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EUROPEAN YOUTH AND SPORT PLATFORM 2023

CONCLUSIONS

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1. Giving Youth a Real Say in Sport

Our journey within the Youth and Sport fields started in 2002, when national sport organisations united to form a coalition to fight for youth rights within the European sport movement. The independent youth body of the European Sports NGO (ENGSO) – ENGSO Youth was born.

Since then and amidst advocacy actions, campaigns, partnerships, projects, debates and a lot of challenges, ENGSO Youth has been reaffirming itself as a fundamental stakeholder with an increasingly significant impact in engaging, connecting and empowering young people across Europe within the sport sector.

At a time when the world faces unprecedented challenges, young people have been consistently showing their sense of ownership in our future as a global community, finding cross-cutting solutions that shape a democratic, pluralistic, and tolerant world united in solidarity and respect for Human Rights and fundamental freedoms.

ENGSO Youth's mission and responsibility is to give Youth a real say in Sport and provide spaces where young leaders can gather and find joint solutions to our challenges. That is the aim of ENGSO Youth first ever European Youth and Sport Platform (#EYSP2023).

The European Youth and Sport Platform is ENGSO Youth's flagship event and main contribution to the legacy of the European Year of Youth 2022, striving to build and consolidate a youth-friendly democratic space to ensure the youth voices are continuously, permanently and effectively represented in the European Union.

The European Youth and Sport Platform 2023 took place in Sweden, Stockholm, from the 1st to the 4th of June, 2023. The event was organised by ENGSO Youth in cooperation with ENGSO and The Swedish Sports Confederation, under the Swedish Presidency of the Council of the European Union. The Platform gathered around 100 young leaders engaged in the youth and sport sectors from across Europe, to discuss three main topics identified at the EU level, by the EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027 and the Swedish Presidency of the Council of the EU, as priorities for the Youth and Sport sectors, namely:

1. Good Governance: Youth in Action!
2. Digitalisation and Sport
3. Sustainability in Sport

The EYSP 2023 included several non-formal learning methods such as workshops and discussion groups in order to give participants the chance to actively contribute to all aspects of the Platform. It allowed young leaders to voice their opinions and exchange ideas about the current issues and challenges faced by young people in the Sport sector.

The present document puts forward the voices and ideas of the young participants in a set of recommendations to be addressed to decision-makers and youth and sport stakeholders at all levels. In doing so, it aims to further inform and prompt decision-makers to meaningful and effective action when it comes to planning, shaping and executing EU and National Youth and Sport policies.

As such, the EYSP 2023 emerges as a groundbreaking initiative establishing itself as a flagship event within the Youth and Sport agenda, for its capacity to connect, engage and empower young people and sports enthusiasts across Europe. Thus, we strongly encourage the EU, its Member States, and the Youth and Sport Stakeholders to join efforts in addressing the recommendations hereby issued by the Young representatives.

The topics of the present document are divided into the three themes discussed during the European Youth and Sport Platform 2023: Good Governance; Digitalisation and Sport; and Sustainability in Sport.

2. Good Governance: Youth in Action!

Good governance in Sport, just as in any other public policy area, must necessarily include young people. Youth represents the most active segment of our population practising sport and physical activity. We are the players and athletes of our local sports clubs, Sports Confederations and National Olympic Committees, we are the volunteers that drive the sector forward ensuring every citizen has a safe space to practice sports and physical activity regardless of one's abilities and socioeconomic background.

If we are to address good governance in sport, youth participation in sport governance must be an indivisible and undisputable part of it. Currently, most sport governance decision-making bodies and structures lack effective and meaningful representation of young people, therefore failing to give a voice to the widest segment of its membership's base and in addressing the challenges faced from the grassroots to the elite level that hinder the development of physically active communities.

During the European Youth and Sport Platform 2023, the topic of good governance in sport was addressed at:



The High-Level Panel on the Importance of Youth Voices in the European Sport Setting;



The Plenary Session on "Good Governance: Youth in Action!";



The Parallel Sessions on:

- Role of Youth: Building Up Local Communities;
- Sport Integrity in the Mindset of You(th);
- You(th) voices / HealthyLifestyle4All Edition.

Throughout the sessions, the following recommendations were discussed and agreed upon:

- 1) Youth needs to be included in every step of the sport organisation's decisions, from delineating its mission, vision, and objectives, to implementation and evaluation of policies and programmes. Co-creation and co-management with, for and by young people are essential as any decision within the organisation can affect how youth interacts with sport structures and practices sport and physical activity.
- 2) Address youth participation deficit in decision-making by establishing mechanisms for their formal engagement. This includes increasing youth representatives in board structures and creating youth bodies that allow for effective and inclusive participation.
- 3) Sport governing bodies must promote accountability and transparency at all levels by ensuring relevant information is public and accessible, and by applying effective solidarity mechanisms that allow for the redistribution of revenues to the grassroots level, thus allowing to level the playing field both between healthier clubs and grassroots clubs, and between popular high-revenue sports and less popular, low revenue sports.
- 4) Good governance practices must be ensured in liaison with the relevant public authorities and serve as a precondition for public funding.
- 5) Recognise and include youth work within the organisation's activities as it plays an important role in the personal and social development of young people, their participation in society and the transition to adulthood, while fostering intergenerational dialogue and solidarity.
- 6) Provide access to quality and user-friendly information regarding the organisation's activities and how young people can participate.

7) Sport plays a fundamental role in the development of healthy individuals and constitutes a fundamental and preferred area amongst young people to participate in society and cope with challenges and burdens within their lives. Therefore, it's essential to ensure young people have access to inclusive sport and physical activity facilities, regardless of one's abilities and socioeconomic background.

8) Ensure young people have access to quality education within the sport sector and can act as drivers for sport integrity, fostering healthier environments, social inclusion and integration.

9) Volunteers are the backbone of the sport sector. As such their role should be properly recognised and provided with training and reasonable benefits.

3. Digitalisation and Sport

The digital transition is having a great impact on the sport sector. From improved sport experience for fans and practitioners, to increasingly higher sport performance through sport innovation and digital equipment, from impacting the "rules of the game" with automatic and computer-aided referees which are becoming the norm instead of the exception, to becoming the game itself with the adventure of Esports into the realm of the sport ecosystem.

Technology is playing a role larger than ever before in the lives of fans, practitioners and athletes, opening the door for sport organisations to recreate themselves with new, innovative customer experiences, as well as fan and athlete engagement.

However, whilst the digitalisation of the sport sector is necessary, it should not come at the expense of citizens' physical and mental health and well-being, thus becoming essential to secure a balance between the digital and physical environments in due respect for young people's rights.

During the European Youth and Sport Platform 2023, the topic of digitalisation in sport was addressed at:



The Plenary Session on “Digitalisation and Sport”;



The Parallel Sessions on:

- Digitalisation and Mental Health;
- Role of Social Media in Every Day (Sport) Life;
- Gamification in Sport Setting.

Throughout the sessions, the following recommendations were discussed and agreed upon:

- 1) Research has an important role in providing the rationale for policies and practices whilst accessing their impact. Continuous research needs to be supported to understand the full impact of digitalisation (and possibly AI) on grassroots sports, athletes and youth. There’s also a necessity to invest more in research on the relationship between physical health, mental health, and sport.
- 2) Sport organisations should dedicate efforts to increase their capacities in digital technologies and incorporate different technological trends within their work in a Human Rights-Based approach. When possible, sport organisations should offer accessible resources to all young people, and embrace techniques already used by the professional sports or business sector to increase efficiency without losing its core mission and values.
- 3) The sport sector should protect and follow its data flows in a better and more secure manner. Education about data is critical among the different sports providers. Understanding the value of personal data but also the way data collection works is essential to provide secure and user-friendly information and digital services.
- 4) For grassroots sports associations, the relevant public authorities should provide easy-to-use online booking and management systems which will facilitate their operations, services and communication with the users.
- 5) Whilst the affordability of access to the digital world and advanced technologies still comes with a high price, public authorities should ensure proper support for grassroots sport organisations and young people to seize the digital transition to their benefit and avoid the lengthening of the digital divide.
- 6) Efforts should be made to foster cooperation between traditional sports and e-sport in order to benefit communities, Youth in Sport, and foster innovation within grassroots sport.

7) Invest in media literacy and education programmes, and foster cross-sectoral cooperation between health authorities, sport sector and other relevant areas, whilst raising awareness to the importance of implementing a comprehensive approach to mental health and addressing the stigma that still is associated with it. This includes investment in education within sport clubs, organisations, and federations at all levels on the importance of safeguarding athletes and youth in the digital environment and the negative impact social media can have on their health, well-being and safety, as well as education of children, youth, parents, athletes, and coaches through formal, non-formal and informal learning methodologies on the problematic of social media use and exposure and the importance of self-regulation, privacy and safety in the online environment.

8) Sport federations at all levels have the responsibility to provide gender-balanced sports coverage and act upon hate speech, which often is directed towards female athletes. Sport federations have the social responsibility to lead the online environment and social media conversation with due respect for equality, inclusion, diversity and European values.

9) In an increasingly digital world the boundaries of “freedom of speech” and “hate speech” are often discussed. Whilst the digital environment opens up a wide range of opportunities for young people and sports organisations, it also poses threats such as isolation, lack of physical activity, disinformation and misinformation, cyberbullying and hate speech. Therefore, there’s a need to better regulate the digital sector and establish well-defined digital rights, adjusting the legislation on the digital environment in a Human Rights-based approach.

10) Social media and tech companies have a responsibility to contribute to the protection and safeguarding of athletes and youth, mainly through moderation of the content posted on social media, including comments, responding to reports, adjusting the algorithm to prioritise positive content (and hide or delete the hate content), and abiding by the terms and conditions of European Data Protection Regulation (e.g. General Data Protection Regulation - GDPR).

4. Sustainability in Sport

When it comes to the Green transition, Sport is uniquely placed to lead by example as it re-examines its practices and policies to move fans and society towards a more sustainable future within and beyond the sporting field.

Protecting the environment can and should be used as an incentive to practice more sports within and outside our cities. In this regard, there's a growing need to rethink our urban spaces and their connectivity with rural and peripheral areas and regions. Smart cities should be designed for the benefit of their inhabitants seizing the need for environmental protection, better mobility and healthier lifestyles by creating safer spaces for the population to enjoy sports in a more inclusive, efficient and sustainable manner.

Across the globe, youth is increasingly mobilising and taking leadership roles to advance their communities and countries towards sustainability. In this process, young people recognise that creating a sustainable future will require a collective vision, commitment and action not only from youth but across generations.

While sport alone cannot provide all the answers, sport entities, actors and decision-makers can play an important role in addressing environmental sustainability.

During the European Youth and Sport Platform 2023, the topic of Sustainability in Sport was addressed at:



The Plenary Session on "Sustainability in Sport";



The Parallel Sessions on:

- Economic Sustainability - Sustainable Sport Business Model;
- Social Sustainability - How to Increase Social Sustainability in Sports;
- Environmental Sustainability - Swedish Sport Library: Second-hand materials coming to life.

Throughout the sessions, the following recommendations were discussed and agreed upon:

1) Ensure that evidence-based policies, strategies, action plans, and guidelines related to sustainability in sport are shaped, implemented and evaluated with the active inclusion and participation of young people whose future depends on today's global actions to tackle environmental and climate challenges.

2) When devising policies, and strategies related to sustainability, preferably, these should take into consideration the several dimensions of sustainability, namely, environmental, social, and economic sustainability.

3) Likewise, sport organisations should strive to adopt sustainability guidelines that would guide their daily work, from resources and infrastructure management to events and meetings. In this regard, resources like the EU-Council of Europe Youth Partnership Sustainability Guidelines can help sport and youth organisations in implementing more sustainable events, and strategies.

4) Sport federations and organisations and the sport industry should strive to implement a circular economy approach by promoting the reuse and recycling of sports equipment and adopting waste-reduction actions (e.g. E-tickets, non-disposable cups). The principle of solidarity should also be effectively implemented by donating sports equipment to smaller sports clubs, schools and local communities.

5) Foster cross-sector cooperation and invest in the concept of smart cities, therefore improving connectivity between regions and accessibility to sport infrastructures in a sustainable manner, and ensuring our cities are adapted and resilient to future challenges. In this regard, cooperation and partnerships between sports clubs and local authorities should be pursued to maximise the utility of sports infrastructures that can be used by several clubs for several types of sports.

6) Public authorities and energy companies should work together to promote and provide the necessary support and incentives for the use of renewable energy in sports infrastructures (e.g. adequate funding to install solar panels in every sports infrastructure).

7) Proposing evidence-based strategies for the implementation of the SDGs within the sport sector, tackling climate change through sport, and mandating intersectional audits on the possible impacts of specific policies on different groups before a specific policy is adopted.

8) Invest in Education for Sustainable Development, Sustainability in Sport and Climate Change, and ensure that the language used in environmental and climate change processes is accessible and transparent for all citizens.

9) Ensuring that sport education for SDGs initiatives are inclusive, affordable and accessible to all young people, from all socio-economic backgrounds.

10) Supporting physical education practitioners and teachers, as well as other educators and sport workers in advancing their understanding of the SDGs in order to empower and educate young people on sustainability and climate change, and the role of sport towards greener societies. Educating coaches, athletes, and elite sports practitioners on sustainable practices centred in a human rights-based approach and supporting awareness-raising campaigns on the implementation of green practices in sport is necessary and can serve as an inspiration to grassroots sports and young people.

11) Urge educational institutions and governments to provide institutional support and resources for youth-led change processes towards sustainability in sports. Mechanisms should include dedicated funding, institutional integration, working space, mandates, recognition, and training for youth-led sustainability initiatives.

Acknowledgements

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Annex

Selection of useful sources and channels on Youth and Sport:

- [United Nations \(UN\) Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#)
- [United Nations \(UN\) Economic and Social Council \(ECOSOC\) Youth Forum](#)
- [United Nations \(UN\) Sport for Climate Action Framework](#)
- [World Health Organisation \(WHO\) / Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development \(OECD\) 2023](#)
- [International Olympic Committee \(IOC\) Young Leaders Programme](#)
- [International Olympic Committee \(IOC\) Strategic Framework on Human Rights](#)
- [European Youth Portal](#)
- [EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027](#)
- [European Commission HealthyLifestyle4All Youth Ideas Labs](#)
- [Eurobarometer on Sport and Physical Activity](#)
- [Eurobarometer on Youth and Democracy in the European Year of Youth](#)
- [Council of Europe Resources - Sport](#)
- [Council of Europe Manuals and Handbooks - Youth](#)
- [European Youth Foundation](#)
- [EU - Council of Europe Youth Partnership](#)
- [ENGSO Position Paper on the European Sport Model](#)
- [European Youth Forum - Youth Progress Index](#)
- [ENGSO Youth Manual on Human Rights Education through Sport](#)



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