WLVT

We Lead Volleyball Together

Key Findings and Recommendations



Co-funded by the European Union

Presented by The Hague University of Applied Sciences

About WLVT Project

Connecting Young Leaders Together

Despite volleyball's popularity among girls in Europe, a noticeable gap exists in leadership roles, with women less represented as trainers, coaches, board members and referees. To address these goals, we started the We Lead Volleyball Together (WLVT) project, which is made possible with the support of the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union.

The project sets four objectives to tackle, each designed to make meaningful changes in the world of volleyball, filling the gaps described above. These goals are:

- To stimulate female leadership and increase the autonomy and leadership skills of youth between the age of 16-20 years (especially girls);
- To implement, test and adjust the volleyball young leaders' program in four EU countries and at the same time organize volleyball activities that match the needs of teenagers;
- To create more awareness and interest within volleyball clubs and federations about the relevance of gender-balanced youth participation in decision-making;
- To stimulate and create more knowledge transfer about youth involvement and giving youth responsibilities in volleyball.

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Evaluation Methodology

Overview of quantitative and qualitative research approaches

Survey

- 132 participants: pre-programme survey
- 88 participants: post-programme survey (33% attrition)
- Two full data-collection rounds across the project
- Instrument: adapted Youth Leadership Development Scale
- Six domains: Inclusive Leadership, Teamwork, Talents, Skills, Barriers, Practice

Interview

- 12 in-depth semi-structured interviews
- Participants: club board members and senior volunteer leaders
- All four partner countries represented
- Thematic analysis using inductive coding
- Focus: pathways into leadership, mentoring practices, structural barriers

Participant Demographics

Total Participants

132 participants throughout two years

Age Distribution

Mean age 19.4 years.

Gender Breakdown

74% female.

Engagement Levels

33% attrition rate.

The Core Finding: Structure Matters

01

Youth leadership relies on governance, not just individual skills.

02

Structural barriers limit young people’s influence in decision-making.

03

Sustainable change requires engagement from adults and clubs alike.

The Informal Pathway to Youth Leadership



Informal observation

A motivated young person stands out during club activities. Adults notice - informally, without a formal process.

01

Personal invitation

A trusted adult personally invites the young person into a small, defined responsibility.



02



03

Graduated responsibility

Tasks grow incrementally. Early involvement is low-stakes; confidence and scope increase together.

4

Sustained mentoring

Adults remain available without taking over. The young person leads; the adult provides guidance.

Areas of meaningful impact and identified limitations

Contributions

- Acted as a catalyst for relational and cultural change at club level
- Created a shared language around youth leadership across four national contexts
- Cross-national exchange was among the most valued elements for club leaders
- Young people developed transferable competencies: communication, planning, financial awareness, and resilience

Limitations

- Programme materials were assessed as too long and complex for small volunteer-run organisations
- Individual skill-building activities dominated the design; structural dimensions were less explicitly addressed
- 33% survey attrition limits the strength of pre-to-post comparisons
- No control group: observed changes cannot be causally attributed to the programme

Recommendations for Federations

1. Compress and adapt programme materials to the realistic capacity of volunteer-run clubs. Target ten well-designed core activities rather than a comprehensive manual.
2. Make structural empowerment an explicit programme goal alongside individual development. Design activities that involve adults and club governance, not only young participants.
3. Support clubs in developing systematic — not only informal — practices for identifying and inviting young people into leadership roles.
4. Invest in volunteer coordinator roles at club level, even on a part-time or shared basis. Coordination capacity is a precondition for sustained youth leadership pathways.
5. Build structured cross-club and cross-national peer learning into programme design. Exchange was consistently identified as high-value by participants.
6. Include young people's direct voice in future evaluations — as evaluators, not only as subjects. Their perspective on barriers and enablers is underrepresented in the current evidence base.