



# Youth Sport for Climate Action

The position of ENGSO Youth



Undoubtedly climate change is shaping the future of our planet. It has many social implications, varying from the displacement of communities, threatened local livelihoods and decreased recreational opportunities. Global warming is placing our future generations at risk. Meeting the scale of the challenge to achieve the goals of the Paris Agreement requires action by all sectors, including the sport movement. The Agreement calls for capping global warming at “well below» two degrees Celsius, but the planet is currently on track to experience a temperature rise of double that figure. The Paris Agreement and Sustainable Development Goals are two visionary accords which hold great potential to stabilise our climate, and proliferate peace and sustainable development in the long run.

## Young people and climate change

From Poland to Colombia to Australia, thousands of young people are protesting and marching to encourage new policies towards the planet’s protection, raise awareness of the tremendous impacts of climate change and global warming and demand that action be taken at the political level. On March 15 2019, in what might be considered as the largest youth-led protest in history, an estimated 1.6 million students in 300 cities around the world walked out of school to march for climate action. Inspired by the 16 years old Greta Thunberg, young people have spent their Fridays striking in the name of climate change, signposting their activism with the hashtag #FridaysforFuture and #SS4C (School Strike 4 Climate). A number of similar examples from all around the world demonstrate that the new generation has become the leading voice for global climate action. Despite these youth-led efforts and recent climate change emergency declarations, some world leaders are still questioning climate change and global warming.

## The sport movement and climate change

With its global reach, universal appeal and the power to inspire and influence millions of people around the globe, sport is uniquely placed to lead by example as it reexamines its own practices and policies to move fans and society towards a more sustainable future within and beyond the sporting field. The global interest around sport and its media coverage, provide a strong platform to and inspire and engage large audiences to do the same. Sport is now widely recognised as a tool to be used in formal and non-formal education where it can connect with an assortment of social and soft skills development. While sport cannot provide all the answers, sport entities can play an important role in addressing climate change by a reduction of their carbon emissions and a focus on their own waste management and energy policies. When considering

sport as a tool, it is important to realize its potential when used in combination with other tools to educate on different topics and advocate for sustainable environmental measures.

Sports organisations can display climate leadership by engaging actively and collectively in the climate neutrality journey. For instance, at sporting events, visitors and fans could be encouraged to be more responsible in their behavior towards the environment. Engaging sports celebrities to join the fight against climate change can have great impact too. Sport stars are important role models for many people, and for young people in particular. As a leading global example, with many influential sportsmen and women committing themselves to the initiative, #Sport4Climate is set to make a real, lasting difference.

In December 2018, the global sport movement already made considerable steps to join international climate action efforts and to support the implementation of the Paris Agreement. **The Sports for Climate Action Framework** was initiated by the UN Climate Change Secretariat and 17 sport stakeholders, including major actors like the International Olympic Committee (IOC), the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA), and the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA). Other signatories include the French Tennis Federation, Roland Garros, Formula One, the International Sailing Federation, organizers of the Tokyo 2020 Summer Olympics, the Paris 2024 Summer Olympics, the Rugby League World Cup 2021 and the World Surf League. The goal of the Sports for Climate Action Framework is to mobilise sports organisations, teams, athletes, and fans in a concerted effort to raise awareness and promote climate action.

The activities under the Framework have two overarching objectives:

1. Promote a set of principles for the global sports community to adopt in order to combat climate change, and;
2. Use sports as a unifying tool to drive climate awareness and action among global citizens.

---

<sup>1</sup><https://www.connect4climate.org/initiatives/sport4climate>

<sup>2</sup><https://unfccc.int/climate-action/sectoral-engagement/sports-for-climate-action>

ENGSO Youth, as the voice of young European sports people, strongly supports the objectives and principles of the UN's Sports for Climate Action Framework. At the same time we call for action to implement these goals with a clear and realistic timeline. We believe young people play a crucial role in the better implementation of these actions, therefore there is a need for their active involvement in shaping global sport-climate policies and in designing how sport can be used as an awareness raising tool. As youth are often the beneficiaries of these efforts, it is critical that they are duly represented in the processes. Through its educational activities and initiatives ENGSO Youth also commits to advocate for climate action and greater environmental responsibility at the level of youth sports.

## Specific Recommendations in relation to youth sport and climate action:

**1.** Global sport policies related to sustainable development and climate change shall be shaped with the active inclusion of young people whose future depends on today's global actions. A global youth advisory group on sustainable development and climate action shall be created, while youth committees in national and international sporting organisations shall be set up in order to better channel the opinion and voice of young people at all levels. Youth advisory entities can also encourage young people to develop their own initiatives, form partnerships and seek knowledge transfer opportunities to improve sustainable practices within their organisations;

**2.** Organisers of middle and large scale sport events shall provide adequate frameworks for youth-led, peer-to-peer learning activities related to sustainable development and climate action. Educational side-events, workshops and seminars realised before, during and after international or national sporting competitions can strengthen the commitment of young volunteers, spectators and athletes towards more sustainable and eco-friendly behaviour while they can be used also to raise awareness on the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. Sport-based initiatives, like the Global Goals World Cup can also promote awareness at grassroots level on sustainable development.

**3.** Sport organisations at all levels shall support, empower and encourage their young members to run initiatives for more environmentally friendly and sustainable sporting activities. Initiatives can be developed and implemented by creative youngsters, this can range from sport-based non-formal education to community events, volunteering and fundraising. For instance, youth-led awareness raising activities to strengthen resilience towards climate refugees can be realised during sporting competitions;

**4.** Role model youth athletes shall use their image and popularity to raise awareness on the importance of sustainable development and climate action. A global network of young athletes could be developed within the Sports For Climate Action Framework in order to advocate for more environmental friendly sport events and sport-related climate-action. A global pledge for sport-related climate action could be initiated and signed by well-known youth athletes to increase visibility of their commitment;

**5.** International youth sport networks shall adhere to the Sport For Climate Action Framework, while young people shall also actively contribute to the goals of the Framework with their everyday actions. Reducing the ecological footprint of each individual can be achieved through various ways from active transportation (cycling to school or work) to recycling. As another example, reducing excessive red meat consumption can not just lead to healthier nutrition but it can also support environmental friendly policies. Young people should also be encouraged to advocate for their organisations to embrace sustainability practices in their day to day operations.

---

<sup>3</sup><http://ggwcup.com>

