

FACTSHEET

XIII OLYMPIC CONGRESS –
THEME 4: OLYMPISM AND YOUTH
SEPTEMBER 2009



1. THE THEME AND SUB-THEMES

The fourth Congress theme dedicated to Olympism and Youth is split up into three sub-themes:

1.1 Moving towards an active society

1.2 Is competitive sport still appealing?

1.3 Youth sport events

It is one of the most pressing issues of our times – especially where the developed world is concerned: on the one hand, sharp declines in physical activity; on the other, escalating rates of obesity.

Worryingly, this trend is making itself felt among the very youngest members of our society – most notably teenagers, who are dropping out of sports activities in significant numbers.

Interestingly, though, while some see the world of multimedia as a root cause of children's increasingly sedentary lifestyles, others argue that digital technology has a role to play in promoting sport to young people. For example, could popular sport-themed video games, such as Mario & Sonic at the Olympic Games, actually encourage young people to lead more active lives?

Clearly, the exact nature of what is causing so many youngsters to turn their back on sport merits considered and open-minded investigation.

It can be argued that competitive sport may help steer young participants away from some of the less savoury temptations endemic in 21st century society. As such, perhaps the social and educational values of sport should occupy a more integral role in international education systems. By extension, given that not every student can be an outstanding athlete, there may be an argument for attaching greater importance to participation in sport in our schools and colleges.

The Olympic Movement recognises that it is only by appreciating the younger generation's mindset and current perception of sport that the appropriate courses of action will be explored.

This means gaining an understanding of which sports are currently most appealing to young people, and why, and then working out how best to foster competitive sport for all. So, exploring how clubs and federations can attract and keep youngsters in competitive sport, and considering whether or not existing administrative frameworks for supporting young people's involvement in competitive sport are working hard enough.

As part of the process of understanding the exact nature of the young people/competitive sports dynamic, the role of sports events also merits investigation. It could be argued that sports events should meet young people's highest expectations if they are to promote not just physical activity and competition, but also the latter's personal and social benefits.

The IOC has moved to address this issue by setting up the Youth Olympic Games (YOG) – the first edition of which takes place in Singapore next year. The Games will mix elite competition with educating the young athletes on the Olympic values, healthy lifestyles and social responsibility.

2. LINK WITH THE OLYMPIC MOVEMENT IN SOCIETY

Today's youth are tomorrow's Olympians and/or spectators.

It is thus highly important that one of the biggest social movements – The Olympic Movement – cares about the young generation and has a positive impact on their health, education and integration, particularly for minorities.

For many young people sport remains the only way to accede to a certain life standard and helps with their education and their openness towards other cultures and countries.



3. AGENDA AND KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

Theme 1 dedicated to Youth and Olympism is debated on Saturday 4 October in the afternoon in a plenary session, followed by breakout working groups for each one of the sub-themes.

The keynote speaker in the plenary session will be **José Ramos Horta**, the second President of East Timor and co-recipient of the 1996 Nobel Peace Prize, together with Carlos Felipe Ximenes Belo, bishop of East Timor.

President Horta, born in a family with 10 brothers and sisters, has during his lifetime inspired the youth of his country and actively promoted projects for the development and education of young citizens.

One of these projects is the joint *Youth Integration and Development Initiative*, Ba Futuru and Edge-ucate.org which has begun the process of engaging Timorese youth in positive peace-building activities. This project has shown that the cooperation of individuals, local communities, international agencies and the government can stop the cycle of violence and help to create a sense of security and a vision for a positive future. Further projects he has shown a genuine interest in are peacejam, an initiative of youth and Nobel Peace Prize winners to change the world and World Youth Day. In his political action, President Horta has taken several youth-oriented and educational initiatives.

José Ramos Horta studied Public International Law at The Hague Academy of International Law (1983) and at Antioch University where he completed an MA in Peace Studies (1984). He was trained in Human Rights Law at the International Institute of Human Rights In Strasbourg, France (1983).

For more information/story ideas:

- Interview with President José Ramos Horta in the Olympic Review, September 2009

4. CASE STUDIES

a) Moving towards an active society

- The IOC Sport for All Commission, chaired by IOC member Walther Tröger is the leading force for all grassroots sports initiative.
- In an effort to encourage all NOCs to commemorate and celebrate Olympic Day, in 1987 the IOC Sport for All Commission launched the Olympic Day Run concept with the objective of promoting the practice of participation in sport by men, women and children from all corners of the world, regardless of athletic ability. From 45 NOCs taking part in the first edition, today over 150 NOCs worldwide participate.
- Each year, the Sport for All Commission awards IOC patronage and financial assistance to 15 Sport for All events in each of the five continents. These sports events can be drawn from a wide range of activities, the main criterion for selection being that the event concerned must truly be open to all, particularly the younger generation. So far, more than 150 NOCs have benefited from this programme.
- The IOC, through its Sport for All Commission, has granted patronage to the World Sport for All Congress since 1986. Since 1994, the Congress has also been patronised by the World Health Organisation (WHO), and since 1996, by the General Association of International Sports Federations (GAISF), now known as SportAccord, which have both cooperated with the IOC in the organisation of the Congress. The most recent Congress in 2008 in Genting Highlands (Malaysia)



developed a series of recommendations on how to encourage young people to be active in today's society.

For more information/story ideas:

- <http://www.olympic.org/sport-for-all-commission>
- Final declarations of all Sport for All Congresses, particularly the 2008 Genting Highlands Declaration.
- Olympic Day promotional material including videos and photos.

b) Is competitive sport still appealing?

- The IOC is following closely all elite junior competitions such as the World and the Continental Championships for different youth categories in all Olympic sports.
- Among other things, the Continental Youth Olympic Games, such as the EYOF, founded under Jacques Rogge's leadership when he was President of the European Olympic Committees, have proven that the younger generation is still willing to take the sacrifices of elite sports career and that their motivation and ambitions are still extremely high.

For more information/story ideas:

- Video with text and photos of young athletes in China (weightlifting), UK (rowing), Argentina (football) and Russia (tennis) expressing their motivation for elite competition.

c) Youth sports events

The YOG, an initiative of President Rogge, were presented and adopted by the IOC Session in Guatemala City in 2007. The first edition of the Summer Youth Olympic Games will take place in Singapore in 2010. The first Winter Youth Olympic Games will be organised in Innsbruck (Austria) in 2012.

➤ The aim of the Youth Olympic Games is triple:

- to provide a platform to the 14- to 18-year-old elite athletes in all Olympic sports and introduce to them the Olympic spirit at a younger age;
- to combine the sports event with an educational programme linked to important issues such as the fight against doping and healthy lifestyles; and
- to reach out through young people worldwide on the basis of appealing and powerful communications initiatives that allow young people all over the world to benefit from the sports and educational programme offered to the athletes and the public at the YOG.

For more information/story ideas:

- <http://www.olympic.org/yog>
- <http://www.singapore2010.sg>
- Summer and Winter Youth Olympic Games brochures
- Youth Olympic Games newsletters
- Video and rough cut with text and photos presenting the Youth Olympic Games.

5. FURTHER INFORMATION

- See all additional information and story ideas under each sub-theme under chapter 4.

Other overall information includes:

- Programme of the XIII Olympic Congress
- Factsheets, one each theme
- Factsheet on previous Congresses



- 12 video news releases on different sub-themes
- Special Olympic Review September 2009
- Follow the Congress on Facebook and Twitter.

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