Navigating Transitions Creating Futures: Supporting young people into meaningful Employment, Education and Training in rural areas

Report: YES Forum's Annual Event & General Assembly 2026

From 15 to 17 June 2026, YES Forum members, partners, policymakers, and youth and social work practitioners gathered in Timișoara and Reșița, Romania, for the Annual Event 2026. Hosted in partnership with YES Forum member Nevo Parudimos, the event brought together around 80 participants from across Europe. Combining the YES Forum General Assembly, the *Back on Track* Final Conference, field visits, and networking activities, the programme showcased inspiring local initiatives and provided dialogue between policymakers and practitioners. Through the event, participants gained a deeper understanding of the important role that European programmes such as ESF+ and Interreg play in supporting innovative approaches to youth employment, participation, and social inclusion.

Arrival, Walking Tour and Networking

The YES Forum Annual Event 2026 began on 15 June with a guided tour of Timișoara 'Walking Through History – A Journey to the Origins of Romanian Democracy'. The tour offered participants a unique introduction to the city's rich history and democratic heritage, providing valuable context for the activities in the following days.

The day concluded with an interactive networking dinner designed to encourage informal exchange among members. Through a creative skills-mapping activity, participants shared both the skills they could offer and those they wished to develop, highlighting the diverse expertise across the network. Building on this exchange, the following day YES Forum introduced its new flagship project, Generation LINK. It brings together youth and social workers from different generations to learn from one another, strengthen professional skills, and support knowledge transfer across the sector.

General Assembly – Statutory Part

On 16 June, the YES Forum General Assembly took place in Reșița, Romania, home to YES Forum member Nevo Parudimos. Participants were warmly welcomed by Director Daniel Grebeldinger and his team. Reșița's Mayor, Ioan Popa, also joined the opening and shared inspiring insights into the city's transformation from a former industrial centre into a more diverse and resilient local economy, a topic that resonated with many participants.

The General Assembly provided the platform for YES Forum's activities and achievements in 2025 while looking ahead to future priorities. Members received updates on the organisation's annual accounts and financial planning, celebrated the successful award of the four-year EaSI Structural Grant under the ESF+ programme, and learned about the new Secretariat team structure. The meeting also highlighted EU policy developments and opportunities for collaboration in 2026. Also, YES Forum welcomed new member Avalatea from Spain to the network.

Another highlight was the presentation of the Erasmus+ project WAVE II – What about Democracy Education, Participation and the Transfer of European Values in the Context of Intercultural Youth Social Work, delivered by Alex Hauser from BAG KJS. The project was showcased as a strong example of collaboration among YES Forum members and of how joint initiatives can bring valuable youth work practices to the European level. As a project partner, YES Forum contributed to the development of the Digital Guidelines, one of the project's key outputs. Participants were introduced to the project's main results, including the Digital Guidelines and the multilingual Video Course, which offer practical tools and methods for participatory democracy education in intercultural youth social work.

During registration and breaks, YES Forum members furthermore had the opportunity to have their say in the public consultation for the next EU Youth Strategy. Feedback collected will be fed into the

consultation process, ensuring the network's expertise will be considered in the further refining of the document. These resources sparked lively discussion and interest among participants.

Community-Driven Approaches to Roma Housing, Employment and Rural Inclusion – Field Visits

Before the field visits, a local council representative and Daniel Grebeldinger presented their collaboration in providing services and social housing for vulnerable Roma communities in Reșița. They highlighted the value of strong partnerships between civil society and local authorities in addressing social challenges. Participants then visited Nevo Parudimos' youth centre, a local NGO hub, and a social housing project. The visits showcased community-led approaches to Roma inclusion and youth work, offering inspiration and practical ideas for participants' own local contexts.

Back on Track: Time to celebrate

The day ended with a festive dinner and music, bringing together YES Forum members with the Back on Track project participants for a special occasion: Celebrating the successful conclusion of the 2.5-year Interreg project. Participants from both contexts mixed during a Danube themed pub quiz, and a local Roma band brought in a festive vibe.

Conference on Targeted Training Approaches to Improve Employability and Social Inclusion for Rural NEETs in the Danube Region

The Back on Track Final Conference, led by ÖJAB, focused on presenting and discussing project results around improving employability and social inclusion for rural NEETs in the Danube Region.
Katarina Ivanković-Knežević, Director for Social Rights and Inclusion at DG EMPL, contributed a warm opening address which highlighted the EU's efforts to improve social inclusion for nearly 8 million young "NEETs" (those not in employment, education, or training), particularly those facing extra hurdles in rural or impoverished areas. This commitment is supported by €17 billion from the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+), and existing initiatives like the Youth Guarantee which have already helped over 63 million young people transition into work or training, aiming to reduce the NEET rate to 9% by 2030.
Deeper insights into the Romanian context were provided by Kașai Paula-Roxana, Executive Director of the Timiș County Employment Agency, and Stefania Andreescu, General Director at the Romanian Ministry of Labour, Family, Youth and Social Solidarity.
Following this, project partners in the Back on Track project Alexia Ciucan (psychologist), Vojtěch Jíra (DEX), Cornelia Kramsall (ip-center) and Vlasta Marković (Prijateljice) presented examples of project impact and outcomes from their local contexts, highlighting the need for strengthening of self-worth and celebrating the small steps of achievements by the young people.
The conference concluded with the presentation of further Interreg projects taking steps in a similar direction and highlighting the on-going need of specialised support for the target group.

Connecting Ideas and People – Learning on ESF+ and Interreg

The YES Forum Annual Event 2026 concluded with a networking lunch. It also provided a final opportunity to contribute to the consultation on the future EU Youth Strategy and to learn more about the outcomes of the WAVE II project.
In the closing session, Annett Wiedermann and Julia Probst thanked host organisation Nevo Parudimos and all those whose dedication contributed to the success of the event. Overall, the Event strengthened cooperation across the YES Forum network and provided valuable insights into youth and social work practices in Romania and the Danube Region. It also highlighted the vital role of European funding programmes, particularly ESF+ and Interreg, in supporting innovative approaches to youth employment, participation, and social inclusion.


YES Forum 2026 Annual Event
Navigating Transitions
Creating Futures
Supporting young people into meaningful Employment, Education and Training in rural areas
15 - 17 June 2026, Timișoara (RO)




Board Reflection
Bringing the YES Forum Strategy to Life




WAVE II
Erasmus+




VALATEA
















Final Conference











Final Programme Annual Event

Empowering young people

Monday, 15th June 2026	
afternoon	arrival/ registration
17:00 – 19:00	**Walking Through History** **A Journey to the Origins of Romanian Democracy** Guided Tour through Timișoara
19:00 – 22:00	**Interactive Dinner** food, fun and conversations - project showcases

Tuesday, 16th June 2026		
09:00 – 10:30	Bus transfer from Timișoara to Reșița	**Parallel activity for BoT Partners** (organised by ÖJAB) **Workshop Erasmus+ Project WAVE II** (organised by BAG KJS)
10:30 – 12:30	**YES Forum General Assembly** EEIG members	
12:30 – 13:30	Lunchbreak	
13:30 – 17:00	**Community-Driven Approaches to Roma Housing, Employment and Rural Inclusion** Field Visit **Strategies for Engaging NEET Youth Through Vocational Education, Training and Employment Pathways** Field Visit	
17:00 – 18:30	Bus transfer back to Timișoara	
19:00 – 22:00	**Festive dinner and music for all**	

Wednesday, 17th June 2026	
10:00 – 12:30	**Targeted Training Approaches to Improve Employability and Social Inclusion for Rural NEETs in the Danube Region** Experiences from the Back on Track Project - Impact & Outcomes
12:30 – 14:00	**Connecting Ideas and People** Networking lunch, informal exchange, and information stands
from 14:00	departure