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**PRESS**  
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# Oslo Youth for Healthy and Sustainable Diets

This report summarizes the EAT Oslo Youth for Healthy and Sustainable Diets project, which invited local youth and other stakeholders to share recommendations on how public spaces and school meals could be reconsidered to enhance health and sustainability.

October 2022

This project was supported by the Research Council of Norway. The Norwegian name for the project is *Ung og sulten i Oslo: Løsninger for et sunt og bærekraftig kosthold.*



# Food Consumption in Cities

Cities around the world are increasingly focusing on improving their food systems as a way to achieve health and sustainability goals. In the Nordic region, for example, cities are applying integrated food systems approaches to improve the health of their population and reduce their climate footprint. Three Nordic capital cities – Copenhagen, Oslo, and Stockholm – have set ambitious targets for achieving a [Planetary Health Diet](#) for all by 2030, by signing the [C40 Good Food Cities Declaration](#).

While municipalities can influence the meals they offer in public institutions, encouraging citizens to change the way they eat in everyday life is more challenging. To address this, it is helpful to understand how people interact with food in their daily routines and to provide them with places that make it easier to choose healthy, sustainable options.

The Oslo Youth for Healthy and Sustainable Diets project was designed to support a shift towards healthy and sustainable diets among Oslo youth, through consultations and awareness raising activities.

Project partners included EAT, [Oslo Municipality](#), [Bydel St Hanshaugen](#). [PRESS](#) supported the project by recruiting youth and moderators to take part in the activities.



Implementation of prototype interventions in Nørrebro, Copenhagen with seating, edible plants and a food truck offering planetary health diet meals, ©Gehl

## Cities and Urban Diets at EAT

EAT works to support cities and urban areas adopt food system solutions that address pressing challenges. This support is designed to enhance climate resilience, reduce environmental impact, and improve health. EAT's [Cities and Urban Diets](#) program aims at making healthy and sustainable food the easy choice for all city dwellers.

More than half the world's population now lives in urban areas. This is expected to increase to 68% by 2050.<sup>1</sup> Achieving a global transformation of food systems demands that healthy and sustainable food consumption patterns become the new normal in cities and towns.

EAT's Cities projects are informed by and aligned with the findings and recommendations of the 2019 EAT-Lancet Commission. EAT's existing cities work supports a range of activities including EU projects addressing citizen-driven food systems innovation and integrated food policy approaches ([FoodSHIFT 2030](#) and [Food Trails](#), respectively); and city-specific science translation and technical assistance, following our work with Copenhagen in our [Shifting Urban Diets](#) project (2019-2021).

<sup>1</sup> United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2019). World Population Prospects 2019: Highlights (ST/ESA/SER.A/423)

# The Project: Oslo Youth for Healthy and Sustainable Diets

**Oslo Youth for Healthy and Sustainable Diets** translated science from the [EAT-Lancet Commission](#) into accessible knowledge for youth and city-level action in Oslo.

The project builds on methods developed in EAT's [Shifting Urban Diets](#) project, successfully piloted in Copenhagen and resulting in three approaches towards a Planetary Health Diet. Testing these methods in Oslo is an important step to scaling to a range of cities.

To enhance understanding of the Planetary Health Diet and healthy and sustainable food, and to equip residents with the tools and mindset to change eating habits, the project held consultations with Oslo youth addressing:

1. How physical surroundings ([‘food environments’](#)\*) influence food consumption behavior,
2. How to develop tasty, healthy, and sustainable school meals.

The consultations used the [CO-CREATE Dialogue Forum tool](#), to facilitate discussion between youth and adults working on

these topics. Participants shared their lived experience and interaction with food and co-developed recommendations for healthy food environments and school meals.

The recommendations were gathered and presented to Oslo Municipality as a guidance document to support the city's food-related goals, as part of Oslo's school meals program and actions to achieve the C40 Good Food Cities Declaration.

The Norwegian name for the project is *Ung og sulten i Oslo: Løsninger for et sunt og bærekraftig kosthold*.

*\*Food environments are the interface where people interact with the food system to make their decisions about acquiring, preparing and consuming food (such as grocery stores, markets, restaurants, cafeterias, but also considering food availability and accessibility). Enhancing food environments can help us design cities and communities that invite behavioral change towards more healthy and sustainable eating behaviors.*



Workshop on school meals, 6 September 2022, ©EAT

# Engaging Oslo Youth



Workshop on school meals, 6 September 2022, ©EAT



Workshop on school meals, 20 September 2022, ©EAT

**EAT and its partners invited high-school local youth** aged 16-19 to a series of activities in September 2022, to share recommendations on how public spaces and school meals could be reconsidered, with health and sustainability in mind.

The project focused on engaging high schoolers in Oslo, as teenagers are in a crucial life moment where they gain independence and have autonomy in shaping their own food behaviors. This is also the age group which Oslo Municipality is addressing with its new free school meals program, which launched in high schools in 2022.

To recruit youth, we created a digital flyer inviting them to take part in the project and distributed it through existing youth networks, such as youth groups, extracurricular organizations, and cultural associations. Project information and invitations were also shared on EAT's social channels (Instagram and Facebook), and by Ung på Haugen ("Young på Haugen") – the centrally-located district of St. Hanshaugen in Oslo, which organizes activities for youth and families.

The activities were held at Huset på Haugen, a youth cultural center in Oslo.

In total, the project engaged 34 participants throughout its activities, including eleven youth between 15 and 25 years old. The other participants came from various municipal departments, environmental and climate organizations, food service providers, food service professionals, and researchers.

The main challenge the project faced was engaging teenagers to participate in the consultations after school hours.



A filled out CO-CREATE Dialogue Forum tool, 6 September 2022, ©EAT

# Recommendations for Healthy and Sustainable Diets in Oslo

The activities used the [CO-CREATE Dialogue Forum tool](#) that EAT developed through its EU-funded CO-CREATE project, designed to connect youth and decision-makers to co-create solutions for a healthier future. The Dialogue Forum tool creates an inclusive space for discussion across generations and sectors. The tool and process, developed for and with young people, promotes youth inclusion and leadership in decision-making. The free canvas and a five-step process are designed to allow participants to connect with others, discuss an idea, and collaborate on action.

The project activities included:

1. Introduction to the Planetary Health Diet and workshop on school meals, using the CO-CREATE Dialogue tool
2. Introduction to food environments and Photovoice-inspired exercise
3. Workshop on food environments, using CO-CREATE tool
4. Discussion of youth recommendations with Oslo Municipality

The following section captures a selection of conversations and recommended actions developed by the youth and stakeholders in the project's co-creation workshops.

## 1. Co-creation workshop: Introduction to the Planetary Health Diet and workshop on school meals

Tuesday 6 September, 17:00-19:00

Huset på Haugen

The session started with an introduction to the Planetary Health Diet and was followed by the co-creation workshop on how to develop tasty, healthy, and sustainable school meals. The workshop format allowed for small groups of 6 participants to discuss their interest in the topic, and delve into challenges, opportunities and areas of action that can help make school meals appealing to students while also achieving the municipality's food-related goals. The first event brought together 22 attendees: 9 youth and 13 actors who work across the fields of school meals or other food provision.

### Recommendations on school meals:

Information about what sustainable meals look like, how to work with food environments, and how to properly organize youth engagement were highlighted as especially important.

This information is especially relevant for chefs, school personnel and decision-makers.

Involvement of youth in the serving of tasty food is vital to avoid food waste in schools. One of the measures suggested was to involve youth directly in creating the menus, but also to set aside enough time during the day to eat, so students don't need to arrive earlier to school to have breakfast.

Resources are needed nationally and locally to ensure funding for organizing and planning, logistics, storage, communication and involvement processes with youth and school staff. Better involvement of the department for education and health in connection with the school meals project is key to providing political support. It was felt that school meals need to be detached from political periods and "above politics."

Showcase Norwegian producers and food to create meals using more seasonal and local produce. Giving menus climate labels to display food-based carbon emissions.

## 2. Introduction to food environments and Photovoice-inspired exercise

Thursday 15 September, 17:00-18:00  
EAT offices, central Oslo

The youth participants were invited to learn more about the concept of 'food environments' ahead of the second co-creation workshop and were given a photovoice-inspired exercise to apply learnings to their day-to-day lives. The photo exercise asked them to document their local food environments over several days, focusing on where and how they interact with food outside of their homes (ex: at grocery stores, cafes, or restaurants in their neighborhood, school, clubs, or even online). As many youth were not able to attend the in-person meeting, background information and instructions for the exercise were shared with a group of 15 youth who shared interest in taking part in the activity. This exercise helped youth prepare for the co-creation workshop on food environments.



Example of food environment with produce on the street, advertising signs from fast food, and restaurants pouring out onto the streets, ©EAT

## 3. Co-creation workshop 2: Food Environments

Tuesday 20 September, 17:00-19:00  
Huset på Haugen

The second co-creation workshop focused on food environments in Oslo and how physical surroundings can be improved to provide healthy food environments. Using the CO-CREATE Dialogue Forum tool again, the groups of six participants each delved into the external influences shaping our food consumption behaviors, how this specifically impacts youth, and possible approaches that can be taken to create healthier and more sustainable food environments in Oslo.

### Recommendations on food environments:

Individual responsibility was highlighted as a key consideration, for school meals but especially for food environments; participants expressed feeling pressure to eat healthily and sustainably, while at the same time being exposed to advertising and easy, cheap and unhealthy options in their busy day-to-day lives.

Collaborating with grocery stores and food providers on product placement and procurement practices, and working with them and their own sustainability goals could be a way of achieving healthier food environments.

Regulating junk food advertising in public spaces came up as a key action area and political measure, although the Municipality faces challenges with marketing laws and legal limitations.

Similarly, stopping the sale of junk food in municipal sports arenas was a popular suggestion.

Regulations around when students leave school could reduce unhealthy consumption practices, if schools provide healthy and sustainable food and students are protected from external influences during school hours.

Making sustainable and healthy options affordable was a key recommendation for food environments, as price often is a driving factor of food decisions. Limiting subsidies of meats and increasing the subsidies for vegetables and greens was also considered as an opportunity to promote healthy and more sustainable food options.

Subsidized cooking courses on affordable, healthy, and sustainable cooking for citizens facing economic challenges could contribute to better food consumption at home, potentially lowering the demand for food outside the home.

Including food considerations in the early stages of construction plans, together with the development company or owner of the building, can enable better urban planning and food environments.

#### 4. Final discussion of recommendations with youth and Oslo Municipality

Tuesday 27 September, 17:00-19:00  
Huset på Haugen

The final event invited Oslo Municipality's 'Coordination Group for Sustainable Food' to hear ideas and recommendations directly from youth, based on the previous workshops and discussions, on promoting healthier and more sustainable diets. The event allowed for open dialogue between youth representatives and Oslo Municipality members, covering a variety of topics and suggestions, from introducing food and health courses in school curricula, youth engagement, food affordability and marketing, to using social media for public communications on sustainable food choices.



Final event, 27 September 2022, ©EAT

The city should introduce "Food and Health" as a course in elementary school curriculum, so that students can learn about diverse topics and get familiar with cooking their own healthy meals.

*It's important to avoid shame about the food we eat!*

When we talk about diets and healthy food, we need to be mindful of youth's body image and food habits. Trustworthy information needs to be just as easily available as diet advice on Tik Tok.

INVOLVEMENT FROM STUDENTS REGARDING WHAT FOOD TO SERVE IS IMPORTANT. INFORMATION ABOUT THE FOOD, AND HOW IT POSITIVELY CONTRIBUTES TO SOCIETY AND PERSONAL HEALTH. MAKE IT ATTRACTIVE TO EAT HEALTHIER AND MORE SUSTAINABLE.

Share more on social media about how to make sustainable choices.

THE MUNICIPALITY SHOULD LISTEN TO YOUTH TO MAKE IT BETTER AND EASIER TO LIVE IN OSLO, ESPECIALLY CONSIDERING EVERYTHING THAT GOES ON IN THE WORLD.

**Make it easier and more attractive to run "green" businesses.**

**Lower the price on sustainable food and make it more affordable to choose sustainable and healthy rather than unhealthy.**

The project made me more aware of what I eat, and I try to eat healthier.

# Co-creating Recommendations with Youth

Through project activities, young people gained an understanding of how food is part of tackling our global climate and health crises and considered possible solutions to address these challenges – including through designing public spaces to encourage healthier food behaviors, and through sustainable meals in schools. This new knowledge provides the basis for mindset shifts towards more sustainable lifestyles and everyday habits.

Overall, stakeholder engagement and communicating knowledge were two key recommendations that were mentioned throughout as part of supporting a shift towards healthy and sustainable diets. This highlights the value of a project such as *Ung og Sulten i Oslo*, which actively sought to involve youth in creating recommendations for the path ahead.

By engaging young people as well as Oslo Municipality, this project provided space for interaction and opportunities to inform Oslo's work and help ensure interventions respond to the needs of youth in the city.

**Now the goal is to further develop these recommendations and implement them in the city context.** We aim to collaborate with partners to conduct food environment studies and pilot interventions, building on the input provided by the youth engaged in this project.

In addition to the topics covered in this project – school meals and food environments – we intend to help cities establish science-based targets (SBTs) for their food-related emissions, scaling up the three methods developed in the Shifting Urban Diets project in Copenhagen.

With the insights gained from testing the methods in additional cities and consulting a wider range of stakeholders, we will create a publicly available toolkit – a City Guide to a Planetary Health Diet – to help urban stakeholders improve their food systems.

**What did you like about the project?**

**"We got to say what we wanted because it had to be said. Everyone had something reasonable to share, which made me think it was a safe space to be."**



Workshop on school meals, 6 September 2022, ©EAT



Workshop on food environments, 20 September 2022, ©EAT



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Thank you to everyone who supported and took part in the project.

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