



**Giving youth  
a real say in sport**



**Paper**



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# Imprint

**Editor:**

ENGSO Youth – European Non-Governmental Sports Organisation

**Author:**

Participants of the ENGSO Youth 'Future Leaders Conference' Helsinki 2007, revised by the members of the ENGSO Youth Committee 2008

**Responsible Editor:**

Jan Holze (dsj/ENGSO Youth)

**Editorial Team/Proofreading:**

Judith Wood (ENGSO Youth/CCPR)

Rebekka Kemmler-Müller (ENGSO Youth)

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## Preface

ENGSO Youth is working to develop a sporting culture in which children and young people are encouraged and given the opportunity to participate in decision-making processes at all levels within sports organisations.

It is important for the future of sport that young people are able to develop the skills and experiences that will encourage them to be active participants and the future leaders of European sport.

Of the 15 countries that sent delegates to the ENGSO Youth 'Future Leaders' Conference in Helsinki, May 2007, only 8 had established youth committees within their organisations. Furthermore, only 15 countries from the possible 41 members of ENGSO sent youth delegates to the Conference.

This document is intended to motivate ENGSO member organisations to improve youth leadership opportunities, enable young people to take control of their own destiny and to actively promote youth governance in their countries.

Many countries claim to have a youth sport structure, but how many really give young people equal treatment?

ENGSO Youth wants to ensure a successful future for sport in Europe. For young people and together with young people, we challenge the members of ENGSO to help make this dream a reality.

ENGSO Youth Committee



# About ENGSO Youth

ENGSO Youth promotes the involvement of young people in all aspects of sport, including participation, governance and decision-making.

ENGSO Youth is the youth organisation of ENGSO and was founded in 2003. It is an autonomous non-profit organisation based on democratically adapted statutes and regulations. ENGSO Youth has 41 member countries in Europe, both inside and outside of the EU.

ENGSO Youth consists of the ENGSO Youth Assembly and Youth Committee. The Youth Assembly is the decision making body of ENGSO Youth and meets every two years. The ENGSO Youth Committee consists of 9 elected members from the Assembly. All members are under 35 and represent their National Sports Confederation or National Olympic Committee.

The main aims and activities of ENGSO Youth are:

- Representing the interests of people under the age of 35 volunteering, participating or working in sport
- Working in partnership with other European Youth organisations
- Dialogue with the European Union; including the European Commission, European Parliament and Council of Europe
- Enabling networks amongst young people and youth organisations
- Responding to EU consultations on behalf of European Youth and Sport
- Producing guidance and information for national and European sports organisations

More information about youth sport structures in ENGSO countries can be found on /youth.htm: [www.engso.com/youth.htm](http://www.engso.com/youth.htm) or by making direct contact with the ENGSO Youth Committee members.





## Giving youth a real say in sport

Sport is the most popular youth movement in Europe; however, despite this, every year there is a large drop-out of young people from organised sport across Europe. This drop-out has negative implications for the health of European citizens and also causes a decline in the number of future competitors, organisers and leaders of sport.

One reason for the decline in participation is that young people are not sufficiently engaged with their activities and clubs and instead turn to alternative interests over which they have greater control.

A primary purpose of ENGSO Youth is to encourage all ENGSO members to give young people a chance to participate in the decision-making processes of their sport. This will encourage more young people to stay involved in sport and ensure that the activities offered meet the specific aims and needs of young people.

*“If you have a problem, ask a teenager whilst they still know everything”*



There is no better person to know about the wishes and interests of young people than a young person. Therefore, if an activity is to be successful it is vital that young people are consulted throughout the organisational process and given opportunities to manage their own activities.

Volunteering is essential to the success of sport, and to ensure that we have experienced and well-trained adult volunteers it is important to offer young people voluntary opportunities. As well as using volunteering to gain skills and experiences to make them better sports leaders, volunteering in sport also introduces young people to democratic values and team working.

By giving young people positions of responsibility within clubs, and encouraging them to develop their own ideas and activities, sport is ensuring a successful legacy for the future through the recruitment and training of potential leaders.



# Right of co-determination for children and young people

Sports organisations should ensure that young people have the opportunity to:

- participate in physical activity.
- have real influence on their own training, competitive activity
- participate in the planning of their own activities
- to take co-responsibility for their own activities
- do other tasks in the sport clubs
- have a real say in the sport organisation
- participate in the decision-making process at all levels
- formulate sports policies
- elect their own committee to represent their interest
- plan and execute events or project

Although these are the values to which all ENGSO Members adhere, the reality is very different ...

A recent Norwegian study indicated that 80% of young people said that they have no influence on things happening in their sports club and only 6% are engaged in the boards or other committees.

When participants at the ENGSO Youth GA were asked to list the reasons why there are not more young leaders in sport they wrote:

- The sports organisations don't encourage young people to put themselves forward
- Senior officials are prejudiced against youth leaders and resistant to change
- There is no information about how to get involved

- There is no funding for youth leadership development
- Conflicts with volunteering, participation in sport and studies
- The benefits to the individual aren't visible enough
- Too few opportunities
- Lack of role models
- Lack of 'youth culture' within a country or organisation

When the same participants were asked what they needed to become youth leaders, they replied:

- Encouragement and support from senior people within a sports organisation
- Simply just to be asked!
- Training in the necessary leadership skills
- Advertisements showing them where to find opportunities
- To be integrated into a team with a real project to run
- To be given responsibilities, e.g. a youth position on the Board of a Federation
- Access to resources, including facilities and financial support
- Offered a pathway from small roles to positions of responsibility

For all the participants the role of senior officials working or volunteering within a Committee was seen as vital in the success or failure of young leaders.



### Does the following sound familiar?

*The Anti-Youth Sports Federation. This Federation provides no opportunities for young people to develop their experience or training and concentrates its priorities upon senior officials. Young people are seen as lacking in knowledge and experience and therefore of no value to the Federation. Many of the officials have been in the organisation for a very long time and there is a strict hierarchy. Procedures are very formal and tradition is paramount. Technology is ignored and young people are seen as disruptive as they do not fit in easily with the rigid structure of the organisation.*

Unfortunately this type of organisation is still very common, even in countries where real efforts are being made to involve young people. It is currently estimated that by 2050 the population of Europe will have decreased by 55 million. There will be more opportunities for dynamic young people and unless sport changes, those dynamic young people will choose to have their lives and careers outside of sport.

### Austria

The first steps to establish an Austrian Youth Sports structure took place in 2001 when a small working group was installed in the Austrian National Sports Confederation (BSO). In the preceding two years this working group gathered experiences and information from ENGSO, Norway and Germany in order to be able to develop the Standing Orders. During the General Assembly of the Austrian National Sports Confederation in 2003 the proposal was adopted and the first Youth General Assembly was held a few months later in spring 2004. Around 80 delegates of the associate members under the age of 35 elected the first Youth Committee for a period of three years. It consists of 10 elected members, all under the age of 35.

The Youth Committee has focused on the following topics:

- Co-determination of Youth in sport
- Youth, Sport and Alcohol
- Teambuilding and anti-discrimination work (ARCTOS)
- Sport and Nutrition
- Educational Programs

National and International Networking is one of the main tasks of the Youth Committee in order to develop Youth Sport Policy in Austria.

The General Assemblies are held every three years.





# So what can you do to develop youth leadership in your organisation?

Firstly you must ensure that youth leadership is made a priority of your organisation and that it is supported by the Board and senior officials. Responsibility for youth engagement should be given to an individual who personally supports this aim and objectives.

Establishing a Youth Committee is one of the best methods for improving youth participation as it can enable young people to take on more responsibilities, whilst also providing a forum for further education and opportunities. Examples from leading countries are included within this report to help provide you with inspiration for your country.

Other ideas are:

1. start a mentoring programme for young people within the organisation
2. invite a young person to become a member of the board
3. organise a national youth leadership conference
4. send young leaders to participate in conferences and events that will develop their skills and experiences
5. create a young leader of the year award
6. include youth leadership within the aims of your organisation and provide funding
7. instigate projects that can be managed by a youth committee

All of the above may sound challenging but ENGSO Youth are available to offer advice and support at all stages of your journey towards full youth participation.

## Finland

The Finnish National Youth Committee (LUNK) was established at the beginning of 2006 in co-operation with the Finnish Sports Federation, the Young Finland Association and the Finnish Olympic Committee. The main aims of the Committee are increasing youth participation and youth co-determination in sport. The members of LUNK have gained eight seats in the select committees of the Finnish Sport Federation, and one member sits on the Board of the Young Finland Association with the right of speech and attendance. One of the LUNK projects – ‘team mate’, successfully brought together active young people and working representatives from more than 20 sports associations. Both sides gained useful information from each other, particularly on how to gain the support of senior officials and how to establish youth networks or to organise youth events. The ‘team mate’ project has stimulated sports associations to establish their own youth committees at both regional and national level.





# Benefits for your organisation

Neither are the advantages one sided. The development of a Youth Committee can provide an organisation and staff with fresh ideas and extra assistance in running projects and events.

Changes need not be large or expensive, but through joint working and sharing ideas with young people in your organisation, you will instil a culture and commitment that will bring rewards for years to come.

The benefits for your organisation include:

- more motivated young people
- better trained staff
- staff/youth leader retention
- delivery of more projects and programmes
- greater participation in sport
- the opportunity to create the future leaders of your organisation

## France

### **French National Young Leaders Commission – “Experience your passion differently!”**

#### **1) The CNOSF and Youths**

The French National Olympic and Sports Committee (CNOSF) has always supported the growth of sport associations, one of its mission being the promotion and defense of the sport movement’s unity.

Because the sport movement is above all composed of sport associations and volunteers that enable it to exist, the CNOSF must, as federator, promote all forms of volunteering and thus contribute to the future of sport clubs and ensure their permanence.

In 2000, the CNOSF asserted the importance of the role played by youths by initiating a study on their involvement as volunteers, as part of its “Youth and Sport” Sector. One of the first initiatives was to organize a national course to educate young leaders.

With regard to the results obtained and the breeding ground initiated, the CNOSF created the Young Leaders Commission, making official participation of youth to define its policy.

#### **2) Who are we?**

The goal of the CNOSF’s Young Leaders Commission is to raise awareness among youth and educate them to decision-making within sport organizations and also to ensure the transition from one generation to the next.

More generally, its aims to promote the involvement of youth by creating the necessary conditions for them to be able to undertake and defend their projects within their sport organizations. The commission encourages youth to take part in the policy initiated by the CNOSF which aims to give them a growing role in sport organizations.

It sets up all means to allow them to acquire the experience and knowledge that will provide the basis for their future involvement in sport.

Finally, the commission creates a collective process on volunteering at the service of one same passion: sport.



### 3) Our priorities

To conceive and put in place a course of study:

- Organise courses
- Design and provide suitable educational aids, in collaboration with sport organizations.

To create and conduct a national network of “young leaders” to devise and develop tomorrow’s sport:

- Organise meetings of young leaders
- Install “referent” leaders in each region (see “focus”)
- Share good practices and experiences.

**To include youth in decision-making bodies in which they can play a role**, whether at the CNOSF’s level, or at the national and European levels.

### 4) Our commitment

Sport organizations are the site of a rich community life where individuals sharing the same passion are brought together to undertake humanly endowed projects.

To experience passion of sport is to enjoy the practice of the physical activity but also to participate in the development of the sport.

To take part, means getting involved at the club level and taking on responsibilities.

Because the effects of the leader’s expertise are felt on the value of the associative project, it is essential to educate oneself for quality involvement.

## FOCUS: the young leader referent

### Identity:

he is part of a sport organization.

### Role:

- He represents and is actor of the youth policy development at local level
- He acts as a link for the national policy according to the local environment, he guarantees the efficiency of the network
- He is the principal actor of the network
- He identifies new volunteers
- He is the relay of information’s and initiates actions.

### Missions:

- To compile of what has been realized on the thematic : young leaders involvement
- To create and to follow young leaders actions and events at local novel
- To coordinate and to animate a young leaders network
- To become a central point of exchange of information (between national and local level).
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- To become a central point of exchange of information (between national and local level).

❖ **To energize and animate his network depending on the geographical scale and the local realities.**



# Now that your organisation has an active youth leadership programme, what measures can be implemented within your membership organisations?

Give young people the opportunity:

## Local sport clubs

- to state their opinions
- to develop their skills
- act as a leader
- organise a youth event
- to have their own youth group
- to have a delegate on the board

## Sport federation

- to participate in working groups
- to take part in organising competitions

- to represent the organisation at national meetings or forums
- to elect representatives onto the national youth committees

## National Olympic Committee or Sport Federation

- to have a National Youth Committee
- to encourage young people in sport federations and sport clubs
- to organise a Youth Forum

## Germany – Junior Teams for All

The idea of ‘junior teams’ is a flexible form of volunteer youth work in sports and it has been used by the German Sports Youth for several years. It is an open group of young volunteers under the age of 27 who work together without the need to be elected. Our team motto is ‘everybody who wants can join’ at anytime. The members do not need to take part in every meeting, they are only attached to specific projects if they desire. The members have the chance to plan and realise their own projects, to have influence and a real say in sports to move youth-work, to make youth decisions and there is also room for the exchange of experience between team members and learning within the organisation. The goals of the team are to represent the German Sports Youth with an authentic ‘young face’, to create a network of young volunteers from different levels of the sports youth organisation, to spread the idea of ‘junior teams’ to all member organisations as well as to provide education for team members, that they are able to stretch their minds and learn for life. For example, in time management body language and communication. Therefore, the members receive training in workshops on topics such as decision making and soft skills. One of the most important projects of the junior team is working on a brochure, which like this paper, aims to promote youth engagement and provide ideas for how clubs and federations can start a junior team of their own. We hope that it will create a lot of new junior teams.

Martina Bucher  
Board Member of the German Sports Youth.

# Start today

A waterfall starts with only one drop of rain; it will only take one person – you – to make a real difference to youth governance. Please start today.

ENGSO Youth  
c/o Germans Sports Youth  
Rebekka Kemmler-Müller  
Otto-Fleck-Schneise 12  
60528 Frankfurt  
Germany

**Phone: +49 69 6700 268**

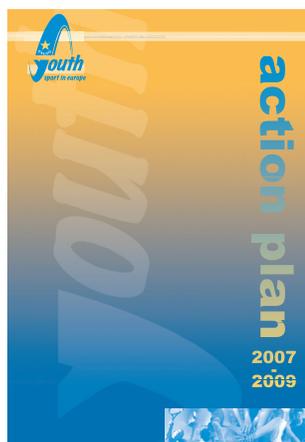
**Fax: +49 69 670 26 91**

**Email: [engso-youth@dsj.de](mailto:engso-youth@dsj.de)**

**[www.engso.com/youth.htm](http://www.engso.com/youth.htm)**



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