

ENGSO Youth Statement on the New EU Strategy for Youth "Investing and Empowering"

ENGSO Youth welcomes the **New EU Strategy for Youth**, which outlines the priorities of the European Union's policy and action in the youth field for the coming years. Especially, ENGSO Youth welcomes the inclusion of health and sport as fields of action as part of improving access and full participation of young people in society.

We would like to emphasise that sport can be an excellent tool for achieving many of the other priorities of the strategy as well, which is why **we encourage enhanced cross-sectoral co-operation** described in point 5.1 of the strategy not only in the fields of youth, health and sport, but also between youth sport and the other areas included in the strategy. Sport is a non-verbal form of communication, with the ability to cross all boundaries. It brings people together and generates solidarity, tolerance and fair play, it can support employability of young people, it includes an element of non-formal learning and it is a major sector in volunteering – sport is an excellent tool for promoting the priorities set in the New EU Strategy for Youth. To demonstrate this, ENGSO Youth would like to share with you this example of a youth sport project involving young people with fewer opportunities:

LOS project of the city of Bonn in co-operation with local sport club SSF Bonn

The LOS project targets young people with fewer opportunities and problematic social behaviour in parts of the city of Bonn, Germany. The project offers sporting opportunities for young men in their neighbourhood. The sport club SSF Bonn provides a facility where youth may gather in a safe environment where they may reach common understanding through sport and develop relationships and friends.

The young people come from various ethnic backgrounds and spend their free time boxing and weight training. This is provided free of charge and facilitated by a coach who is paid by the sports club. The club provides not only opportunities to do sport, but additional social benefits. Life coaching and the development of the young people's social skills is the main aim of the coach. A side effect and strength to the programme is that the young people learn to respect rules for life through their involvement and often apply them in society. The coach comes from a similar background to participants and can relate to the youth as they are members of the same community. He guides them through problematic situations regarding friends, parents, or teachers offering a helping hand they can count on, if they stick to the club rules. A decrease in violence and increase in community welfare is seen as one of the major successes of this project.

As part of the cross-sectoral co-operation, ENGSO Youth believes that **enhancing co-operation within the Directorate of Youth, Sport and Citizenship, especially between the Youth and Sport Units, would have a significant impact** on achieving the goals set in the new EU Strategy for Youth and encourages the development of this co-operation.



Concerning youth health and sport, ENGSO Youth recognises the strong link between physical activity and health, and supports fully the inclusion of this topic in the strategy, especially the prevention of obesity and applying the EU Physical Activity Guidelines. Furthermore, ENGSO Youth welcomes the proposed collaboration between youth workers, sport organisations and health professionals. As the above example illustrates, **coaches and sport instructors are often, in fact, doing youth work, and recognising this educational role they have and supporting them in it is essential.**

In addition to the health and sport aspects under the topic “improving access and full participation of young people in society”, ENGSO Youth would like to point out that **youth participation, especially involvement in democratic decision making in sports, is of utmost importance.** Young people are often seen as merely participants in sporting activities, but sports organisations also offer a great deal of opportunities to make the voice of young people heard through boards, youth committees and other structures. More than 700 000 sport clubs in Europe offer activities for millions of young people in Europe – many of whom are not organised in any other form of civic activity. **Therefore, sports organisations as well as governments should be encouraged to take the views of young people into consideration in sports matters.**

Concerning the new integrated cooperation framework illustrated in point 5 of the strategy, ENGSO Youth would once again like to express its support to the topic. In order to fully realise the potential which sport has in the youth sector, **ENGSO Youth suggests that youth sport organisations shall be included in the permanent and regular dialogue both on national and on European level, as well as in peer-learning processes.** As illustrated above, we believe that including the youth sports movement has an added value to each of the peer-learning exercises mentioned in the strategy as well as to the future structured dialogue.

Conclusion

ENGSO Youth welcomes the new EU Strategy for Youth “Investing and Empowering” and is willing to actively support the implementation of it and of the suggestions included within this paper. ENGSO Youth hopes that you take into consideration the above comments to build together a Europe, where the well-being and social inclusion of young people is ensured, where young people are provided with adequate possibilities to participate and to be involved, and where young people's voice is heard in all decision making processes.

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ENGSO Youth is the youth organization of ENGSO (European Non-Governmental Sports Organisation). ENGSO Youth is the youth sport for all organization on European level. ENGSO Youth has 41 members, which are the umbrella organizations from across Europe. ENGSO Youth represents the interests of young people (under 35) involved in sports in Europe. The organisation promotes sport and health, participation and volunteering of children and young people in sports and international cooperation. Please find more information on the ENGSO Youth website: www.engso.eu/youth.htm