

How we coordinated a global youth manifesto on climate change at COY11

What is this document?

- ★ We would like to share how we coordinated the COY11 [Manifesto](#) with anyone interested in preparing a similar document.
- ★ This is an **open-source model** so feel free to share it around and adapt our organisation as you wish. Most importantly, we hope this document will enable you to **learn from our mistakes!**
- ★ This document will go through the **10 steps that we followed to coordinate the manifesto**, explaining the different missions that had to be covered and how long it took us. **Key successes and failures** will then be highlighted so that you can easily learn from them.

The context of COY11

A Conference Of Youth (COY) is a meetup that is organised by youth every year before the UNFCCC's annual meeting. The aim is for youth to discuss and develop strategies before participating in the UNFCCC. In 2015, we held the 11th COY in Paris.

There were lots of expectation around the UNFCCC's meeting in 2015 because an international agreement was to be signed. Because of all of the excitement, we decided to organise a bigger COY to reach out to a wider audience. **We coordinated a three-day event gathering 5000 youth from around the world to debate climate change, share solutions and get inspired.** Our manifesto was coordinated as part of COY.

Besides the Paris COY, 8 "local COYs" were organised at the same time with the same concept and values. The local COYs were scattered around the world (Morocco, Brazil, Canada, Nouvelle-Calédonie, Bénin, Madagascar, India, Japan) but were all connected to the Paris COY.

10 steps we followed to produce a manifesto

1. Have an in depth reflexion on what is the aim and the design of your manifesto. [2 weeks]

Key questions need to be answered from the beginning : **why are you coordinating a manifesto? for whom is it written for? who does it represent? what will be its format?** Even though this reflexion may take considerable time, it is essential to do so in order to have a clear vision of the project.

At COY11, we aimed for the youth to reflect upon strategic themes as well as agree on values that it will respect. The manifesto's goal was to serve as a lobbying tool for engaged youth groups, but to also be the outcome of a reflexion defining common values and objectives of the youth. The manifesto was divided in two parts : values and themes. The first part included the values considered as most important by the participants. It aims to define what principles the youth agrees to respect. The second part gathered different themes considered as key for the youth : adaptation; conservation; education; energy; environmental law; human rights; sustainable food production; youth inclusion. Each theme was developed over one page, explaining the position and recommendations of the participants, as well as actions to put in place.

- Advice = We took the time to share our ideas with different people and organisations before taking a final decision, which enabled us to improve our initial project.

2. Assess what resources you already have and which ones you need to put in place. [2 weeks]

What networks are you able to reach out to in order to find participants for your manifesto? For COY11, we had a strong network of international youth, thanks to the local COYs that were held around the world.

- Advice = If you don't have a good network of people, try and think of how you can create one (through schools, youth organisations, YOUNGO, etc). Think about how inclusive you want your manifesto to be : do you want it to have a good international representation? do you plan to respect a gender equality? This will influence who you will reach out to.

Do you have a website where you can communicate on your manifesto? Do you have specific knowledge in computer science or social media that you could use at your advantage? At COY11, we already had our website where we published all the necessary information. We had volunteers that looked into how to connect live with local COYs, how to use different platforms and online tools to communicate with people based in different countries (eg. slack, trello, google drive, etc).

Can you use resources of people who have done a similar project ? Many youth manifestos have been produced in the past. At COY11, youth from COY10 gave us advice and documents so we did not start from scratch.

3. Decide on the process of the manifesto. [2 days]

After choosing the format of the manifesto (e.g. if it is divided in chapters), **you need to decide on how it will be produced (i.e the "rules" you put in place)** : will it be based in consensus decision-making or will you use a voting system? Will participants be divided in working groups? Will you use a selection process? These are essential questions that will affect the manifesto and the people working on it. **It is important to find a balance between what you ideally want and what you can realistically achieve** (due to time constraints, the number of volunteers working with you, etc).

At COY11, we decided to have specific working groups to work on each part of the manifesto. These groups were composed of about 20 people, with one group coordinator (to communicate on its behalf) and one group rapporteur (to minute the debates and discussions within the group). The only requirement to join a group was motivation and to be under 30 years old. Some groups were in French and others in English, due to the high demand to have both languages. This implied that the coordination between groups was sometimes difficult, but ensured a more inclusive manifesto. The working groups were closed and had the ultimate authority of what was included in the text. People who had not joined a working groups had multiple ways of sharing their ideas and views with the groups via twitter, questionnaires and live sessions during COY.

- Advice = Create documents explaining your process in detail and how you plan to coordinate the manifesto. You will notice what is missing and be able to clearly communicate on it with the members of your working groups, with media, within your own teams, etc.

4. Get your working groups started! [2 weeks]

It is now time to **contact your networks and gather participants for your manifesto**.

At COY11, we sent out a questionnaire to all of the COY participants and to the local COY networks to ask youth about the content of the manifesto and if they wanted to join a working group. The results highlighted 9 subjects that people wanted to work on and gave us an exhaustive list of people who were interested in taking part in the manifesto.

We then contacted the list of people and gave them in depth information on the manifesto, its process and its format. We asked them to decide which subject they would like to work on.

Following their answers, the working groups were created. Participants were assigned their role within the working groups (coordinator, rapporteur or member) and their specific task.

- Advice = At COY11, people only had a few days to express their interest, which was not enough for people around the world to receive the information and act on it. Give enough time for people to join your manifesto project.

5. Supervise your working groups. [2 weeks]

Once your participants are working on the manifesto, **you need to be able to support them as much as possible and steer them in the right direction**. You are the only one who has an overview of the entire project, so make sure you share all the information you may have.

At COY11, the working groups added up to over 250 people. We committed considerable time **answering questions, following their progress, providing them with tools and resources**. Most importantly, it is essential to **give clear deadlines and to be very explicit about the work they have to do**. The working groups were asked to fill in a homework sheet one week after their creation to make sure that the groups had started working together. This was a good way to notice which groups were working effectively and the ones who were struggling.

→ Advice = The working groups only had two weeks to work together before COY11. This was very tight, considering the fact that they lived in different time zones and were volunteers.

One week before COY, the working groups had to submit a draft of their text. This draft was then uploaded to our website and anyone was able to give feedback to the working groups via a questionnaire.

→ Advice = We had thought about many processes for people to feedback to the working groups. However, we did not communicate effectively on these tools, so they were not used well enough.

6. Producing the manifesto. [3 days]

It is important to **have a moment when participants gather and fully commit to work on the manifesto**. This is where discussions can reach conclusions and key decisions are taken. **Depending on how you gather your participants, there is a myriad of ways you can get them to finalise the manifesto** : present their work to each other, exchange working groups for an afternoon, have session on consensus, etc.

During the three days of COY, the working groups presented their work and facilitated a debate on their topic. This enabled them to receive ideas from other participants and challenge their work. This also ensured that people could participate to the manifesto, even if they were not part of a working group. The sessions were live streamed and people could tweet in live questions.

A second session was held in one of the local COY. The working group had sent them the topic of the debate and the local COYs sent feedback to the working group coordinator.

On the last day of COY, the working groups could finalise their final draft and submitted their work by noon. During the afternoon, the manifesto's spelling and grammar was corrected and it was printed in A3 sheets. COY participants were able to read the manifesto and sign it on their way out of COY.

→ Advice = With only one volunteer working full time on the manifesto, the pressure was huge! It is worth having a team of multiple people coordinating and managing the production of the manifesto.

7. Communicate as much as you can on the manifesto. [3 days during COY but lots of work prior]

It is great to produce a manifesto but it is a shame if no one ends up reading it. **Communicating on your project is a key element that should not be overlooked**. This will give credibility to your manifesto and key actors will hear about it. As a coordinator, it is your duty to respect the work of all the participants and do your best to share it!

The COY11 communication team did an amazing work around the entire event and highlighted the manifesto as a main outcome of our conference. We received considerable media attention throughout the three days of COY, where we did our best to explain the process and the aim of the manifesto. As a result, key decision-makers were interested in the manifesto and we presented it to COP21 president L.Fabius, French president F.Hollande, UN youth envoy A.Alhendawi, and french environmentalist N.Hulot.

→ Advice = It is important that you learn how to explain your vision, aim and design in a clear and concise manner. Once you have agreed on a way to communicate on the manifesto, all of your team should speak about it in a similar way for consistency.

8. Sign the manifesto. [1 day]

You may want to **think about who will be able to sign the manifesto or if you want to have it signed at all**. It could simply be the manifesto participants for example. At COY11, we decided that any individual or organisation is able to sign our manifesto. As the manifesto is divided in multiple themes, they can sign them individually. The manifesto was simply uploaded on our website with a google form to sign it.

- Advice = After COY11, we were exhausted but we should have use the hype as much as possible to diffuse the manifesto, share it via all of our social media and get people to sign it.

9. Have a beautiful and accessible presentation. [3 weeks]

As a coordinator, it is important that you take the time to make a nice document out of your manifesto. Again, to respect the work that was put into your manifesto, **you need to take the time to make it a document that people would want to read. This can simply be to ensure its translation or to think of creative ways for its layout**.

At COY11, the manifesto is being translated from English to French and Spanish. In order to make a visual and creative document, we have asked young artists to illustrate the manifesto with drawings.

10. Share it with the rest of the world. [3 weeks]

Once the manifesto is produced, translated and laid out, it is essential to **diffuse it as much as you can**. YOUNGO networks are good example of how you can reach out to international youth.

At COY11, we compiled a list of organisations, youth groups and networks where we can diffuse the manifesto. While diffusing it, we hope to keep the manifesto alive. People are invited to sign it but are also asked about what it has inspired them to do and what actions they advise other youth to take in line with the manifesto.

Key successes and failures

Success

- ★ Our biggest success is that participants from over 55 different countries participated in the working groups of the manifesto. This ensured that we represented a wide variety of world views and positions. This was the result of our wide networks through local COYs.
- ★ Many participants of the manifesto expressed their happiness in participating in the process and working with international youth on a project.
- ★ We had multiple ways for people to participate in the manifesto, before, during and after COY, regardless if they were in Paris or if they were a member of a working group.
- ★ This project was entirely coordinated by youth, from its initial conception to the translation of the final document.

Failures

- ★ The communication with the local COYs was sometimes difficult and unclear. As we were all volunteers, it was complicated to organise a time where we could all speak and work together. It is important to communicate as early as possible with all the people who will be working on your manifesto in order to build the project together.
- ★ We were hoping to reach the manifesto through a consensus-based decision making process. Unfortunately, it ended up being an unrealistic goal because the participants were dispersed on too many different activities during COY11.
- ★ We should have done a better communication on the many ways people could engage in the manifesto outside of a working group. The tools (live stream, twitter, questionnaires) to give their opinion existed but they had little use.

- ★ Many working groups did not follow the instructions we had given them on the format of the manifesto. This was in part because we had not communicate clearly enough with them and because we were overwhelmed during COY.

Advice for future manifestos

- ★ Start working earlier than us! We started actively coordinating the manifesto project 2 months before COY11. This project requires a considerable amount of time, especially if you have to invent all of the process and design of the manifesto. All the participants would have benefitted from having more time to work together and we would have been able to give them better support and assistance. This can be balanced by the number of people working on the manifesto-project. At COY11, we were only a small team of about 5 volunteers.
- ★ We would highly advise to focus future manifestos on key actions and strategies that the youth can put in practice in their daily life. Many youth have already come together to express their position and recommendations on key topics. We are producing very similar documents year after year. We tried to integrate an aspect of actions that need to be put in place in our manifesto. However, we would advise to focus the entirety future manifestos on realistic actions that people can put in place in their daily lives and strategies to reach them. This would also give a more tangible reason to share the manifesto around the world once it has been produced.
- ★ We advise to have the participants work on the manifesto full time for a few days. At COY11, the working group members were not required to only work on the manifesto and many got dispersed by the wide range of events and workshops at COY11. This created imbalances between working groups. It would have been much more effective to ask the members to fully commit themselves to working on the manifesto during COY11.