



REPORT

Summary

After two years of online events, on 25-27 May, YES Forum held its **General Assembly and Annual Event 2022** on-site in Viareggio (IT) in collaboration with Zefiro. The event's highlights were to reconnect, celebrate the 20th anniversary of YES Forum and think together for a more inclusive and participatory Europe.

50 participants from 24 organisations and 11 countries reviewed the extent of their improvements and the challenges faced during the last years and looked forward to future projects and collaborations. Several **keynote speeches and discussions** focused on the topics of **European Pillar of Social Rights** (EPSR), social inclusion and employability of young people. **Alternative sessions** were organized for young people to share their ideas and experiences on internships and for participating organisations to **exchange their inspiring activities and practices** at the market place.

Please find [here](#) photos taken during the event.

Wednesday, 25 May

Photovoice – a creative and arts-based approach in youth work

YES Forum Annual Event started with the Photovoice exhibition created by young people through the VOICE project. The project's training participants, mainly from the social and youth work field, experimented with the participatory research method Photovoice, addressing the question "How do you imagine your European utopia in 20 years?". Their produced photographs and respective annotations were exhibited in the venue, thus providing the Annual Event participants with the opportunity to get familiar with the Photovoice method and grasp how young youth and social work professionals view Europe.

Joint Dinner & YES Forum 20th Anniversary Celebrations

Joint dinner on the first day was the perfect occasion to get together, reconnect and celebrate the 20th anniversary of YES Forum. Besides the delicious food and golden sunset, a Kahoot activity was organized to get to know the YES Forum network and ask questions about Italy and Europe. Furthermore, participants watched a short video by Hans Steimle where he talked about the beginning of YES Forum 20 years ago and how it has been growing since then.

Thursday, 26 May

Share & Care: “How did we make it so far?”

The event’s second day started with the Share & Care activity where participants paired with each other and exchanged inspiring practices regarding their work during the last two years and their plans looking forward. Participants mentioned the increase in online activities instead of on-site activities and the usage of video conferencing tools since the pandemic started. Looking forward, participants stressed on being adaptable and flexible, keeping some of the working methods learned, such as using online tools to reach more young people and the balance between home-office and working from the office. Furthermore, YES Forum promoted [its survey on “Covid-19 Impact on Youth Organisations and Looking Forward”](#) to collect more information on the topic.

YES Forum General Assembly

The General Assembly reviewed the projects and activities of 2021 as well as the last 20 years’ accomplishments. An outlook on the future with new themes and opportunities was presented. This year, the approval of the ESF+ operating grant was a significant development for YES Forum. The new operating grant paves the way for adequate finances to implement the YES Forum Strategy, extend the network and member collaboration and be more active in advocacy. During the GA, the balance sheet for 2021 was approved as well as the release of the board. The network's financial situation is stable, with a positive outlook for 2022.

Alternative session: “Internships – how to develop your talents and competencies”

Parallel to the General Assembly, an alternative session brought together a diverse group of former and current trainees, young people and professionals to discuss internships. Former interns of the YES Forum talked about their journey, starting from their experience as interns at the YES Forum and reflecting on how this experience influenced their professional path later. All participants were invited to share their own experiences. Undoubtedly, internships were recognized as a practice with both positive and negative aspects to be carefully considered during the session. Unpaid/underpaid internships and the unfair access to the job market in different national contexts around Europe were the main discussion topics. In the end of the session, the consultation on “Quality Framework for Internships” was promoted. Please find more information about it [here](#).

Lights on... Policy Experts & Social Affairs

Keynote speeches were mainly focused on EPSR’s third and fourth principles: “Equal Opportunities” and “Active Support to Employment”. Alva Finn, Secretary-General at Social Platform, introduced EPSR, its action plan timeline and key objectives. She stressed youth employment as another indicator for the 2030 headline on employment and the lack of action plans for the year 2023. For this reason, she pointed out the need for holding your country to account by monitoring the national targets and engaging in the process. Cătălin Buzoianu, PhD Student at Freie Universität Berlin, stated that “substantive social rights in the form of access to social protection and healthcare must be a recognized counterpart to attracting skilled young people to the labour market of wealthier Member States”. Stefano Tirati, Vice President at EfVET, talked about how green transition and digital technologies transform the way we live, work, and learn. He mentioned the need for a holistic approach to make VET more innovative and flexibility to make lifelong learning more inclusive through the help of digital technologies.

Please find the presentations of the speakers [here](#).

Friday, 27 May

European Policies and their Impact on Youth

On the event's last day, participants attended the last conference on "European Policies and their Impact on Youth" in Lucca. Alessandro Tambellini, the Mayor of Lucca, welcomed participants in Lucca and thanked them for their presence in the town and overall action aimed at empowering young people. Valentina Mercanti, the Regional MP for Youth, presented the Tuscany region's project "Giovanisi", which has already supported more than 405,000 young people for their studies and training, independence, professional integration and the launch of new businesses.

A roundtable regarding the "European Youth and Participation" was organised in the last session. Annett Wiedermann, Managing Director at YES Forum, focused on several innovative projects of YES Forum by stressing their non-judgemental approach to raise all young people's societal and political awareness. Cătălin Buzoianu, PhD Student at Freie Universität Berlin, walked us through his experience as an international EVS volunteer at YES Forum and the challenges he faced in Germany. Thais Dutra Fernández, Policy Expert, emphasised the importance of easy and accessible language for young people to be involved in every part of society. Jim Davis, Head of Youth Engagement at the Children's Society, talked about the drawbacks of Covid-19 and Brexit on the youth and social work by focusing on the migration policies in the UK and anti-racist initiatives in their organisation.



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[Survey: Covid-19 Impact on Youth Organisations and Looking Forward](#)

Please fill our survey **by 30 June!**