



Youth Participation – Fédération Catholique des Scouts BP

The Results

On the educational front, the young people and their aspirations and dreams are central to the system. Each young person, with his or her peers and with the help of the leaders, is invited to decide on an important part of the activities of the unit, as well as to determine their own programme of personal advancement. The election of Patrol Leaders and Sixers is also encouraged.



The objective is to involve more young people in decision-making

On the institutional front, a dual process has been activated:

- At the level of the local group, the decision-making process has been democratised and the young people exercise considerable influence in that process. The group council is made up exclusively of young leaders in charge of the different units, the chaplain and the group leader. The group leader is elected by a two-thirds majority of the young leaders. The unit leaders themselves are also elected by their peers according to the same procedures. The group council, 80-90% of which is made up of young

people under 25 years of age, is the supreme decision-making body at local level.

- At national level, Belgian law dictates that at least two thirds of the members of the leading authorities of youth movements must be under 35 years of age. This has been the case in our association since the 1980s. Since quite recently, the National Chairman (who is both Chairman and Chief Commissioner of the association) has been elected by the representatives of the 480 local groups on the basis of the presentation of a detailed programme establishing the policy of the association for the next three years. Each group council elects its delegate for the election of the chairman. The group leaders cannot be elected as delegates.

The Reasons

In educational terms, we felt that the project approach was indispensable, on the one hand to ensure that the young people's aspirations were taken into account in the implementation of the programme, and, on the other hand, to stress education in assuming responsibility and practising democracy through the life of the units.

In institutional terms, the elective processes are organised in such a way as to ensure that the young leaders in charge of the units and of the educational process really



Strategic Priority 1

Youth Involvement – revitalising the Scout Method



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do have a say in the matter at all levels of the association. In the same spirit, we have reduced the number of intermediate levels by insisting that the association should operate as a federation of local groups. The two essential levels are the local level and the national level. The national level is under the direct control of the local groups.



The project approach places the young person at the centre of the educational process

The Methods

On the educational front, starting at the end of the 1970s, educational reflection in the different sections resulted in the testing of and then the promotion and generalisation of a project approach. Resistance was quite strong to start with, despite the clear success of the pilot units.

On the institutional front, it was above all a question of applying Belgian law in a creative way, by giving responsibility to all young leaders, instead of just being content with having young members on the National Board, and without having to change the behaviour and processes at the other levels of the association.

This wider representation of young people went hand in hand with strengthening the democratic processes at all levels. The reservations of certain local leaders slowed down the process, which finally took more than ten years to come into general use. Today, it is for the record that, we check that the criteria are being respected. Naturally, the people who emerge and are chosen for leadership roles correspond to the “young” profile.

What we have learned

On the educational front, the unit leaders have to view their role differently, relinquish certain aspects of their “power” and adopt an attitude of leaders of people younger than themselves. The young people themselves, who were used to being led by leaders, resisted the change in some cases. Success happened gradually. Thanks to training and publications, the mindset changed and the project approach became current practice.

On the institutional front, the dynamics of younger leaders is only a real success when it starts at local level. Quality regional leaders and, above all, leaders with legitimacy and personal credibility – something which is essential in a voluntary movement – cannot usually be “pulled out of a hat by magic”. It is important for them to have some (relatively brief) experience at all levels. People who are “thrust into a role”, whatever their qualities and personal skills, always lack institutional feeling if they have not had the chance to be involved with the work of the local or regional leader.



Young people plan and decide on their own activities

happens by means of concrete tools, means and techniques which allow young leaders to be at ease with the philosophy of participative leadership.



In Belgium, 2/3 of the leadership of youth associations must be under 35 years of age

At national level: the challenge today is to get our leaders involved in the educational and policy-related deliberations. Today, our objective is to also get our young leaders involved in defining the strategy of the association. In this respect, a major conference next year will allow all our leaders to face questions from representatives from different walks of society (politicians, academics, men and women in the field). Then we will have to see how to respond, all together, to these challenges issued by society.

For further information, contact Jean-Pierre Darimont: jeanpierre.darimont@ping.be



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Organisation Mondiale du Mouvement Scout



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World Scout Bureau
P.O. Box 241
1211 Geneva 4, Switzerland

www.scout.org
worldbureau@world.scout.org