



GROWing Opportunities for Young People

ANNUAL REPORT 2021



“Meet & Connect” event in Cologne, October 2021

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EDITORIAL

“Meet & Connect” event in Cologne, October 2021

Building inclusive societies for young people and facilitating their transition into the labour market have always been core objectives of our network. 2021 has definitely been a challenging year for youth as they often had to deal with obstacles in terms of access in education and training. YES Forum had to better adjust its activities to this reality, to help young people cultivate their competencies and identify their position in the labour market and the possibilities that lie ahead.

YES Forum acknowledges the need for ongoing work that supports and motivates young people. It is of great importance that our network continues to build synergies and foster mutual exchange for our members to reach as many youngsters as possible.

This year, we want to dedicate space to our member organization “Activa”, based in Örebro (SE) and its passionate work towards inclusion and training. Activa has been actively involved in numerous projects to mainly focus on training opportunities for youth excluded from the job market. We want to bring their projects, good work and innovative ideas in the spotlight!

Last year’s pandemic experience was indeed challenging but did also improve YES Forum’s networking toolset. We managed to hold hybrid meetings with both staff and learners in Cologne and two on-site trainings in the framework of our SIEM and BRIDGE projects, which took place in Stuttgart (DE) and Bologna (IT) respectively.

We also worked hard to ensure a bright and inspiring future for our network. In 2021, our members adopted our “YES! Youth Empowerment Strategy”, for the years coming, with revised vision, mission and values, newly established GROW strategic objectives and emphasized sustainable principles. In addition, we elected a new YES Forum Board for 2021–2023 that will bring original ideas and vision to our network. As former board member and former president of YES Forum, Ronald de Haan, said: “the ingredients for a good future for the YES Forum are here and present”. The experience of the former board members, combined with the commitment of the younger generation of board members, will contribute to a bright future for

our network, where youngsters will always be “the starting point for our activities”.

Considering the restrictions these past years brought in travelling and physical gatherings, we consider 2022 as an opportunity to give back to the youngsters some of the lost opportunities. To begin with, in the context of the EU initiative, “European Year of Youth 2022”, a variety of events and activities will take place on topics like education, training, learning, employment, and civic and political participation. These focal points are the foundation of the YES Forum.

The European Year of Youth coincides with the big celebration of YES Forum’s 20th anniversary in Tuscany in May 2022. Our organisation looks forward to inviting member organisations and youngsters for a great meet up where old and new ideas will melt together for the cause of Europe’s youth!



Gwen Birza, Hannah Degerman, Sebastian Frank, Alexander Hauser, Lilika Trikalinou
| YES Forum Board Members



Annett Wiedermann | Director of the YES Forum



“Meet & Connect” event in Cologne, October 2021

In 2021, virtual meetings still prevailed. But in late summer we managed to hold on-site events that remind us the importance of these encounters. This picture was taken during the “Meet & Connect” event held in Cologne. The first face-to-face meeting with our members and partners in months. It reflects our aim for next years: getting together to strengthen our network and our work.

In 2020, YES Forum had already started reviewing its strategy, to better align it with the needs and challenges of the previous years. Along with our members and secretariat staff, we incorporated what we deem to be important for us and the young people we have been working with.

The final version of the new “YES Forum Youth Empowerment Strategy” was presented in detail and adopted during our online General Assembly in 2021! We now have revised our Vision, Mission, and Values, to better describe our work and the change we want to see in the future. We have also illustrated our “Sustainable Principles”. Each one of them has been at the core of our work for years and expresses what we stand for: participation, flexibility, support, transparency, solidarity and learning.

Our newly established GROW objectives are illustrated as a step-by-step, interconnected process. These strategic objectives YES Forum include generating better prospects for the young generation, raising awareness about youth issues, optimizing professional approaches in youth work as well as widening participation of all the young people in decision-making processes.

GENERATE better prospects for young generations

RAISE awareness about youth issues on the political agenda

OPTIMIZE professional approaches in youth work

WIDEN participation of all young people in decision making

YES FORUM STRATEGY 2021+

Street view photograph taken by participants of the “BRIDGE” training in Bologna, November 2021

PROJECTS AND ACTIVITIES

“SIEM” Inclusive mobility workshop in Stuttgart, September 2021

Europe3E

The “Europe through young Eyes: Exchange, Explore. Exhibit (Europe3E)” project is designed as a follow up project of our highly successful “YourEP” and “Our Life. Our Voice. Young people and poverty” projects. It aims at reaching meaningful active citizenship, raising political awareness and deepening social inclusion among youth, through peer and Photovoice research and the use of political simulations.

Considering the unprecedented health emergency of the past two years, we managed to readjust our working schedule and format of activities to successfully implement our project. Our young participants identified through the Photovoice process two topics to be explored during the political simulation of the European Parliament stage: “Restrictions & Freedom” and “Education”, fully corresponding with the obstacles this new reality brought into their lives. A final meeting took place in Cologne, where the YES Forum, partners and young people could conclude the project in presence.

In addition, several manuals on the use of the Photovoice method in youth projects, the implementation of inclusive and accessible political simulations and activities for youth were produced.

The final project output to be produced is a set of policy recommendations for policy makers at local and EU level, providing them with guidance on how to encourage young people to explore the EU and make their voices heard.

<https://www.yes-forum.eu/index.php?id=591>



“Europe3E” photovoice results from Sankt Johannis Bernburg

VOICE

The “Photovoice: Participation and Empowerment in Youth Work (VOICE)” project (2021–2023) builds on our successful implemented project YourEP, its follow up Europe3E and its experiments, this time, with the Photovoice method in the international youth work context.

Bringing together future and current youth workers, young people and creative organisations (e.g. photographers and graphic designers), the “VOICE” project aims at making Photovoice a more recognized creative tool that future and current youth workers can use to promote social inclusion, engagement and active citizenship of young people.

VOICE is expected to have a positive and long-lasting impact, by equipping social and youth work students, as well as youth workers with new creative methods to work with young people. In this context, targeted material and manuals will be produced.

<https://europe3e.yes-forum.eu/>

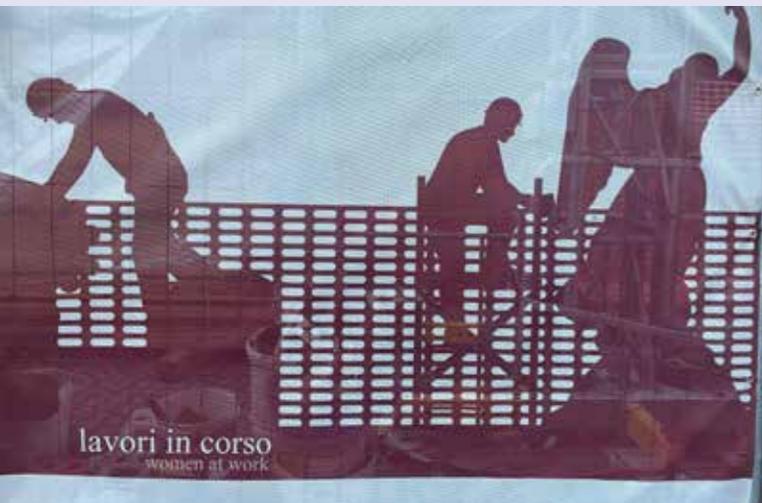
It Works!

Unemployment has been an ongoing concern and a challenge across Europe for the past years. Access to the job market is particularly hard for young people and, even more, for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds, resulting in their exclusion from a huge part of social life.

“The Employable Youth: It Works!” project is designed with a clear focus on Vocational Training and the need for on-the-job training. This project develops a holistic approach towards the employment and training of socially excluded youth, especially NEETs. This project provides handbooks for professionals working with youth to enhance their knowledge, and it creates tools for employability and soft skills to support the youth.

This year, the “Handbook & Toolbox for Professionals” and the “Soft Skills for Employability” module were published. Currently, the project team is preparing the pilot implementation of the “Assisted Training Scheme”.

<https://www.yes-forum.eu/index.php?id=592>



SAAM

From 2020–2023, the YES Forum will be part of the pilot project SAAM (Supporting Alliance for African Mobility). This project is led by the Spanish VET training centre SanViator and coordinated by the Spanish Mobility Organization, Asociación Mundus. The SAAM project supports the mobility of VET teachers and students of various disciplines.

This alliance between experts from EU and African countries aims at developing new curricula, methodologies, technologies and management. It also enhances mobilities between Africa and Europe, using training job-shadowing and knowledge acquisition on internationalization, transparency tools and educational pathways.

Over 40 months, 70 European teachers, 135 African teachers and more than 300 students will move between both continents. The year 2021 brought a number of mobilities of EU staff to the African continent. Next, a mobility for African staff is scheduled for February 2022 in Brussels.

<https://saam.global/>

Street banner photograph taken by participants of the “BRIDGE” training in Bologna, November 2021

“SIEM” Inclusive mobility workshop in Stuttgart, September 2021



SIEM

Students from less privileged backgrounds are still underrepresented in mobility programmes. Social inclusion is a priority for the 2021–2027 Erasmus+ programme, but very little hard data is available on the accessibility of the current programme and the measures that could be improve access and participation in learning mobilities.

Since spring 2020, YES Forum has been cooperating with the Erasmus Student Network and partner universities in the Social Inclusion and Engagement in Mobility (SIEM) project. This project is an important step toward making international mobility opportunities more inclusive, enabling students from all backgrounds to study, work or volunteer abroad. SIEM promotes widening participation, community engagement and peer-to-peer interaction.

On 13–16 September 2021, the Inclusive Mobility Workshop took place in Stuttgart, Germany. Young participants from different backgrounds provided input on the major barriers they face to participate in mobility and what can be done to bring international mobility opportunities closer to their communities.

<https://siem-project.eu/>

POWERst

First-generation students from non-academic backgrounds struggle to thrive in higher education. This issue needs to be addressed to foster social inclusion by building a more inclusive higher education system while at the same time supporting university staff. Universities should be seen as attractive, accessible and safe places for young people from all backgrounds.

YES Forum collaborates with German, Dutch and French universities in the “POWERst- emPOWERing first generation STudents” project to build a more inclusive higher education system in Europe. The purpose of the project is to help students complete a higher education study program and potentially pursue a scientific career, focusing on first-generation students. The innovative aspect of POWERst is that students are involved and actively participate in the project from the very beginning. Throughout and beyond the project, they will receive tailor-made support and be empowered to achieve their potential fully. Furthermore, the project will provide help and material for university staff in teaching and administration.

This project was launched at the beginning of the year 2021 with an online kick-off meeting, an excellent opportunity for partners to get to know each other and plan the first steps.

<https://www.project.uni-stuttgart.de/powerst/>



Street view, taken by participants of the "BRIDGE" training in Bologna, November 2021

BRIDGE

In international youth and youth social work, teams are often characterized by a heterogeneous composition concerning the age of the professionals, among other things. This diversity is an important enrichment for the work, but it also brings challenges for the cooperation. Each generation brings its strengths and experience, which must be utilized, preserved, and dovetailed with one another. At the same time, it is crucial for many organizations that the knowledge of the baby boomer generation, which will soon be retiring, is also available to future generations. Therefore, a successful intergenerational exchange is an important vehicle for successful work.

Since March 2021, YES Forum has been involved in the Breaching Reservation and Improving Dialogue through Gen-

erational Exchange (BRIDGE), a project to strengthen intergenerational dialogue in youth work organizations. BRIDGE promotes mutual positive influence and mutual learning opportunities.

The first Training Course of the BRIDGE project was held in Bologna, Italy, on 3-5 November. Junior and senior workers spent three days together brainstorming, discussing and exchanging ideas on the strengths of junior and senior workers and how they can learn from each other.

<https://internationaler-bund.org/en/bridge>

Growth with Diversity

All YES Forum members are working with and for young people, but their forms of action, approach, and structure still vary significantly from one another. Therefore, YES Forum provides room for peer learning and inspiring practices and organises workshops, training and webinars open for member organisations and professionals working with marginalised young people.

As a European network of organisations, capacity building is essential to the YES Forum membership development. YES Forum aims to grow as a network to be a stronger actor that contributes to a more social Europe, where no one is left behind and invests in the full potential of young people. Besides organising events for members to share their success stories, our capacity building activities aim at helping organisations understand practice, recognise which parts of it could be applied in their context and learn how to adapt it.

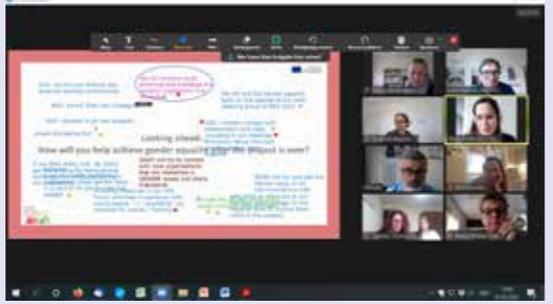
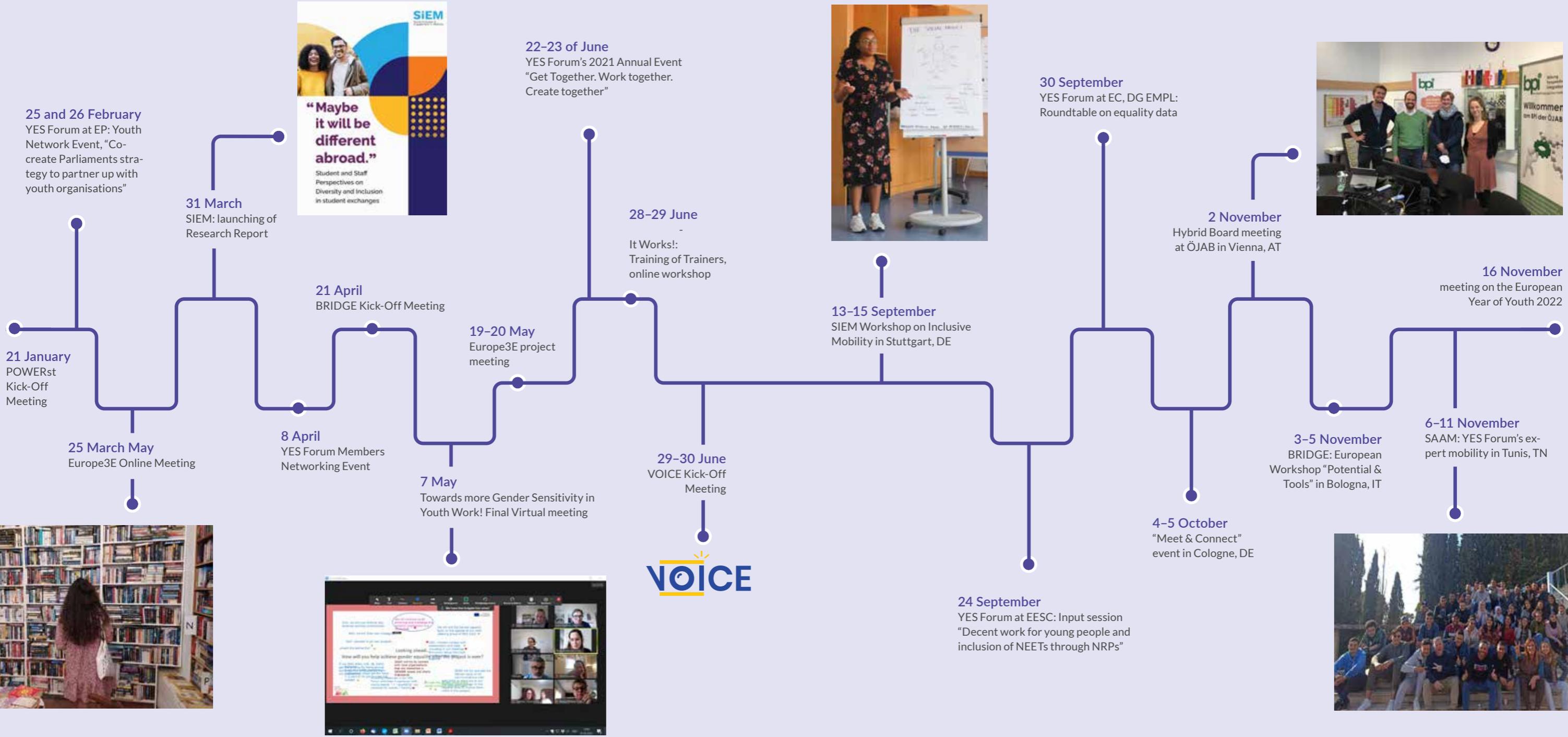
YES Forum acts as a platform for exchanging and promoting good practices. Despite the challenges of the current pandemic, online events were organised to stay close to members and partners throughout the year. In 2021, YES Forum organised numerous thematic and networking events and its annual event. Since the COVID-19 outbreak, the networking and social part of European projects and different events has decreased, although the shared experience and social interaction are still keys to being part of a European network like YES Forum. In its 2021 General Assembly and Annual Event, YES Forum presented its new Youth Empowerment Strategy

"Meet & Connect" event in Cologne, October 2021



and new European calls and programmes relevant to youth work. In addition, the YES Forum members elected its new board of directors for 2021-2023.

When lockdown measures were eased, we used this small window of opportunity and organised an on-site event in Cologne. The "Meet & Connect" event was a unique opportunity to conclude the Europe3E project with not only its official partners but also a wider group of social and youth workers from within and without the YES Forum network. Different sessions were also organised with all participants to exchange inspiring practices and to generate new project ideas.



Making Young People's Voice Heard

YES Forum is a network of organisations committed to youth work. A basic component of our work is advocating for a more inclusive society that provides equal opportunities for education and training to all youth.

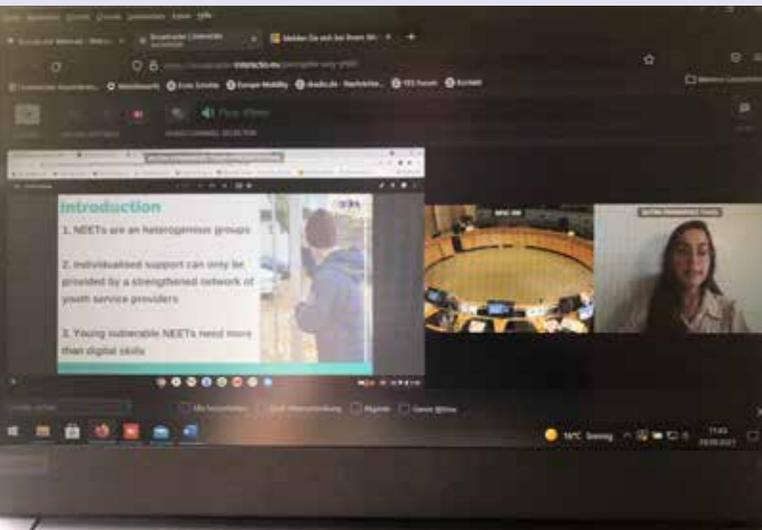
We seek to influence policies and perceptions in order to create better life opportunities for young people at European, national, regional and local level. We contribute to the development of policies on youth by transferring knowledge gained through practical experience and by giving the young people a voice which decision-makers hear and pay attention to. We especially focus on including young people, whose voices may be overlooked, and we aim at breaking the intergenerational cycles of disadvantage for the ones coming from vulnerable backgrounds. Moreover, we provide a plat-

form for youth workers working with vulnerable young people. We deem that the expertise and experience gained by youth workers is valuable and should be directly channelled to the political sphere.

In 2021, we are still facing the practical challenges COVID brought, yet try to ensure that young people and youth workers receive the same, if not more, support. Among our advocacy activities for 2021, YES Forum contributed to the European Economic and Social Committee's input session on "How to guarantee decent work for young people and ensure the inclusion of NEETs through the proper elaboration of National Recovery Plans". With our contribution, we drew more attention to the fact that young NEETs need more than digital skills to adapt to this new reality. Moreover, we participated in the "Inclusion and Diversity Forum" sessions, organized by SALTO Inclusion and Diversity, which aimed at creating greater visibility for the inclusion and diversity topic and building bridges between stakeholders active in the EU youth programmes (Erasmus+, ESC, etc).

YES Forum also contributed to the official youth stakeholders events to plan activities dedicated to the "European Year of Youth 2022".

Thaís Dutra Fernández presenting YES Forum's opinion at the European Economic and Social Committee's study group, 24/10/2021



YES Forum gives students the opportunity to gain real experience in the daily business of a European network. Supporting European projects on different topics with young people and professionals in youth work and engaging with fresh ideas is a main goal of an internship with YES Forum. Also in 2021, YES Forum hosted students to do a mandatory training to learn and explore the connection between theory and practice. In the following there is an authentic voice.

Çağla Ezgi Yıldız (internship since August 2021)

“After pursuing a master’s degree in Political Science, gaining experience in the academic environment and at an international organisation, I wanted to continue working in a non-profit organisation. As a political science student passionate about European politics and data-driven research, I started my internship at the YES Forum with the enthusiasm of making a real impact.

Even though I was not experienced in youth/social work before my internship, one of my main motivations to contribute to the work of YES Forum is my closeness to the target group, young people from diverse and less advantaged backgrounds. As a first-generation student and a young woman studying/working in a foreign country, I consider myself one of them. In the end, YES Forum is an organisation not only working for but also working with young people who face disadvantages stemming from their socio-economic background, educational difficulties, discrimination based on gender, sexual orientation or ethnicity, or geographical seclusion.

During my internship, the YES Forum provided me with an environment to practice my knowledge and skills. I had the opportunity to contribute to ongoing European projects on different topics as well as new project applications. Further, I extended my knowledge of European Youth Policy, EU funding programs and opportunities. I learned more about youth and social work, project management, and event organisation in general.

Finally, working in a European network means collaborating with different member organisations devoted to the same cause. YES Forum has 40 members across Europe, and during my internship, I got to meet and work with some of them through projects or events. Each encounter enriched my understanding of the network and of Europe as a whole.

I am grateful for this internship opportunity and would recommend it to anyone passionate about creating opportunities for young people and making a difference for the better.



“At Activa we often work in collaborative projects. Our projects are focused on method development, reaching new target groups and influencing attitudes towards people with disabilities in working life.”

Åsa Engström, Project Manager in Activa

Our YES Forum member “Activa” is involved in several projects mainstreaming diversity and inclusion for vulnerable groups. Innovative training methods, mobilities and internship opportunities are among their areas of expertise and action. It is surely worth mentioning their project “Step by step, IPS 2.0” (2021–2023), which aims at testing the method IPS, Individual Placement and Support, with a new target group: people with autism spectrum diagnosis. Furthermore, their “Moves” project aims at establishing an effective program, which offers international internship opportunities for young people who need support in managing their mobility. Last but not least, their project “From newcomer to co-worker” focuses on combining the SFI (Swedish for immigrants) school with internships. The expected outcome is for immigrants to practice the language while receiving training.

Work-track

The “Work-track” project, in cooperation with five Swedish schools, focuses on young people (ages 16–19) that display low motivation and low performance at school. The Swedish educational system provides those students with a specialized, adapted “introduction program” and, upon successful completion, it permits them to graduate from upper secondary school. The “World Track” project aims at developing appropriate methods and structures to support students facing problems with the “Introduction program”. During the project, the participating schools will develop a “working track” with a close connection to the local labor market and with an appropriate support structure. More specifically, the students will be able to combine their regular educational path in the “Introduction program” with work training, basic knowledge of the labor market and more traditional learning, but always in connection with their individual workplaces. The goal of the project is to increase students’ motivation and to implement the methods developed during the project in the regular activities of the participating schools.

<https://www.s-activa.se/>



Young participants in the “World Track” project in Sweden



Picture retrieved from the EU Youth Portal in the context of the “European Year of Youth 2022” campaign

Considering the challenges the young generation had to endure for the past years of the COVID crisis, the year 2022 is proclaimed by the Commission to be the “European Year of Youth”. Working together with EU institutions, Member States, civil society organisations and young people, a number of activities will be organized throughout the year at European, national, regional and local level. This year aims at drawing inspiration from young people’s insights and recommendations, better promoting the opportunities offered to them for personal, social and professional development and encouraging them to become active citizens and actors of change. Enhancement of green skills, digital transitions and inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities, are mainstreamed in every aspect of the upcoming activities.

The YES Forum welcomes this initiative and plans to actively participate and organize activities related to the EYY2022. Considering that not all youth have access to the internet, and as an extension, to the information on the activities of the year,

targeted promotion will be a basic component of our actions. At the same time, it is important to make use of activities taking place “closer to home”, in decentralized areas, which can be more accessible for some.

Thematic priorities like active citizenship and participation, social inclusion, mental health and professional development are of particular importance for our network. More specifically, having already successfully tested innovative educational methods in our projects (like Photovoice and political simulations), we will strive to involve even more young people with fewer opportunities, organizing exhibitions, trainings and debates, with a political scope. In addition, we would like to provide the youth with some organized, out-of-home, summer activities that will bring them closer to nature and closer to other young people. Moreover, drawing from our soon concluded project “ItWorks” which deals with NETs employability, we would like to focus on the objective of professional development for youth with fewer opportunities.

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YES FORUM TURNS 20!



The year 2022 signals the YES Forum's 20th anniversary! After 20 years of service, along with our members and partners, we remember, celebrate and reflect on our past experiences and we plan our future. The year offers a number of online and on-site activities that will reinforce our network connections.

The highlight of this year's celebrations will be our Annual Event in May 25-27 in Tuscany. Old and new members, partners, stakeholders, trainees and young people will gather in Tuscany for a three-day event full of discussions, workshops and activities. Drawing from our BRIDGE project, we will focus on intergenerational dialogue and exchange of good practices. Older and younger generations will exchange ideas and knowledge, bringing an up-to-date perspective to our network. Throughout the event, we will steadily involve young people and trainees, so as to give them a better glimpse of how a European network works and how different stakeholders cooperate to reach common objectives.

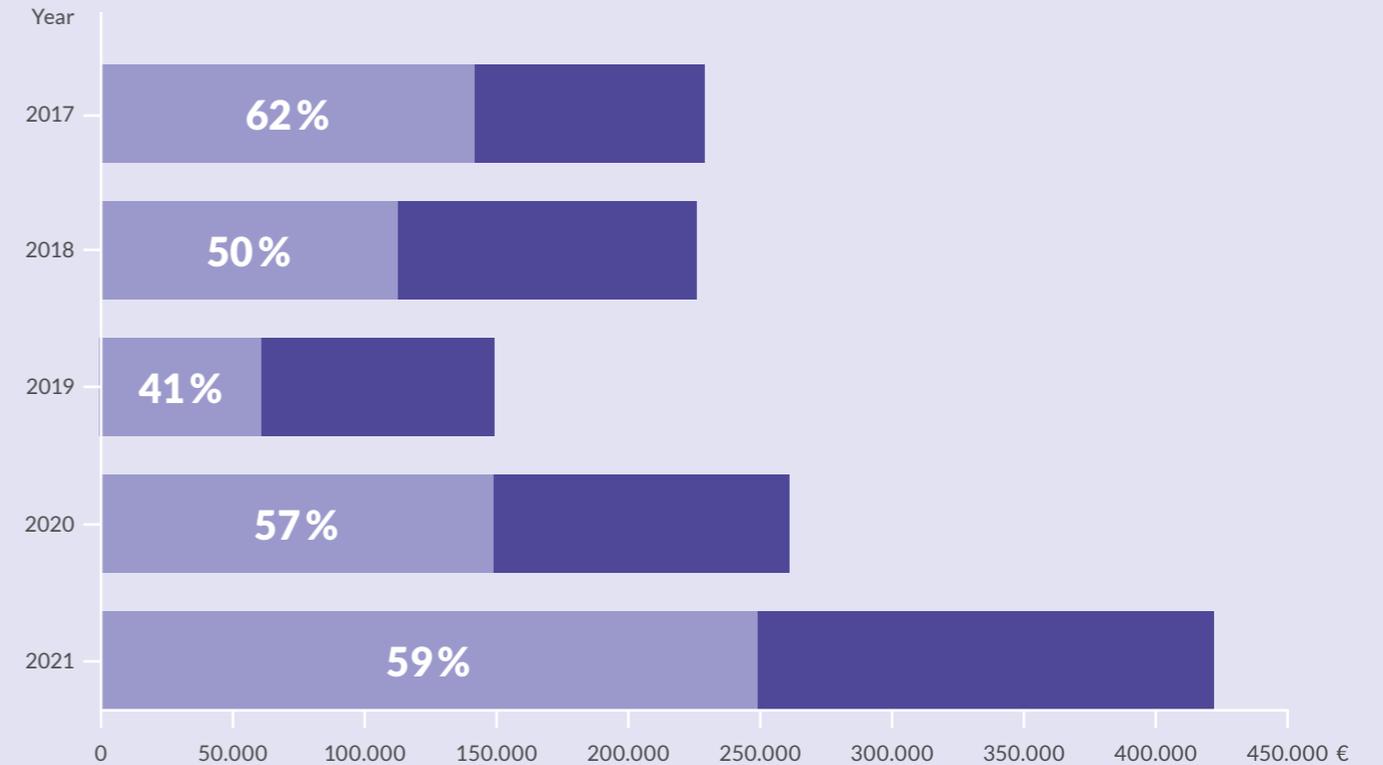
A more detailed schedule of our Annual Event and activities for 2022 will soon be announced.



KEY FACTS AND FIGURES

Promotional material of YES Forum

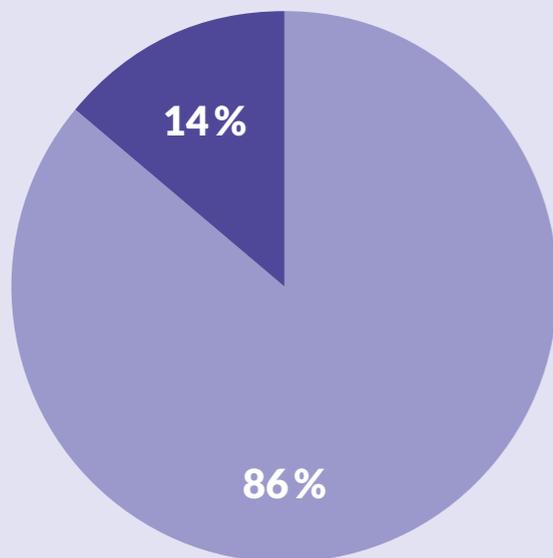
Project Expenses from the Total Grants



In 2021, our total grants increased significantly. Hence, we were able to increase our expenses on our projects and members' activities.

- Total Grants
- Project Expenses

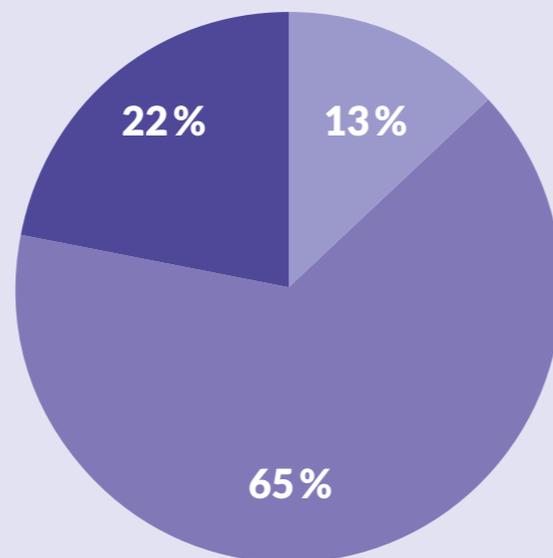
Online and On-site Activities



■ International On-site
■ Online

All on-site events were organized between September and November 2021. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, it was not possible to organize on-site events most of the time. However, when it was possible to hold face-to-face events, we took the opportunity and made the best out of the current situation.

Type of activities



■ Advocacy
■ Network Activities
■ Trainings & Workshops

In 2021, the following publications were produced as part of our project work. In addition to English publications, we also produced translations in the languages of partner countries such as Dutch, French, Greek, German, Romanian and Spanish.

Publication	Topic
Guidelines for Inclusive Mobility Promotion (SIEM)	Handbook developed for International Relations Offices working with in- and outbound student mobility, primarily within the Erasmus+ programme.
“Maybe it will be different abroad” (SIEM)	An extensive research report that gathers student and staff perspectives on diversity and inclusion in international student exchanges.
Inclusive Communication Manual (SIEM)	A practical guideline on how to communicate inclusively with international youth for written, spoken and visual communication.
Handbook & Toolbox for Professionals (It Works!)	Guideline developed for professionals working with marginalized youth in the field of VET.
Soft Skills for Employability: It Works! (It Works!)	Handbook for practitioners: soft skills for young people away from formal VET to enhance their knowledge and boost their employability.
Europe and Me: Participatory Photovoice Research (Europe3E)	A guide to explain the Photovoice method as used in the Europe3E Project.
How to involve all youth in the European project (Europe3E)	A guide to promote the use of inclusive political simulations.
Europe3E starts at your doorstep! (Europe3E)	The publication complement the views of young people who are not well organised and are outside mainstream political dialogue procedures.
Experts on-site travel diaries (SAAM)	Travel diaries of VET experts from Europe that travelled to different countries in Africa for job shadowing.

Exhibition	Topic
What does Europe mean to me? (Europe3E)	Online exhibition presenting Photovoice pictures taken by the young participants in the Project.



STRUCTURE

Board's retreat meeting in Cologne, October 2021

The YES Forum, founded as EEIG, is a membership driven organization. Objectives are achieved through our democratic structure with full participation of members. Elected by the members, the Board of Directors represents and protects the members' interests within the network, and supervises the budget and activities. The appointed Managing Director is responsible for running the business of the EEIG and internal organisation. To manage the activities and to support effective internal and external communication, the YES Forum is supported by the Secretariat in Stuttgart, where experienced staff works together with young people in training as apprentices and EVS-volunteers in a dynamic environment.

BOARD

- Gwen Birza,**
Jongerenwerk Barkema de Haan, Netherlands
- Hannah Degerman,**
Pita Kommun, Sweden
- Sebastian Frank,**
ÖJAB Vienna, Austria
- Alexander Hauser,**
BAG KJS, Germany
- Lilika Trikalinou**
IEKEP, Greece

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Director and Project Manager
- Diana Neugebauer,**
Finance and Administration Officer
- Elie Demerseman,**
Trainer Youth Activities
- Thais Dutra Fernández,**
Project Officer
- Orane Jouanneau,**
Project Officer
- Çağla Ezgi Yıldız,**
Intern (since August)
- Iliana Petsa,**
Intern (since November)





YES Forum EWIV – Youth and European Social Work Forum



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March 2022

YES Forum is a member of the



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Text written by Iliana Petsa and Çağla Ezgi Yıldız.

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