WORLD SCOUTING

Youth Leadership Policy

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Sumário

Part I. Policy System and Common Foundations ***4***

a. Background 4
b. What Policies Are 4
c. Purpose of the Policy System 5
d. Target Audience 6
e. Beneficiaries of the Policy System 6
f. Implementation of the Policy System 6
g. Common Definitions 6

Part II. World Youth Leadership Policy ***9***

Chapter 1: Policy Context and Direction **9**

1.1. Introduction 9
1.2. From Youth Participation to Youth Leadership 9
1.3. Purpose 10
1.4. Policy Statement 10
1.5. Rationale to involve young people 11
1.6. Beneficiaries 11
1.7. Scope 12

Chapter 2: Foundations of Youth Leadership in Scouting **14**

2.1. Guiding Principles and Values 14
2.2. The Youth Leadership Journey 15
2.3. The Leadership Competencies 16

Chapter 3: The Three Areas of Youth Leadership **17**

3.1. Youth Leadership Through the Youth Programme 17
3.2. Intergenerational Partnership 18
3.3. Youth Leadership in Decision-Making 19

Chapter 4: Enabling Conditions for Youth Leadership **20**

4.1. Organisational Culture 20
4.2. Accessible Leadership Pathways 21
4.3. Inclusion and Equity 21
4.4. Safe and Supportive Environments 21
4.5. Adult Capacity and Support 21
4.6. Resources and Organisational Support 22
4.7. Learning and Evidence 22

Chapter 5: Policy Integration and Shared Responsibility **23**

5.1. Relationship with the Youth Programme Policy 23
5.2. Relationship with the Adult Volunteering Policy 23
5.2. Relationship with the Safe from Harm Policy 23

Chapter 6: Responsibilities and Accountability **24**

6.1. National Scout Organizations and Associations 24
6.2. National Governance Bodies 24
6.3. Adults 25
6.4. Young People 25
6.5. World Scouting 25

Chapter 7: Implementation, Monitoring and Evolution **26**

7.1. Policy Implementation and Life Cycle 26
7.2. Implementation of the WSYL Policy 27
7.3. Core Expectations for Successful Implementation 27
7.4. Monitoring and Evaluation 28
7.5. Continuous Improvement 29
7.6. Policy Review and Update 29

Annex 1 – World Scout Conference Resolutions **30**

DRAF

Annex 2 – Models Supporting Meaningful Youth Participation and Leadership 32
Annex 3 – Rationale to Involve Young People.....35
Annex 4 – Core Competencies of Youth Leadership in Scouting.....38
Annex 5 – Related Documents on Youth Leadership 39

DRAFT

Part I. Policy System and Common Foundations

This section establishes the common principles, terminology, governance, and implementation expectations that apply across a World Scouting Policy System. Read it as the shared foundation for the Youth Programme Policy, Youth Leadership Policy, Adults in Scouting Policy, and Safe from Harm Policy.

a. Background

World Scouting has developed several global policies to support National Scout Organizations (NSOs) in delivering safe, relevant, high-quality Scouting experiences. Over time, these policies have evolved independently, reflecting different priorities, mandates, and stages in the Movement's development.
The review of the World Scouting policy framework began to ensure the policies remain relevant, coherent, and aligned with the current needs of young people, adults, and NSOs.
The review of the previous *World Scout Youth Involvement Policy* (2014), *World Scout Youth Programme Policy* (2014), *Safe from Harm World Policy* (2017), and *World Adults in Scouting Policy* (2018) began following a decision by the 2021–2024 World Scout Committee. The review aims to keep the policies aligned, strengthen coherence across WOSM's educational and organizational framework, and reflect the priorities outlined in the Strategy for Scouting adopted by the 43rd World Scout Conference in 2024. The review also responds to resolutions and decisions adopted by the World Scout Conference and the World Scout Committee, including commitments related to Safe from Harm, Health and Well-being, Youth Engagement, educational quality, inclusion, and organizational effectiveness.
The new policies build on the strengths and content of the previous policies, updating key principles and introducing new concepts where needed to ensure relevance to emerging trends and needs.
Recognizing that Scouting outcomes depend on interactions across multiple policy areas, World Scouting undertook an integrated review process, first defining a Policy Review Framework to guide 4 autonomous but interconnected policy review teams, including consultations with NSOs, volunteers, young people, and subject-matter experts. This process highlighted the need for a common policy architecture and greater coherence between coherence.

b. What Policies Are

World Scouting policies establish the principles, commitments, and expectations that guide decision-making and implementation across the Movement.

> In World Scouting, a policy is a purpose-driven, values-based set of principles that defines the Movement's shared aims and directions in a specific area. It serves as an institutional tool for long-term change - providing stability, guiding innovation, and remaining adaptable to evolving contexts.

Policies provide direction on what World Scouting seeks to achieve and the conditions required for success. They are not operational procedures, manuals, or implementation guidelines. Rather, they provide a common framework that supports adaptation to different national, cultural, legal, educational, and organizational contexts.

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Guiding Principles

All World Scouting policies are guided by common principles:

- Mission-driven and values-based.
- Youth-centred and educational.
- Safe, inclusive, and accessible.
- Evidence-informed and future-oriented.
- Adaptable to different contexts.
- Based on shared responsibility and accountability.
- Committed to participation, partnership, and continuous improvement.

Policies as a System

The World Scouting policy framework has been developed as an interconnected system between:

- Youth Programme Policy,
- Youth Leadership Policy,
- Adults in Scouting Policy
- Safe from Harm Policy

This policy system aims to achieve its outcomes through the interactions among these four policy areas. It defines the relationships among 4 autonomous but interconnected policies, creates a common policy architecture, improves coherence between policies, strengthens implementation support, and clarifies how the policies work together as a system.

Each policy has a distinct purpose but cannot achieve its objectives on its own. The policies reinforce and depend on one another.

Quality Youth Programmes require capable, supported Adults and Volunteers; meaningful Youth Leadership requires safe, inclusive environments; Safe from Harm depends on responsible Adults, Volunteers, and active participation by young people; and Adults in Scouting supports the volunteers who make all other aspects of Scouting possible.

c. Purpose of the Policy System

Together, the policies establish the conditions necessary for young people and adults to benefit from Scouting and contribute to its Mission. It guides NSOs in strengthening local Scout Groups and effectively delivering Scouting Education.

The policy system seeks to:

- Support transformative educational experiences.
- Foster youth participation, leadership, and active citizenship.
- Ensure safe and supportive environments.
- Strengthen adult and volunteer development and support.
- Improve organizational effectiveness and sustainability.
- Support quality Scouting across diverse contexts.

Delivery Settings

Scouting is delivered in a variety of contexts around the world, typically identified through:

- **Community-Based Scouting** - Scouting delivered primarily through community-based Scout Groups and local volunteer structures.
- **School-Based Scouting** - Scouting delivered within educational institutions where schools play a significant role in facilitating participation, leadership, organization, or programme delivery.

While implementation contexts and delivery methods may differ, the Mission of Scouting, Scout Method, educational purpose, and values remain consistent across all delivery settings. The policy system supports implementation across both community-based and school-based Scouting while allowing contextual adaptation.

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d. Target Audience

The primary audience for the World Scouting policy system is National Scout Organizations and National Scout Associations. NSOs and NSAs are responsible for contextualizing, implementing, monitoring, and continuously improving the application of these policies within their own realities at the national level. Adults in Scouting also share responsibility for upholding and applying these guiding principles within their respective contexts, thereby contributing to their effective implementation across all levels of the Movement.
The policies support governance bodies, professional staff, volunteers, trainers, commissioners, educational leaders, and other individuals responsible for creating the conditions necessary for quality Scouting.
World Scouting supports NSOs through policy guidance, services, implementation resources, capacity development, and opportunities for shared learning.

e. Beneficiaries of the Policy System

The World Scouting policy system is built around beneficiaries' needs.

Young People - Young people are Scouting's primary beneficiaries. Through Scouting, they access educational opportunities, personal development, participation, leadership experiences, and opportunities to become active citizens who contribute positively to their communities.
Adults - Individuals who support young people and carry out their roles while also benefiting from the Movement. They benefit from meaningful volunteering experiences, learning opportunities, support, recognition, personal growth, and opportunities to contribute to young people's development and the wider Movement.

As a system, these policies create an integrated experience for young people and adults in all contexts worldwide.

f. Implementation of the Policy System

The policies' effectiveness as a system depends on coordinated implementation.
Policies alone do not create change. Their impact depends on NSOs' ability to build the structures, culture, leadership, resources, and support systems needed to implement them.

Implementation should therefore be approached as a system rather than through isolated policy actions. NSOs should consider how Youth Programme, Adults in Scouting, Safe from Harm, and Youth Leadership interact and reinforce one another within their governance, educational, safeguarding, and volunteer management systems. This should consider that implementation should be proportional to NSO relations and capacities.

Successful implementation requires enabling environments that support learning, participation, leadership, safety, inclusion, accountability, and continuous improvement.

g. Common Definitions

To support coherence across the policy system, a common set of definitions is used throughout all World Scouting policies.

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For the sake of the World Scout Youth Leadership Policy, the following definitions should be considered:

- **Young People -** Children and Youth, who are members, recipients or beneficiaries of the educational programme, from 5 to 26 (typically). Age ranges may vary in NSOs depending on context, delivery mode, or country regulations. Young People may take temporary or formal roles in facilitating youth programme to individuals younger than them as part of their learning experience.

- **Youth -** Internal and external (members and non-members). Individuals in the transitional stage between childhood and adulthood, characterized by increasing independence, responsibility, and participation in society. Generally considered individuals aged 15 to 24 years (UN), although age ranges may vary according to national, cultural, legal, and organizational contexts.

- **Young Adults -** Members in the range of Youth aged between 18 and 30, who either take part of Youth Programme or take on leadership roles within Scouting by delivering the Youth Programme (YP) to other young people, supporting adults in their functions, or participating in organisational structures.

- **Adults in Scouting -** Adults, who play a role within the Movement or organisation, either with formal responsibility or as a supporter. Typically, a volunteer or paid professional who contributes to Youth Programme (YP), facilitating, delivering, or implementing, supports or manages other adults, or serves within organisational structures. In some cases, they may be engaged in time-bound, project-based roles.

- **Youth Participation** is a process that ensures young people are consulted and given the opportunity to contribute to the decisions that affect their lives.

- **Youth Involvement** is a capacity-building process, based on enabling young people to actively share responsibility with adults for making decisions that affect their lives, and the lives of others in their community.

- **Youth Engagement** is the meaningful participation and sustained involvement of young people in an action in which they use their time, intelligence, talents, skills and abilities for making a positive change in their own lives and the lives of others, which results from strong connections to a particular idea, person, activity, place, or outcome**.**

- **Leadership in Scouting** is a collaborative and developmental process through which people shape a shared vision, empower and support one another, and act together to create positive change towards a common purpose. Leadership can be exercised by anyone, with or without a formal position. In Scouting, leadership is distinguished by four interconnected characteristics**:**
    - **Values-based and purpose-driven:** Leadership is guided by the vision of creating a better world and by the values expressed in the Scout Promise and Law. It connects individual and collective action with Scouting's purpose of developing active and responsible citizens who contribute positively to their communities and society**.**
    - **Empowering individuals:** Leadership strengthens people's capacity to act with autonomy, responsibility and self-awareness. Everyone can develop and exercise leadership, whether or not they hold a formal position. Individuals recognise their strengths, take responsibility, make decisions, and develop the confidence and resilience to contribute to positive change.
    - **Collaborative and shared:** Leadership happens with others, not over others. People collaborate towards a shared purpose, actively influencing, supporting, and empowering one another. Leadership roles move between people according to the situation, rather than remaining with one designated leader. Adults create supportive environments and partner with young people, while young people progressively exercise greater autonomy and responsibility.

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- **Learned through action and reflection:** Leadership develops through the Scout Method, particularly through learning by doing, teamwork, creativity, personal progression, adult support, and community involvement. Scouts learn to lead by exploring ideas, finding creative solutions, making decisions, taking responsibility, working with others, acting, reflecting on their experiences, and applying their learning in new situations.

- **Youth Leadership,** as part of the youth development process, is the sustained and long-term practice through which young people in Scouting acquire competencies and agency to identify their personal strengths and weaknesses and steer their own lives, to lead others in a course of action, to positively influence and implement changes in the institutions and communities to which they belong.

- **Youth Leadership in Decision Making** is the mechanism through which youth leadership is realised across all levels of Scouting, from the local group to the national, regional, and world levels. It enables young people to meaningfully contribute to, influence, and lead decision-making processes within the organisation and beyond. It also ensures that structures, processes, and organisational cultures support young people as full, effective, and meaningful partners in shaping decisions at all levels of the Movement.

- **Meaningful Influence** is the condition in which young people have genuine opportunities to contribute to decisions, decision-makers seriously consider their contributions, and young people can understand how their participation influenced the process or outcome.

- **Youth Programme in Scouting** is the totality of the learning opportunities from which young people can benefit (What), created to achieve the purpose of Scouting (Why) and experienced through the Scout method (How).

- **The Scout Method** is a system of progressive self-education through the following interrelated elements: the Scout law and promise, learning by doing, the team system, symbolic framework, personal progression, nature, and adult support**.**

- **World Scout Policy -** In World Scouting, a policy is a purpose-driven, values-based set of principles that defines the Movement's shared aims and directions in a specific area. It serves as an institutional tool for long-term change - providing stability, guiding innovation, and remaining adaptable to evolving contexts.

Disclaimer: Throughout this Policy, the term **"youth leadership"** will be used to signal a shift from previous conventional terminology and to emphasise Scouting's commitment to enhancing youth leadership development. However, in some cases, other terms may be used where they are grammatically or contextually more appropriate.

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Part II. World Youth Leadership Policy

Chapter 1: Policy Context and Direction

1.1. Introduction

This Policy places youth leadership at the heart of Scouting's educational mission and reinforces its identity as a **Movement of and for young people.**

It enables young people to progressively develop and exercise leadership through the Youth Programme, community action, intergenerational partnership, and meaningful participation in decision-making.

Youth leadership goes beyond representation or formal positions. It begins with young people learning to understand themselves, make choices, take responsibility, collaborate with others, and contribute to their communities, progressively expanding their opportunities to influence decisions and shape Scouting.

Aligned with the Strategy for Scouting and its ambition of **A World Shaped by Youth**, the Policy seeks to ensure that young people from diverse backgrounds not only benefit from Scouting but also actively shape its present, future, and positive impact on society.

1.2. From Youth Participation to Youth Leadership

World Scouting's approach to young people's involvement has evolved over the last decades, reflecting a progressive shift from youth participation towards youth leadership. [1][2]

A major milestone came in 2011, when the World Scout Conference established youth involvement in decision-making as a strategic priority and introduced measurable objectives to strengthen youth representation and influence across the Movement.

In 2014, the World Scout Youth Involvement Policy provided a common framework for NSOs, encouraging greater participation, representation, intergenerational collaboration, and mechanisms that enabled young people to contribute to governance and decision-making.

Experience from its implementation showed significant progress in youth engagement and representation across National, Regional, and World levels.
At the same time, it highlighted an important limitation: participation, consultation, or representation alone do not necessarily result in meaningful influence.

In 2021, the World Scout Conference strengthened the Movement's commitment to youth engagement, leadership development, intergenerational partnership, and increased youth representation in decision-making.

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[1] in Adam Fletcher's Spiral of Youth Action

[2] "Towards moving from traditional youth engagement to youth leadership" in Roadmap for Education in Scouting, page 3

DRAFT

Subsequent work by the Youth Leadership in Decision-Making Task Force reinforced the need to move beyond inviting young people to participate towards enabling them to exercise responsibility, influence decisions, and lead alongside others.

This evolution also led World Scouting to move beyond transitional mechanisms, such as the World Youth Advisor system, towards approaches that strengthen young people's direct participation and leadership in governance.

This transition recognises that NSOs, Regions, and the World level are at different stages of youth leadership development and will progress at different paces and through approaches adapted to their contexts.

Building on this evolution, the World Scout Youth Leadership Policy places youth leadership, meaningful influence, and intergenerational partnership at the centre of the Movement's approach, strengthening the conditions for young people to progressively develop and exercise leadership throughout Scouting.

1.3. Purpose

The purpose of the World Scout Youth Leadership Policy is to provide a clear and globally aligned direction for strengthening youth leadership throughout the Scout Movement.

The Policy:

- establishes a common understanding of youth leadership in Scouting;
- defines the principles that should guide youth leadership;
- identifies the main areas in which young people develop and exercise leadership;
- establishes expectations for National Scout Organizations;
- clarifies the responsibilities of young people, adults, NSOs, governance bodies, and World Scouting; and
- provides a basis for monitoring, learning, and continuous improvement.

Together with the Strategy for Scouting and the Youth Leadership Strategy:

- the **Strategy for Scouting** defines the long-term ambition;
- the **Youth Leadership Strategy** establishes strategic priorities; and
- the **Youth Leadership Policy** defines the principles, expectations, and conditions that guide implementation across the Movement.

1.4. Policy Statement

The Basic Principle

Scouting is a Movement of and for young people, supported by adults; it is not a Movement for young people managed by adults on their behalf.

Scouting creates a learning community where young people and adults contribute their perspectives, experience, competencies, and commitment through dialogue, partnership, shared leadership, and responsibility.

Grounded in a learning community of young people and adults, this basic principle should be reflected by National Scout Organizations throughout their Youth Programme, organisational culture, governance,

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operations, and decision-making, fostering inclusive conditions that enable young people to progressively develop leadership, exercise responsibility, influence decisions, and contribute to positive change at all levels of the Movement.

Youth leadership should give young people from diverse backgrounds real opportunities to influence decisions and shape the Movement and its impact moving beyond symbolic or tokenistic participation.

In doing so, Scouting strengthens its educational mission, and relevance, while contributing to a more inclusive, democratic, sustainable and peaceful world.

1.5. Rationale to involve young people

The World Youth Leadership Policy recognises a foundational principle: young people are not only the future of the Scout Movement; they are part of its present. Their meaningful involvement in Scouting and society is both a right and an essential part of their development as active citizens and leaders.

Youth leadership contributes to social development and sustainability by enabling young people to take initiative, contribute their perspectives, take responsibility, and participate in decisions that affect their lives and communities. Meaningful participation goes beyond presence or consultation; it gives young people genuine opportunities to influence decisions and share ownership of their outcomes.

Within Scouting, youth leadership is both an educational outcome and part of the educational process. Through the Scout Method, particularly learning by doing and youth–adult partnership, young people progressively develop leadership competencies by making decisions, taking responsibility, collaborating with others, and facilitating positive change. These experiences prepare them to contribute actively to their communities and society.

Meaningful youth leadership also strengthens the Scout Movement. Young people's perspectives help National Scout Organizations keep their Youth Programme, strategies, governance, and organisational practices relevant to the realities and aspirations of young people. Shared leadership between young people and adults supports organisational renewal while creating opportunities for both generations to contribute their respective competencies, perspectives, and experience.

However, meaningful youth leadership does not happen automatically. Cultural perceptions of age and leadership, adult-centred organisational structures, unequal access to leadership development, limited awareness of opportunities, financial and practical barriers, and insufficient enabling environments can restrict young people's participation and influence. Addressing these barriers requires intentional structures, supportive adults, equitable opportunities, appropriate resources, and an organisational culture that recognises young people as leaders today.

The full rationale, supporting evidence, and analysis of the challenges affecting youth leadership are presented in **Annex 3 – Rationale for Youth Leadership.**

1.6. Beneficiaries

The primary beneficiaries of this Policy are young people and young adults.

Young people, typically aged 5 to 26, are the recipients of the Youth Programme. They expect to find enabling environments and meaningful experiences embedded throughout the Youth Programme, providing the foundation for their leadership journey.

Young adults, typically aged 18 to 30, expect to find enabling environments, training opportunities, and meaningful experiences integrated across the Movement's governance structures, actively supported and championed by adult leaders.

Indirectly, the Policy also benefits the communities in which young people and young adults live and contribute, as well as the institutions they influence and help shape through their meaningful participation and leadership.

1.7. Scope

Rooted in the understanding that leadership in Scouting is a collaborative and progressive process [3], this Policy recognises youth leadership as a sustained journey through which young people progressively develop competencies, exercise responsibility, and expand their leadership throughout their Scouting experience.

The Policy applies across both the **educational and organisational dimensions** of Scouting and at all relevant levels of the Movement, supporting National Scout Organizations in creating environments and opportunities where young people can develop and exercise leadership.

It focuses on **three interconnected areas of youth leadership**, which provide the main architecture for the Policy and align with the priorities of the Youth Leadership Strategy:



Youth Leadership through the Youth Programme
Young people progressively develop and practise leadership through the Scout Method, personal progression, learning by doing, reflection, increasing responsibility, and community action.

[3] 21st Century Leadership in Scouting

Intergenerational Partnership
Young people and adults build relationships based on mutual learning, trust, mentorship, shared responsibility, and leadership, creating enabling environments where young people can progressively exercise greater responsibility and autonomy.

Youth Leadership in Decision-Making
Young people access meaningful and inclusive opportunities to contribute to, influence, and lead decisions across Scouting, supported by organisational cultures, structures, and processes that enable intergenerational collaboration and meaningful influence.

Alignment with the Youth Leadership Strategy

	Empowering Young Leadership	Meaningful Intergenerational Partnerships	Demonstrating Impact
Youth Programme	Young people progressively develop and practise leadership competencies through the Scout Method, learning by doing, reflection, community action, and increasing responsibility.	Programme experiences enable young people and adults to learn from one another, share responsibility, and practise leadership together across generations.	The development and contribution of youth leadership through the Youth Programme are assessed, recognised, and used to strengthen educational approaches.
Intergenerational Partnership	Adults and more experienced people create enabling environments that build young people's confidence, agency, competencies, and access to leadership opportunities.	Adults and young people build relationships based on mentorship, mutual learning, trust, respect, shared leadership, and accountability.	The quality and outcomes of mentorship and intergenerational leadership are evaluated, recognised, and continuously improved.
Decision-Making	Governance, operations, events, and decision-making processes provide accessible and continuous pathways through which young people can exercise influence, responsibility, and leadership.	Organisational cultures and structures embed shared decision-making, distribute responsibility across generations, and challenge age-based assumptions and barriers.	Evidence is used to assess young people's influence, demonstrate organisational and societal outcomes, and strengthen policies, structures, and resource allocation.

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Chapter 2: Foundations of Youth Leadership in Scouting

2.1. Guiding Principles and Values

The following guiding principles and values provide the foundation for implementing this Policy and strengthening youth leadership across all levels of the Scout Movement.

1 - Young People as Leaders Today
Young people are recognised as leaders today, not only future leaders. Every level of Scouting actively enables young people to contribute, influence decisions, and lead change through structures, behaviours, and cultures that champion youth leadership while respecting different contexts. Leading the way may look like a scout physically leading a walk with a map and compass to the collective leadership of a boardroom.

2 - Leadership that Creates Impact
Youth leadership is measured by the positive impact young people have on individuals, organisations, communities, and society. This requires meaningful participation, genuine influence, shared decision-making, and opportunities to shape outcomes at all levels.

3 - Meaningful Intergenerational Partnerships
Young people and adults create shared leadership spaces where they shape direction, make decisions, share responsibility, and learn from one another. These partnerships are intentional and built on mutual trust, respect, reciprocal learning, and recognition of the distinct strengths each generation brings.

4 - Adults as Enablers of Youth Leadership
Adults play an essential role in enabling youth leadership. As mentors, coaches, facilitators, and allies, they create environments that empower young people to lead with autonomy, confidence, accountability, and appropriate support.

5 - Anchored in the Youth Programme
Youth leadership is grounded in the Scout Method and embedded throughout Scouting's youth programme, fostering the progressive development of leadership competencies. The team system, youth-led projects, adult support, and learning by doing guide its application across programs, governance, operations, and organizational structures

6. Leadership as a Holistic Journey
Youth leadership develops progressively across a young person's journey in Scouting. Through diverse pathways across the Youth Programme, governance, community action, and innovation, young leaders grow from driving team activity into peer mentors who champion, support, and make space for the next generation of youth leaders.

7. Accessible Pathways and Opportunities
Scouting actively removes barriers to leadership and intentionally creates equitable opportunities for all young people. Leadership pathways are accessible, diverse, and designed so every young person can contribute according to their interests, abilities, and context.

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8. Safe and Responsible Leadership
Young people are empowered to lead safely, confidently, and responsibly within environments that actively support their physical, emotional, and mental wellbeing. Safeguarding, clear guidance, mentoring, manageable expectations, risk awareness, and accessible support systems ensure that leadership is a positive and sustainable experience.

2.2. The Youth Leadership Journey

Youth leadership in Scouting is a **continuous and progressive journey**. Rooted in the Scout Method — particularly learning by doing, the Team System, personal progression, and adult support — young people develop confidence, responsibility, competencies, and increasing autonomy through meaningful experiences and reflection.

Leadership is a **shared and dynamic process**, not simply a formal position. Young people learn both to lead and be led, taking responsibility according to their development and the needs of each situation. As their competencies and confidence grow, adults progressively shift from direct guidance towards mentoring, coaching, and partnership, while opportunities to exercise leadership and influence expand.

The Leadership Journey includes four interconnected dimensions:

Leading Self
Young people develop self-awareness, confidence, resilience, and ethical judgement while progressively taking responsibility for their own learning and actions. They learn to make informed choices, reflect on their experiences, understand the consequences of their decisions, and act with increasing autonomy and according to Scouting's values.

Leading with Others
Young people learn to collaborate, communicate, build trust, share responsibility, and work towards a common purpose. Through the Team System and other collaborative experiences, they practise making decisions together, addressing challenges, supporting their peers, and moving between leading and supporting the leadership of others according to the situation.

Leading for Communities
Young people extend their leadership beyond their immediate Scout experience by identifying needs and opportunities, taking initiative, engaging with others, and contributing to positive change. Through community action, service, partnerships, and advocacy, they strengthen their active citizenship, social responsibility, and capacity to contribute to more inclusive, sustainable, and resilient communities.

Leading the Movement
Young people contribute to shaping Scouting itself through programme development, projects, organisational decision-making, governance, representation, and other forms of leadership and service. At local, national, Regional, and World levels, they progressively exercise influence and responsibility through intergenerational partnership and can support other young people to develop and exercise leadership.

These dimensions are **not fixed stages or a hierarchy**. Young people may experience them simultaneously or in different sequences according to their age, personal progression, experiences, opportunities, and context. NSOs should provide inclusive and progressively challenging opportunities for every young person to develop and exercise leadership throughout their Scouting journey.

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2.3. The Leadership Competencies

Scouting develops leadership competencies progressively through the Youth Programme and through opportunities to practise leadership.

These competencies combine **knowledge, skills, attitudes and values** that support young people in:

- leading and managing themselves;
- working with and supporting other people;
- making responsible and ethical decisions;
- communicating and engaging in dialogue;
- planning and turning ideas into action;
- adapting, learning, and responding to change;
- contributing to communities and society;
- understanding and influencing organisational decisions; and
- imagining possibilities, thinking creatively, and contributing to positive change.

National Scout Organizations should integrate leadership competency development within their Youth Programme and adapt expected levels of complexity and autonomy to different age sections and individual progression.
Supporting World Scouting resources may provide more detailed competency frameworks and implementation guidance.

The full list of competency areas and an explanation of what they mean for young people in Scouting are presented in **Annex 4 – Core Competencies of Youth Leadership in Scouting**.

Chapter 3: The Three Areas of Youth Leadership

3.1. Youth Leadership Through the Youth Programme

Every young person should progressively develop and practise leadership through their experience of the Youth Programme.

Youth leadership is a key educational component of Scouting, rooted in a learner-centred approach and the concept of self-education. It is not an additional programme activity, but should be embedded and strengthened throughout the NSO's Youth Programme.

Youth leadership begins at the unit level, where the Scout Method provides the primary environment for young people to experience participation, shared responsibility, and leadership in practice. Through learning by doing, the Team System, personal progression, the Scout Promise and Law, community involvement, and adult support, young people progressively learn to make choices, collaborate, take responsibility, reflect, and lead.

Youth leadership applies to all young people participating in the Scouting educational process, typically from ages 5 to 26. Its development begins in the first age section and progressively evolves in responsibility, autonomy, and complexity according to each young person's age, development, and personal progression.

Through age-appropriate participation in planning, decision-making, action, and reflection, young people progressively develop the competencies, autonomy, and responsibility that provide a foundation for lifelong active citizenship and leadership.

This means that, National Scout Organizations should ensure that the Youth Programme:

- provides age-appropriate and progressively challenging opportunities for leadership;
- enables young people to participate in shaping their own learning and collective experiences;
- supports personal progression and increasing autonomy;
- creates opportunities to practise leadership through teamwork, projects, community action, and other meaningful experiences;
- allows young people to make decisions, act on them, reflect on outcomes, and learn from experience; and
- enables young people to apply their leadership beyond Scouting as active citizens in their communities and society.

The team system
The Team (Patrol) System is one of the strongest enabling spaces for youth leadership within Scouting. It creates opportunities for collaboration, shared decision-making, peer learning, and collective responsibility. Through progressively increasing autonomy appropriate to each age section, young people learn to listen to others, negotiate, solve problems, make decisions together, and contribute to achieving shared goals. In this way, the Team System becomes a practical experience of democratic participation and collaborative leadership.

The Leadership Experience
Leadership in Scouting is understood as a shared and developmental experience rather than a fixed position. Every young person should have opportunities and the space to lead according to their interests,

DRAFT

strengths, experience, and the needs of the group, while also learning to support and empower others. Leadership responsibilities should progressively evolve throughout the Scout journey, enabling young people to build confidence, exercise initiative, develop key leadership competencies, and strengthen their capacity to create positive change within Scouting and in their communities.

A Representative and Participatory System
Within each team and unit, young people should actively participate in shaping their collective experience by planning, implementing, and evaluating activities, while sharing responsibilities with their peers and adult leaders. Representative and participatory mechanisms should ensure that young people have meaningful opportunities to contribute to decisions affecting the life of the unit. These experiences cultivate dialogue, shared ownership, accountability, and prepare young people to engage effectively in decision-making processes at higher levels of the Movement and in society.

Learning by doing
This motto, embedded in everything we do in Scouting, is the first step towards creating a safe environment where young people can step outside their comfort zone, try, fail, try again, and learn from their mistakes. By encouraging them to embrace new challenges in a supportive setting, Scouting provides one of the essential foundations for developing confidence, resilience, and leadership competencies.

By contrast, an approach that assumes young people should simply follow instructions from their leaders, rather than inspiring them to pursue their own aspirations and learning through Scouting, undermines both leadership development and Scouting's fundamental principle of learning by doing.

Personal Progression
Personal progression supports each young person to advance according to their development, experiences, interests, and capacities.
Leadership expectations should therefore evolve progressively rather than rely on one standard model of leadership for all age groups.

Community Leadership and Active Citizenship
Youth leadership extends beyond internal Scouting roles. When adapted to their age and level of maturity, involving young people in identifying challenges and implementing meaningful solutions to improve their communities provides a powerful opportunity and space to develop and practise leadership. Youth-led community projects create the ideal environment to foster innovation, collaborate with others, take initiative, and contribute to more inclusive, peaceful, resilient, and sustainable communities.

3.2. Intergenerational Partnership

Young people and adults should experience relationships that enable them to learn, contribute, make decisions, and exercise leadership together.

Intergenerational partnership is a fundamental principle of youth leadership in Scouting, recognising that young people and adults bring different experiences, competencies, perspectives, and responsibilities. It does not require identical roles or equal responsibility in every situation. Instead, it requires respect, dialogue, appropriate sharing of responsibility, mutual learning, and a commitment to creating meaningful opportunities for young people to lead.

Adults play an enabling role as facilitators, mentors, coaches, advocates, and partners in youth leadership. By implementing the Scout Method and creating supportive environments and opportunities, they enable young people to progressively exercise greater autonomy, responsibility, and leadership.

They should:

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- implement the Scout Method and its principle of adult support;
- create conditions that enable young people to take appropriate responsibility;
- listen to and value young people's perspectives;
- create space for young people to take increasing responsibility for their learning and participation in decision-making;
- progressively adjust their support as young people's confidence and competencies develop;
- support reflection and learning from experience;
- recognise their responsibility for safeguarding and educational quality;
- contribute to cultures based on trust, respect, dialogue, and shared responsibility, and
- build external connections and create opportunities for collaboration, learning, and positive impact.

National Scout Organizations should ensure that their systems for supporting and developing adults prepare them to fulfil these roles effectively.

Young people also carry responsibility within intergenerational partnerships. They should have opportunities to contribute constructively, respect others, take responsibility for agreed roles and decisions, remain open to learning, and support the participation and leadership of their peers.

3.3. Youth Leadership in Decision-Making

Young people should have sustained, accessible, and meaningful opportunities to contribute to, influence, and exercise leadership in decisions that affect them and the Scout Movement.

Youth leadership in decision-making goes beyond representation:

- Representation concerns who is present.
- Participation concerns whether young people can contribute.
- Influence concerns whether their contributions can shape decisions.

Youth leadership in decision-making contributes to building a Movement of and with young people by ensuring their meaningful engagement in decision-making processes and structures at all levels of Scouting — local, national, Regional, and World.

As young people progressively develop their leadership competencies, they should access increasing opportunities to exercise responsibility, take initiative, contribute to shared outcomes, and influence decisions. Depending on the NSO’s level of maturity, opportunities to participate in institutional decision-making should progressively become accessible to every young person. Beyond the national level, these opportunities are generally available to young people aged 16 to 30.

In line with the Global Support Assessment Tool (GSAT) and the Youth Leadership Strategy KPIs, World Scouting should establish inclusive governance structures and processes that ensure young people and young adults represent at least 40% of decision-making bodies and operational structures at the National, Regional, and World levels of WOSM.
Furthermore, NSOs are encouraged to work towards having at least 40% of their board members under the age of 30, with voting rights

Beyond representation, these structures and processes should enable young people to participate meaningfully and influence outcomes, reflecting the diversity of the membership. The enabling environment should be intentional, transparent, inclusive, adequately resourced, and integrated across governance, programme development, organisational planning, and leadership development.

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The Policy seeks to strengthen their representation and meaningful participation across the Movement's governance and operational structures.

National Scout Organizations should therefore create decision-making environments in which young people:

- receive appropriate information and understand the purpose and scope of decisions;
- can express their perspectives freely and safely;
- have equitable access to opportunities to participate;
- can contribute throughout relevant decision-making processes rather than only at isolated moments;
- receive appropriate preparation and support;
- participate alongside adults through respectful intergenerational partnership;
- have genuine opportunities to influence outcomes; and
- can understand how decision-makers considered their contributions.

Context and Progression
National Scout Organizations, Regions, and World Scouting operate in different cultural, legal, social, and organisational realities and have reached different stages in developing youth leadership.

The Policy therefore establishes common outcomes while allowing different mechanisms and pathways to achieve them. Organisations should progressively strengthen youth leadership while adapting their approaches to their context, ensuring that contextual differences do not limit meaningful opportunities for young people.

Chapter 4: Enabling Conditions for Youth Leadership

Youth leadership requires more than creating individual opportunities for participation. It depends on organisational conditions, culture, structures, and systems that make leadership accessible, safe, meaningful, and sustainable across all levels of Scouting.

NSOs and WOSM play a key role in creating enabling environments where young people are trusted as partners, their contributions are valued, and responsibility and decision-making are shared across generations. These environments should enable young people to progressively develop leadership competencies, influence decisions, and contribute to the development and strategic direction of the Movement.

The following areas describe the key organisational conditions needed for youth leadership to flourish.

4.1. Organisational Culture

National Scout Organizations should foster a culture that:

- recognises young people as leaders and contributors today;
- values their perspectives and experiences;
- challenges unnecessary age-based assumptions about leadership;
- encourages collaboration rather than competition between generations;

- supports learning from experience;
- welcomes constructive challenge and new ideas; and
- recognises youth leadership as part of organisational quality rather than as a separate initiative.

4.2. Accessible Leadership Pathways

Young people should be able to identify and access progressively challenging opportunities to lead throughout their Scouting journey.

Pathways may vary according to national context and organisational design, but organizations should ensure continuity between educational leadership experiences, community action, organisational participation, and other opportunities to contribute.

Leadership pathways should remain open to young people from diverse backgrounds rather than depend primarily on existing networks, previous visibility, financial capacity, or access to specific structures.

4.3. Inclusion and Equity

National Scout Organizations should identify and address barriers that limit young people's access to leadership, meaningful participation, and influence, considering cultural, financial, geographic, social, structural, accessibility, gender-related, and other barriers relevant to their context.

They should pay particular attention to whether leadership opportunities reflect the diversity of the young people they serve and whether young people from different backgrounds are not only able to participate, but also have their voices heard and their contributions recognised and reflected in decisions.

4.4. Safe and Supportive Environments

Youth leadership requires environments where young people can exercise responsibility while receiving appropriate safeguarding and support. Safeguarding and risk management should enable meaningful educational challenge while protecting young people from harm.

National Scout Organizations should avoid using safety as a reason to unnecessarily remove opportunities for participation, learning, autonomy, and leadership.

The Safeguarding and Wellbeing Policy provides the primary direction for safeguarding responsibilities, systems, and standards.

4.5. Adult Capacity and Support

National Scout Organizations should ensure that adults who work with or support young people understand:

- youth leadership and progressive autonomy;
- the Scout Method;
- facilitation and mentoring;

- intergenerational partnership;
- meaningful participation and influence;
- inclusion and accessibility;
- safeguarding responsibilities; and
- how to adjust support according to young people's age, development, experience, and responsibilities.

The Adult Volunteering in Scouting Policy provides the primary direction for recruiting, developing, supporting, and recognising adults.

4.6. Resources and Organisational Support

National Scout Organizations should provide appropriate organisational support for youth leadership. This includes considering leadership development and youth participation when allocating time, human resources, financial resources, information, learning opportunities, accessibility support, and organisational capacity.

Lack of resources should prompt organizations to seek proportionate and context-sensitive approaches rather than treat youth leadership as optional.

4.7. Learning and Evidence

National Scout Organizations should regularly examine young people's leadership experiences and use evidence to improve their approaches.

Evidence should consider not only how many young people participate, but also:

- who can access opportunities;
- how young people experience leadership;
- whether their responsibilities progress over time;
- the quality of intergenerational partnership;
- whether young people influence decisions;
- what young people learn and contribute; and
- what organisational or community outcomes result.

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Chapter 5: Policy Integration and Shared Responsibility

5.1. Relationship with the Youth Programme Policy

The Youth Programme provides the primary educational context in which young people progressively develop and exercise leadership. Youth leadership is therefore both an essential part of the educational experience and an outcome of the Youth Programme.

National Scout Organizations should connect leadership development with personal progression, adapting opportunities to different ages and stages of development. Young people should progressively take responsibility for their own learning, collaborate with others, engage in community action, make meaningful decisions, and contribute to the review, design, testing, and improvement of the Youth Programme.

Adults should act as facilitators and enablers, ensuring that young people's perspectives influence decisions. By embedding youth leadership and co-creation throughout the Youth Programme, NSOs strengthen its relevance, educational quality, and ownership by young people.

5.2. Relationship with the Adult Volunteering Policy

Adults play an essential role in enabling youth leadership by creating learning environments where young people can progressively assume responsibility, exercise leadership, and participate in decision-making. This requires adults to understand and implement the Scout Method, apply sound educational practices, facilitate and mentor young people, and engage in their own continuous development.

The Adult Volunteering in Scouting Policy provides the primary direction for how organisations recruit, develop, support, and recognise adults to fulfil these responsibilities effectively.

5.2. Relationship with the Safe from Harm Policy

Meaningful youth leadership flourishes in environments that are both safe and empowering, where young people can move beyond their comfort zones by progressively exercising responsibility, autonomy, and leadership, making decisions, and learning from experience, while ensuring their protection and wellbeing.

The Safe from Harm Policy provides the primary direction for the systems, responsibilities, and standards needed to create these conditions. Safeguarding and risk management should enable young people to explore, make decisions, take appropriate challenges, and learn through experience, rather than limit age-appropriate participation and leadership.

National Scout Organizations should therefore seek an appropriate balance between protection and empowerment, ensuring that safeguarding supports meaningful youth leadership while effectively managing risk.

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Chapter 6: Responsibilities and Accountability

Creating and sustaining meaningful youth leadership requires shared and coordinated action across the Scout Movement. Young people, adults, National Scout Organizations, and World Scouting carry complementary responsibilities across the educational and organisational dimensions of Scouting.

Together, they create enabling environments where young people can progressively develop leadership competencies through the Youth Programme, exercise responsibility, and meaningfully participate in and influence governance and decision-making.

6.1. National Scout Organizations and Associations

National Scout Organizations hold overall responsibility for contextualising and implementing this Policy across the educational and organisational dimensions of Scouting. Implementation should reflect each NSO's context, size, governance model, cultural environment, and level of development while progressively working towards the outcomes established by this Policy.
NSOs should:

- embed youth leadership throughout the Youth Programme, ensuring progressively challenging and age-appropriate opportunities to develop and exercise leadership through the Scout Method and personal progression;
- create meaningful and sustained opportunities for young people to participate in and influence decision-making, across relevant levels and dimensions of the organisation;
- develop accessible and progressive leadership pathways that connect experiences in the Youth Programme, community action, organisational leadership, and decision-making;
- strengthen intergenerational partnership, developing the capacity of both young people and adults to collaborate, share responsibility, and exercise leadership together;
- create an inclusive organisational culture that values young people as leaders and identifies and addresses barriers to leadership and influence;
- provide appropriate resources, support, and organisational capacity to sustain meaningful youth leadership;
- establish clear responsibility and accountability for implementing the Policy; and
- monitor representation, meaningful influence, and young people's leadership experiences, using evidence and feedback for continuous improvement.

NSOs may use different structures and mechanisms according to their context, provided that they progressively work towards the principles, expectations, and outcomes established in this Policy.

6.2. National Governance Bodies

National governance bodies provide strategic leadership and oversight.
They should ensure that:

- youth leadership remains an organisational priority;
- governance reflects the principles of this Policy;
- young people can meaningfully contribute to relevant decisions;
- resources support implementation;
- the organisation addresses barriers to meaningful participation; and

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- the NSO reviews progress and remains accountable for implementation.

6.3. Adults

Adults create and sustain many of the conditions in which young people develop and exercise leadership.
According to their roles, adults should:

- implement the Scout Method;
- facilitate learning and reflection;
- mentor and support young people;
- progressively share appropriate responsibility;
- listen to young people's perspectives;
- help create safe and inclusive environments;
- challenge tokenistic participation and unnecessary adult control; and
- model values-based, collaborative, and responsible leadership.

6.4. Young People

Young people are active partners in youth leadership.
They should receive opportunities and support to:

- take responsibility for their own learning and actions;
- contribute their ideas, perspectives, and experiences;
- participate responsibly in shared decisions;
- collaborate with peers and adults;
- respect and enable the participation of others;
- contribute to their communities;
- reflect on and learn from leadership experiences; and
- help create opportunities for other young people to lead.

These expectations should remain appropriate to age, development, context, and role.

6.5. World Scouting

World Scouting provides global direction and support for implementation.
It should:

- maintain and evolve this Policy;
- provide supporting guidance and implementation resources;
- support capacity development and shared learning;
- integrate youth leadership within relevant World Scouting systems and services;
- create meaningful youth leadership opportunities at World level;
- support Regions and NSOs according to their different contexts and stages of development;
- monitor global progress; and
- use evidence and learning to strengthen the Movement's approach.

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World and Regional structures should also lead by example in creating meaningful opportunities for young people to exercise leadership and influence decisions.

Chapter 7: Implementation, Monitoring and Evolution

Effective implementation of the World Scout Youth Leadership Policy requires its principles and expectations to be reflected in the educational experiences, organisational cultures, governance structures, and decision-making processes of the Scout Movement.

Implementation is a continuous process that recognises the different stages of development of youth leadership across National Scout Organizations and the diverse contexts in which Scouting operates. This chapter establishes expectations for implementation, monitoring, evaluation, continuous improvement, and policy review.

7.1. Policy Implementation and Life Cycle

The World Scout Youth Leadership Policy provides a common reference for strengthening youth leadership across the Movement. World Scouting should support its application through appropriate institutional arrangements, communication, capacity development, resources, and coordination.

Relevant World Scouting, regional, and national institutional documents and processes should be reviewed and, where necessary, aligned with the principles and expectations established in this Policy. This includes ensuring coherence with the other core World Scouting policies, particularly those addressing Youth Programme, Adults in Scouting, and Safe from Harm.

The Policy follows a nine-year implementation and review cycle, organised into three triennia:

- **First triennium – Adoption and promotion:** Promote the Policy across the Movement, develop or update supporting resources, and identify necessary adjustments to relevant institutional documents, processes, and practices.

- **Second triennium – Implementation:** Support NSOs in applying the Policy, strengthening national alignment, developing enabling conditions for youth leadership, and addressing identified gaps and implementation needs.

- **Third triennium – Evaluation and review:** Continue supporting implementation while undertaking a comprehensive evaluation of the Policy's application, relevance, and effectiveness, and identifying any necessary revisions.

This framework provides a common reference for implementation and comprehensive review while recognising that NSOs may progress at different paces according to their national circumstances and organisational development.

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7.2. Implementation of the WSYL Policy

National Scout Organizations (NSOs) are expected to implement the World Scout Youth Leadership Policy according to their national circumstances, organisational structures, and stage of development.

Implementation goes beyond adopting a National Youth Leadership Policy. NSOs should integrate youth leadership throughout their Youth Programme, governance, and organisational practices, ensuring that young people progressively develop leadership competencies, exercise responsibility, collaborate across generations, and meaningfully influence decisions. Different cultural and organisational contexts should guide implementation without limiting opportunities for young people to lead.

NSOs should consider the following approaches according to their stage of development:

- **During initial development:** Use this Policy as a reference to establish or revise national approaches to youth leadership, including the necessary structures, resources, and responsibilities.
- **During implementation:** Assess existing educational and organisational practices, identify gaps, and strengthen leadership opportunities, intergenerational partnership, and meaningful influence.
- **During continuous improvement:** Periodically review progress and use evidence and feedback to identify priorities and improve youth leadership practices.

Regardless of their stage of development, NSOs should communicate the Policy's principles and expectations to relevant stakeholders and support those responsible for implementation.

World Scouting should support implementation through guidance, resources, capacity development, and opportunities to exchange experiences and good practices, in alignment with the Youth Leadership Strategy and the different needs of NSOs.

7.3. Core Expectations for Successful Implementation

Successful implementation should result in six interconnected outcomes across the educational and organisational dimensions of Scouting:

1. Youth leadership is embedded throughout the Youth Programme
Young people progressively develop and practise leadership through the Scout Method, personal progression, teamwork, community action, and learning by doing, applying their competencies through increasingly challenging leadership experiences.

2. Young people meaningfully influence decisions
Young people have sustained and inclusive opportunities to participate in decision-making, with appropriate preparation, access to information, clear roles, and feedback. Success goes beyond numerical representation and considers the extent to which young people can genuinely influence outcomes.

3. Intergenerational partnership becomes normal practice
Young people and adults work together through trust, dialogue, mutual learning, and shared responsibility. Adults are prepared and supported to act as facilitators, mentors, and partners, progressively creating space for young people to exercise greater responsibility and leadership.

4. Leadership opportunities are accessible and inclusive
NSOs provide diverse and progressive pathways for young people to exercise leadership according to their interests, abilities, development, and context, while identifying and addressing barriers that may limit access and meaningful participation.

5. Organisational systems enable youth leadership
Governance, organisational culture, adult support, safeguarding, capacity-building, resources, communication, and organisational practices work together to sustain youth leadership rather than relying on isolated initiatives or representative positions.

6. Evidence drives continuous improvement
NSOs regularly monitor and review youth leadership, considering representation as well as the quality of participation, inclusion, learning, influence, and impact. Evidence and feedback from young people should inform continuous improvement of the Youth Programme and organisational practices.

Ultimately, successful implementation is reflected in an organisational culture where leadership is understood as a shared and progressive learning journey, intergenerational collaboration strengthens decision-making, and young people are recognised as active contributors to Scouting and their communities.

7.4. Monitoring and Evaluation

World Scouting should monitor and evaluate the implementation of the World Scout Youth Leadership Policy across the Movement to assess progress, identify common challenges and gaps, and determine areas requiring further support or improvement.

This process should draw on relevant qualitative and quantitative evidence from National Scout Organizations, Regional Support Centres, young people, adults, and existing organisational monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, including the Global Support Assessment Tool (GSAT), and any other assessment tools where appropriate.

Monitoring and evaluation should consider the extent to which the principles and expectations of this Policy are applied across the educational and organisational dimensions of Scouting, including:

- **Youth Programme:** The extent to which young people progressively develop and exercise leadership through the Scout Method, personal progression, decision-making, reflection, and community engagement?
- **Leadership progression:** Whether young people experience increasing responsibility, autonomy, and opportunities to lead throughout their Scouting journey.
- **Access and inclusion:** Whether young people from diverse backgrounds can access leadership opportunities equitably.
- **Representation:** Whether decision-making structures include meaningful representation of young people and reflect the diversity of membership.
- **Participation and influence:** Whether young people have appropriate information, preparation, and support to contribute to decisions and genuinely influence outcomes.
- **Intergenerational partnership:** Whether relationships between young people and adults demonstrate trust, dialogue, mutual learning, respect, and appropriate sharing of responsibility.
- **Learning and development:** Whether leadership experiences contribute to the progressive development of competencies, values, confidence, responsibility, and active citizenship.
- **Enabling organisational conditions:** Whether organisational culture, governance, adult support, safeguarding, resources, and other organisational systems enable and sustain youth leadership.

- **Impact:** How youth leadership contributes to the Youth Programme, the organisation, communities, and society.

Monitoring and evaluation should consider both the opportunities available to young people and their actual experiences of leadership. Representation measures provide important information but should not serve as the only measure of meaningful youth leadership.

NSOs should actively involve young people in evaluating their leadership experiences, identifying challenges, and assessing the effectiveness of existing approaches.

The findings should inform decisions on implementation support, capacity development, the development of relevant resources, and the effectiveness of policy application across the Movement. They should also contribute to the periodic review and update of this Policy, as established in Section 7.5.

7.5. Continuous Improvement

National Scout Organizations should use monitoring, feedback, reflection, and organisational learning to continuously strengthen their approach to youth leadership, actively involving young people in assessing their experiences and identifying areas for improvement.

Success should not be measured by the presence or representation of young people alone, but also by their autonomy, responsibility, meaningful influence, learning and development, inclusion, and impact.

World Scouting should support continuous learning across the Movement by gathering evidence, facilitating the exchange of experiences and learning, and adapting supporting resources to evolving needs, contexts, and practices.

7.6. Policy Review and Update

The World Scout Youth Leadership Policy should maintain stability in its core principles and expectations while remaining relevant to the evolving needs of young people, the Scout Movement, and society.

A comprehensive review of the Policy should normally take place within the nine-year period established in Section 7.1, considering its implementation, relevance, effectiveness, and alignment with the Fundamentals of Scouting and the Strategy for Scouting.

The review should consider:

- the extent and effectiveness of implementation across different Scouting contexts;
- evidence and feedback from young people and adults;
- changes in the Strategy for Scouting and relevant institutional priorities;
- developments in Youth Programme, adult volunteering, safeguarding, and organisational governance;
- changes in young people's realities, needs, opportunities, and forms of participation;
- learning and experiences from National Scout Organizations and Regions;
- evidence of meaningful youth influence, leadership development, and intergenerational partnership; and
- relevant academic research, emerging trends, and developments in youth leadership and participation beyond Scouting.

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While the three-triennium framework provides a reference for comprehensive review, World Scouting may undertake targeted reviews and updates of specific sections, provisions, or terminology at any time to respond to emerging trends, changing circumstances, or identified needs. Such updates should preserve the stability and coherence of the Policy's core principles and follow the appropriate governance processes without requiring a comprehensive review of the entire Policy.

World Scouting should review implementation progress at the end of each triennium and submit a progress report to the World Scout Committee. At the end of the third triennium, a comprehensive review report, including recommendations for any necessary revisions, should reach the World Scout Conference through the appropriate governance processes.

The Policy remains in force beyond the review period until the appropriate governance bodies formally revise or replace it. Implementation, monitoring, learning, and continuous improvement should continue throughout its implementation and review cycle.

Annex 1 – World Scout Conference Resolutions

Resolution 2021-E - Youth Engagement Strategy
Supporting document: Conference Document 10

The Conference,

- recognising youth engagement as a component of the core educational methods of Scouting,
- referencing the World Scout Youth Involvement Policy which gives the direction at all levels to strengthen youth engagement educationally, institutionally and in the community,
- reaffirming several Conference Resolutions (most recently 2017-07) which relate to youth involvement in inclusive decision-making and inclusion of young people in delegations to the World Scout Conference,
- noting the consultations carried out by the two Task Forces for World Scout Committee Size and Effectiveness and the Evolution of the World Scout Youth Forum and World Scout Conference during this triennium,
- being aware of the progress achieved through the implementation of the Youth Involvement Strategy 2011-2020 as outlined in its reports,

- approves the main goals and key objectives of the Youth Engagement Strategy as described in Conference Document 10;
- requests the World Scout Committee to,
  - further develop the Youth Engagement Strategy for young people across the Scout Movement and in all aspects of Scouting (at the unit, institutional and community level) by establishing the plans, tools and measures required through a wide and diverse consultation process;
  - review the World Scout Youth Involvement Policy during the 2021-2024 Triennium and ensure alignment with the development of the Youth Engagement Strategy;
  - align the Youth Engagement Strategy with the next Strategy for Scouting to provide direction for future triennial plans.

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Resolution 2021-G - Youth Advisor system and youth involvement in decision-making
Supporting document: Conference Document 10

The Conference,

- recalling Conference Resolutions (most recently 2008-14 and 2017-07) highlighting the transitional and interim nature of the World Scout Youth Forum and the World Youth Advisor system in the decision-making processes of WOSM,
- heartened by the progress on youth involvement in decision-making over the last decades, in particular the success of the World Youth Advisor system as a transitional measure, as outlined in Conference Document 10, and the Scout Movement's readiness to accelerate the progress on youth involvement in decision-making to conclude this transitionary measure,
- considering Conference Resolution 2017-11, expressing the need to have the most effective World Scout Committee and highlighting the importance of its diversity to ensure it carries out its responsibilities in the most qualitative way possible,
- recognizing more efforts are needed to continue strengthening the involvement of young people in decision-making and to ensure past progress is not lost,
- noting the World Scout Committee's intention to discontinue the World Youth Advisor system at the end of the 2021-2024 Triennium, as elaborated in Conference Document 10, with an aim of ensuring and further strengthening youth participation in the membership of the World Scout Committee and its substructures,

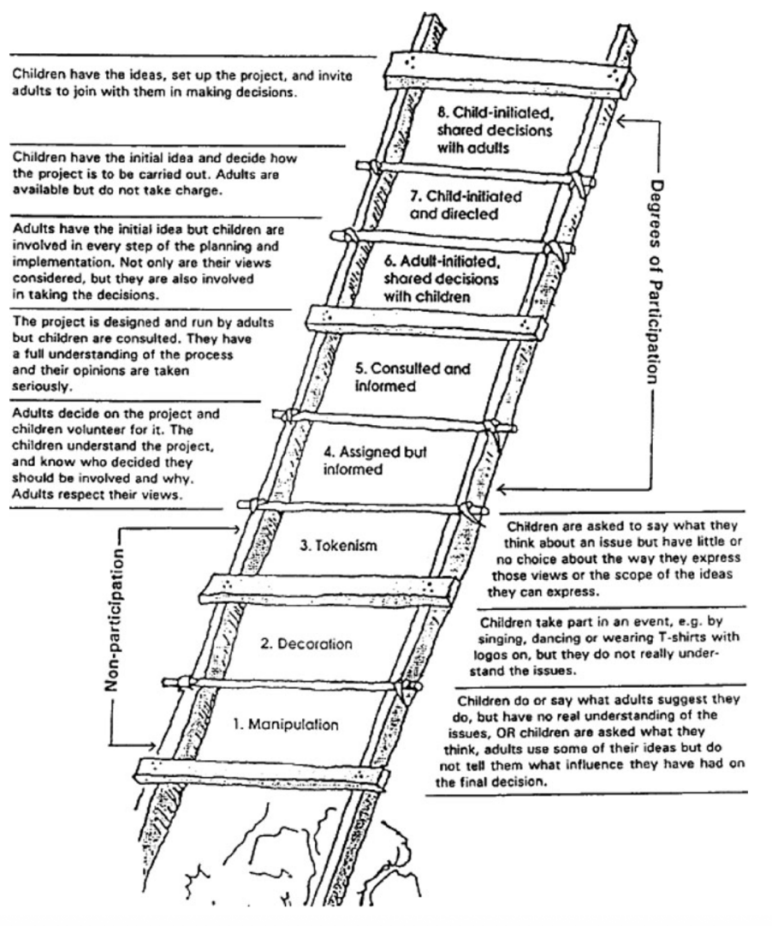
- encourages that existing transitional Youth Advisor systems at the Regional level continue until such time that its goals are achieved;
- requests Member Organizations to,
  - recognize their critical responsibility towards youth involvement as the only entities nominating candidates for World and Regional Scout Committees;
  - proactively identify, nominate, and support suitable young people who could serve on World and Regional Scout Committees;
  - take action to ensure youth involvement in decision-making at all levels in their structures;
  - include young people in their World Scout Conference delegations;
- requests the World Scout Committee to apply the following measures to enhance youth involvement in decision-making in the World Scout Committee,
  - continue to include young people under the age of 30 in all of its Standing Committees and Operational Framework;
  - propose amended Rules of Procedure for future World Scout Conferences, allowing for an extended deadline to strengthen the diversity of candidate profiles;
  - present by December 2022 a report with recommendations on identifying and overcoming structural barriers hindering youth involvement in World Scouting;
  - establish and promote a "social contract" open for signature by Member Organizations who commit themselves to identify and nominate young people under the age of 30 to World and/or Regional Scout Committees;
  - support the delivery of training to young people under the age of 30 interested to have a leadership position at National, Regional and World structures;
- requests the World Scout Committee to monitor the youth involvement situation in decision-making and to take further actions as outlined in section 3.3 of Conference Document 10, if the results are unsatisfactory.

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Annex 2 – Models Supporting Meaningful Youth Participation and Leadership

This annex presents four of the most widely used academic models for understanding youth participation, involvement, engagement, and empowerment. Together, they address four distinct but complementary questions: how much power young people hold in a given process, what organisational commitment meaningful participation requires, what kinds of youth-adult partnerships look like in practice, and whether participation meets a basic standard of quality and rights. Rather than choosing between them, we find that the models work best when read alongside each other.

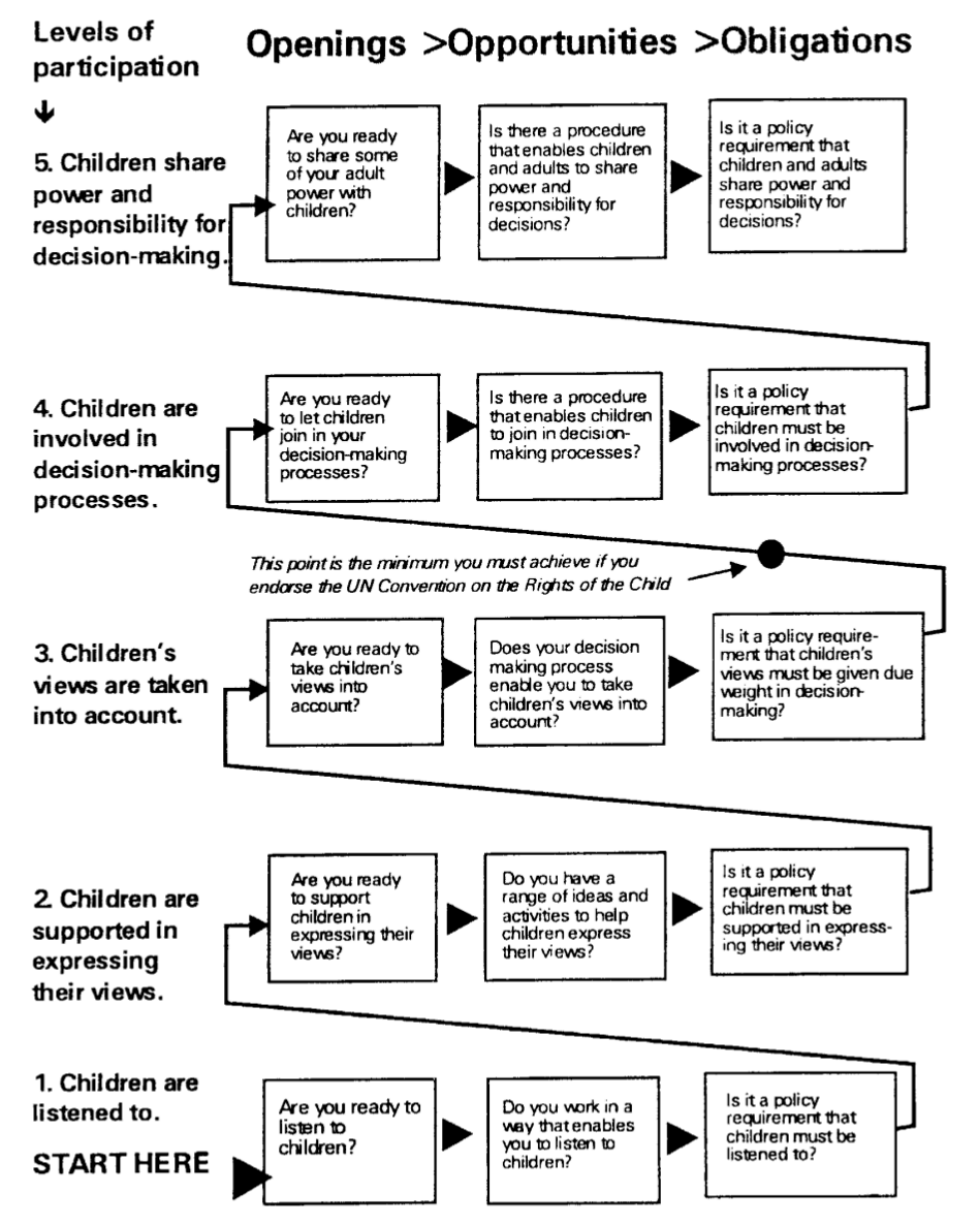
The Ladder of Young People's Participation - Roger Hart (1992)
Hart's model remains a conceptual foundation for many works on youth participation. It describes eight levels of participation, ranging from manipulation at the bottom to genuine shared decision-making at the top. It introduced the foundational distinction between participation that is real and participation that is only symbolic.



Source: Hart (1992)

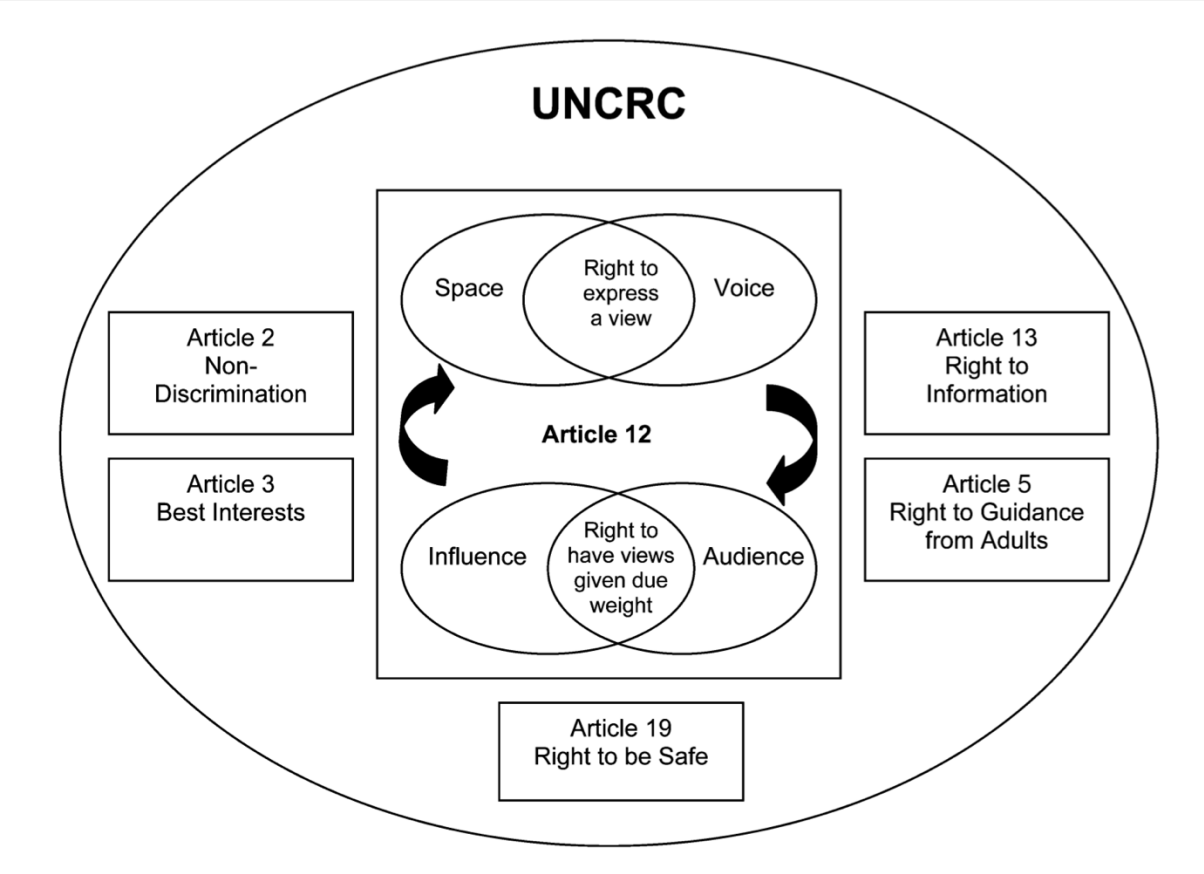
Pathways to Participation - Harry Shier (2001)

Shier builds on Hart's Ladder of Participation, but shifts the focus from youth to the adults and organisation. At each of the five levels of youth participation, he asks about the role and motivation of adults to support young people. Three questions are asked: is there an opening for this, i.e. is there a willingness to support young people's participation? Is there an opportunity, i.e. do the conditions and resources allow for this? And is there an obligation, i.e. is there a formal policy or requirement that makes it consistent and accountable? This model is particularly relevant to the Scouting context, where adult leaders play a central role in supporting and enabling young leadership and decision-making, and mere aspiration and genuine commitment have greatly different impacts.



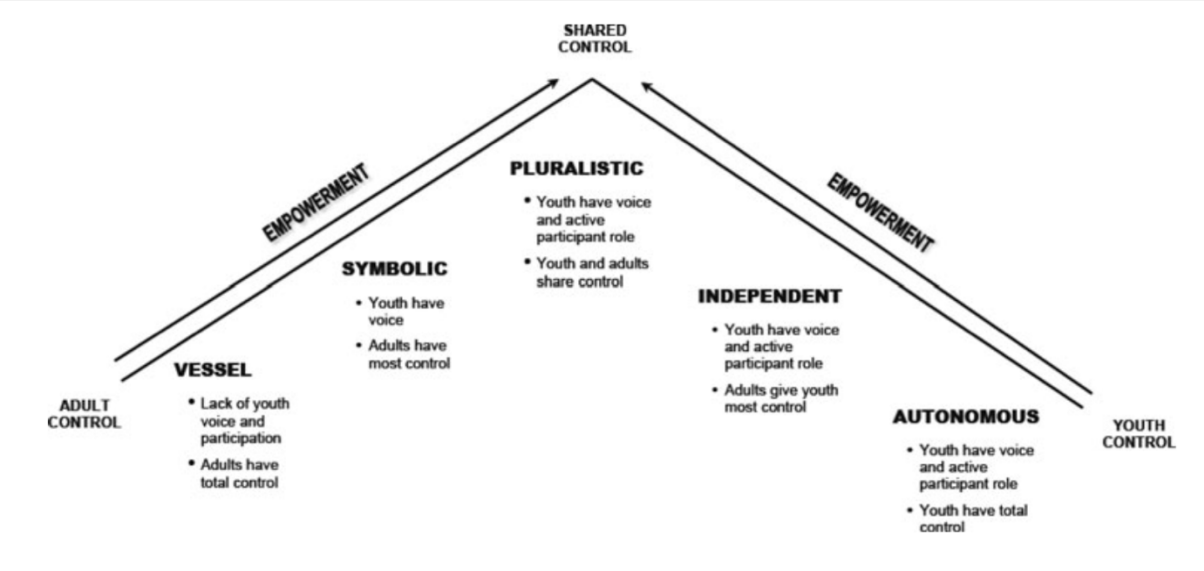
Source: Shier (2001)

Rights-Based Participation Model - Laura Lundy (2007)
Lundy's model is grounded explicitly in a legal rights framework, specifically in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. It discusses youth participation as a legal obligation and addresses whether it is complete and meaningful in a legal sense, asking whether participation meets the standard set by Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. It proposes four interdependent elements: Space (young people are given the opportunity to form a view), Voice (they are supported to express it), Audience (they are genuinely listened to), and Influence (their views actually affect decisions). In this Scout policy context, it provides the quality standard against which any youth involvement practice should be measured.



Source: Lundy (2007)

TYPE Pyramid - Wong, Zimmerman & Parker (2010)
This evidence-based model describes five distinct types of youth-adult partnership, offering Scouting a valuable lens for understanding the different forms that youth participation and empowerment can take in practice. Ranging from youth as passive recipients through to fully autonomous youth action, it recognises that the most appropriate type of partnership depends on context, age, and purpose. This encourages leaders to think carefully about what kind of partnership best supports a young person at different stages of their development and across different programme contexts — and serves as a reminder that there is no single right way to promote youth agency and shared leadership.



Source: Wong et al. (2010)

Annex 3 – Rationale to Involve Young People

The World Youth Leadership Policy rests on a foundational idea: young people are not simple the future of the Scout Movement, they are the present, therefore the following reasons are particularly relevant for the involvement of young people:

3.1. Why involve young people in society development?

Young People's Rights
Youth participation is not a programme option or simply a capacity-building activity; it is a fundamental right of young people to be involved in and heard on decisions that affect their lives (1). In youth-focused organisations such as Scouting, this right must be translated into practice through structures and processes that enable meaningful participation. Participation is only meaningful when young people's voices genuinely influence decisions (2) . Recognising youth participation as a right therefore requires creating the spaces and opportunities for young people to make an impact.

Youth Participation as a Driver of Social Development and sustainability
Leadership in the current era is no longer defined by positional authority, but by the capacity to act with purpose, exercise sound judgement, and collaborate effectively in complex environments (3). Young people who experience genuine participation, including opportunities for leadership and meaningful challenges, develop stronger identities, greater social competencies, and a deeper commitment to learning.
These outcomes contribute to social development and sustainability, as young leaders often bring long-term perspectives, empathy towards diverse stakeholders, and adaptive approaches to governance, enabling them to contribute meaningfully to decision-making and public policy processes (4). Participation of Youth People implies agency, influence, and shared ownership — not merely presence or consultation.

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3.2. Why involve young people in decision-making in Scouting?

Education for preparing and Empowering Young People to Lead Today
Youth Leadership is both an educational outcome and a pedagogical method within Scouting. Involving young people in decision-making is fundamental to achieving the mission of Scouting and delivering education for life. Through meaningful participation, Scouting creates safe learning environments where young people develop as individuals, learn to take responsibility, and play a constructive role in society. By participating in selecting activities, evaluating group life, and establishing common rules, young people practise decision-making and experience one of the core principles of the Scout Method: learning by doing.

Developing Leadership Competencies for Active Citizenship
Youth leadership provides meaningful opportunities for young people to develop leadership as a collaborative process of establishing a shared vision, engaging and empowering others, and facilitating positive change (5). Through active participation in decision-making, young people strengthen their capacity to collaborate across diverse perspectives, communicate effectively, solve problems creatively, and take shared responsibility for achieving common goals. In partnership with adults, these experiences foster confidence, resilience, and a values-based approach to leadership that prepares young people to become active citizens committed to creating a better world.

Strengthening Organizational Relevance through Shared Leadership
Youth leadership is more than youth representation; it is an educational process that enables young people to develop leadership competencies, contribute to meaningful decision-making, and strengthen the Youth Programme, the Movement, and society. Their active involvement in organizational decision-making ensures that strategies, programmes, and governance remain relevant to the evolving realities, aspirations, and needs of young people.

Without the perspectives of those directly experiencing and delivering the Youth Programme, National Scout Organizations may struggle to design responsive strategies and maintain the relevance of their educational offer.

When young people are not genuinely empowered to contribute, influence decisions, and see the impact of their participation, motivation, ownership, and long-term engagement may decline, reducing opportunities to cultivate future leaders and sustain organizational renewal.

Scouting develops leadership through learning by doing. Young people build leadership competencies by actively participating in decision-making, taking responsibility, collaborating with others, and facilitating positive change. Without these authentic opportunities throughout their Scout journey, they cannot be expected to develop the confidence, skills, and readiness required to become active citizens and contribute effectively to the future leadership of the Movement and society.

Strengthening Youth–Adult Partnership
The Mission of Scouting is best achieved through meaningful partnerships between young people and adults, where each contributes their unique perspectives, experiences, and strengths to a shared educational process. In Scouting, adults play an enabling role by creating safe learning environments that empower young people to lead, make decisions, and learn through experience. Through mutual trust, constructive dialogue, and shared responsibility, young people and adults strengthen one another while contributing to the continuous development of the Youth Programme and the Movement.

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3.3. Challenges to Youth Leadership

Despite significant progress across the Scout Movement, meaningful youth involvement continues to be influenced by cultural, structural, institutional and socioeconomic factors. While barriers such as poverty, disability, gender inequality and cultural norms continue to affect opportunities for participation, organizations also face internal challenges that can limit meaningful youth leadership and intergenerational decision-making.

Mindsets and perceptions of young people: Traditional perceptions that associate leadership with age or experience may limit trust in young people's abilities and reduce opportunities for them to contribute meaningfully to decision-making. Moving from seeing young people as future leaders to recognising them as leaders today requires a cultural shift across all levels of the Movement.

Organisational culture and structures: Governance systems, organisational practices and decision-making processes may unintentionally reinforce hierarchical or adult-centred approaches. When structures are not designed to promote intergenerational leadership, young people may encounter invisible barriers that restrict their influence, responsibility and ability to contribute beyond consultative roles.

Limited access to leadership development: Meaningful involvement depends on providing young people with equitable opportunities to develop the knowledge, competencies, confidence and experience required for leadership. Organizations that do not invest sufficiently in learning pathways, mentoring and capacity-building risk limiting both individual development and the long-term sustainability of youth leadership.

Limited awareness of opportunities: Young people cannot engage in decision-making if they are unaware of available opportunities or do not understand how to access them. Transparent, accessible and youth-friendly communication is essential to ensure equitable participation and to inspire new generations of leaders.

Financial and practical barriers: Financial constraints, competing educational or professional commitments, and unequal access to resources continue to prevent many young people from participating fully in leadership and decision-making opportunities. Reducing these barriers requires sustained investment and equitable support mechanisms.

Continuity and enabling environments: High turnover of adult volunteers and staff, insufficient preparation for adults to work in partnership with young people, and the absence of mechanisms to monitor the quality of youth involvement can weaken continuity, reduce institutional learning and limit the development of meaningful intergenerational leadership.

Institutional and Global Context

This policy reflects a global institutional trend towards increased youth involvement and leadership. The **United Nations** and **UNESCO** have highlighted the need to move beyond symbolic youth participation by establishing institutionalised and mandated pathways that enable young people to meaningfully influence policymaking and decision-making. This policy aligns with this direction, positioning youth leadership not as a discretionary programme addition but as a structural indicator of institutional quality.

This shift from consultation towards co-ownership increasingly shapes the multilateral system and civil society. It appears in the **United Nations Youth2030 Strategy**, regional frameworks such as the **African Youth Charter**, and accountability standards promoted by non-governmental organisations. This trend has gained further momentum in recent years. The **Council of Europe** revised its participation charter in

2025 through direct consultation with youth leaders across its member countries, while the **African Youth Charter** is undergoing its 20th-anniversary revision.

The policy also aligns with the approach promoted by the **United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)** through its Youth Steering Committee, which encourages institutions to engage young people not only as participants or respondents, but also as partners in managing, shaping, and evaluating processes that concern them.

Annex 4 – Core Competencies of Youth Leadership in Scouting

Youth leadership is not defined by a position or title, but by the capacity to contribute meaningfully to decisions, inspire positive change, and work collaboratively with others. As young people progress through their Scouting journey, they develop a range of interconnected competencies that enable them to exercise leadership at increasing levels of responsibility.

These competencies are cultivated through the Scout Method, learning by doing, meaningful participation in decision-making, community engagement, and intergenerational partnerships. Together, they prepare young people not only to lead within Scouting, but also to become active citizens capable of contributing ethically, collaboratively, and effectively to society. This competency-based approach reflects the Movement's vision of youth leadership as a progressive educational journey supported by continuous learning, mentoring, and opportunities for meaningful engagement in decision-making.

Competency Area	What this means for young people in Scouting
Self Leadership and Agency	The ability to lead oneself with integrity, purpose and resilience by demonstrating self-awareness, emotional intelligence, adaptability, empathy and personal responsibility. It includes confidence to act, continuous personal growth, wellbeing, and the capacity to inspire others through example while remaining grounded in Scout values.
Critical Thinking and Ethical Decision-making	The ability to analyse complex situations, think systemically, develop creative connectionsmake informed and ethical decisions, and translate ideas into action. It includes planning, prioritising, managing resources responsibly, evaluating risks, solving problems creatively, and ensuring accountability and long-term sustainability.
Governance and Decision-Making	The ability to understand governance systems, institutional processes and decision-making mechanisms, and to participate meaningfully in them. It includes navigating organizational structures, understanding policies and procedures, influencing agendas, contributing to formal decision-making bodies, exercising shared responsibility, and advocating for transparent, accountable and inclusive governance.
Collaborative and Intergenerational Leadership	The ability to build trusting relationships and work effectively across generations, cultures and sectors through dialogue, mutual respect and shared leadership. It includes relationship-building, networking, coalition-building, mentoring, partnership development and creating

	environments where diverse perspectives strengthen collective decisions..
Communication and Dialogue	The ability to communicate with clarity, authenticity and empathy across diverse audiences and contexts. It includes active listening, constructive dialogue, facilitation, negotiation, public speaking, storytelling, advocacy and conflict transformation to foster understanding and collective action.
Civic Engagement and Community Impact	The ability to identify community needs, mobilise people and resources, and lead initiatives that contribute to positive social change. It includes active citizenship, community engagement, advocacy, social innovation, environmental stewardship and empowering others to create sustainable impact locally and globally.
Innovation, Adaptability and Resilience	The ability to embrace change, think creatively and respond effectively to uncertainty. It includes experimentation, learning from failure, innovation, digital confidence, resilience and the flexibility to lead in rapidly evolving social, technological and environmental contexts.
Inclusion and Global Citizenship	The ability to lead with respect for diversity, equity and human dignity while fostering belonging across cultures and identities. It includes intercultural competence, global awareness, ethical leadership, solidarity, peacebuilding and promoting inclusive participation where every voice is valued.
Learning and Capacity Development	The ability to pursue lifelong learning while supporting the growth of others. It includes reflective practice, mentoring, coaching, knowledge sharing, receiving and providing feedback, and continuously developing the competencies required for leadership throughout the Leadership Journey.

Annex 5 – Related Documents on Youth Leadership

The following documents complement and support the implementation of the World Scout Youth Leadership Policy. Together, they provide the conceptual foundations, strategic frameworks, practical guidance, and implementation tools that help National Scout Organizations translate the policy into practice according to their context and needs.

- **Youth Leadership Strategy** - TBA

- **21st Century Leadership in Scouting**

  This document redefines leadership in Scouting for today's realities. It moves beyond leadership as position or authority and places it at the heart of the Youth Programme as a key educational outcome that supports Scouting's Mission.
  It provides a shared framework for all National Scout Organizations (NSOs), promoting a common understanding of leadership while respecting different cultural and organisational contexts.

The document combines conceptual foundations with practical guidance. It defines leadership as a collaborative, values-based process, identifies the knowledge, skills, and attitudes it develops, and explains how the Scout Method enables young people to build these capacities.
As a key reference for the World Scout Youth Leadership Policy, it also encourages NSOs to continuously review and strengthen how leadership development is embedded within their Youth Programme.

- **Youth Leadership in Decision Making**

This framework strengthens Scouting's commitment to being a Movement of and for young people by providing a clear direction for Youth Leadership in Decision Making across all levels of the Movement. It establishes practical principles for meaningful youth participation, including intergenerational collaboration, dedicated support, continuous engagement, and capacity building. It also describes the conditions, responsibilities, and organisational culture needed to embed Youth Leadership in Decision Making within National Scout Organizations (NSOs).
Developed following the 2023 World Scout Committee decision and aligned with the Youth Involvement Policy, this framework serves as a key reference for implementing the World Scout Youth Leadership Policy and strengthening youth leadership across Scouting.

- **Youth Leadership in Decision Making: Guidelines for Implementation**

These Guidelines translate the Youth Leadership in Decision Making Framework into practical action. They present nine adaptable strategies that National Scout Organizations (NSOs) and National Scout Associations (NSAs) can apply according to their context, capacity, and level of development.
Beyond the strategies themselves, the document clarifies key concepts, outlines guiding principles, addresses common organisational challenges, and highlights the importance of intergenerational partnership. It also encourages continuous reflection and evaluation, recognising Youth Leadership in Decision Making as an ongoing organisational culture rather than a one-time initiative.
As a practical companion to the Framework, these Guidelines provide tools and examples to help organisations meaningfully integrate young people into decision-making at all levels of Scouting.

- **Youth Leadership Training Guide**

This guide translates the Youth Leadership in Decision Making Framework into a complete training experience for National Scout Organizations (NSOs) and National Scout Associations (NSAs). It provides practical guidance for designing, delivering, and evaluating Youth Leadership training, including learning objectives, educational content, course management, participant selection, and logistical considerations. Built on the principles of Youth Leadership in Decision Making and designed to be adapted to different contexts, it serves as a practical resource for developing the competencies young people need to participate effectively in decision-making across all levels of Scouting.

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