

Young People's Participation in Sports Ladder

activate young people in your club

How can you stimulate young people to actively participate in sports? How much responsibility can you give them? Isn't it a lot of work to supervise them? How do you approach this and what are the results? These are questions that many clubs face. The 'Young People's Participation in Sports Ladder' can help to give insight into the extent to which a club actively involves young people. Use the ladder to see where you now stand and where you want to go. Be inspired by the practical examples included and make a plan of action for your club.

Most Dutch sports clubs already have a youth policy and a youth committee that organises everything for its young members. The members of these committees are usually adults, and the young members participate in varying degrees. What people often fail to realise is that actively involving young people in the club can be very beneficial to the club itself. For example, setting up a young people's council, having young people organise their own events or involving older youths in the training programmes. This has advantages for both the club and its young members.

"Young people are tomorrow's volunteers"

Linda Selhorst – Ice Skating Club Haarlem

Advantages of active participation by young people

Older youths remain in the club, more continuity, more volunteers and even lower costs are advantages cited by clubs in which young people play an active role.

"Young members stay members because they have the chance to organise activities themselves"

Joke Stenvert – Nautilus Rowing Club

Because young people can indicate their own wishes and needs, there's less chance of losing them as members. In addition, this helps them to develop talents, skills and competences (only available in Dutch) in various areas, such as learning to organise and negotiate. Moreover, their self-confidence, social skills and contacts increase (Eime, Young, Harvey, Charity, & Payne, 2013). They learn that their opinions count and they feel more ties to the club.

This process is simultaneously interesting for the club because young people contribute other qualities than adults do, such as spontaneity, energy and open-mindedness. In addition, using

young members helps to prevent a shortage of volunteers and can lead to more young people participating in sports and other physical activities.

“We’ve kept our training costs low by structurally using young volunteers as trainers.”

Hans Otten – Hockey Club Naarden

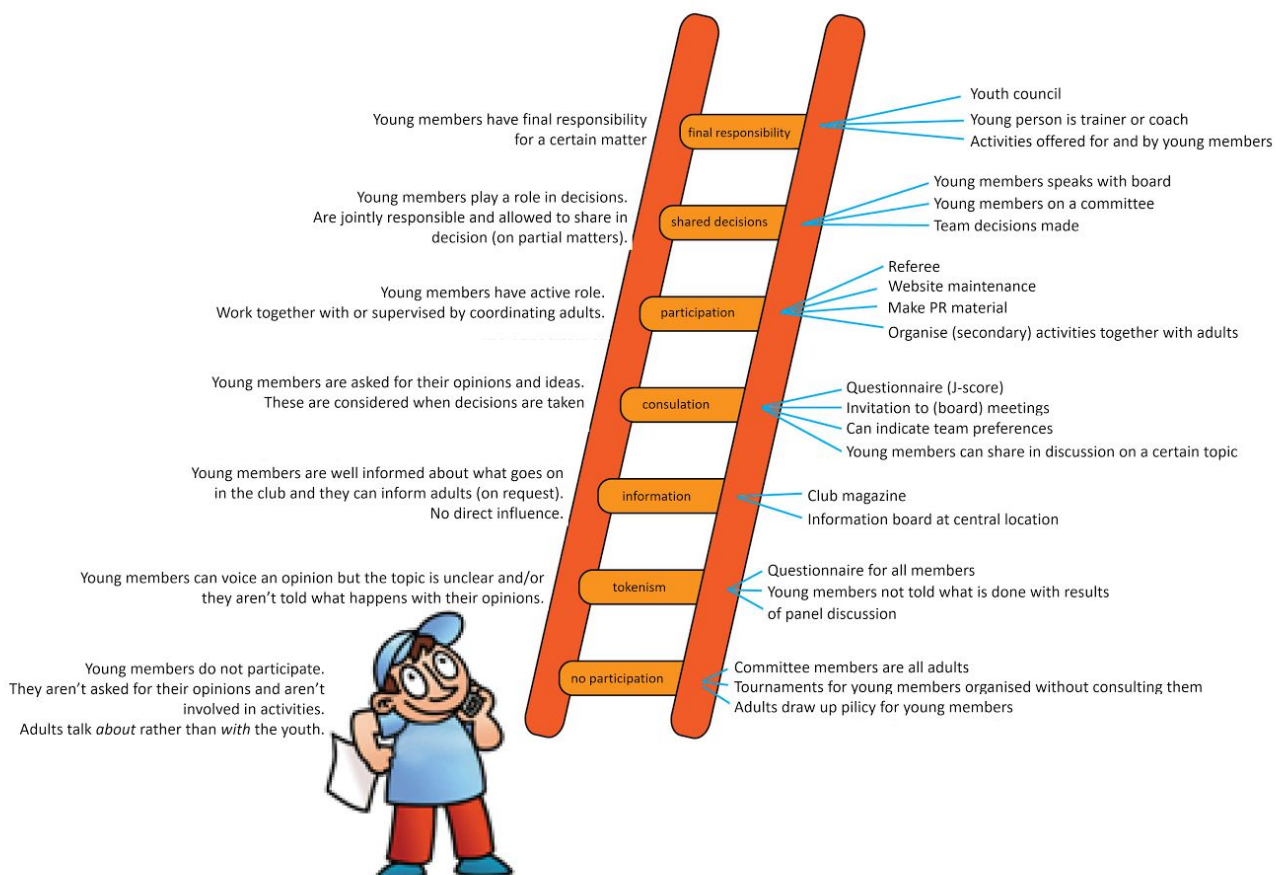
Who is the Youth Participation in Sports Ladder for?

The Youth Participation in Sports Ladder is an instrument for sports clubs, their board members, committee members, trainers and coaches. Club advisors can also use the ladder when talking with a club about how to approach young members. The ladder, which is derived from the model developed by Roger Hart (1992), illustrates the increasing levels of participation that can help to involve young people in a club. The higher the rung, the more active the youth. By using the ladder you have more insight into the current level of participation of your club’s young members and you can decide what your level of ambition is. Are you satisfied now or do you want to give young members a more active role so that they climb higher up the ladder?

This is the ladder

YOUNG PEOPLE’S PARTICIPATION IN SPORTS LADDER

Get insight into the level of youth participation in your club



Rungs	Explanation	Example
Final responsibility	Young members have final responsibility for a certain matter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ↪ Youth council ↪ Young person is trainer or coach ↪ Activities offered for and by young members
Shared decisions	Young members play a role in decisions. Are jointly responsible and allowed to share in decision (on partial matters)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ↪ Young member speaks with board ↪ Young members on a committee ↪ Team decisions made
Participation	Young members have active role. Work together with or supervised by coordinating adults	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ↪ Referee ↪ Website maintenance ↪ Make PR material ↪ Organise (secondary) activities together with adults
Consultation	Young members are asked for their opinions and ideas. These are considered when decisions are taken	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ↪ Questionnaire (J-score) ↪ Invitation to (board) meetings ↪ Can indicate team preferences ↪ Young members can share in discussion on a certain topic
Information	Young members are well informed about what goes on in the club and they can inform adults (on request). No direct influence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ↪ Club magazine ↪ Information board at central location
Tokenism	Young members can voice an opinion but the topic is unclear and/or they aren't told what happens with their opinions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ↪ Questionnaire for all members ↪ Young members not told what is done with results of panel discussion
No participation	Young members do not participate. They aren't asked for their opinions and aren't involved in activities. Adults talk <i>about</i> rather than <i>with</i> the youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ↪ Committee members are all adults ↪ Tournaments for young members organised without consulting them ↪ Adults draw up policy for young members

How do you use the ladder?

- Read the description of each rung. At which rung of the ladder do you recognise the way in which your club treats its young members?
- Decide if you are satisfied with your current rung. Think about what the other rungs could mean for your club.
- Let yourself be inspired by examples from other clubs.
- Decide which rung you want to work towards with your club.
- Get started!

Practical examples

How do sports clubs actually put this into practice? We have collected four good examples of clubs that have successfully made and kept their young members active (all four only available in Dutch):

- [Practical example Roeivereniging Nautilus in Rotterdam](#) (Rowing club)
- [Practical example Tennisvereniging Tie-Breakers in Amsterdam](#) (Tennis club)
- [Practical example IJclub Haarlem](#) (Ice skating club)
- [Practical example Hockeyvereniging HC Naarden](#) (Hockey club)

Share your opinions and experiences

We're curious to hear about your experiences. Do you actively involve young members in your club? If you have tips and suggestions that you'd like to add or a good example, please let us know.

We share tips and advice with other professionals via twitter, workshops and www.allesoversport.nl. For questions and information, please contact dorien.dijk@kcsport.nl or phone +31 (0)318 - 490 900.

References

- Eime, R. M., Young, J. A., Harvey, J. T., Charity, M. J., & Payne, W. R. (2013). A systematic review of the psychological and social benefits of participation in sport for children and adolescents: informing development of a conceptual model of health through sport. *International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity*, 10(1), 1.
- Hart, R. A. (1992). *Children's Participation: From Tokenism to Citizenship*. Innocenti Essays No. 4. UNICEF, International Child Development Centre, Piazza SS Annunziata 12, 50122 Florence, Italy.