



Impact Report 2022





Welcome!

It is a privilege to introduce our Impact Report 2022 in a new design. After two years dominated by online activities, the YES Forum responded in 2022 with courage to organise in-person activities. Our Annual Event, hosted by our member Zefiro in Tuscany, was the starting point of a series of in-person international events, trainings and conferences in different European countries.

All our different activities and formats are essential to listen to young peoples' stories and the experiences of our practitioners working to support young people in diverse situations. Having members from all over Europe that work directly with our target group provides a unique perspective of European social and youth work. Built on that, YES Forum produced several publications on different topics that impact our work. This rich expertise is useful for organisations beyond our network and also respected and heard in the public sphere.

This report shows the YES Forum's passionate work towards a more inclusive Europe.

We wish you an inspiring read.

Annett Wiedermann & the YES Forum's Secretariat
Director

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Dear reader,

as the chair of the YES Forum board, I would like to take this opportunity to thank each member and partner for your genuine commitment throughout the years, your work in the youth field, your passionate youth and professionals, and your engagement in networking form a ground for European inclusion. The year 2022, although its many challenges, has been a successful year for YES Forum collaborations, thanks to the skills and the knowledge you provide to project meetings, events, and digital brainstorming. The foundation of the YES Forum rests on the commitment of members and partners. It emphasizes a strong, European bond where organisations share perspectives on the importance of youth work.

Many of our members are continuing their project work for next year through ESF+ or Erasmus+. North Sweden's and Piteå municipality's (which organisation I represent) focal point for the following years is the green transition, where new industry establishments enable hundreds of thousands of jobs in a region with demographic challenges. Engaging in the recruitment of both national and international newcomers is one methodological way to approach the challenge, but it addresses the fear of brain drain in other regions.

Developing innovative methods to decrease the distance between the youth and the local and regional business sector is therefore another way to ensure the skills supply in the region. Such youth work is inspired by your practices and the great results that you bring to our European network.

Your constant will to take European youth work to the next level is highly appreciated from the view of the board of YES Forum. It is what will keep us moving into an uncertain future where partnerships might be more important than ever.

I'm happy to be working with you in 2023!

Hannah Degerman
Chair of the Board
Piteå kommun



Back to on-site events. 2022 has been the year in which we got together again in person with members, professionals and young people.

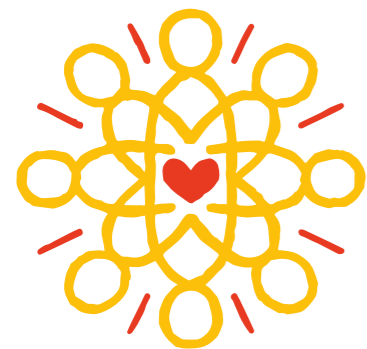


Happy birthday, YES Forum!

Our network is now 20 years old. We are as committed as the first day to work towards a more inclusive and participatory Europe.

New image, same values.

This year we have renewed our logo and image, but we maintain our core mission: empower young people.



The network grows.

Solidarity Works, a Bulgarian organisation, has joined us as a new Associated Member. Welcome!



Working more closely with our members. The collaboration with Zefiro and BAG KJS was key to organising our two main events, the Annual Event and the Policy Event.

28

in person activities & events organised by the YES Forum, from members' events to projects' meetings, trainings, workshops and study visits covering a wide range of topics.

719 participants

gathered face-to-face in our encounters, coming from different backgrounds: youth and social work professionals, young people, students and policy-makers.

Facts about YES Forum

51.800

people reached all around Europe through our activity on social media

7 countries
hosted this year's gatherings:
Austria, Belgium,
Bulgaria, Croatia, France,
Germany and
Italy.

6 publications

that explore the impact of current issues on social and youth work were produced based on our network's expertise.



Looking forward to 20 more years of the YES Forum!

2022 was a turning point for many reasons. We knew it would be a special year since the network celebrated its *20th Anniversary*. The goal for this year was clear: resume our activities as normally as possible, paying special attention to on-site events. Of course, involving young people.

It was not easy, but we had the invaluable support of our members. In collaboration with *Zefiro*, we held our *Annual Event* in Viareggio on 25–27 May. We met our members in person again and thereby inaugurated our comeback to on-site events.

It was the perfect occasion to *revitalise the network* after two exceptional years. We reflected on the challenges faced during the pandemic and looked forward to future projects and collaborations. The exchanges indeed inspired us to continue working together for a more inclusive and participatory Europe.



Annual Event in Viareggio,
May 2022



The European Pillar of Social Rights and their application

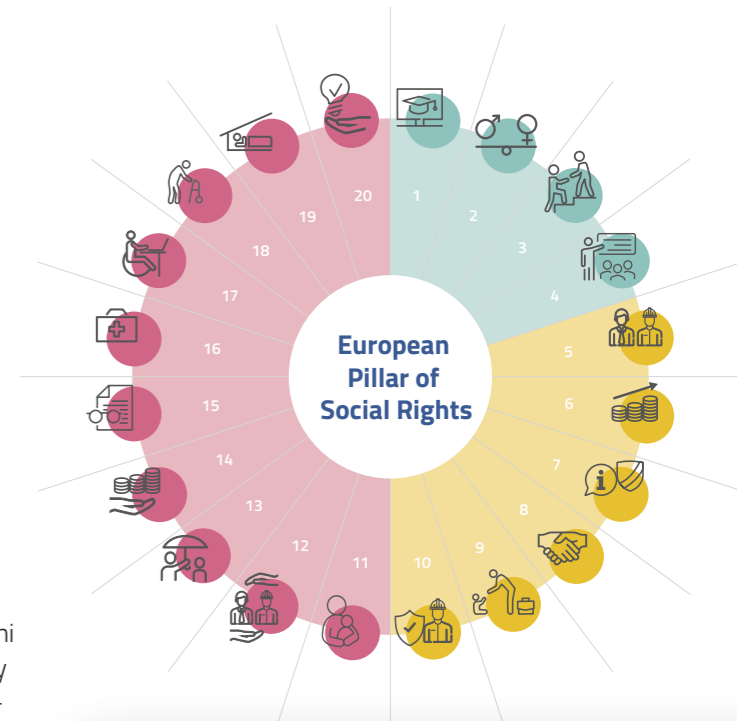
Through our advocacy work, we seek to build bridges between grassroots work and policy-making. Our annual *Policy Event* is the best example. On 26–27 October, we met once again in Brussels with professionals from the youth and social work field, members of the European Commission, representatives of European networks and young people to talk about *Social Inclusion and participation of young people in Europe*. The event took place as part of the European Year of Youth.

Organised in collaboration with our member *BAG KJS*, it was an insightful event full of exchanges and discussions about the *European Pillar of Social Rights* and their implementation in the field. The inputs by Silvana Roebstorf, Policy Officer at the European Commission, Peter Besselmann and Lucrezia Ioannoni Fiore, Desk Officers of the ALMA initiative, and Sterenn Coudray (IB), Mirco Trielli (Zefiro) and Jan Wilker (Goethe Institut), professionals from different countries, brought together the policy-making and the field-work spheres.

European networks such as Eurodiaconia (Heather Roy), Social Platform (Katja Reuter), Solidar (Martina Corti) and Caritas (Philip Hagedorn) and local organisations coming from Greece, Slovakia, France, the United Kingdom and the Netherlands addressed the practical approach to the EPSR.

Listening to young people

True to YES Forum’s principles, young people played a central role during the event. To make sure that all participating young people would feel comfortable participating, they joined a tailor-made programme designed to introduce them to European institutions and prepare them to better follow the main programme on the second day. Active participation of young participants was encouraged throughout the event and we are delighted that Anna Maria Bareveld, a Dutch youngster, participated in the panel of the session dedicated to local experiences. In a very touching moment, she shared the impact that youth work and the social work that accompanies her have in her life (read more about Anna Maria Bareveld’s experience on page 20).



Policy Event in Brussels, October 2022



#rEUconnecting

The pandemic has shown the importance of cooperation to ensure that no one is left behind. For us, as a network driven by its members, this was always obvious: creating connections among countries is the only way to build a strong, inclusive, social Europe.

We are aware that European cooperation can be a wide concept. For that reason, we have asked several people what it means to them. From social workers to young people, they have shared different perceptions, but all of them have something in common: they all reflect how essential strong links are to ensure an inclusive Europe.

The testimonies are part of our #rEUconnecting campaign, aimed to raise awareness about the need for an interconnected civil society to shape a Europe that leaves no one behind.

Discover all the testimonies



Going beyond our network

Besides our advocacy activities, we are also involved in third parties' initiatives to bring further our network's experience and concerns. For instance, we are part of Social Platform's *Social Pillar Working Group* and we joined several international events such as the *Civil Society Days*, the *Conference on the Right to Disconnect*, *Strategic Dialogues* on poverty or the ESF+ work programme, Eurodiaconia's *Conference on the State of the Social European Union* and the *Public Participation and Deliberative Democracy Festival*.

We also participated as panellists at the *Inclusion & Engagement in Mobility conference* organised by the Erasmus Student Network. There we discussed the barriers faced by students coming from minority backgrounds going abroad.



The YES Forum, represented by Thais Dutra Fernández, at the final conference of the SIEM project, October 2023



Valentina Mercanti, regional MP of Tuscany, at the YES Forum Annual Event, May 2022

European Year of Youth

The European Commission designated 2022 as the European Year of Youth, to highlight the importance of European youth to build a better future. Along with two of our members, we organised two events in the frame of this special year.

In collaboration with Zefiro, we addressed the European policies and their impact on youth focusing on the Tuscany case with *Valentina Mercanti*, regional MP, and *Alessandro Tambellini*, mayor of Lucca, as part of the programme of our Annual Event.

Furthermore, the Policy Event, organised in cooperation with BAG KJS, also took place within the frame of the European Year of Youth, where young people were given the opportunity to voice their thoughts on the role of social work in Europe and engaged in exchanges with *Petra Kammerevert*, German MEP.

The COVID-19's impact on the youth field

The COVID-19 pandemic affected all fields since its outbreak in 2020. The youth sector has severely experienced its impact, not only on its daily work but also on the living conditions of young people.

We have analyzed the extent of the pandemic's effect on youth organizations' daily work by combining YES Forum members' experience with desk research. We aimed to gain insight into how they managed their work since the COVID-19 pandemic started, what new working methods they discovered, and how they are planning to continue. We compiled the results in the report *Youth and Social Work and the COVID-19 pandemic: Impact and perspectives*.

Following this research, we also compiled several *policy recommendations* for tackling the COVID-impact in the lives of young people and the work of the youth and social work sector. For these recommendations, we also profited from the conclusions of a second report we published this year, *The value of learning mobilities in a post-pandemic context*, focusing on how young people and professionals experienced learning mobilities in a period of transition to an almost-post pandemic context (find more details about this report on page 19).

Our main point of attention was the *forced* digitalisation for young people, education professionals and the youth and social work sector. From our experience, responses to such unexpected situations should not be only based on short term, emergency solutions but on tailored-made, long-term ones where digital tools are part of a human-centric approach, fostering equity for all young people.





FIELD WORK

FIELD WORK

Innovative methods

The YES Forum always looks for new approaches to social and youth work. By exploring innovative methods and partnerships with organisations beyond our field, we gain new expertise to make our work more inclusive. The best example of this is *the VOICE project*. Along with our youth and creative partners from Austria, Bulgaria, Germany, Italy and the Netherlands, we aim to promote the Photovoice method in youth work.

We organised *two trainings in Viareggio and Vienna*, where about 80 social work students, as well as young social and youth workers learned how to use the Photovoice method. Through a combination of theoretical input and practical learning, participants learned how to apply it in their future activities, and work towards more inclusive societies by empowering local communities.

During the process, participants produced the VOICE project's *Photovoice* results answering the questions *How do you imagine your European utopia in 20 years?* and *How would you describe the life of a young person in Europe to an alien?* The outcomes will be soon available in an *online exhibition*. Later,



they carried out several local experiments where they applied the expertise gained in the trainings.

Spreading the word

Two participants from the youth workers' trainings in Italy, *Kim Köhler* and *Olga Vlasova*, led two informative sessions in the frame of our annual Policy Event in Brussels. They presented the project and the benefits of the Photovoice method to professionals from the social and youth work field, young people and policy-makers (read more about Olga Vlasova's experience on page 20).

In parallel, the collaboration among youth and creative organisations will produce results which will contribute to promoting the Photovoice method across Europe through various channels: an *academic poster*, a *video tutorial*, a *handbook* and *policy recommendations*.



VOICE project's trainings in Viareggio and Vienna, May and July 2022

Bringing the EU closer to young people

READY

Most European young people are far from realizing the impact the European Union has on their lives. This distance is especially notorious regarding the European treaties. Although they are translated into all the languages of the 27 member states of the EU, that does not ensure everyone understands them. How do we make sure that the importance of the European Union is recognized by young people if its texts are far from their reality?

To raise EU awareness among young people by making relevant provisions from *EU treaties* understandable to them, we launched the *READY project* in April. We aim to raise literacy competencies in young people, so they can better understand the meaning of these treaties and the importance that they have over their lives.

Working together with partners from Croatia, France, Germany, Greece and Italy, young people will translate EU treaties into a *youth-accessible language*. During the project's *first training* in Strasbourg, participants deepened their knowledge of the European Union and how to design *infographics* through participatory and interactive methods. They focused on different aspects of European policies, such as the Union's competencies, European citizenship, free movement and the Schengen area, employment and social affairs, environment or the economic and monetary union.



Ready to read training in Strasbourg, December 2022

UPin

Climate change is a hot topic for younger generations. They are aware of its risks for the planet and they are actively engaged to find solutions. But are they aware of what the European Union is doing in that regard?

The *European Green Deal* is the major European initiative to tackle climate change and turn the Union into a more environmentally friendly territory. However, is not easy to understand its goals and the actions taken so far. Since May we are creating attractive and understandable content about the Green Deal for young people in the frame of the *UPin project*. Together with partners from Austria, Italy and Norway we want to raise awareness of climate change among young people, inform about solutions on different levels and empower them to become active in the fight against climate change.

Expanding horizons



BRIDGE training in Örebro, April 2022

Knowledge transfer in intergenerational workspaces

Social and youth organisations face a big organizational challenge: how to tackle the *generational gap* between senior and junior staff. Employees from different generations and experience levels have different skill sets crucial for youth and social work. But that expertise is not always properly transferred. Intergenerational dialogue plays a central role in ensuring knowledge transmission within organisations. Both junior workers and senior staff have different aspects to teach and learn from the other generation.

In this regard, we continued working on the *BRIDGE project*. During the last year, we participated in a new training on how to transfer knowledge in heterogeneous groups, organised in Örebro in April, and kept deepening our knowledge on the topic through exchanges with the project partners.

Following this experience, we published a set of *guidelines* on the matter addressing both social and youth work organisations and policymakers. We provided general recommendations to foster more inclusive workplaces and an accessible labour market for all age cohorts.



SAAM

VET student mobilities between Africa and Europe become a reality in 2022! The *SAAM project* started a new phase by bringing students from several African countries to Europe to broaden their knowledge and expertise with international experience. Our expert *Mirco Trielli* prepared the students with tailored seminars on intercultural exchange to support them with new skills before their travels.

Trielli's expertise on international mobilities was also shared with African and European professionals during the seminar *Capacity Building for Leadership in VET Mobility between Africa and Europe*, promoted by EfVET+ SAAM Team and held in February. The workshop focused on stereotypes and how to face them.



Mirco Trielli at the SAAM's seminar in Brussels, February 2022

Boosting inclusivity

It Works!

Since 2019 we have been working on developing tools for employability and soft skills to support NEETs and the professionals working with them. The *The Employable Youth: It Works!* project came to an end this year, but its learnings will last thanks to the many outputs produced by the collaboration among partners from Spain, Sweden, Romania, Greece, Germany and the UK.

In 2022 the pilot implementation of the *Assisted Training Scheme* was finalised and the experiences and feedback gained during the process were collated in a report. Moreover, all the learning was translated into several *guidelines and recommendations* for policy-makers and professionals to improve the employability of NEETs.

Flexibility has been the guiding principle during the It Works! implementation. On the one hand, the project was characterised by a steady adaptation in the face of unexpected and disrupting situations. On the other, these challenges led to additional and further learning for the whole project consortium concerning digital tools and approaches.



It Works! partners in Waiblingen, June 2022

The European Student Network (ESN) presents the project in Brussels, October 2022



SIEM

On 3–4 October 2022, the YES Forum participated in the *SIEM project's Inclusion & Engagement in Mobility* final conference organised by ESN in Brussels. We shared our experience at the panel on *Barriers to inclusion in Mobility opportunities for minority groups' perspective*. Furthermore, a young person from a rural area in France accompanied us to the event. This experience allowed her to enter into the dialogue on inclusive learning mobility in the context of higher education. Additionally, we invited a representative from ESN to present the SIEM project in our Policy Event as an example of good practice of inclusivity.

POWERst

Between 5 and 9 September, the University of Stuttgart organised the *POWERst Summer School*. Within five days students received tailor-made support to help them reach their full potential and to support them in completing their study courses. The YES Forum contributed to this Summer School by facilitating a *seminar about international mobility*.

On the 26th of October, we promoted the POWERst project during our annual Policy Event with social and youth workers, young people as well as policy-makers in Brussels. Practitioners from the youth and social field learned about and exchanged on POWERst's latest developments. Some of the most discussed topics revolved around *issues experienced by first-generation students*, such as difficulties to access support materials, networking or the impostor syndrome.



POWERst project presentation at the Policy Event in Brussels, October 2022

Our network's experience

At the YES Forum, we aim to ensure that all of our members have the opportunity to acquire the necessary skills and competencies to effectively reach their goals and provide high-quality assistance to the young people they work with. We provide room for peer learning and the exchange of inspiring practices to broaden our members' expertise. One of the main objectives of these activities is to *promote hands-on approaches to make VET, education and life-long learning more inclusive*.

However, this knowledge can also be useful for other organisations working in the social and youth field, as well as for policy-making processes. We have collected an overview of the activities through which we promoted this approach in *a report* and elaborated several *recommendations* for organisations and policymakers to help them work towards inclusivity.



A part for all

In May we started a new journey with the Center for Research of Ethnicity and Culture (Slovakia). The project *A part for all* aims to support the participation of youth from different minorities in activities and policy-making at the local level in Bratislava. In the summer of 2022, CVEK conducted 23 research interviews with young Roma, foreigners, LGBTI people, young people from socially disadvantaged backgrounds and young people with disabilities. The conclusions will guide the work of the *Diverse Youth Action Group*, formed by 15 youngsters from different minorities. The project and its goal were also promoted in Brussels in the Policy Event.

By *Alena Chudzikova, Center for the Research of Ethnicity and Culture, (SK)*





WORKING WITH AND FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Learning mobilities are back

The capacity building of our members and the young people they work with is one of our core activities. Our network organises quality learning mobility opportunities *for professionals and disadvantaged young people*. In our activities, we connect young people, especially those who otherwise may not have had the possibility or motivation to meet other cultures. In this way they can develop the right soft skills that would later improve their chances of employability, while flourishing their talents, developing self-esteem and confidence in their abilities, as well as critical thinking and a better understanding of the European Union and the value of active citizenship.

The COVID-19 pandemic forced us to stop or re-think trainings, internships and study visits. Even though digital tools allowed us to maintain some of the exchanges, the experiences lacked some of the benefits for participants. Luckily, in 2022 we could organise on-site learning mobilities again. We used these to gather valuable insights into how young people and professionals experience learning mobilities in a transition to an almost post-pandemic context. The testimonies and the conclusions are collected in the report *The value of learning mobilities in a post-pandemic context* and provide evidence that the on-site experience cannot be replaced.



Study visit to Stuttgart's Public Library, September 2022



Policy Event in Brussels, October 2022

Young people's experience

“Multiple points connect me with the YES Forum, and I should say that each of these points represents a unique journey and enriching experience.

The first connection was created in Viareggio (Italy) where many participants from different European countries came together to discover an interesting tool called Photovoice, the tool that promotes inclusion, participation and empowerment in youth work. It was an amazing experience in itself: *many interesting views and perspectives*, discussions on global and local issues and collective search for the ways for a better future for all of us. Summing it up, I can say that I came back to Germany inspired and with a number of great insights and ideas.

The next connecting point happened in the heart of European politics, in Brussels. There I had a great opportunity to present the VOICE project and my experience from Viareggio. It was a pleasure to present the interesting project in a supportive, family-like environment and to take part in a number of meaningful conversations. The whole atmosphere *encouraged me to think deeply about different stages of policy-making process* as well as to reflect on challenges and opportunities involved in this process.

And I am very grateful for this experience!”



Olga Vlasova

“This was the first time I visited Brussels and the European institutions. The program was nice, even though we missed part of the morning program on the second day. This was due to a communication error, which was resolved well.

When I came in on the first day I thought everyone looked very serious, but shortly after that I was able to relax. The ice breaker gave me contact with other people. That's nice, because you can talk to other people you don't know. I did get a little more information about the institutions, but sadly I can't learn and find out everything within two days.

When I was asked to speak in front of the group, I was very excited. And *I was also very happy that I was asked to give my opinion*. When it was time to speak, I really liked it! I also liked that I was given a choice to participate and that I could cancel at any time. That gave less pressure to say yes. I found it a very special experience to sit with the speakers and because they were talking about my peers, I was listening extra carefully. *It's nice to hear that someone is involved in my age group and that they want to mean something to us and want to get to know us*.

I really enjoyed the exchange! And if there is another similar exchange, I would love to participate again.”



Anna Maria Bareveld

“I started my internship at the YES Forum while I was still a masters' student at University of Padua (IT). My interest in youth policies and education, and the experience I gained with EU funded projects during my internship, inspired me into choosing my master's thesis topic, with the title *Environmental Citizenship Education for Youth in the EU: The Implementation of Erasmus+ Youth and European Solidarity Corps Programmes in Greece and Sweden*.

Employing a combination of descriptive analysis, content analysis, and descriptive statistics, my dissertation explored how environmental citizenship education for youth is promoted at the EU level and how the concept is mainstreamed at the national level. Considering that national contexts differ, the empirical analysis was focused on investigating to which extent the EU can promote this concept, thus exploring the implementation of the Erasmus+ youth and European Solidarity Corps (ESC) programmes in Greece and Sweden.

As a working student, I had the opportunity to *complement my own academic research with what I observed daily* at an organization leading and coordinating Erasmus+ projects for youth. Even if it was a challenging process in terms of time management, I found myself equipped with valuable theoretical and practical knowledge and experience to start my career in the youth and social work field.”

Summary of the thesis

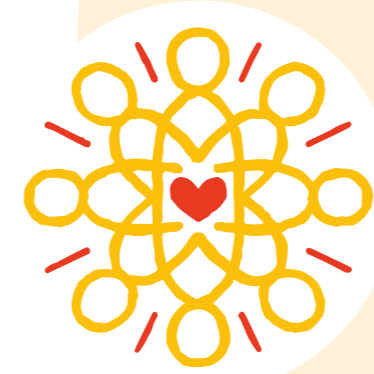


Iliana Petsa





OUR MEMBERS



Welcome, Solidarity Works!

2022 also brought us a new associated member! We warmly welcome Solidarity Works, from Bulgaria, to our network and look forward to further collaborations.

At Solidarity Works we work tirelessly to promote intergenerational and intercultural dialogue, empower marginalized groups, as well as youth, women and the elderly. We use art, storytelling, advocacy and self-development to prevent domestic and intimate partner violence, and are continuously learning how to create healthy and fulfilling interpersonal relationships as well as nurture solidarity between and among diverse groups of people.

Website: www.solidarityworks.eu

Contact person:

Maggie Nazer, Executive Director,
magi.nazer@gmail.com

Members' experience

“At the end of 2021 the EU proclaimed the Year of European Youth 2022. The BAG KJS then decided to organise a larger event in Brussels in 2022. This event should make visible the practice of youth social work and the situation of disadvantaged young people in the centre of the EU.

It quickly became clear that these goals would be difficult to achieve on a *national solo* basis. Cooperation partners at the European level who share the same interests and goals were needed. As the BAG KJS had been active member of the YES Forum for many years it made sense to approach this network for European youth social work.

For the BAG KJS the most valuable benefit was the cooperation and support from the YES Forum office team. Whether it was the preparation of the content and agenda, the administrative tasks or the many contacts to suitable staff, political representatives and, last but not least, to the member organisations of the YES Forum, without this multifaceted support the conference would not have been possible.

The cooperation has once again made it clear to BAG KJS how important the YES Forum is as a European network of youth social work but, also and above all, what outstanding resources and competences of European youth social work are available to the member organisations.”



Alexander Hauser, BAG KJS



WHO WE ARE

About the YES Forum

Founded in 2002, YES Forum is a European network of organisations working with and for young people facing challenging situations. We aim to create an environment where young people and youth professionals have equally accessible learning and work-related opportunities in Europe and beyond.

Vision, mission & values

The YES Forum strives towards a society where every young person, regardless of their background, is able to realize their full potential and is given the opportunity to make a positive contribution to society.

Together we can make sure young people's voices are heard.

The YES Forum promotes civic and political education across a more inclusive Europe. We are dedicated to increasing the opportunities and chances in the lives of all young people by providing support for real participation in society.

Youth participation is our central value. The guiding question in our work is not *What can we do for young people?*. Instead, we are asking *What can we do with them?*.

We acknowledge the diverse ways in which young people can make valuable contributions, by promoting their social engagement.

Objectives and principles

The YES Forum creates room for discussion and consultations. We strongly encourage the involvement of our members in transnational cooperation which engage both young people and practitioners.


To generate better prospects for the young generation


To raise awareness about youth issues on the political agenda


To optimize professional approaches in youth work


To widen participation all young people in decision making processes

Structure

The YES Forum is driven by its members, who have overall decision-making authority. The network is represented by the appointed Managing Director, who is responsible for running its business and internal organisation. The management Board elected by the members supervises budget and activities. Planned aims are implemented through our democratic structure with the full participation of members.

To coordinate the activities and to support effective internal and external communication, the YES Forum is supported by the Secretariat in Stuttgart. In the Secretariat, experienced staff works together in a dynamic environment.

Our Members



Board

Gwen Birza
Jongerenwerk Barkema de Haan (NL)

Hannah Degerman
Piteå kommun (SE)

Sebastian Frank
ÖJAB (AT)

Alexander Hauser
BAG KJS (DE)

Lilika Trikalinou
IEKEP (EL)

YES Forum Secretariat

Annett Wiedermann
Director & Project Manager

Diana Neugebauer
Financial Administration

Çağla Ezgi Yıldız
Project Assistant

Iliana Petsa
Project Assistant

Olatz Alonso Guevara
Communication Officer

Elie Demerseman
Consultant & Trainer in European Projects

Thais Dutra Fernández
Project and Advocacy Officer



Empowering
young people

**YES Forum EWIV –
Youth and European Social Work Forum**

Wagenburgstr. 26–28
70184 Stuttgart
Germany

T +49-7 11-1 64 89-27

office@yes-forum.eu
www.yes-forum.eu



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Editor YES Forum

Author(s) Olatz Alonso

Contributions Alena Chudzikova, Alexander Hauser,
Anna Maria Bareveld, Iliana Petsa, Olga Vlasova

Proofreading Sophie Brandes

Design Ralf Schnarrenberger

Images credits

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