



WLVT
We Lead Volleyball Together

Sustainability plan

Norwegian Volleyball Federation
Icelandic Volleyball Federation
Dutch Volleyball Federation
Volleyball Denmark
The Hague University of Applied Sciences



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Introduction

This Sustainability Plan has been developed as part of the We Lead Volleyball Together (WLVT). The purpose of the plan is to support the long-term implementation and development of youth leadership within volleyball federations and clubs across the participating countries.

Throughout the project, young people have been empowered through leadership training, practical experiences, and active involvement in club and federation activities. To secure the lasting impact of these efforts, the participating federations are working to integrate youth leadership into their educational structures, club development strategies, and long-term organisational policies. The sustainability work focuses on both national federations and local volleyball clubs. This booklet will also include a sustainability plan from the The Hague University of Applied Sciences, in order to provide a perspective on sustainability from a data and research point of view as well.

In addition to the individual sustainability plans, this document also presents a joint overview of the shared outcomes, long-term impacts, and expected scaling potential of the WLVT project. By identifying common priorities and approaches across the participating countries, the document highlights how the project has contributed to strengthening youth leadership structures within volleyball and created a foundation for continued development beyond the project period.

Particular attention is given to the integration of youth leadership into federation education systems and club development initiatives. Together, these efforts demonstrate the potential for WLVT principles to reach a significantly wider audience than the original pilot clubs and create lasting value for the European volleyball community.

Shared Outcomes and Lasting Impact

The WLVT project has established a strong and sustainable foundation for youth leadership development across the participating federations. While each federation will continue the work in ways that reflect its national context, several common sustainability priorities and long-term impacts can be identified.

Key Outcomes for the Federations

Across all partner federations, youth leadership is no longer viewed as a stand-alone project activity, but rather as an integrated part of future organisational development.

The most significant shared outcomes include:

- Integration of youth leadership principles into federation education and training programmes.
- Creation of clearer leadership pathways for young people, enabling progression from participants to coaches, volunteers, mentors, committee members, and board representatives.
- Increased focus on youth representation and participation in decision-making processes.
- Strengthened mentoring structures that support young leaders through practical experience and guidance.
- Continued promotion of gender equality and inclusive leadership.
- Development of national and regional networks where young leaders can learn from and inspire one another.

A particularly important shared outcome is that all federations plan to integrate key WLVT principles into their existing education programmes, ensuring that the project's approaches and learnings continue beyond the project period.

Key Outcomes for the Clubs

At club level, the project has demonstrated that sustainable youth leadership depends on providing young people with meaningful opportunities for participation and responsibility.

Across the participating countries, several common sustainability actions can be identified.

Recruitment and Retention

- Early identification of motivated young people.
- Recruitment through everyday club activities, camps, training environments, and social networks.
- Creation of visible leadership opportunities for young members.

Mentoring and Support

- Appointment of club mentors or coordinators.
- Gradual transfer of responsibility from experienced leaders to young leaders.
- Peer mentoring initiatives and the promotion of positive role models.

Education and Leadership Development

- Use of WLVT-inspired activities in practical and easily accessible formats.
- Integration of selected project elements into coaching roles, volunteering activities, and event organisation.
- Continued leadership workshops and educational opportunities.

Expected Upscaling and Reach

A key ambition of the WLVT project has been to move beyond the participating pilot clubs (24 clubs) and establish sustainable structures that can be scaled nationally.

Through integration into federation education systems and club development initiatives, key WLVT principles have the potential to reach a substantial proportion of volleyball clubs across the partner countries.

The expected national reach includes:

- **The Netherlands:** WLVT leadership principles will be integrated into Nevobo's education programmes and youth engagement initiatives, making the methodology available to approximately 961 affiliated volleyball clubs. In addition, leadership activities will be incorporated into seven annual volleyball camps, reaching approximately 45 young leaders each year.
- **Denmark:** Volleyball Denmark will establish its first dedicated youth leadership module and make it available through its educational offer to approximately 250 affiliated volleyball clubs nationwide.
- **Norway:** Selected WLVT elements will become part of the federation's educational department and leadership development programmes, making the approach available to approximately 313 volleyball clubs across the country.
- **Iceland:** WLVT principles will be integrated into activities involving all 24 youth volleyball clubs in Iceland. Furthermore, the federation will work to disseminate the methodology to other sports through cooperation with the Icelandic Sports Association.

Together, these initiatives create the potential to reach more than 1,500 volleyball clubs across the four partner countries, significantly extending the impact of the project beyond the original pilot phase.

In the following section, each federation and the university present their individual plans for sustaining and further developing the activities, methods, and outcomes generated through the WLVT project

Norwegian Volleyball Federation

Organizational Continuation of the Program within the Federation

The original program proved to be too extensive in its full format for us to implement it full-term. Therefore, selected elements from the Erasmus program will be integrated into our new simplified leadership program for young adults 19–26 years old. This allow us to use the most valuable components in a more suitable way towards our clubs.

In parallel, the federation will continue the Open Gym initiative we have going on throughout 2026 and the first part of 2027, for young leaders between 13–19 year olds. During this period, efforts will focus on establishing Open Gym as a permanent activity with a stronger emphasis on youth leadership, responsibility, and participation.

Concrete goals for 2026/2027

1. Develop and launch a new youth leadership program for young adults aged 19–26, using selected elements from the original project.
2. Continue and further develop the Open Gym initiative through 2026 and early 2027, with the aim of establishing it as a permanent activity.
3. Increase youth involvement in leadership roles within clubs by creating clearer pathways from participation to volunteering, coaching, and organizational responsibility.

Concrete actions/initiatives planned for 2026/2027

- Design the structure and content of the new leadership program based on experiences and learning from the original project.
- Start our new leadership program, in September during our club and trainer conference
- Continue Open Gym sessions and evaluate participation, leadership opportunities, and long-term sustainability.

National Expansion and Development of the Program

Over the next five years, the program will be expanded gradually through a scalable model where clubs can implement selected elements according to their local capacity and needs.

The new leadership program for young adults (19–26 years) will serve as the national framework, while Open Gym will function as a practical arena in the clubs where participants can develop leadership skills through active involvement.

Within five years, the federation aims to:

- Introduce the leadership program in more clubs across the country.
- Develop educational materials and practical resources that support local implementation.
- Build a network of young leaders who can act as role models and mentors.
- Increase cooperation between clubs to exchange experiences and best practices.
- Work toward making Open Gym a permanent concept that can be replicated nationally.

This approach allows for gradual growth while ensuring quality and sustainability.

Club-Level Continuation and Implementation

Clubs will ensure continuation by integrating program activities into their daily and yearly activities and creating clear responsibilities for youth leaders.

A key priority will be to maintain opportunities for young people to move into active roles within the club structure. Therefore, a lot of our clubs have young representatives in their boards, and young leaders that contribute into their activities like coaching or arranging events.

Recruitment efforts will focus on identifying motivated young participants and supporting them in progressing toward leadership positions.

Clubs will also work to:

- Include youth leadership activities in annual plans.
- Maintain volunteer and coaching pathways for young adults.
- Use Open Gym as a recruitment and engagement arena.

Concrete examples

- Young adults participating in Open Gym can gradually take responsibility for planning sessions, welcoming participants, and assisting coaches.
- Participants from the leadership program may become assistant coaches, volunteers, event coordinators, or youth representatives in club committees.
- Clubs can establish youth leadership teams responsible for organizing activities and recruiting new participants.
- Former participants can act as mentors for new members entering the program.
- Open Gym activities can be used as an entry point for recruiting young volunteers and future leaders.

This structure supports long-term sustainability by embedding leadership development directly into everyday club activities and creating continuous recruitment pathways.

Icelandic Volleyball Federation

Organizational Continuation of the Program within the Federation

The We Lead Volleyball Together program will become a permanent part of the federation's youth development and education strategy. The federation will integrate WLVT principles into regular club development, coach education, youth participation structures, and leadership pathways. The program aligns with the federation's long-term goals regarding inclusion, youth engagement, volunteer development, and gender equality in volleyball leadership.

The federation will appoint a responsible coordinator or working group to oversee the continuation of the program nationally. Existing educational materials, mentoring structures, and leadership activities developed during the project will continue to be used and adapted annually. Clubs participating in WLVT will also be encouraged to include youth leadership activities in their yearly operational plans.

The program will continue through:

- Annual recruitment of new Young Leaders.
- Integration of youth leadership modules into federation education programs.
- Continued cooperation with clubs.
- Creation of leadership opportunities for young people within events, camps, competitions, and club structures.

The program is based on inclusive leadership, representation, youth participation, and learning through practice. These principles are central in the WLVT theoretical guide and will remain part of the federation's educational philosophy.

Concrete goals for 2026/2027

1. Train at least 10 new Young Leaders annually through clubs and federation activities.
2. Ensure that at least 75% of participants in youth leadership activities are young women.
3. Integrate youth leadership workshops into at least 2 national federation events or educational programs each year.
4. Establish a national network of former WLVT participants acting as peer mentors and role models.
5. Increase youth representation in club committees and federation working groups.

Concrete actions/initiatives planned for 2026/2027

- Organize an annual WLVT leadership workshop.
- Continue mentor training for club mentors and volunteers.
- Include Young Leaders in the organization of tournaments, events, school activities, and grassroots events.
- Promote success stories and role models through federation media channels.
- Cooperate with schools and municipalities to connect volleyball with youth participation initiatives.
- Create a monitoring system to evaluate leadership participation and program impact annually.

National Expansion and Development of the Program

Within the next five years, the federation aims to expand WLVT into a nationwide youth leadership structure connected to clubs, schools, regional activities, and national volleyball events.

The long-term objective is not only to train young leaders, but to create a sustainable culture where youth participation becomes a normal and expected part of volleyball governance and development.

The program will expand through:

- Involvement of more clubs from different regions.
- Cooperation with schools.
- Integration with referee, coaching, and volunteering pathways.
- Creation of regional youth leadership ambassadors.
- Stronger visibility of female and youth role models.

The federation will gradually create a “leadership pathway” where young people can progress from:

1. Participant.
2. Young Leader.
3. Volunteer assistant.
4. Mentor or coach.
5. Committee or board representative.

Within five years, the federation aims to:

- Involve at least 5 clubs actively using WLVT methods.
- Establish yearly national youth leadership gatherings.
- Include youth representatives in selected federation decision-making structures.
- Connect WLVT activities with social inclusion and grassroots participation projects.

The program will also continue promoting inclusive leadership principles such as participation, belonging, equal opportunities, and teamwork.

Club-Level Continuation and Implementation

Clubs play a central role in ensuring the long-term continuation of WLVT activities. Sustainability at club level will be achieved by embedding youth leadership into normal club operations instead of treating it as a temporary project.

Each participating club will be encouraged to:

- Appoint a responsible mentor or coordinator.
- include youth leadership goals in annual club planning.
- Create concrete leadership opportunities for young people.
- Involve young leaders in communication, events, training support, and decision-making.
- Establish recruitment systems for new participants every season.

The WLVT model already includes Club Mentors, Club Sessions, and practical leadership experiences, which provide a strong structure for long-term continuation.

Clubs will also focus on creating inclusive and welcoming environments where young people feel heard and valued. The program stresses that leadership grows through participation, visibility, teamwork, and supportive mentoring.

Some concrete examples

- Young Leaders assist coaches in youth training sessions.
- Youth representatives participating in club meetings or youth committees.
- Older players mentoring younger participants during volleyball camps.
- Clubs organizing an annual “Leadership Workshop”.
- Young Leaders helping organize local tournaments and school events.
- Former WLVT participants are becoming assistant mentors for new groups.
- Clubs recruit new participants directly from U15 and U17 teams each season.
- Young Leaders managing social media, communication, or event promotion.
- Clubs create small volunteer teams where young people can test different leadership roles before taking bigger responsibilities.

Clubs will also use visibility and recognition to maintain motivation. Sharing achievements, stories, and successful activities helps strengthen recruitment and encourages more young people to participate. This approach directly reflects the WLVT emphasis on increasing visibility of young leaders and creating opportunities to lead.

The Dutch Volleyball Federation – Nevobo

Organizational Continuation of the Program within the Federation

We Lead Volleyball Together will get integrated in Nevobo's long term strategy and policy 'Sportive and Social Gold'. Personal development, youth involvement and a representation of male and female members in the Nevobo organisation and its clubs, is an important pillar for the future.

Concrete goals for 2026/2027

1. Integrate WLVT leadership elements and principles in educational courses of Nevobo.
2. Follow up on female role models as trainer/ coach, referee, board member.
3. Further development of youth involvement programmes at club level.

Concrete actions/initiatives planned for 2026/2027

- Integration of WLVT elements in educational courses:
 - Further develop it as accessible online programme
 - Make different leadership modules. E.g. for role models, style of leadership, 'gender' leadership. That can be part of educational courses for trainer/ coaches, referees, board members, but also national team players, club mentors at local volleyball clubs.
- Follow up on female role models:
 - We started a collaboration with Stichting SAM to work on female role models in all kinds of functions. The purpose is to create more awareness on women equality. In this collaboration we take the learnings from WLVT. Through sessions with trainer/ coaches, referees and board members we follow up on the learnings and communicative messages.

- Further development of youth involvement programmes at club level:
 - The existing youth involvement programmes about trainer/ coach, eventmaker and youth board will get a leadership module in it. This development ensures that more youth get in touch with the essence of personal leadership development.
 - In addition, the mentors guiding the youth in these programmes will also get a leadership module. Here they learn about their leadership and guidance skills, but also on equal representation of youth involvement.

National Expansion and Development of the Program

In the coming years, Nevobo aims to integrate the successful elements of WLVT in structural education of other educational programmes. These educational programmes cover trainer/ coaches, referees and board members. But also youth in the age of 12–30 years old.

Furthermore, we will expand the leadership programme to the organisation of 7 volleyball camps, covering 45 potential young leaders yearly.

In addition, Nevobo is aiming for educating young board members (under 30 years old) on personal leadership development.

Creating a youth network throughout the country stimulates peer-to-peer learning and bonding over a shared volleyball passion. Using that increase the involvement of youth at local clubs and stimulating the future volunteers.

Club-Level Continuation and Implementation

Clubs that participated want to appoint a permanent club mentor, guiding the young members in the club to get involved in a programme that works for them. Some of the clubs are looking into finding finances to be able to appoint that club mentor. Voluntarily based or as a paid job.

In addition, clubs want to keep offering programmes for young members of their club.

Furthermore, clubs that participated are open to share their experiences with other clubs. With the purpose to inspire and stimulate them to start with involvement of youth as well as leadership skills for youth.

Participants in the WLVT programme may become a club mentor themselves in the future.

Volleyball Denmark

Organizational Continuation of the Program within the Federation

Core elements from the WLVT project will become an integral part of Volleyball Denmark's leadership development offering. Prior to this project, Volleyball Denmark did not provide its own leadership materials or training programmes, as this area has traditionally been delegated to another Danish sports organisation, DGI.

However, we have chosen to focus specifically on leadership development for young leaders by establishing a dedicated leadership module. Engaging more young people in leadership roles is a key strategic priority for the future.

The module will be based on the handbook, workbook, and exercise book developed through the project. Going forward, we intend to implement the programme in a more streamlined format, making it less resource-intensive for local clubs and associations to deliver.

The module will be included as part of our short-course programme, which is promoted and delivered continuously throughout each season.

Within Volleyball Denmark, efforts are being made to increase the involvement of young people in committees and, ideally, on the Volleyball Denmark Board as well. We are actively exploring ways to make the more formal committee and board work within the organisation more open and accessible, thereby making it a more attractive opportunity for young people to engage in leadership and governance roles.

Concrete goals for 2026/2027

1. Young leadership development is integrated into Volleyball Denmark's education and training programmes.
 - Project materials have been revised and condensed into short, user-friendly guides.
2. At least one young leader is involved in a board, committee, or coaching staff position within Volleyball Denmark.
3. A national mentoring and networking programme for young leaders has been established.

Concrete actions/initiatives planned for 2026/2027 in federation

- Revision of the materials to ensure that a new, dedicated short-course module is ready for the start of the 2026 season, including the development of a concise Young Leaders Toolkit featuring practical exercises and inspirational case studies
- Delivery of approximately six short-course sessions throughout the season.
- Organisation of national and regional networking events for young leaders.
- Integration of young leadership modules into existing coach and leadership education programmes, while ensuring that young leadership themes become a natural component of Volleyball Denmark's club development services.
- Ongoing collection of experiences and sharing of best practices among clubs through the network activities.

National Expansion and Development of the Program

We see significant potential in expanding the work with young leaders to more clubs across the country. In particular, we see great value in facilitating knowledge sharing between clubs and establishing local or regional networks. National initiatives should be flexible and take into account the varying sizes, geographical locations, and resources of clubs. For smaller clubs and those located far from the major cities, logistics is a particularly important consideration.

Volleyball Denmark is also mindful of the need for:

- Increased regional collaboration.
- Shorter and more practical materials.
- Practice-oriented programmes with a strong focus on action and implementation.
- Opportunities to link the project to local funding schemes and municipal initiatives.

Club-Level Continuation and Implementation

The clubs are already actively working to ensure continuity through the gradual transfer of responsibilities, clearly defined roles, and strong social integration. Several common practices can be identified across the clubs:

Early Recruitment

Young people are identified at an early stage as assistant coaches, volunteers, and role models. They are typically recruited from among members who demonstrate a high level of commitment and a strong connection to the club.

Gradual Transfer of Responsibility

Young leaders are initially given small, manageable tasks and gradually take on greater responsibility as they develop their skills and confidence.

Mentoring and Support Networks

Experienced leaders provide guidance and support, ensuring that young leaders are not left to manage complex responsibilities on their own.

Formal Roles

Young people are involved in boards, committees, communication teams, event teams, and coaching roles.

Social Belonging

A strong sense of community and recognition is highlighted as a key factor in retaining young leaders.

Competence Development

Clubs provide courses, training opportunities, and practical experience in leadership, planning, finance, communication, and pedagogy.

- A combination of recognition, financial compensation, and social activities is used to support and motivate young leaders.

Overall

Across the clubs, there is a clear ambition to make the development of young leaders a permanent part of the volleyball environment.

The sustainability of this work is based on:

- Early identification of engaged young people.
- Gradual transfer of responsibility.
- Close mentoring and support.
- Formal roles with genuine influence.
- Strong social communities and recognition.
- Practical and easily accessible tools.

The clubs view the programme as an important investment in both the future of the club and the personal and professional development of young people.

The Hague University of Applied Sciences

Long-Term Use of Knowledge and Experiences Gained Through the Project

THUAS will embed the knowledge gained from WLVT into its ongoing academic and applied work through multiple channels:

- Educational programmes: Insights on youth leadership development, gendered barriers in sport leadership, and inclusive leadership practices will be integrated into the Sport Management curriculum, providing students with evidence-based case material drawn directly from European grassroots clubs.
- Student projects & internships: WLVT partner federations and clubs (Nevobo, NVBF, VBF, BLÍ) offer ongoing opportunities for student internships, graduation research, and applied projects, ensuring continuous knowledge transfer between the university and the sport sector.
- Conferences: Results will be presented at European sport management and sport science conferences (e.g. EASM) strengthening THUAS's visibility in the international sport research community.

Maintaining and Developing Cooperation with Project Partners

THUAS collaborates with the Volleyball Federations of the Netherlands (Nevobo), Norway (NVBF), Iceland (BLÍ), and Denmark (VD) within WLVT. The project has built a sustainable European network that will continue beyond the funding period through several concrete avenues:

- Student internships, guest lectures, and field trips with the partner federations, embedding cooperation into the educational program.
- Data exchange and shared research infrastructure, the survey instruments, interview protocols, and conceptual framework developed in WLVT provide a reusable basis for comparative cross-national studies.

Long-Term Value of Project Methodologies, Tools, and Insights

Several outputs will have lasting academic and applied value:

- The leadership self-assessment instrument (pre/post survey covering attitudes, barriers & opportunities, talents, skills, leadership behaviours, and inclusive leadership) is tool that can be reused in future research and educational contexts.
- The mixed-methods research design combining quantitative self-assessments with qualitative in-depth interviews with club board members, providing a replicable model for impact evaluation in grassroots sport.
- Insights on inclusive leadership and gender equity in sport, directly relevant for ongoing teaching, research, and policy advice.

Key Lessons Learned and Their Impact on Future Work

Several key lessons emerged from WLVT that will shape THUAS's future research, education, and project work:

- Youth leadership is a condition for organizational survival, not an add-on. Clubs see developing young coaches, board members, and event organizers as essential for long-term viability. Future projects will frame leadership development as a sustainability issue, which resonates more strongly with clubs than purely educational arguments.
- Leadership develops through experience and mentorship, not formal instruction alone. The combination of small, manageable tasks with personal mentoring proved most effective. Future educational and project designs will prioritize experiential learning, graduated responsibility, and peer-based support over heavy theoretical materials.

- Program materials must fit the capacity of volunteer-run clubs. The WLVT handbook was perceived as too long and complex by several clubs. Future iterations and future THUAS-led projects will use shorter, modular, locally contextualized materials with greater flexibility in delivery.
- Informal and relational pathways matter more than formal pipelines. No club used a structured recruitment process, young leaders were identified through everyday participation and social trust. Program designs must work with these informal processes, not around them.
- Structural barriers (educational mobility, time constraints, perceived formality of leadership roles) limit sustainability. Future work will explore practices such as alumni networks, reframing leadership as "helping and contributing," and low-barrier entry points.
- Retention depends on social embedding and recognition, not formal incentives. Clubs with strong social cohesion retain young leaders better, a finding that will inform curriculum content on volunteer management.
- Peer collaboration between clubs and federations is the most valued element of transnational projects. THUAS will continue to invest in cross-country peer-learning structures in future initiatives.
- Survey results show measurable but uneven impact. Positive shifts were observed in barriers/opportunities and exploring talents, while perceptions of "easy" and "relaxing" decreased post-training, indicating that participants experienced the program as more demanding than expected. This points to the need for better expectation management and clearer scaffolding in future program designs.

Conclusion

The We Lead Volleyball Together (WLVT) project has demonstrated that youth leadership can become a sustainable and integrated part of volleyball development when supported by clear structures, practical learning opportunities, mentoring, and strong collaboration between federations, clubs, and educational institutions.

One of the most important achievements of the project is that youth leadership is no longer viewed as a stand-alone initiative, but as a strategic element of future organisational development. Across all partner organisations, key WLVT principles and methodologies will be integrated into educational programmes, club development initiatives, governance structures, and leadership pathways, ensuring that the project's impact extends well beyond the funding period. The project has also created a strong foundation for national upscaling. Through the planned integration of WLVT-inspired activities into federation programmes and club development structures, the project has the potential to reach more than 1,500 volleyball clubs across the four partner countries. This significantly expands the original pilot phase and creates opportunities for thousands of young people to engage in leadership roles within sport.

The experiences gained throughout the project have highlighted the importance of practical, flexible, and accessible approaches to leadership development. Sustainable youth leadership is created when young people are given meaningful responsibilities, supported by mentoring, and included in decision-making processes within welcoming and inclusive environments.

The Hague University of Applied Sciences will continue to contribute through education, research, and international cooperation, ensuring that the knowledge, methodologies, tools, and insights developed through WLVT remain available and continue to inform future practice and research.

Together, the partners have established a sustainable framework for youth leadership development that extends from local clubs to national federations and higher education institutions. By embedding youth leadership into structures, policies, and educational systems, WLVT has created a lasting legacy and a strong platform for future generations of young leaders in volleyball and beyond.

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