EPAS is nearly 20 years old, and it has come a long way in those 20 years. Today, youth voices are shaping the work on an international level. That is an achievement to be proud of. As work continues, we look forward to seeing not only continued Engagement of young people but also greater embedment of youth and children in decision-making.

We strongly welcome the inclusion of young people and children in these recommendations. As we move forward with the creation of recommendations, we hope to see the inclusion of children, Disabled sports people, d/Deaf sports people, Global majority people, and other groups in the Engagement for this process.

We look forward to collaboration between governments to implement and build on this resolution; it is an exciting opportunity for governments across Europe to welcome this resolution and continue engaging young people in the recommendations process as we move forward.

I was also glad to see the inclusion of Ukrainian sports people in this resolution, supporting their continued presence in the international sporting world, and I hope to see this built on in future recommendations. Sport is a world of community, and closing participation gaps sets up future generations for success and advancements otherwise not possible. It is incredibly important we continue to see the implementation and funding of support of sports persons from Ukraine and Palestine as well as refugee athletes. With the high rates of disability, namely amputees and spinal cord injuries seen in conflict zones, the impact of sports after injury and the role of activity in rehab can not be understated, especially in the process of regaining independence in daily life and mental health benefits.

We highlight the importance of evidence-based decision-making in implementing this resolution and welcome its inclusion; research conducted and guided by lived experience from the beginning will inevitably lead to recommendations and implementation that truly reflect the needs of sports persons across experiences. The skills and knowledge of young people cannot be overstated; I feel deeply privileged to be able to contribute to this today, bringing insights from Strasbourg.

As we develop practical tools and good practice to reduce sedentary behaviour, it is important that this work does so across experiences, especially given the financial, social, and environmental barriers young people increasingly face due to the impacts of climate change. Additionally, inclusion must be meaningful and youth-led; funding for accessible venues, training and equipment must be available for all communities, from rural communities to disabled sports persons.

The normalcy of overtraining and harmful practices appears across sports; the harm this causes to athletes, coaches, volunteers, and referees cannot be overstated. A resolution that reflects this is a movement going in the right direction. A direction that leads to healthier and safer sporting environments for everyone.

As we work on these key areas we also need to be working to ensure the places we discuss these issues are also accessible. I have heard a lot over the past two days on the importance of inclusion

and accessibility while simultaneously facing significant access barriers, including my ability to access those very discussions. It is incredibly important we not only recognise but actively implement changes to how we integrate young people in decision making. Accessibility must not stop with a ramp. It must include early planning, financial support, captioning, Deaf accessible translation and so much more. Otherwise we will continue to see disabled people missing from decision-making discussions.

I dream of a day where disabled, LGBT+ including trans, global majority young people and especially children can engage in sports like their peers, within their schooling environments. Where adaptations are the norm, rurality ceases to be a barrier, sensory needs are met, mental health is cared for like physical health, and sports wheelchairs and appropriate coach training are available across schools, physical education departments, and clubs. I feel that with this resolution, we are one step, closer to that dream of an equitable tomorrow.

If you leave here with one thing from this speech, I ask you to take away that this is just the beginning. This is only the beginning of an opportunity for flourishing youth engagement across borders, ages, and abilities. Within this room is a truly magnificent wealth of lived experience, professional expertise, and resources that, with continued collaboration, will build a safer and healthier sporting world for our Athletes, coaches, referees, and even a fun kickabout. I can’t wait to see where we are in one year, two years, ten years’ time.

Thank you

Zander Newman