



# EURO Scout.Doc

## YOUTH EMPOWERMENT

### Preparing young people for life

#### Background

##### Youth Empowerment - background

In the contemporary world, youth empowerment is an oft-used expression, which has many different definitions depending on the context in which it is being used. It is often referred to as a mere intergenerational process and its' true meaning is missed.

In Scouting, where the youth members are not only the movement's "raison d'être" but also its' main and most powerful resource, the concept of youth empowerment needs to be understood and embraced, in order to maximise its' potential.

Within Scouting, youth empowerment is a very broad and deep concept; it is present in almost everything scouts say and do, appearing in many different ways, as well as in the movement's educational methods.

Youth Empowerment is an integral part of, the purpose of, the educational approach of, and the aim of scouting, and because of this it makes it one of the most important concepts we have in scouting.

##### Definitions

There are many definitions for the term "empowerment", an Anglo-Saxon term roughly translatable into other languages: German – "ermächtigung"; Spanish – "the empowerment"; Portuguese – "empoderamento"; and Italian – "potenziamento". In Italian, of course the literal translation is "potenziamento", but in its use in politics, there is no literal translation. In Arabic, "empowerment" literally means "support skills", but, as in Italian, the English word is generally used. French presents with the greatest uncertainty. Dictionary definitions range from "authorization", "accountability", "empowerment".

*The following table shows some variation of uses in many areas where "empowerment" has been or is particularly used.*

Areas	Meanings
Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▫ Readability in production process</li> <li>▫ Leeway</li> <li>▫ Legitimacy to take action</li> <li>▫ Capacity for collective action, solidarity and/or individual approach</li> </ul>
Social Policies (health, gender, social work, local development) and Youth Policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▫ Ability to act, appropriation of power, self-actor</li> </ul>
NGOs, International Organizations and Agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▫ Autonomy, participation, local development</li> </ul>
European Documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▫ Mobilization</li> </ul>
UNICEF Turkey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▫ Protecting youth against the risks created by urbanization, rapid social change and ensure that young people acquire skills.</li> </ul>



Through all these changes, the lexical field of "empowerment" may appear broad or nonspecific. With regards to youth policy, it covers almost all areas. This is evident in the proposals made by UNICEF Turkey who define Youth Empowerment as a strategy for youth to acquire skills. The word "empowerment": "setting a youth empowerment strategy and mechanism" ("develop strategy and mechanism for youth empowerment ") is confused with "youth empowerment" and "National Youth Strategy" ("National Youth Strategy"). The document in its content declares the need to protect young people against the risks caused by urbanization, rapid social change and to guarantee them the necessary skills. We retain the term "empowerment" which oscillates between two meanings.

One idea of youth empowerment is the acquisition of specific life skills that allow the youth member to take control of their lives, and have a positive impact on those who they meet during their lives.

*"Youth empowerment is an attitudinal, structural and cultural process whereby young people gain the ability, authority, and agency to make decisions and implement change in their own lives and the lives of other people, including youth and adults."*

Vavrus, J. & Fletcher, A. (2006)

Another idea is that youth empowerment is simultaneously an individual and collective aspiration, where a common good or outcome is strived for.

*(Empowerment is) "a social action process that promotes participation of people, organizations and communities in gaining control over their lives in their community and larger society."*

Wallerstein and Bernstein (1988)

## Youth Empowerment and Scouting

### YE and the Mission of Scouting

"[...] of the People, by the People, for the People" - this was the way the American President, Abraham Lincoln, in its famous Gettysburg Address (1863), defined the democratic form of government the American Founding Fathers fight for.

Using an analogous approach, could we say that Scouting is a movement of the Young People, by the Young People, for the Young People?

When reading the materials produced by Baden Powell and studying how Scouting began and subsequently developed, it can be said that this was the original idea of scouting. By reading the current version of the Mission of Scouting it can be verified that this approach is not only still present but it also constitutes one of the structural aspects of Scouting.

*The mission of Scouting is to contribute to the education of young people, through a value system based on the Scout Promise and Law, to help build a better world where people are self-fulfilled as individuals and play a constructive role in society.*

Scouting aims to contribute to the education of young people, but young people are not only the beneficiaries of the educational process, they are also its principal agent; this is what is stated in the second part of the Mission statement.

Scouting aims to educate young people in a non-formal manner, this educational process is an active one where the young people contribute to their own development and ultimately decide their own fate.

*This is achieved via*

- *involving the young people during their formative years in a non-formal educational process*
- *using the scout method that makes each individual the principal agent in his or her development as a self-reliant, supportive, responsible and committed person*
- *assisting young people to establish a value system based upon spiritual, social and personal principles as expressed in the Promise and Law.*

The Mission of Scouting is **TO EMPOWER YOUNG PEOPLE FOR LIFE...**

## Three perspectives/levels of YE in Scouting

It has been shown that there are several different definitions and approaches to youth empowerment, but which one is best suited to Scouting? And which one should Scouting adopt?

There is no need for scouting to adopt one external definition, as its' history, dimensions and pedagogical consistency allow it to have its' own vision of youth empowerment, according to its' mission and specificities.

As we have seen, in Scouting youth empowerment is not just one idea but it is its' very purpose, approach and result.

Three different perspectives of youth empowerment can be devised, at three different levels.

### 1. Youth Programme

The most important perspective is the one directly related to Scouting's mission. Scouting aims to contribute to young people's personal development and believes that youth involvement, beginning at an early age, is the most appropriate way to promote young people's personal development.

Youth involvement means that the young people are not only the beneficiaries of the educational process, but also the ones who take charge of their own development. The level of youth involvement increases as the youth members grow older, and simultaneously the adult involvement decreases. This results in greater autonomy and responsibility for the young people as they get older.

The level of youth involvement increases and also becomes more important as time passes. During this time it transforms from youth participation into youth leadership. During this time the young people's input into decision-making should also increase. This is what Scouting youth programme does...

### 2. Adult Resources

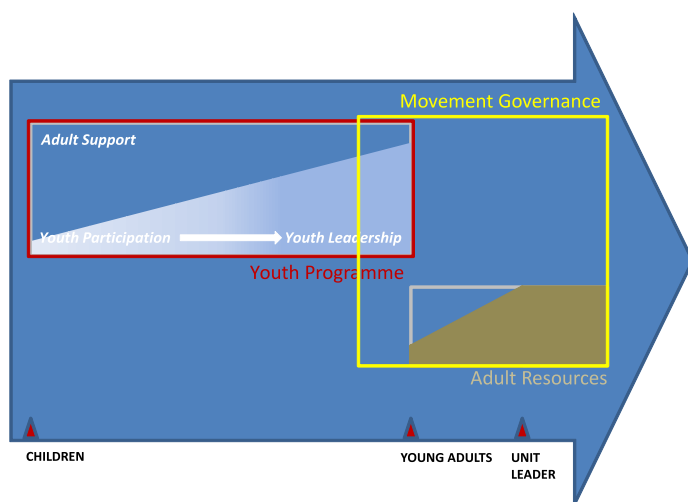
Part of the Scouting Method is adults and young people working together. These adults or leaders also need some empowerment, not empowerment for life, but – in this case – empowerment for their specific mission in Scouting, what takes some years until they become experienced and autonomous leaders, as they have some training and gain the main competences of an Adult in Scouting.

The empowerment of young leaders can take place via training courses, mentoring and coaching processes, and intergenerational dialogue with older or more experienced leaders. All of these methods allow the smooth transfer of knowledge, it is part of the adult resources policy and it is vital for continuity in the scouting movement.

### 3. Governance and Representation

In scouting, both adult members and older young people should participate in the governance of the movement.

In order to empower young people to play an active part in the governance of the movement they need to be enabled with the right skills and allowed to use these also.



To all these three processes, we call YOUTH EMPOWERMENT,

**Youth empowerment** = to promote & give tools to empower young people for life, through youth involvement (both youth participation & leadership), to prepare & give tools to adults in scouting in order to fulfil their mission, to involve (giving room & enabling) both adults & young adults in the movement governance.

Youth Empowerment is simultaneously the purpose, the educational approach, and the aim of Scouting, because of this it makes it one of the most important concepts we have in scouting. The concept needs to be fostered and encouraged in all NSOs in order to thrive and grow.

*Youth Involvement (definition)*

**Youth involvement is a process aimed at enabling young people to play an active role in the decisions that affect them, in the communities and societies in which they live.**



*Youth Participation (definition)*

**Youth participation is the process aimed at giving young people an opportunity to have a word to say, since early ages, within their scout unit, referring to their activities and personal development.**

*Youth Leadership (definition)*

**Youth leadership is the process aimed to promote and let young people to take the initiative and to manage decision-making amongst peers (but not only), being the main protagonists in leading their scout unit, as well as their personal development.**



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