



10 April 2025

## Dear Special Olympics Community, Partners, and Supporters,

We are Louis and Tim – two young leaders from Germany who are passionate about inclusion and sports. Louis brings his experience as a tennis athlete, while Tim is inspired by his work in leadership and advocacy. Together, we are part of a team committed to creating a more inclusive world.

Our paths first crossed at a start-up event, where we quickly realized that we share the same vision: empowering people with intellectual disabilities. What started as a simple conversation soon became much more – Louis suggested that we apply to join the Global Youth Leadership Council (GYLC). That decision not only transformed our journey with Special Olympics but also deepened our friendship. Since then, we've been part of a global network of young leaders dedicated to fostering inclusion worldwide.

Our leadership journey began in Germany but has already taken us to Washington, D.C., Abu Dhabi, and Romania – experiences that have consistently strengthened our commitment to inclusion. The highlight of this journey was the Global Youth Leadership Summit 2025 in Turin. There, we had the honor of leading the summit alongside 16 other GYLC members, sparking meaningful conversations and inspiring the next generation of changemakers.

One of the most important lessons we've learned is this:

**Leadership is not defined by titles but by actions.** It's about creating spaces where people feel valued, their voices are heard, and they can grow beyond their limits. For Tim, leadership means empathy and positivity – sometimes, even a simple smile can make a difference. For Louis, leadership is about fostering an environment where inclusion thrives and every voice matters. At the GYLS, we experienced firsthand how youth-driven initiatives can create frameworks that teach real skills in project planning, advocacy, and leadership – tools that strengthen our movement in a sustainable way.

Despite all the progress we've made, many young people around the world still face significant barriers to true inclusion. Too often, we are overlooked, excluded from decision-making processes, or reduced to symbolic roles. We ask: If we are the future, why are we not allowed to lead outside of Special Olympics?

Now is the time to act – with determination and clarity.

Inclusion can no longer be optional – it is essential. We, young people, are ready. We understand the challenges of our generation, we bring networks, and we are the next generation of leaders within Special Olympics.



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At the GYLS, groundbreaking projects were showcased – from inclusive basketball in Albania to the development of Unified Champion Schools in Jamaica. These initiatives demonstrate that young people are not spectators – we are drivers of the inclusion movement. For four years, the Global Youth Leadership Council has proven that young people can create, lead, and take responsibility. The 16 Unified pairs selected every two years are not mere symbols but active agents of change.

Through all the incredible experiences and lessons at the GYLS, we've grown into a strong team. We've learned the importance of learning from each other, supporting one another, and growing personally along the way.

In a world that is increasingly divided, we must choose a new path. Now is the time to stand together as a global community. Let's treat each other with respect, listen openly, value differences, and focus on what unites us.

To all decision-makers in education, politics, science, and society, we direct our call:

- **Politicians:** Create real opportunities for young people to participate – beyond words.
- **Educational institutions:** Foster inclusive learning environments where students with and without intellectual disabilities learn together and experience diversity as the norm.
- **Scientists:** Highlight the positive effects of inclusion in your research to drive systemic change.
- **Societal actors:** Ensure inclusive workplaces that are accessible to all – including people with intellectual disabilities.

The future is not someday – it begins now. Give young people real responsibility, let them have a voice in decision-making, and empower them to shape the inclusive world of tomorrow.

The future starts with us. **The time to act is now.**

Thank you,

*Louis Kleemeyer*

**Louis Kleemeyer**  
Global Youth Leadership Council Co-Chairs  
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*Tim*

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