



Report

Lessons learned from (less) successful youth participation practices.

Future of football: results of a comparative country analysis.

Lessons learned from (less) successful youth participation practices.

Future of football: results of a comparative country analysis.

In collaboration with Football Supporters Europe.

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

Mulier Instituut

Rutger de Kwaasteniet
Anouk Greeven
Johan Steenberg

For more information, please contact the Mulier Instituut.

© Mulier Instituut

Utrecht, July 7, 2024
www.mulierinstituut.nl
info@mulierinstituut.nl

Disclaimer

This project is funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them. You are allowed to reproduce parts of this publication under the condition of proper attribution: author(s), the title of the publication, and the year of publication. There are usage conditions for the photos in this publication. Therefore, do not reproduce photos without permission from the Mulier Instituut.



Co-funded by
the European Union

In collaboration with Football Supporters Europe.

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.



Co-funded by
the European Union

About us

The Mulier Institute conducts sports research for policy and society. We investigate various themes related to sports and physical activity for governments, social organisations, educational institutions, sports organisations, and businesses. These themes range from sports participation among (groups of) Dutch citizens to children's motor skills, and from diversity and inclusion to the economic impact of sport events.

The Mulier Institute is an independent non-profit foundation.

Our goal is to contribute to well-founded policies aimed at promoting sports, physical activity, and strengthening the sports sector. We achieve this in several ways:

We collect data and monitor the Dutch sports sector and policy programs.

We develop knowledge and research methods through exploratory and in-depth studies.

We interpret research findings and translate them into policy practice.

We support policy decisions with expertise and advice.

We provide requested and unsolicited interpretation and reflection in the role of a 'critical friend' of the sports sector.

We work towards promoting sports science.

Table of contents

Lessons learned from (less) successful youth participation practices.

1	Introduction	6
1.1	Background	6
1.2	Methods	6
2	Country analysis	7
2.1	England	7
2.2	Germany	8
2.3	Tunisia	10
2.4	Norway	11
2.5	Sweden	13
2.6	Spain	15
3	Implications	17
	References	19
	Appendix 1 - The Global State of Democracy (2022)	21

Introduction

1.1 Background

Nowadays, the participation of youth in the governance of football (fan) organisations is limited. The Erasmus+ project Future of Football (FOF) aims to increase that participation by developing a toolkit. One of the obstacles that the project partners¹ face, is the lack of a (well-thought-out) strategic approach focused on increasing youth's participation in football (fan) organisations. It is particularly relevant that such an approach builds on insights from former or current practices that both enable(d) and constrain(ed) youth participation in governance positions of sports or football (fan) organisations. Therefore, the Mulier Institute – research partner within the FOF project – identified 'successful' and 'less successful' practices from partner countries.

1.2 Methods

To gain insights thereabout, we conducted a comparative country analysis through an online survey, which was filled in by representatives from all the FOF partners. The target group of the FOF project consists of young people aged 18 to 25. However, youth participation practices on sports and football in the countries of the partners do not only target this group. Therefore, when relevant, we asked respondents to reflect on lessons from practices that were focused on other age groups as well.

In the end, the toolkit developed through the FOF project is always carried out by partners in the specific contexts within their countries. Therefore, we investigated these contexts as well, through desk research. Our focus was on the state of democracy, the economy, other relevant social conditions, youth participation, the organisation of sports and of football in particular, and the governance of football and football fandom.



Reading guide

Hereafter, this document contains two chapters. In the second chapter, we describe the results of the desk research and the survey per country. In the third chapter, we describe implications for how to develop a toolkit for increasing youth participation in the governance of football fan organisations.

¹ Partners are organisations that represent football fans in England, Germany, Tunisia, Norway, Sweden, and Spain.

Country analysis

2.1 England

England can be seen as a stable and high-performing democracy (International IDEA, United Kingdom, n.d. a). It has the sixth largest economy in the world (ibid). Among European economies, England has one of the highest income inequalities (Hoekman et al., 2015). Furthermore, it is relevant to note that England withdrew from the European Union in 2020, based on the so-called 'Brexit.' Among other things, Brexit reflects the upcoming of a new social division in England, where the popularity of populist political parties is increasing (ibid).

In the area of football, England has a so-called football pyramid. The top of the pyramid is the Premier league. Below this is the English Football League, which consists of three divisions. Level five is the National League. In total, there are eleven levels.²

The Football Supporters Association (FSA) represents football supporters in England and Wales. It has three different types of memberships: individual membership for fans, affiliate membership for supporters' groups who meet certain criteria (for example having a democratic structure), and associate membership for entities such as regional/non-democratic supporters' groups. The affiliate members have five votes per group during the annual general meeting, whereas individual and associates have one vote. The board consists of nine to eleven professional employees, with an average age of 40, elected by the National Council. The National Council consists of representatives from community-owned clubs, six individual fans and representatives from associate organisations.

According to Jess Grundy, representative on behalf of England in the FOF project, the main obstacle concerning youth involvement is that some younger supporters may not be aware what a fan group is, their potential impact on the club and local community, and the pathways to involvement. Offering guidance and support to younger fans will help to encourage involvement in groups and confidence to take on a role that an older supporter with more experience may have held before.

In England, so-called FA youth councils, or youth parliaments, have been established, in order to engage young people in governance positions. In the survey we conducted, this practice was identified as successful. More information about these councils/parliaments can be found in our literature scan about barriers and enablers of youth participation (Greeven et al., 2023).

² Our description of the way football is organised in the countries of FOF partners is based on both our own knowledge and our deduction from texts we found with desk research. Therefore, we do not refer to specific sources.

Furthermore, there is a group of young supporters (aged 12/13) of Rangers, Celtic, and Dumbarton, who form an ultra-group which is called the Dumbarton Ultras. The idea to create this group started after they noticed that there was a quiet atmosphere during the matches. The young ultras bring chants and colours to the Dumbarton FC stadium. In general, they have gained a lot of support from the public, who see it as a move which will motivate other young fans to form young ultra-groups. Therefore, forming an ultra-group that is led and seeks out younger people is identified as a successful practice.

In the survey, other reasons for identifying the councils/parliaments and ultra-group as successful are mentioned as well. Guidance and support from mentors helps young people to understand the impact they can have on their football club. Also, if clubs use children's/junior clubs as a foundation, younger people are involved from an early age and may engage more. Finally, having sections specifically for younger people will help to keep them involved, and can help to develop more of an education about fan groups, democratic organisations etc.

An important lesson learned from practices in England, is that young people can grow into relevant roles. They realise that it is worth it to stand up for their opinion in democratic structures and to try to solve problems by dialogue.

Another lesson is that groups and clubs – according to the FSA – could be made more accessible for younger people, not just on a match day. It would be beneficial for clubs and fan groups to be approachable and potentially offer 'open' times when people can come along, ask questions or become involved. Younger people may initially not want to get involved if they feel unsure about what will be required of them to participate or if they do not feel as though they have the specific knowledge, experience or skills to join in.

Finally, amongst the most important lessons learned from less successful practices, are that young people were not engaged in junior groups, the impact of fan groups was underestimated, trust in young people was too low, and young people were not given a platform to express their thoughts and perceptions. Therefore, in the survey it is described as important to ensure that young people are given a platform to make a difference. Because otherwise they may not feel valued and will ultimately be disengaged.

2.2 Germany

Like England, Germany can be characterised as a high-performing democracy (International IDEA, Germany, n.d. b). Germany has the fourth largest economy in the world and the largest in Europe (ibid). The country consists of 16 federal states. To a certain extent, these are self-governing bodies. Federal states in eastern Germany still lag behind the ones in the western part of the country. This leads to political polarisation. In comparison with the west, many people in eastern Germany vote for extreme right-wing or left-wing political parties (European Commission, Germany, n.d. b; International IDEA, Germany, n.d. b).

Furthermore, Germany can be seen as an immigration hub in Europe. In 2021, 27 percent of the population consisted of people with an immigration background. The increase of immigrants raises feelings of nationalism and xenophobia in Germany. Among other groups, relatively old people express these feelings. The population in Germany is ageing (ibid).

In 2019, a joint youth strategy was formed, which aims to involve young people in decisions that concern them (ibid). Participation, equal conditions, and empowerment are at the centre of the strategy. An interministerial working group on youth developed the strategy and guides its implementation. Federal states are also involved, as are young people, through a participative project.

Among other things, the strategy consists of a 'youth check.' This is an assessment tool to analyse the impact of federal legislation on young people aged 12 to 27. The tool was developed to ensure that legislation is in line with the interests and concerns of the younger generation, as well as to raise awareness of the need to consider young people and what is important to them (ibid).

Other relevant insights about Germany are:

- The rate of youth unemployment is relatively low.
- There is no national youth parliament.
- At national and state level, there are multiple youth advisory boards (for example of ministries).
- The German Federal Youth Council represents interests of children and young people in Germany – of which youth associations, regional youth councils and associates affiliated to them, are the members (ibid).

In football, there are more than 2.235 leagues in Germany, on thirteen levels. The top three consist of one national division and the lower ones of more divisions in smaller geographic areas. The football league is administered by the German Football Association, together with regional associations and state associations. The first two tiers, level 1 and 2 of the Bundesliga, are organised by the German Football League. Level 3 is organised by the German Football Association, level 4 by the regional associations, and the rest by state associations. Women's football has ten levels, of which 1 and 2 are national, three is regional and the rest are state levels.

Finally, it is relevant to sketch the football-fan context in Germany. Unsere Kurve is an association in which twenty-three fan organisations from the Bundesliga are united. The aim of the organisation is to preserve positive fan culture and to represent fans. Germany has a 50+1 regulation since 2012, which means that members own or control 50 percent of the shares of the club, plus one share. Therefore, supporters have a significant impact on football clubs and their decision-making processes. The board of Unsere Kurve consists of five volunteers and meets twice a year.

In addition, Koorindationsstelle Fanprojekte (KOS)/Coordination Centre of Fan Projects is a German organisation which supports and coordinates seventy-one socio-pedagogical fan projects, from the Bundesliga down to the fifth division. Moreover, it supports football institutions as advisory body. KOS consists of six professional employees with an average age of 50-55 years.

KOS organises social-educational fan projects, which aim to develop alternative problem-solving approaches together with young football fans. They support young fans in representing their own interests by using democratic processes. By doing so, fans learn that it is worth it to raise their voice and to go to an organisation together with others to form majorities. Therefore, the projects are seen as successful practices.

Another successful practice is one about youth work from Werder Bremen. There is a non-profit organisation called 'Fan Projekt Bremen', which works for and with young fans to conduct socio-educational measures suitable for young people. One of their projects is 'Fit For Life', which focuses on developing emotional, cognitive and social skills through different modules. Moreover, a fan centre called Ostkurve has been created, which functions as meeting place for the fans. Many events, meetings, parties, and educational workshops take place there. This was made possible by volunteer work of the fans. Furthermore, it is shaped by young fans through the campaign 'Sitting is for the ass'. Fan Projekt Bremen values a high degree of self-determination, personal responsibility, and democracy promotion. Therefore, it is identified in the survey by KOS as successful practice as well. In addition, young people are encouraged and supported to take on these roles which are new to them. This allows them to develop their skills.

The most important effect is that young people realise that it is worth it to stand up for their opinion in democratic structures. And that they try to solve problems through dialogue. Successful experiences are needed on the way to involving young people in the structures. It is important for them to see that an outcome is the consequence of the time invested, and that short-term solutions do not bring success.

In Germany, lessons learned from failed practices are that when a dialogue is not conducted on equal terms, or when young people are not taken seriously in a dialogue, chances for their participation in governance decrease. Because they feel that they are not taken seriously or that they cannot make a difference.

2.3 Tunisia

Tunisia can be seen as a mid-range democracy (International IDEA, Tunisia, n.d. f). The country consists of four regions and twenty-four governorates (provinces). On the African continent, Tunisia is one of the wealthiest countries. Since the Arabic Spring revolution in 2011, the wealth of the population has decelerated. The main income sectors within Tunisia are information/communication technologies, tourism, manufacturing, and organic farming (ibid). In 2022, Tunisia approved a new

constitution that strengthens a one-man rule, which has been followed by many protests. Discrimination and social equality issues are prominent in the country (ibid).

In Tunisia, people can vote from 18 years of age (ibid). Young people are very disengaged from all forms of formal political activity (Mansouri, 2020). Young people are perceived as major instigators of the Arab Spring revolution in 2011 (Schafer, 2013). Their slogan was 'Freedom, dignity, and employment' (ibid). After the revolution, they were optimistic about the future, but this turned to frustration and scepticism when the socio-economic/political transformation began to fade. Currently, this lack of faith results in a low vote turnout (not only among youth) (ibid). Youth still face social exclusion on a national scale. Their involvement in civil society organisations is minimal (ibid).

Football is the most popular sport in Tunisia. There are three professional leagues: LP-1, LP-2, and LP-3. The Tunisian Football Federation is the governing body of the leagues. The top division is the Tunisian Professional League 1, which has fourteen participating clubs. Amateur football is managed by the Tunisian Football Federation as well.

SOCIOS CSS participates in FOF and is the supporters network of Club Sportif Sfaxien, which plays in LP-1. It was created in 2008 and now has more than six thousand members. It was the first supporters network on a national and Arab level. The organisation consists of a board and both professional employees and volunteers, with an average age of 38. According to Mezen, member of the board of SOCIOS CSS, direct communication channels is the main obstacle in their youth involvement.

Sandlanders is also involved with football fandom. They are a consulting organisation that works on the development of African football with football clubs, supporters' clubs and associations. Sandlanders has a formal partnership with Football Supporters Europe; initiator of the FOF project.

The SOCIOS CSS activities are seen as a good platform for youth to talk about their ideas. Legislation that prohibits young people for being present at events of their clubs, are mentioned as the most constraining factor. Other successful and less successful practices and lessons learned from them, were not brought to the fore in the survey we conducted.

2.4 Norway

Norway is ranked second in democratic performance among European countries (see Appendix). It exemplifies a strong democracy marked by direct elections and minimal political polarisation (IDEA International, Norway, n.d. c). Norway is seen as one of the most inclusive countries in the world with the least income inequality, but this income inequality has been increasing recently (Secretary of the Nordic Council of Ministers, 2018). The democracy has lately evolved from being dominated by five

major parties to showing more party plurality. In the 2023 elections, the Labour Party, after nearly a century of dominance, suffered its first defeat, with the centre-right party coming out on top.

Around 13 percent of the Norwegian population falls within the ages of 15 to 24 (European Commission, Norway, n.d. b). There is more or less free education for Norwegian youth and the voting age is 18. However, there is a low participation rate among young people and there is no specific youth law nor a judicial definition of youth. The responsibility for youth participation lies with the Ministry of Children and Families, and implementation primarily happens at the municipal level. Since 2019, every municipality and county must establish a local youth council to advise local decision-makers. Central to Norwegian youth policy is the emphasis on equality and social inclusion. The Norwegian Children and Youth Council (LNU) serves as an independent umbrella youth organisation, representing one hundred youth organisations across the country.

Within Norway, voluntary organisations play a crucial role, and they receive support through state grant schemes, addressing various societal issues such as integration, diversity, inequality, discrimination, climate, environment, health care, poverty, children, and youth. Through the years, volunteer numbers in sports in Norway have been stable (Hoekman et al., 2015; Eimhjellen et al., 2018), as Norwegian civil society adapts to the more individualised motives of volunteers. The biggest area within this sector consists of voluntary sport organisations (Sivesind, 2012). A growing concern rises about increasing numbers of young people without work or with low incomes, prompting the government to strengthen efforts aimed at supporting children and young people in families facing persistent low income (European Commission, Norway, n.d. b).

In Norway, sports are primarily governed by the Norwegian Olympic and Paralympic Committee and Confederation of Sports (NIF) (Hoekman et al., 2015). Football has been the largest sport for more than one hundred years (Goksoyr & Olstad 2002). The national football league system is administered by the Norwegian Football Federation (NFF), and has five tiers: Eliteserien, first division, second division, third division, and fourth to tenth division. The fourth to tenth division are regional divisions and administered by various regional football associations.

Norsk Supporterallianse (NSA) is an independent interest organisation for supporters' clubs in Norway. The NSA consists of multiple supporters' clubs based in Norway. To be admitted, the supporters' club must have a democratically elected board, collect membership fees, and have annual meetings. The highest authority of the NSA is the annual meeting in which supporters' clubs have votes. The more members a club has, the more votes. The NSA has a board of five to seven volunteer members, with an average age of 30 to 40. They are elected for a period of 2 years in the annual meeting (AGM).

A positive aspect of the situation in Norway, is that youth can vote in the AGM from an age of 15. According to Annet Wingsternes, the deputy chairperson of the NSA, the main obstacles regard the recruitment of youth within the organisation.

2.5 Sweden

Sweden functions as a high-performing democracy with a constitutional monarchy. Its people are represented by the Swedish parliament, and the country is divided into twenty-one regions and 290 municipalities. Sweden's economy is a mix of competition and welfare. While it used to be known for its tolerance and multiculturalism, there has been a rise in far-right views lately, leading to higher crime rates and more inequality among social groups. Another challenge Sweden faces is its ageing population, which brings up questions about the future (International IDEA, Sweden, n.d. e).

In Sweden, 12 percent of the population falls between the ages of 15 and 24. Since 2021, the national youth policy objective includes: 'All young people should have access to good living conditions, power to shape their own lives and influence over the development of the society.' The government, along with the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, oversees youth policy implementation, while municipalities decide how to put it into action. There is a Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society, tasked with training local actors on young people's needs (European Commission, Sweden, n.d. d).

Although there is no national youth law, various Acts like the Education Act govern youth matters. Education is free and publicly funded, leading to high participation rates in upper secondary education, though dropouts still occur. Volunteer work, notably in sports associations, is common, with agencies like Volontärbyrån matching opportunities and offering skill development. However, recruiting volunteers is becoming more challenging for sports organisations (Hoekman et al., 2015). The government prioritises reducing youth unemployment and provides free vocational guidance. The voting turnout among young people has risen to 82 percent in 2022, and student councils and non-profit youth organisations receive significant government funding (European Commission, Sweden, n.d. d).

For many Swedish people, sports are a fundamental part of their lives – as members, but also as volunteers – and a lot of sports clubs exist. Football is by far the most popular sport. Sports are organised and governed by the Swedish Sports Confederation at national level, consisting of seventy-one sports federations. At county level, regional sports federations operate. Local sports clubs also play a significant role, especially for community sports activities, and are often run by volunteers. Within football, interconnected leagues (288 teams in twenty-two leagues) are controlled by the Swedish Football Association and divided into five levels. Levels 6-10 are controlled by regional associations. The first league consists of sixteen clubs.

Swedish Football Supporters Union (SFSU) is a nationwide organisation for football supporters and aims to represent them in matters concerning Swedish football and Swedish supporter culture. Sweden has a 50+1 regulation since 2012, which means that members own or control 50 percent of the shares of the club, plus one share. Therefore, supporters are of significant impact in football clubs and their decision-making processes. SFSU contains only fan-groups' members, from 'official' supporter groups, but also from ultra-groups. There are members from the top two divisions in Sweden and more or less every team has at least one supporter group as a member.

The board of SFSU consists of eight volunteers and the average age is around thirty-seven. The main obstacles concerning youth involvement, according to Isak Eden, chairperson of SFSU, is to reach out to them through the channels they use, and to get them interested in topics outside of the stands, like democracy and involvement in support groups.

In Sweden, supporters' groups organise 'youth stands'. Those are stands in the stadium specifically assigned to young supporters. This causes really young supporters to be engaged in the supporters culture and fan organisations. One example is the youth stand of AIK Stockholm. The target group of this stand is 12-17 years old. It began with seventy season tickets and in 2023 increased to 250 season tickets. There are Supporters Liaison Officers – who act as bridge between football clubs and supporters - who welcome the youth when they arrive, escort them, and support them with tifos. Moreover, they educate other sections on the importance of the youth section. The youth section has seen an increase in girls. Besides the youth stand, they also have organised occasions for youth to meet the players, and guided tours.

Another example is the 'Apberget', the so-called Monkey Mountain, of Djurgården. This is a youth section next to the family stand, but only kids (7-14 years old) are allowed. A season ticket for the Apberget includes tickets to all home games, one away game, merchandise, a meet and greet with players, and a stadium tour. The supporters' club has also been working on the visibility of the youth, for example by a piece in the local newspaper and by allowing youth to speak up in an interview and on the club tv.

Besides youth stands, several supporters' clubs arrange lower prices for young supporters for bus travels and matches. Moreover, there are specific activities concerning fandom organised for young supporters, such as flag painting days. One example of the football club IF Elfsborg is the annual Youth Day, which in 2023 took place in connection with a match. There were two stands filled with activities for young fans (European Football for Development Network, 2023).

According to SFSU, this engagement provides a purpose for youth and a sense of belonging outside matchdays unrelated to results on the pitch, which again results in feeling more responsible for the organisation. A challenge is that the democratic

systems that exist in Swedish football clubs and fan organisations have systems that can be deemed old and rigid. For a newcomer it can be hard to understand how these systems work and how they can engage within them.

2.6 Spain

In 1978, Spain transitioned from a military dictatorship to a democracy. Now the country stands as a mid-performing democracy. While the Global State of Democracy Indices show high scores in representation, rights and rule of law, participation factors score lower. Moreover, multiple challenges persist, such as terrorism, corruption scandals, economic crises, and secessionism; one of them being the region of Catalonia. Spain operates as a decentralised country with seventeen autonomous regions and two autonomous cities, each with its own government, administration, parliaments, and policy frameworks.

Currently, the political landscape is getting more fragmented on multiple levels: national versus regional identities, conservative versus progressive ideologies, and disparities between urban coastal regions and central rural regions. Extremist ideologies and polarisation pose threats to democracy. Nevertheless, Spain remains one of the biggest economies in Europe and is a leader in gender equality legislation (IDEA International, Spain, n.d. d).

10 percent of the Spanish population is aged between 15 and 24. While there is no national youth law in Spain, various autonomous regions have implemented their own laws. Besides, guided by The Youth Strategy 2030, Spain has three action plans spanning from 2022-2030, with a focus on themes like youth engagement in global transformations, participation, and volunteering. The Spanish Youth Council (CJE) serves as the voice of the youth, advising policy makers on matters affecting young people. Additionally, the Youth Institute acts as a national agency, including seventy-six youth entities like regional youth councils and national youth organisations. Their mission involves promoting youth-friendly policies and public initiatives, along with specific programs and resources for youth volunteers nationwide. Spain actively involves young people and youth organisations in policy consultations through initiatives like 'Structured Dialogue'. Despite Spain's relatively low score on participation, the participation rate among individuals under 30 reached 70 percent in 2019, highlighting a strong commitment to civic engagement among the country's youth (European Commission, Spain, n.d. c).

The governance of sports in Spain involves collaboration between national and regional authorities as well as sports federations. At the end of the Spanish Civil War, the structure of sports in Spain changed a lot. It no longer fell under control of the state. From then on, sport clubs were governed on the basis of democratic participation (Hoekman et al., 2015). However, with the transition to a democracy, sports also democratised, and a new framework was created in which professional sports were separated from non-professional sports. Moreover, every autonomous

community adopted its own laws. Therefore, there are differences throughout the country in the Spanish sports model (Hoekman, et al., 2015).

In football, several professional, semi-professional and non-professional leagues are bound together. The top two tiers, La Liga/Primera Division and Segunda Division, are administered by the Liga Nacional de Fútbol Profesional. The lower tiers are run by regional federations. The women's league consists of five levels, of which the first three are administered by the RFEF and the lower two by regional federations.

Accionistas y Socios del Fútbol Español (FASFE) is a democratic independent organisation financed by membership fees. FASFE consists of fan associations, members, democratic clubs, individual fans, and minority shareholders of football clubs. They offer support to supporters' groups and work to support the concepts of democratic fan ownership and representation in the decision-making bodies of their clubs. The board consists of nine volunteers with an average age of 35-40. This is not uncommon, as in 2015, most sports club boards in Catalonia and Galicia consisted of (upper) middle-class men with an age of 36-65 (Hoekman et al., 2015).

As far as FASFE is concerned, little has been done to increase youth participation, and the results have been poor. One example of involvement, not particularly youth-related, is that of the football club Unionistas de Salamanca CF. This club has a specific social area, which is a specific department of the football club, formed by volunteers, that organises projects and activities with a social or cultural character. Moreover, they try to include minority groups such as immigrants and people with disabilities in football. One thing they do, for example, is collecting food and materials. The main obstacles according to Emilio Abejón, chairperson of FASFE, is that although young people may understand and share the goals, they may perceive the work as too complicated or need more knowledge to execute it.

Implications

The insights from this comparative country analysis can be used within a toolkit to raise youth participation in the governance of football fan organisations. Developing such a toolkit is the overarching goal of the FOF project. In the table below, we describe the implications of our research and how FOF partners can activate them.

Table 3.1
Implications for designing a toolkit

Implications	Activate implications
The toolkit needs to be developed on the basis of what young people need in specific countries and how their needs can be met.	<p>Personal communication is an important (maybe the most essential) key to increase youth participation in football fan organisations. Therefore, FOF partners must focus on (periodical) conversations with young people who are and/or might want to be in governance positions.</p> <p>The conversations should be focused on their needs. For FOF partners, it is wise to design a guideline for the conversations. The design of the focus groups that took place in the context of FOF can serve as an example.</p>
It is important to note that young people are not one group. Among young people, there are differences. For example concerning their gender, sexuality, and ethnic backgrounds.	<p>For FOF partners, it is firstly important to distinguish between relevant differences among youth. Secondly, they should think about if there are reasons to question the needs of specific groups differently. Thirdly, these differences should possibly be incorporated in the conversation design to which we referred above.</p>
From the different contexts in partner countries and youth participation therein, the toolkit also has to offer a design for layered youth involvement in football fan organisations.	<p>FOF partners should think about the diversity of needs that young people could have. Maybe some young people only want to attend a match, while others aim to fulfil governance positions. The toolkit has to account for this diversity of needs. Also, the conversation design has to be focused on the possible ways of layered involvement.</p>
The layered design of the toolkit can also account for various stages of youth participation in football fan organisations.	<p>For example, the first stage can be educating youth on fan engagement; the second step about low-threshold involvement in football fan organisations; the third step about exploring further options for getting involved in governance, possibly based on mentorship; etcetera.</p> <p>It is important that the possible stages are aligned with the needs of young people. Therefore, these must be addressed in the conversations with youth as well.</p>

The most important finding of this comparative country analysis is that because of the different contexts within partner countries, the general toolkit, which is the 'end-product' of the FOF project, is not directly useful in practice in all countries. **The toolkit needs to be adapted to specific contexts.**

It is up to every FOF partner to align the toolkit with the specific contexts in their countries. This can be discussed with young people in the conversations we mentioned.

Additionally, it is important that partner countries implement the toolkit within their contexts, draw lessons from that implementation, and adjust the toolkit based on those lessons.

To draw lessons, a set of standard questions can be answered periodically. For example:

- How do we experience the use of the toolkit?
- What goes well and what can be improved?
- Why are things going well or why can they be improved?
- What is the feasibility of possible improvements and how can we activate them?

After a while, common denominators between the lessons from the partner countries can possibly be identified and translated to adjust the general toolkit.

References

Greeven, A., De Kwaasteniet, R., Nouwens, S., & Steenbergen, J. (2023). *Increasing Youth Participation in the Governance of Football Fan Organisations. Future of Football - Literature Scan into Barriers, Enablers, Relevant Practices, and Instruments*. Mulier Instituut.

Eimhjellen, I., Steen-Johnsen, K., Folkestad, B., & Ødegård, G. (2018). Changing patterns of volunteering and participation. *Nonprofit and civil society studies*, 25-65). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-77264-6_2

European Commission. (n.d.-a). Germany. <https://national-policies.eacea.ec.europa.eu/youthwiki/chapters/germany/overview>

European Commission. (n.d.-b). Norway. <https://national-policies.eacea.ec.europa.eu/youthwiki/chapters/norway/overview>

European Commission. (n.d.-c). Spain. <https://national-policies.eacea.ec.europa.eu/youthwiki/chapters/spain/overview>

European Commission. (n.d.-d). Sweden. <https://national-policies.eacea.ec.europa.eu/youthwiki/chapters/sweden/overview>

Hoekman, R., Van der Werff, H., Nagel, S., & Breuer, C. (2015). *A Cross-National Comparative Perspective on sport clubs in Europe*. Springer International Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-17635-2>

International IDEA, Global Stage of Democracy Initiative. (n.d.-a). United Kingdom. <https://www.idea.int/democracytracker/country/united-kingdom>

International IDEA, Global Stage of Democracy Initiative. (n.d.-b). Germany. <https://www.idea.int/democracytracker/country/germany>

International IDEA, Global Stage of Democracy Initiative. (n.d.-c). Norway. <https://www.idea.int/democracytracker/country/norway>

International IDEA, Global Stage of Democracy Initiative. (n.d.-d). Spain. <https://www.idea.int/democracytracker/country/spain>

International IDEA, Global Stage of Democracy Initiative. (n.d.-e). Sweden. <https://www.idea.int/democracytracker/country/sweden>

International IDEA, Global Stage of Democracy Initiative. (n.d.-f). Tunisia. <https://www.idea.int/democracytracker/country/tunisia>

Mansouri, F. (2020). Youth and political engagement in post-revolution Tunisia. In *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 49(1), 104-120.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13530194.2020.1765142>

Schafer, I. (2016). *Political Revolt and Youth Unemployment in Tunisia*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Secretary of the Nordic Council of Ministers. (2018). Increasing Income Inequality in the Nordics: Nordic Economic Policy Review 2018. <https://norden.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1198429/FULLTEXT01.pdf>


European Football for Development Network (2023, September 21). Well-attended Youth Day 2023 IF Elfsborg - European Football for Development Network.
<https://www.efdn.org/blog/news/well-attended-youth-day-2023-if-elfsborg/>

Appendix 1 – The Global State of Democracy (2022)

The Global State of Democracy (2022)

(Global category rankings of European countries)

Flag	Country	Rule of Law	Rights	Representation	Participation
	Denmark	1	1	2	1
	Norway	2	5	7	5
	Germany	3	2	6	10
	Finland	6	7	8	2
	Sweden	5	8	1	13
	Switzerland	4	3	21	6
	Belgium	13	4	15	11
	Ireland	11	12	25	3
	Luxembourg	8	6	28	14
	Netherlands	19	17	5	26
	Estonia	9	18	3	41
	Italy	35	14	14	9
	Iceland	21	11	37	7
	France	20	27	11	24
	Spain	22	15	10	44
	United Kingdom	17	34	19	25
	Czechia	23	10	20	48

A large, thick, orange abstract graphic that starts at the top left, loops around, and then curves downwards towards the bottom right, resembling a stylized '3' or a calligraphic flourish.

Rutger de Kwaasteniet
r.dekwaasteniet@mulierinstituut.nl

Anouk Greeven
a.greeven@mulierinstituut.nl

Johan Steenbergen
j.steenbergen@mulierinstituut.nl