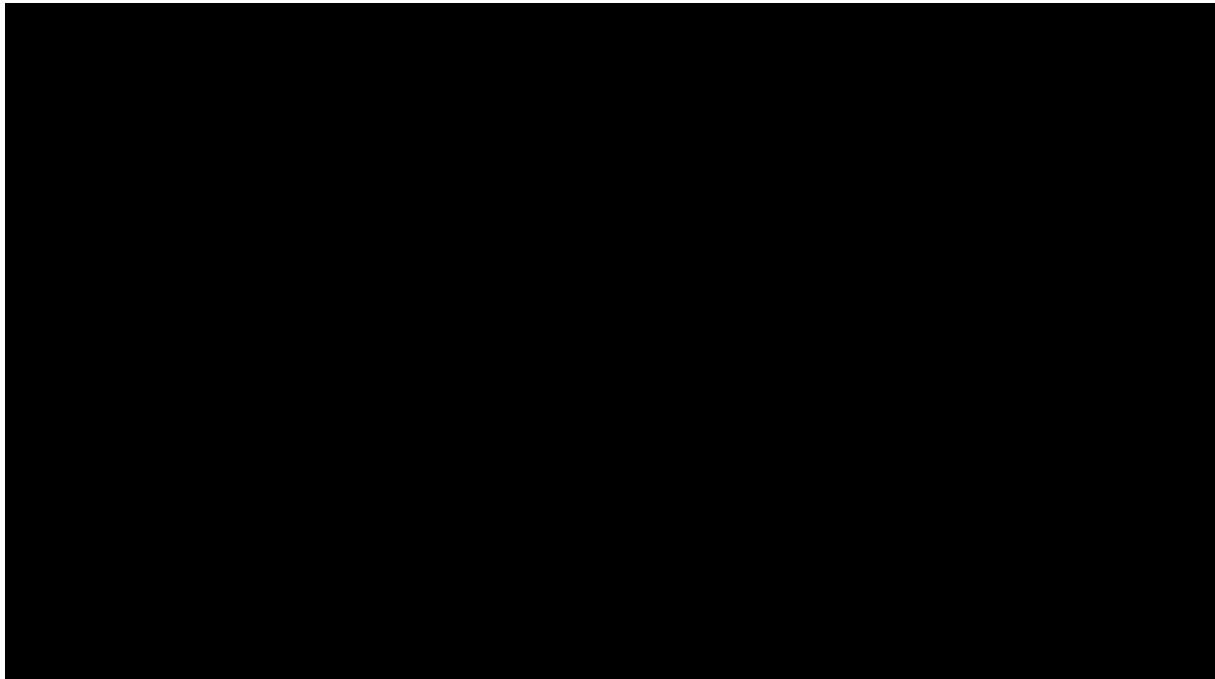
exchanges, thus acknowledging the current loss of biodiversity and resilience of Luxembourgish horticulture and agriculture due to seed manipulation and centralized production.



4. Restoration of swallows in urban areas: Successful implementation of habitability measures for swallows in urban areas

Problem: Sequestration of bird habitat and urban areas leading to an intersectional environmental problem. During the past years, more and more buildings have risen from the ground of Luxembourg. At the same time, old barns that were homes and shelters for swallows and their nests were demolished or renovated. Here, the vicious circle for biodiversity loss begins. Whereas energy efficient buildings are good for the environment, they also prevent the birds from finding holes under the roofs or in the facades to build their nests in. The habitat loss is then reinforced with the sealing of soils through buildings, parking lots, pebbles etc. The lack of green areas results in habitat loss for insects, such as earthworm, which swallows rely on as their main food supply. At the same time, water runoff due to sealed surfaces, does not allow ponds or small rivers to form, hence the water supply for swallows, pollinators and insects is not guaranteed.

Solution: Swallows can live in urban areas if the population, municipalities and governments make small adjustments³. One starting point would be to unseal not strictly necessary sealed soil, for example in already existing green areas, such as urban parks. Additionally, sidewalks can be greened, small patches of trees and wildflowers can be planted. An artificial solution that has already been tested in the project *Urban Birds* would be to install artificial bird nests on house facades underneath the roof for optimal protection. ([Click on the video below](#))



³ Celebrate Urban Birds :<https://celebrateurbanbirds.org>

BirdLife International: <https://www.birdlife.org/partners/luxembourg-naturemwelt/>



Outlook: This challenge can be faced by both, bottom-up and top-down initiatives. For example, could civil engineers be hired to green vertical façades and plan in green patches throughout the city and in parks; e.g. in the city of Differdange rooftop gardens on apartment buildings are being constructed at the moment. Here the artificial bird nests could also be taken into consideration and find their place at the façade. This solution could furthermore be embedded into *Luxembourg in Transition*⁴, an urbanist and architectural project by the Ministère de l'Énergie et de l'Aménagement du Territoire for Luxembourg's transition towards zero-carbon emissions by 2050.

As the project *urban birds* already exists and action is being taken, raising awareness both on municipal and citizen level is the main focus. Through an awareness campaign, the participants of the Youth Forum could spread the word about the identified challenge (with help of their short video) and herewith support the *Urban Birds* project on a national basis.



⁴ Luxembourg in Transition: <https://luxembourgtransition.lu/en/>



Preliminary budget

Project	Timeline	Tasks	Budget
Behavioural Signs	June 2022 – June 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Coordination and follow-up MUB & ANF - Organisation of a graphic design competition - IT specialist for website - Production costs (material, print, new signs etc.) - Publicity - Event planning for launch 	
<i>EcoBuild</i> platform	January 2023 – January 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Coordination and follow-up by MUB & ProSud - 1 full-time Eco-Build coordinator: contact person for all stakeholders and experts in the ecological building sector and for clients, in charge of the maintenance of the platform 	
Seed preservation	September 2022 – open end	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Coordination and follow-up by MUB, Seed asbl, natur&emwelt 	
Swallow habitat	January 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Coordination and follow-up by MUB, Ville de Differdange, natur&emwelt (urban birds) - Embedding in <i>Luxembourg in Transition</i> with MEA - Material (artificial nests, information etc.) 	



Feedback

The first edition of the Minett Beyouthsphere Youth Forum was a success. After 2 days of intensive work, great down to earth concepts were able to see the day. It has been stunning to see participants coming from all over Europe have been able to create a great connection and group dynamic in such a short time, adding everyone value to the concepts they created by bringing different points of views to the table. However, after asking the participants feedback of their experience, it can be noticed that there is still room for improvement that can be done for the next Youth Forum.

Starting with the duration of the event, organisers were agreeing on the fact that the Forum should be stretched on a 2 to 4 full days schedule to allow a smoother and more relaxed development of activities, like for example the networking between participants, the rally and exchange with experts, the development of the core projects or the different workshops.

Lasauvage, offering a great spot for gathering and brainstorming, nonetheless, a visit of one of the core zones of the biosphere reserves should be included to the Forum, and a campfire would be preferable to a concert in another town.

Last but not least, it can be added that it was a pity that no minister was present during the presentation of the results, and that the presence of the stakeholders after the presentation would have been beneficial for a more profound discussion and exchange with the participants around their projects and views.

Finally, even though some things could have been different, the Forum's results have been diverse, and many participants were very glad to be able to be part of this event. It is now our responsibility in view of their hard work to make it possible to achieve the realisation of their projects and ideas as a concrete outcome of the Youth Forum.

It would be wise to first gather participants, be it in a live event or via videoconference, to see which of them would be ready and motivated to continue and concretely realise the Youth Forum projects. Then once participants gathered, it could be interesting to work in a conceptualisation, pre-production, production and post-production schedule.

