

REPORT

YES 2022



*The return
of the YES
ON SITE*

**INSPIRING
SNEAK PEEKS
TO THE
PROGRAM**

**STUDENT AND
VOLUNTEER
INSIGHTS: WHAT
WERE THE
HIGHLIGHTS THIS
YEAR?**

**PILOTING AT YES 2022:
COMMUNITY
COORDINATORS AND THE
VOLUNTEER PATH**



YOUTH FOR UNDERSTANDING
make the world your home



EUROPEAN
SOLIDARITY
CORPS



Co-funded by the
Creative Europe Programme
of the European Union



IT'S LIKE COMING BACK HOME

Real life events like the YES have been craved by many ever since the pandemic started. For the past two years we have lived our daily lives through Teams and Zoom, longing for physical gatherings where the real presence of people and the feeling of community can be experienced through all senses.

Also the YES has been conducted online for the past two years. While successful as an educational activity and in providing participants with amazing content, it still could never replace the actual, original, live

version of the YES - not to mention the YES spirit that we usually build together each year at Werbellinsee.

It is needless to say that this year we felt immense relief and joy that the event could finally be produced and experienced in its original form. While making our way to Werbellinsee on the weekend before YES we truly could feel like coming back home - a place with precious memories there to remind us, reuniting with familiar faces, forming new friendships with less familiar ones, and simply enjoying the energy of the YFU family!



"BRINGING THE YES BACK IN SUCH A FASHION GIVES THE ENTIRE YFU COMMUNITY HOPE THAT IT'S POSSIBLE TO RETURN TO THE YFU WE REMEMBER."

- CHRISTIAN VASILE

YES 2022 IN FIGURES

27.6. - 1.7.2022



100

Volunteers



32

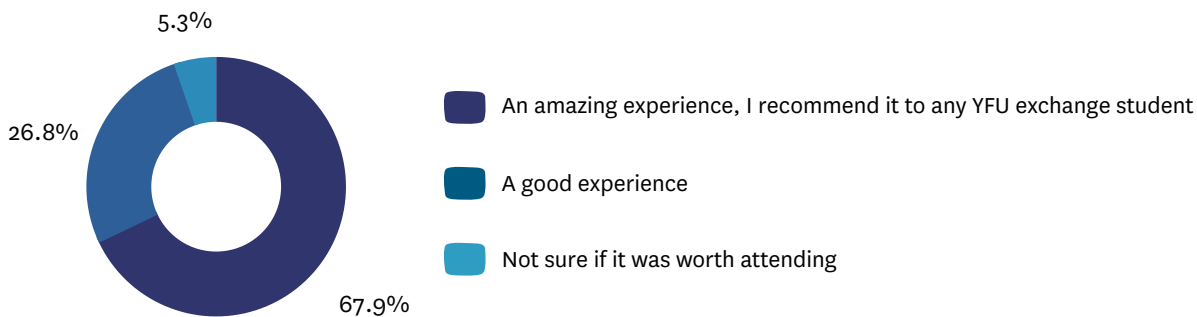
Countries



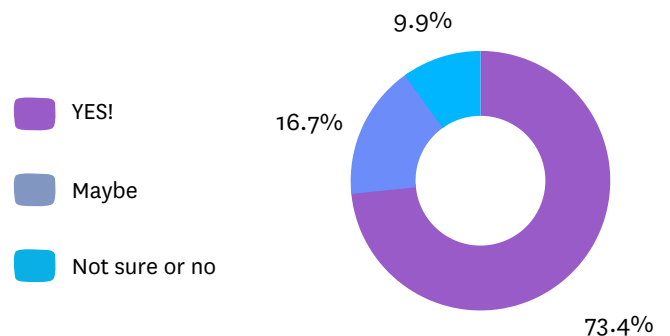
245

Students

Participants on how they would rate their YES experience:



Volunteers on whether they plan to attend YES next year:



YES 2022 NEWS FLASH

PILOT PROJECTS

This year's YES was not only about bringing the original event back to life, but also about adding new aspects to it and trying out new things. Like any annual event, the YES needs constant modification and development. Hence, we introduced some pilot projects to this year's agenda.

We were excited to introduce an addition to the community building aspect of the YES; the Community Coordinators. This duo of creative, enthusiastic minds, also known as Kinga Śliwińska and Zuzanna Nowak, came up with a wide spectrum of activities for engaging both volunteers and students in building a shared sense of community - and ensured with their work that the YFU spirit was lifted through the roof!

A big part of this project were the Spirit Activities, which consisted of a wide range of inspirational, fun games and other program ran by volunteers. These Spirit Activities replaced what used to be the Freetime activities (or FTA's), although the FTA tent with its activity equipment was also present and open for participants at the event.

Another pilot project was the Volunteer Path. This new stream of participants was a direct response to the "lost" two years in many volunteer activities, and especially aimed for young volunteers who have only recently begun volunteering, and who might want to develop their skills in facilitation, leadership, and managing team dynamics.

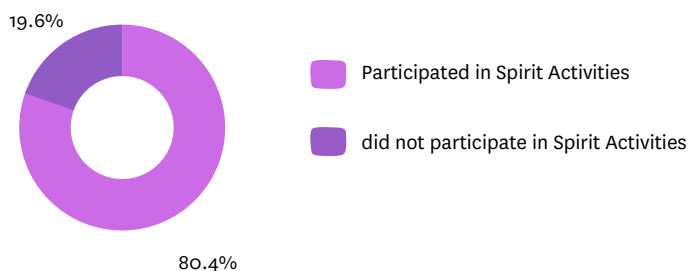
BREAKING RECORDS

In addition to the changes and pilot projects that took place at the YES this year, also some records were broken.

We were delighted to welcome an all-time high number of new volunteers to the event: approximately 50% of all the 100 volunteers were joining the YES for the first time as volunteers. This was an uplifting and motivating development to see, as it truly indicates that the YES attracts volunteers and is seen as an inspirational volunteer activity.

Besides many new faces, we were also happy to encounter many familiar ones that have stayed in the team despite the past challenging years.

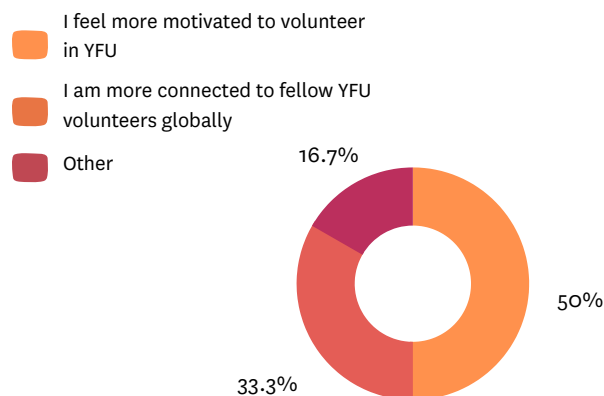
Student barometer



How were the Spirit activities?



Volunteer Path participants on which of the statements they can relate to after the YES



PILOT PROJECT: COMMUNITY COORDINATORS

The YES is known for its unique spirit and sense of community. This is the place where not only the students, but also the volunteers get together for a shared experience that strengthens the whole global YFU community. In the planning process of his year's event the need for community coordinators was recognized. These devoted volunteers, Kinga Sliwinska and Zuza Nowak, would ensure that the YES spirit was lifted through the roof.

Their role consisted of both content and logistic related tasks, but with a lot of freedom and space for creativity. "The best aspect by far is the creative freedom that we were given over the implementation of the role, and the encouragement we received for our ideas - both from each other, and from other volunteers. I also enjoyed having an informal and friendly relationship with everybody on site, students in particular", Zuza reflects on her role. How did this pilot project go, would you see community coordinators also in future YES's? "I would definitely recommend to keep a community coordinator role for the future editions.

PILOT PROJECT: VOLUNTEER PATH

The volunteer path was a direct response to the lost two years of the real YES experience, as we noticed there are many new volunteers with little to no introduction to such global volunteering efforts like the YES. The path was happily welcomed by new volunteers and we received a total of 14



The feedback received from students was overwhelmingly and nearly unilaterally positive and I think it speaks for itself."

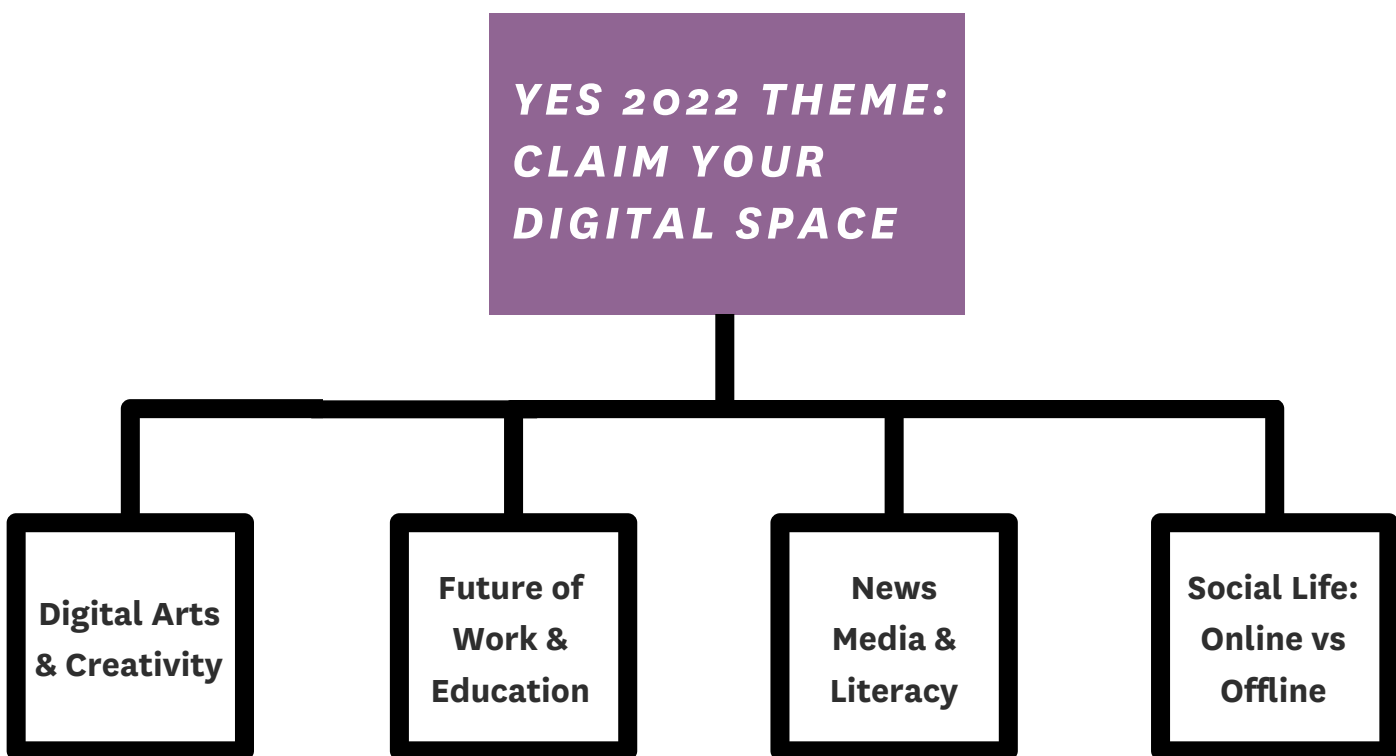
"I can't imagine the YES without running fun, informal activities in addition to the educational content - it wouldn't be the YES anymore. I think the role of Community Coordinators carries great potential, especially if we have the resources to provide them with a slightly bigger team in the future. I have no doubt that the YES is a place where changemakers and leaders of the future are made. It's hard to put into words somehow, but being there, meeting those youngsters, seeing the volunteers work tirelessly to create the legendary YES magic - it's an experience unlike any other" Zuza concludes.

participants for the path. There was a high diversity rate in participating countries, as participants represented 10 different countries, two outside of Europe.

The volunteer path was a unique opportunity for young volunteers (21 years and younger) from all over the world to participate at the YES together with current exchange students who are returning home. Participants on the Volunteer Path would - for the most part - participate in the same activities as the students. These included, for instance, the track sessions. But in addition, these participants would join sessions specifically tailored for the Volunteer Path. During these workshops they would get to know more about volunteering at YFU and the YES while developing their skills as a volunteer in three main areas:

- Group Dynamics & Conflict Resolution - understanding team dynamics, sharing best practices for successful teamwork and exploring techniques for preventing and managing conflicts
- Workshop Facilitation - how to professionally manage groups of students during orientation seminars, finding out ways of asking the right questions, and perfecting skills in debriefing non-formal learning activities
- Project Management & Organization - identifying the key stages of any project, become familiar with useful tools for time and task management, and discussing the importance of work-life balance with other engaged volunteers.

CONTENT STRUCTURE



BUILDING A COHERENT THEME

This year's theme reflects the ever-growing need of understanding the digital environments we operate in. Especially now with the recent leaps in digitalization due to the pandemic. We learn online, meet new people, maintain relationships, entertain ourselves, and access information—all with a few clicks. But these opportunities also bring significant challenges and concerns, such as the negative impact on wellbeing, personal data being sold for profit and difficulty in finding reliable information. It is up to us to figure out how to make the internet friendlier, safer, and more inclusive. There are a few questions we could try to answer:

- How can you protect your privacy when every platform or app demands access to your personal data?
- How do you shape informed opinions and arguments when the media is full of unverified content?
- How can the internet be used to foster 21st century skills such as adaptability, cross-cultural communication, critical thinking, and emotional intelligence?
- How can you use your own exchange experiences to influence your immediate environment, inspire civil society, and create positive change?

TRACK SESSION HIGHLIGHTS ACCORDING TO PARTICIPANTS

"My favorite part was learning about the difference between work and job, the importance of humans, and the fact that there are no perfect students or teachers. Also, I really enjoyed the activity with statements, where we had to decide if we agree with them or not and how for example the things we learn in school differ extremely from country to country. Also found the AI part on one side fascinating and on the other side scary and just "fascinating and scary"

"I liked talking about our opinions on education around the world, especially hearing the other peoples stories"

"The fake news and how difficult it can be to expose them"

"Learning what makes a picture good."

"I liked that we discussed a lot."

"My favorite was definitely the one where we had to stand in the room, and decide where to stand depending on how much we agree/disagree."



FUTURE OF WORK & EDUCATION

"New technologies have impacted our world in revolutionary ways. Think about this - 50 years ago, the invention called a personal computer (PC) was a rare novelty item. Now, they're everywhere and even our smart phones are small and powerful computers. The World Wide Web has only been around about 30 years - and now we've endless cat videos, Big Data and the Internet of Things. It's mind-blowing how far we've come by 2022 - how can we even begin to grasp what the world will be like in 2072? The COVID-19 pandemic has forced the world to accelerate our technological advancements even further. We shouldn't forget, however, that the biggest game changers were already there well before the pandemic. The endless possibilities of Artificial Intelligence (AI), machine learning and Virtual Reality (VR) have been gaining more and more traction for years. Learning apps like Duolingo, Augmented Reality environments such as Pokemon GO and innovative e-learning courses are just a few of the already widespread applications."

These are the questions that guided us on our journey at YES 2022: How are new technologies changing the future of work and education? What knowledge, skills, and abilities are necessary in the digital age? How will we work or study in 2072? If you want to embark on an imaginative journey into the future, this is the track for you! We can't know what the future be, but we're sure going to challenge ourselves to envision what we'd like it to be...

In this track the students experienced five different sessions:

Session "Technology and Ethics of the Future" took the groups on an explorative journey into the world of art. As the students who had already done session B knew, there are certain jobs that are said to be less affected by AI and automation: the empathic jobs, the strategic jobs such as diplomats, and the artistic jobs.

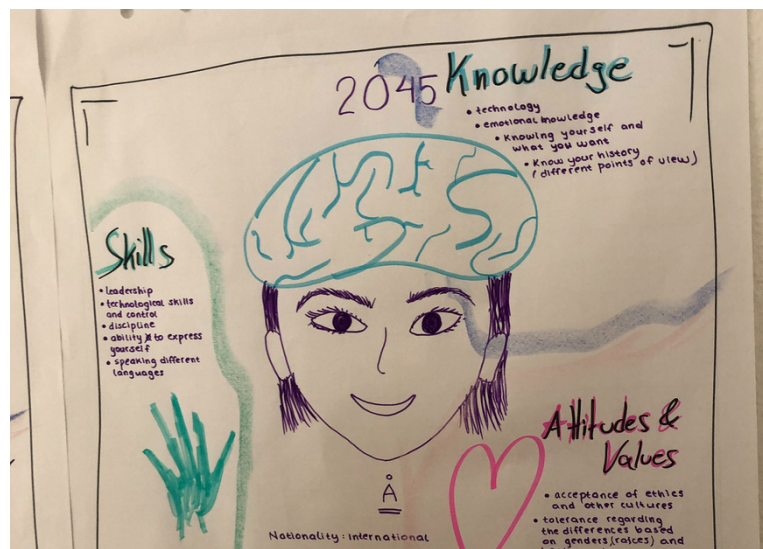
In this session we challenged this widespread notion and looked into innovative, creative, artistic AIs that already exist. DALL-E 2 is a new AI system that can create realistic images and art from a description in natural language.

We discussed who owns the rights to AI created images and how that changes the notion of an artist, and touched on the potential misuses of these tools.

Session "The Future of Work" discussed the automatisisation of jobs and the changes that technology brings to the job market. There are jobs that people used to hold even a decade ago that don't really exist today. What's with the disappearing jobs, and, the jobs that are being invented right now and in the future? We discussed, if automation is automatically a danger to jobs (it's not) and if automation will really replace workers (not really). According to a McKinsey study, only 1% of jobs can be replaced totally by automation, but 62% of the occupations consist at least 30% of activities that can be automated. There are also some occupations that are less likely to be replaced.

Session "The Future of Education is Now" focused on comparing educational systems that the participants have experienced on exchange and in their home countries. To arrive at the future of education, someone needs to start making changes now. Based on their experience with mostly formal but also informal education in their host and home countries, which aspects would they like to change and which did they like? This session was the most theoretical of the four, with a short foray into the neoliberal influence and capabilities approach. In the end the groups realized that the current educational system and the ways we learn or consider important to learn can be different. Students can - and probably during their exchange already did - question the status quo of the educational systems, potentially because they saw each country can have a different status quo (hence it is not one).

In session "School of the Future" the groups imagined the future of schools and how technology will influence what is expected of students and teachers in the future. Through an activity called the Perfect Student, participants reflected on what they feel is expected of them in the educational system and whether they agreed with these expectations. Then, the groups imagined the perfect students and teachers of the future to highlight differences in preferences and the changing world. In the end, participants briefly explored opportunities of action in their own environments. What to do when things are not perfect? How to get involved and have influence?



NEWS MEDIA & LITERACY

"We often hear that excessive social media use can lead to anxiety, depression, FOMO and other mental health issues. During this self-reflective session, we wanted to help students assess their current relationship with social media, and build healthy habits to use these online platforms, so they can enjoy them to the fullest!"

Track Leader Hanna Szabo tells about her session:

"The session started out with an introduction using pictures and memes, followed by a True or False Quiz that introduced theory. Then the session moved on to a short presentation from the Track Leaders about social media and identity, for which we used the metaphor of a theater stage. For the second half of the session, we had the students make individual collages about their identity and social media use, and reflected on these.

I believe that overall we managed to design a session that was engaging and informative, but also not too overwhelming for the students. To my surprise, students were most engaged during the theory part – the section we initially thought would be the most boring for them! They loved debating and we had great discussions, sharing personal stories, and challenging each other's viewpoints. This also meant that I had to adapt the session to the students' needs, so I had to be flexible with the material we prepared, so I shifted a few things around to make sure we have enough time for this theory part.

Nonetheless, I am very happy that Eli and I prepared just enough content that we could deliver in 2 hours, but also enough wiggle room so we could cut a few aspects if necessary when I saw that the group needed something else. "



Personal learning outcomes of Hanna:

"I was quite nervous before because I wasn't sure what the students would like, if I could connect with them, or if they would find the topic interesting. But after the first session I was on cloud 9 because I really felt like we prepared something great and the student's feedback was amazing. Of course there were better and worse moments and sessions, but that is all part of it. And it was just really cool to talk to smart and engaged teens about topics such as identity and mental health."

-Hanna Szabo, YFU volunteer & Track Leader of News Media & Literacy track at YES 2022



DIGITAL ARTS & CREATIVITY

"More than 40 students joined Digital Arts and Creativity workshops for three days. The introduction to the topic started by the incredible and inspiring story from Digital artist Zack Ritche from Malta who started his artistic career at an early age and continued with his persuasion to show up and create a Beppe illustration every day. He introduced students on how digital art and illustrations can collaborate with various fields creating value, as well as master the skills by being playful and experimenting with Beppe persona.

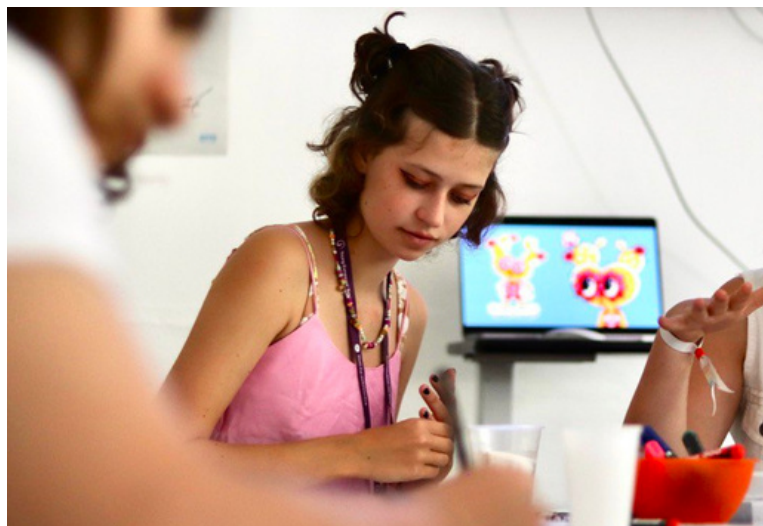
The discussion continued with second guest speaker, CEO and co-founder of "Metaverse Architects" Sean Ellul, who led to discovery of the future environment: discussing terms of "digital property", "NFT" and "artificial intelligence".

Students were keen to find out on how NFT can be recognized and what role NFT's will play in the future. On to that Sean had only one suggestion - he strongly encouraged students to study tech and stay educated about the changes that are about to come.

On following days students had an opportunity to work in close collaboration with digital artists - digital illustrator Zack Ritche and photographer Balint Tapay. During the workshops tips and tricks were revealed. Balint on Photography workshops invited students to take a closer look on how the message gets encoded in the artpiece, discovering major aspects that help to do that, but on the last day they had a hands-on approach. Students created and encoded a message in their photography as well as clarified together the possible partway to become an photographer by themselves.

During the Digital Illustration sessions YES participants learned more about each other, creating their own Beppe versions. During the drawing session Zack invited students to be themselves and embrace their own unique signature.

Each artwork took a very different way of expression, reliving their experience during the exchange or their favourite things in the world. At the end they all together created a common artwork that got to be claimed as NFT POAPs (proof of attendance protocol).





SOCIAL LIFE: ONLINE VS. OFFLINE

During the pandemic, the need to stay connected to each other became a central element in everyone's personal life. Not being able to meet personally had a major impact on every generation, but possibly even more so on high schoolers. They had to make a transition onto the internet to socialize, and many channels of social media grabbed this opportunity to exploit this need for staying in touch.

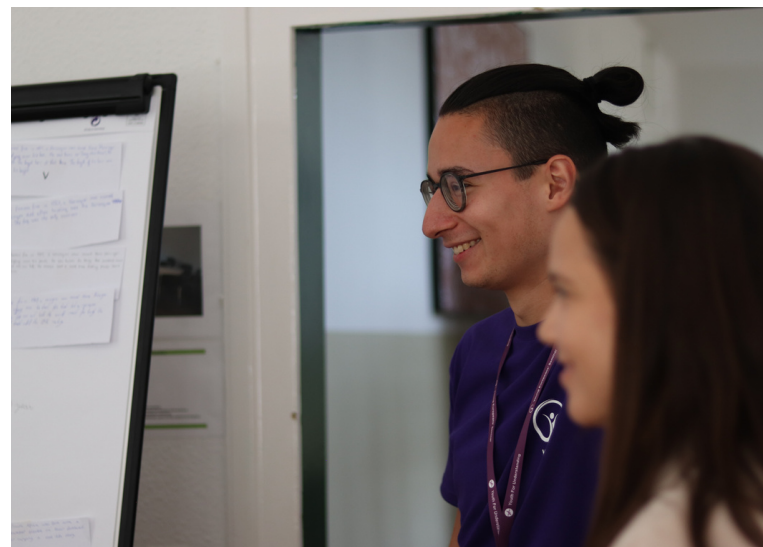
In this track we focused on preparing the students for the post-corona world, bringing their attention to the differences between socializing on the internet versus in person. Although it is easy to say 'personal meetings are objectively better' at first glance, it is important to emphasize that the internet is an amazing place and has many benefits, which is why our motto during the preparation of sessions was 'social media has both good, and bad. We must learn how to minimize the bad while maximizing the good'

In this track the students participated in three sessions, each two hours long. During the first session, Algorithm, we covered how different social media sites gather our data and use it to enhance the experience, target us with ads or sell it to third parties. It is our own responsibility to draw the line: what is it we are happy to share. The students had to take on the role of a social media site and create a website or social media post according to their agenda, which included grabbing the reader's attention, hiding advertisements in the content, and keeping the reader in front of the site as long as possible. Then we discussed how these agendas apply to real life and if there is anything we should or could do about it.

In the second session, Fake News Debunking, we focused on tactics and tips about false information spreading, not only on the internet, but also verbally. After discussing the difference between mis-, dis- and malinformation, we discussed why fake news is created, how we can detect them and stop their spreading.

The third session, that we nicknamed the Mirror, delved into the internal differences within ourselves. We all show a different face on social media than we do in real life. On the internet, we typically share positive memories, exciting adventures or interesting places we have been to, which creates the illusion that our lives are so much more amazing than they actually are. The boring days, the hard times and personal problems rarely get into our feed, but they do exist. The students were all asked to draw a portrait of themselves, split into two: on one side, the life they show on the internet, and on the other their everyday life that only people closely related know. We then talked about why this is the case and the things we need to be careful about when posting or viewing other people's profiles.

Based on the participants' opinions, our most successful session was the Fake News Debunking. This is the session they enjoyed most and took away a lot of information with them. Keeping the same group through all sessions was also a good idea, getting to know the students and having a personal bond with them was essential in the last session, when we asked them to talk about their personal lives and share it with us.





"IT WAS INTERESTING TO LISTEN TO YOU GUYS ON STAGE AND YOU DID A GOOD JOB AT KEEPING US ENTERTAINED WITH THE DIFFERENT PROGRAMS. LITTLE VIDEOS, GOING ON AND OFF STAGE, DANCE IN THE BEGINNING, MUSIC, ENERGIZERS ... ALL THIS WAS JUST GREAT. SO, THANK YOU SO MUCH!"

-YES PARTICIPANT'S FEEDBACK

YES 2022 HOSTS PETRA AND MATEI - CONNECTING THE DOTS

The plenary sessions - one each morning and evening - are the connecting dots throughout the whole program at YES. In these sessions the hosts engage with the participants on topics related to the theme, but also entertain them through a wide variety of energizers.

This year's hosts Petra (from Finland) and Matei (from Romania) took the stage with confidence and delivered announcements, sparked engaging conversations, opened the floor for discussions, and built an open atmosphere for reflecting on each day's learnings and main events.

"Being a host at the YES makes you the face of the seminar since you are one of the people creating the bridge between the students and volunteers", Matei describes. "I was impressed by how woke the teens were and it was amazing to see their curiosity to ask questions from both the speakers and us, the hosts. All of the plenaries made me realise that their generation will achieve great things since they have not only the resources but also the motivation to do it" he states.

For Petra the students were also the highlight of the seminar: "The students were absolutely lovely, and I had lots of very deep and mature conversations with many of them. I don't think I would have had half as much (sensible stuff) to say at their age!" she states. "I think the best moments of the plenaries were when participants would just shout out questions and, without prompt, engage with us on stage", Petra recalls. And what did you gain out of being a host? "I definitely gained trust in myself, and the ability to speak into a microphone without my voice breaking completely!"

Petra and Matei, what is your message to any external partners?

"I believe that YES is one of the most emblematic seminars for the youth around Europe and has a huge potential in the development of the participants. Maintaining a strong partnerships however is the key of ensuring a good collaboration with other entities. I do see the YES and YFU as part of an international community or group and to achieve this we would need the support of our partners.

Creating an international body encompassing organisations such as YFU and merging the knowledge of participants and volunteers would create a strong educational body that would have the power to assist on developing more inclusive legislation that would assist the youngsters in their development as international citizens", Matei answers. Petra adds: "I think the YES is important not only as a step between the exchange year and homecoming, but as a platform for individual expression, finding one's voice again after a life-changing experience, and a place to contemplate how to use this experience to spread the word of acceptance and love"



YES 2022 GUEST SPEAKERS AND PANEL DISCUSSION

In addition to other plenary session content, the participants were also inspired through a panel discussion with three, young bright minds.

Discussing the different hot topics and issues around digital spaces, their usage and the youth, our panelists gave the audience some food for thought - and the opportunity to ask questions, discuss and engage.

The panel discussion was monitored by the hosts Petra and Matei, who set the tone and direction of conversation with their questions. However, the conversation quickly took its own spontaneous twists and turns as eager panelists pointed out more and more interesting viewpoints. This natural flow of conversation was the perfect fit for the inspiring atmosphere of the YES.

Sean, Abril and Maz all brought their own perspectives, experiences and advice to the table, with a laid back yet professional approach. For many participants this was a learning moment, even though the topic was for many already rather familiar.

The topics of discussion ranged from online privacy to data collection, echo chambers, memes, online communities and behaviour, safety, youth, algorithms and more.

While panelists Abril and Maz were already familiar faces to many volunteers and participants, Sean represented a different angle, coming from outside of the YFU community, yet familiar with the field of youth. The trio was a diverse, informed combination with a lot to give for the audience.



Sean Ellul is an expert in the field of digitalization and Metaverse development, but also has a strong background in youth work and organizations.



Experienced YFU volunteer Maz is currently working as a Training Manager Fellow at Atlas Corps in the States. At the YES their role was Senior Education Team leader.



Argentinian law-student and active YFU volunteer Abril is an expert in education and innovation. her role in YES was junior Education Team Leader

PARTICIPANTS' FEEDBACK ON THE PANEL

"IT WAS GREAT AND INTERESTING TO HEAR THE STORY FROM SOMEONE WHO WORKS AROUND THE WORLD"

"EVERYONE LOVED THEM! VERY INTELLIGENT AND INSPIRATIONAL!"

"INTERESTING CONVERSATION FROM DIFFERENT PEOPLE, EACH ONE BROUGHT SOMETHING TO THE DISCUSSION!"

INSIGHTS



"I really think it's great that we have the opportunity to come to the YES, because it's a much needed transition between the end of an exchange year and going back home, which can be hard. Without this kind of transition it would be really difficult to deal with it kind of ending all at once. At the YES you can talk with people and take time to reflect and understand that this exchange experience is over, and through joint activities realize that everyone is going through the same emotions and we can support each other. For example, during the IGL sessions, I had moments where I realized that I was not the only one going through tough times and feeling unsure about how going back home will be like. The YES is also an opportunity to meet so many different cultures and people - we have had many interesting and important conversations with all the other participants!"

Juliette, YES 2022 participant, exchange student in Scotland and Flanders 2021 - 2022.

"I am happy to represent my country, Thailand, at the YES this year. My expectations for the YES were to connect with other people in YFU and to learn more about volunteering, especially now since during the past few years this has been limited due to the pandemic. As a Volunteer Path participant I have learnt how to manage team dynamics, how to facilitate workshops and how organizations work. I feel that this experience has really improved my skills as a volunteer and I now feel confident in leading workshops!

As for the students, I feel they need an event like the YES in order to connect with other people, learn about other countries and how to adapt back to their home countries. This seminar is very helpful, no matter where you were on exchange or where you are from. You can sense the international atmosphere here!

My goal is to return to the YES next year as a volunteer, because I really enjoy this and want to experience it from the volunteer point of view."

Nutthanun, YES 2022 Volunteer Path participant, Exchange student in Argentina in 2019-2020



"To me, the YES represents an opportunity. I am the first Argentinian in the core team, and thanks to the YES I was able to travel from Argentina to Europe. This is my first time traveling outside of Argentina and that's really special to me. From the YES, I will bring back home a lot of motivation and encouragement for volunteers outside of YFU to join. My message is that even if you didn't go on exchange, or you don't have the same experience as most of the YFU volunteers, you can also join this amazing team and you can make changes to the things around you. My advice as a volunteer from outside of YFU is to not be afraid of making mistakes - this way you can learn, feel the experience and enjoy it!

I think the students need an event like YES, because they are still processing their feelings and what has happened in the last 10-12 months. The YES provides a safe space to share all this, to learn more and wrap up everything. They can come back home and have all their ducks in order, so to say."

Abril, YFU volunteer from Argentina, Junior Edu Team Leader at YES 2022



VOLUNTEER FEEDBACK HIGHLIGHTS

"I REALLY ENJOYED GETTING TO KNOW THE STUDENTS AND HELPING THEM NAVIGATE THE TIME AHEAD. I ALSO LOVED GETTING TO KNOW OTHER VOLUNTEERS FROM AROUND THE WORLD."

"I LOVED BEING A PART OF YES AS A VOLUNTEER. IT MADE ME FEEL MORE CONNECTED TO THE GLOBAL YFU."

"THE YES SPIRIT AT LEAST IN MY VIEW WAS AS STRONG AS EVER, BUT WITH STRONGER STUDENT NUMBERS AND A CONTINUED AMBITION TO IMPROVE I KNOW THAT WE CAN REACH FOR THE STARS!"

"I WAS REMINDED AGAIN HOW SO MANY DIFFERENT PEOPLE CAN FEEL SO CONNECTED."

"IT'S SHOWED ME HOW MUCH I'VE GROWN (IN LARGE PARTS THROUGH VOLUNTEERING WITH YFU) SINCE MY OWN YES AS A STUDENT AND FIRST YESES AS A VOLUNTEER. IT HAS ADDED TO MY EXPERIENCE WITH FACILITATING EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES BUT ALSO WITH FORGING NEW PERSONAL CONNECTIONS."

THOUGHTS FROM A FREESTYLER

"The 16-year-old & before-having-went-on-exchange me would not believe me if I would try to explain to her what type of an impact the chosen exchange organisation would still have in her life several years later.

I was a student myself in Germany with YFU 2015-2016, where I had the loveliest and funniest host family and nicest friends, who supported me throughout the year. I grew a lot, experienced new things, learned to let go & came back home with a new language and a more open mindset than before. Additionally, I spent an amazing year in Uruguay interning for YFU after high school. And oh boy, the personal growth was on a different level, and the people I met helped me to become the person I am today.

In the years after my exchange, I have found myself constantly in different YFU events, no matter whether they were back in Finland or somewhere across the globe. I have met such inspirational people and made friends with people across the globe whose actions, intelligence, and kindness always amaze me. I have found my people and place within YFU.

The pandemic left a hole in my YFU-filled life and I've missed my people more than I can explain. The past week, I spent volunteering for YFU YES, a Youth Empowerment Seminar, that took place for the first time in person since the pandemic and collected around 350 lovely people from every corner of the world to Germany.

The YES already ended a few days ago but I've needed a few days to reflect on everything and now I am just sitting on my couch with a few tears of gratitude running down my cheeks. The past week in Germany, working with a team of nearly a hundred volunteers really reminded me of the amazingness of it all and got me super emotional. This post somehow became a massive salute to YFU but I am extremely grateful for each experience and friendship created through this wonderful organisation. Also, massive thanks to my Freakstylers and every other volunteer and student, who participated in the YES and made the event as amazing as it was. My heart is full. See you soon friends!"

Sanni Granqvist, Freestyler at the YES 2022

REFLECTIONS & IMPRESSIONS



Lotta Vaher  · 3rd+
Student and debate teacher at Tartu ... [+ Follow](#)
2w · 

So my exchange year in the Czech Republic has come to an end.


This is an experience I will never forget. I feel like I've become an even more open, international and resourceful person as a result.

Studying abroad, first at Gymnázium Luďka Pika in Pilsen and later at Gymnázium Chodovická in Prague, I learned first hand how the Czech school system works. As always there are some things we Estonians could learn from them, as well as some things they could take from us.

The highlight of the year was definitely the Young European Seminar - it was incredible to see similarly motivated young people from all across the world! We might be the digital generation, but learning about it more in depth will, I'm sure, pay off.

Thank you to all the wonderful people who supported me on this journey and everyone at [Youth For Understanding](#), [YFU Eesti](#) and [YFU Czech Republic](#) for giving me this opportunity in the first place.

Lotta Vaher, participant at YES 2022



valts_grinbergs The heart is full with YFU spirit!

It was so great to be back, see all these beautiful faces and getting to relive this week one more time.

The itch is real!

These people inspire me every time I get to see and hear what they have accomplished and what they are looking to achieve. Keep this up team and stay true to yourself as you are all awesome.

10 years later and I still feel it

The impact this community have had on me and who I have become so far. Time really flies doesn't it, there for we keep going, growing and being better, kinder and welcoming to ourselves and others around me.

Conclusion

Yes yes I am feeling little emotional right now, after this great week as it remind me off all the things I love and make me questions how I want to proceed going forward.

Regardless of all the above, massive thank you to everyone who made this week so great, despite the fact if we shared a hug or not.
See you soon...

To be continued

[#yfuyes2022](#) [#yfu](#) [#yes2022](#)

Valts Grinbergs, Freestyler at YES 2022

Dear YES volunteers, It was an absolute pleasure to have had the opportunity to see the invaluable work you do here, and I feel extremely privileged to have experienced my first YES.

The work you do here is one of consequence, and I genuinely wish I had the chance to be influenced by such a fantastic group of humans when I was a student. It is crystal clear that your energy, dedication and drive has a genuine, meaningful impact on the students you work for, and you should all be proud to be influencing and empowering young people across the globe.

Thank you for giving me the chance and space to share my passions with you, for making me feel at home at my first ever YES, and above all, for contributing towards building a better, more accepting world for all of us.

Keep shining!
-Sean

Sean Ellul, Guest Speaker at YES 2022

PARTNERS



Co-funded by the
Creative Europe Programme
of the European Union

Liberty EU

LIBERTY is an exciting international arts programme exploring and celebrating freedom, led by ArtReach.

LIBERTY comprises of six strands of artistic creation and presentation:

- Inside – Out Performance: A performance taking place both outdoors and inside cultural or non-traditional venues; bridging the two spaces.
- Processional Theatre: A moving, parade-like, performance that engages passers-by and audiences on the street.
- Liberty Art: Provocative and place-making visual art, sculptural art, murals, street art and graffiti that exhibits anywhere there is a suitable space.
- Outdoor Digital Art: Presented outdoors, this work cuts across any art form and features significant digital elements in its creation.
- Educational Workshops: LIBERTY workshops are practical, accessible, challenging and fun. They enable the co-creation and exploration of the project's themes.
- Seminars: Enable a deep-dive into the project's themes; raising questions, seeking actions, and galvanising more interest and spin-off activity.

The six elements of the project will maximize engagement of audiences by being delivered in public spaces with prolonged artist development and sector learning opportunities. LIBERTY will be presented across 10 countries from September 2019 to October 2022. More info here: <https://artreach.biz/liberty-eu/>

As part of this project, young artists with migration background will come to the YES for 3 consecutive years (2020-2023), and will engage young people in artistic activities which will also bring into discussion the difficult realities of a migrant in Europe and how such an experience can translate into powerful art.

In 2022 we had artist Zack Ritche running a workshop within the track of Digital Arts and Creativity and Sean Ellul joining as a guest speaker.



European Solidarity Corps

The European Solidarity Corps is an EU funding programme for young people wishing to engage in solidary activities in a variety of areas. These range from helping the disadvantaged to humanitarian aid, as well as contributing to health and environmental action across the EU and beyond. It runs from 2021 to 2027 with a total budget of €1.01 Billion.

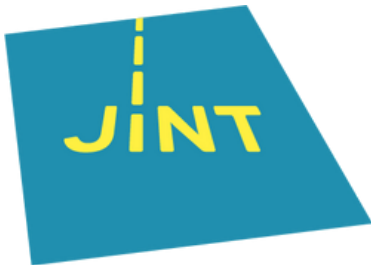
What is the aim of this programme?

The European Solidarity Corps aims to promote solidarity. It does so by enhancing the local or international engagement of young people to strengthen cohesion, solidarity, democracy and citizenship in Europe. Promoting social inclusion is key. The programme's ambition is not only to be more inclusive but also greener and more digital.

How do I apply for funding?

- You can submit your application to JINT vzw, the National Agency implementing the European Solidarity Corps in Flanders, Belgium. You can find more information on the dedicated website (in Dutch).
- Applications for volunteering teams in high priority areas can be submitted to the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency of the European Commission (EACEA).

With the help of this program, three volunteers (from Finland and Russia) supported this event.



JINT

Providing support is the core of JINT's work. We help young people to take part in international and intercultural exchanges, whether abroad or right on their doorstep. We help youth workers to take their day-to-day work to the next level with inspiring international partnerships and projects. We help to inform policy-makers, leading to a more international outlook on youth, youth work and youth policy.

JINT was founded in 1989 by the Flemish government, in consultation with Flemish youth organisations. JINT is a not-for-profit organisation, financed by two institutions:

- Department of Culture, Youth and Media of the Flemish Government
- Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture of the European Commission

THANK YOU!

***TO ALL THOSE WHO MADE THE YES HAPPEN,
WE'RE SO THANKFUL AND GRATEFUL!***

***YOU ARE A GROUP OF PRICELESS, SMART, AND
PASSIONATE VOLUNTEERS – ANY ORGANISATION
WOULD BE LUCKY TO HAVE YOU.***

WE HOPE TO SEE YOU AGAIN IN 2023!