

ACTIVE

Final Declaration Youth Sport to promote EU Youth Goals through inclusive and sustainable sport initiatives

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ACTIVE
European Youth Together

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Final Declaration of Youth in Sport to promote EU Youth Goals through inclusive and sustainable sport initiatives



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Introduction

The 11 European Youth Goals (EYGs) offer a vision of a future Europe that allows young people to reach their full potential and serve as motivation for EU Member States to take steps in that direction. The 11 EYGs are based on the voices of about 50.000 young people from all over Europe who participated in the EU Youth Dialogue process in 2018. This process aimed to make the attitudes, interests, and needs of European youth visible and to strengthen youth participation on all political levels. The EYGs and the EU Youth Dialogue are a part of the EU Youth Strategy 2019–2027, which sets the direction of common youth policy throughout the EU. Member States are called to proceed within their respective competences with modifications in their related policies and agendas, without, however, these Goals being legally binding. In this regard, the 11 EYGs are: 1) Connecting EU with Youth, 2) Equality of All Genders, 3) Inclusive Societies, 4) Information and Constructive Dialogue, 5) Mental Health and Well-being, 6) Moving Rural Youth forward, 7) Quality Employment for All, 8) Quality Learning, 9) Space and Participation for All, 10) Sustainable Green Europe; and 11) Youth Organisations and European Programmes¹.

The ACTIVE initiative recognized the exceptional role of sports and sports-related activities in social change and dedicated its efforts to three of the aforementioned Goals: Goal 1, Goal 3, and Goal 10. Connecting young people with the EU is considered of foremost importance according to the latest surveys on youth's trust and representation in EU institutions. Although 61% of Europeans between the ages of 15 and 24 are satisfied with how democracy operates in the EU, the highest rates were found in the upper middle (65%) and upper (71%) classes, suggesting that trust in EU institutions is, in fact, a class issue. The majority of respondents seemed to think that the interests of their country are taken into account at the EU level, with the youth aged 15-24 years (64%) and students (67%), being the most likely to agree with this statement. But when it comes to ACTIVE's partner nations, high rates in Greece (65%) and Italy (39%) appear to support the opposite, highlighting the necessity of giving up the notion of a one-size-fits-all strategy².

According to the European Commission's "*Study on the landscape of youth representation in the EU, 2020*"², the majority (76%) of the participating organisations concurred that EU youth NGOs and networks are in a position to address problems essential to young people, which is a significant predictor of the worth of EU-level NGOs and the support of youth interests at the EU level. However, answers on the accessibility of EU institutions were rather modest, with just over half of respondents (55%) from national and local Organizations agreeing. Mediterranean countries, in particular, were less likely (31%) to feel well represented in EU-level youth NGOs and networks, with a stated lack of effective institutions or spaces for dialogue between national and local levels and the EU. Policymakers and stakeholders are called to handle this challenge as a grown body of evidence confirms youth's attachment towards the European Union and their interest in politics combined with their willingness to take action in thematic areas that are unique to their profile, such as the environmental challenges (67%) and inclusion through improvements in education and fighting poverty (56% each).

¹ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=OJ:C:2018:456:FULL&from=EN>

² <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/edf3d9db-958d-11ea-aac4-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>

The results of the qualitative and quantitative research conducted in the context of the ACTIVE project with sports researchers, athletes, coaches, volunteers from sports and social associations, and people working with different vulnerable groups also highlighted the barriers that youth often face in their involvement in European programmes and policies. Challenges such as the lack of information, the difficult language used, the economic barriers and inequality, and the bureaucratic issue of participating in the EU programs discourage the youth from active civic and political participation at the EU level. In this regard, sports have the power to change the scenery³; the experience in the International Mobility in Amsterdam and the Youth Exchange in Athens proved that sports activities are in the position to transmit knowledge regarding EU values such as democracy, equality, and human rights, foster the practice of intercultural skills, and empower the youth for the creation of an inclusive and sustainable Europe.

The present document constitutes the *ACTIVE Final Declaration of Youth in Sport to promote EU Youth Goals through inclusive and sustainable sports initiatives*, which were developed with the unique ideas and views of the participant youth (Members, from now on) in International Mobility and Youth Exchange implemented under Working Package 2 (WP2) and in the sports sessions implemented under WP4. The Declaration includes recommendations for the active involvement of youth in EU affairs and the EYGs, and therefore the inclusiveness and sustainability of sports and sports activities. It also includes a Memorandum of Understanding stating the commitment of Members to take an active role in promoting EYGs and advocating for a greener and more inclusive Europe.

³ <https://active.geacoop.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Active-Analysis-report-with-European-Results.pdf>

The ACTIVE Final Declaration of Youth

Recognising the range of social, economic and geographical obstacles, such as discrimination, long-term unemployment, geographical isolation, and lack of connections and services, in youth active participation;

Recognising the insufficient knowledge young people have regarding EU programmes and initiatives;

Recognizing the value of youth participation in democratic life and their social and civic engagement at local, national, European and international level;

Recognising the necessity of resources and support provision for youth participation in society;

Recognizing the need for ensuring a more regular dialogue between young people and EU staff;

Recognising the importance of European youth to build a better future, greener and more inclusive;

Recognising the role of sports as a tool to work in social areas;

Recognising the exceptional role of coaches as role models and educators;

Members

- *Call on better dissemination strategies using easier language when EU topics are discussed and choosing social media relevant to the youth.*
- *Call on the equipment of youth with practical tools and guidelines on how to handle any form of known discrimination.*
- *Encourage local organisations to support and provide opportunities for the youth to formulate proposals to influence local policymaking.*
- *Encourage the local youth centres and associations to organise relevant to the EYGs training meeting.*
- *Call on the tight cooperation of youth organisations and municipalities while carrying out programmes.*
- *Call on follow-up activities in implemented workshops/initiatives, fostering actions' sustainability.*
- *Call on sports clubs to work towards the development of equal opportunities for everyone, taking into consideration the barriers different populations have during their participation in sports.*
- *Encourage sports and youth organisations to provide incentives to youth for disseminating EYGs on their social media.*
- *Encourage sports and youth organisations to collaborate with influential figures in the field of sports while promoting the EYGs.*
- *Encourage educators to experiment with alternative educational tools, such as memes, and interactive videos).*
- *Encourage school directors to support the creation of after-school clubs dedicated to the topics of EYGs.*
- *Encourage communication among schools and universities with the State institutions to formulate proposals for youth activation in multiple domains (e.g., sports, education, research).*

- *Encourage municipal authorities to boost the utilization of open spaces (e.g., parks, stadia) while implementing training activities.*
- *Propose to Municipalities and sports organisations to implement free and accessible sporting actions and events in different neighbourhoods, not only in city centres. Members encourage Municipalities to create helpdesks that will foster the application process for associations and individuals who face difficulties in applying for EU-funded projects.*
- *Encourage Municipalities to offer spaces for youth meetings for free.*
- *Encourage the creation of an institutional network that will disseminate European programmes and objectives simply and comprehensively.*
- *Encourage relevant stakeholders to include the EYG's topics in the formal educational system, through projects and curricula.*
- *Encourage the competent authorities to apply measures addressing the inequalities of young people who do not have access to opportunities through research and local surveys, identification of young people's needs, taking initiatives, and by providing additional funding.*
- *Call on institutions to subsidize grassroots organisations with regular funds dedicated to EYGs activities and infrastructure development.*
- *Propose to competent authorities their provision for advanced training to teachers/educators/supervisors/coaches on EYG, with suggestions and practical ideas for implementation and inclusion in their classes.*
- *Call on State institutions to provide advanced financial support to youth and grassroots sports organisations for the adoption of new frameworks.*
- *Call on State institutions to secure equal pay and opportunities for female athletes, fostering gender equality in sports.*
- *Call on competent authorities to condemn and apply strict penalties to sports players who perpetuate hate speech and harmful stereotypes.*
- *Call on inter-State cooperation for the creation of tools for the promotion of cultural and good practices exchange, fostering youth activation at a local and national level.*
- *Call on EU institutions to be transparent and devoted to their roles and responsibilities.*

Memorandum of Understanding

Understanding the urgent need to contribute and be actively involved in promoting EYGs and advocating for a greener and more inclusive Europe, Members commit themselves to:

Inform and spread the message by

- o Organising formal and informal meetings with other stakeholders for the creation of an action plan at local level;
- o Organising meetings and discuss social and political issues that affect them;
- o Organising relevant actions and non-formal education activities with young people in schools;
- o Staying informed about the actions promoted by the EU, by visiting the EU website, reading articles or watching videos related to the EYGs;
- o Talking in personal networks (e.g., friends) about the EYGs and the relevant projects;
- o Using their social media channels to open dialogue about EYGs and discrimination.

Promote sustainability by

- o Adopting a greener, sustainable and healthier lifestyle;
- o Condemning unsustainable actions;
- o Initiating and participating in local green initiatives (e.g., trash collection, building birdhouses).

Advocate against discrimination by

- o Applying the knowledge they gained in their work with people who experience exclusion and discrimination;
- o Campaigning against sexism in sports;
- o Crowdfunding to support clubs that give girls and women access to sports;
- o Organising free-of-charge events dedicated to combating racism and social exclusion (e.g., intercultural sports tournaments);
- o Joining youth organizations like the European Youth Forum or any national youth organization;
- o Participating in demonstrations and political activist actions;
- o Participating in relevant initiatives, networks and groups;
- o Implementing cultural and sports activities involving people facing exclusion.