



2023 REPORT

We thank our partners for their support



The IDF Europe Youth Platform & the IDF Europe Youth Leadership Lab (YLL)

The IDF Europe Youth platform is one of the pillars of IDF Europe activities. Supporting the **development of** the young people living with diabetes' **advocacy skills**, encouraging the **sharing of knowledge** and the **co-creation of successful activities** are core priorities for IDF Europe. At the start of their journey, **engaged young people are role models for their peers** and, as they progress in their professional lives and civic engagement, become even more effective advocates and influencers. One of IDF Europe Youth programme's main long-term objectives is to **empower youth to engage in policy and advocacy-related activities** by inspiring them through examples of positive leadership. Another goal is to **nurture an active pan-European network of young diabetes advocates**. We believe that not only will young people shape the future but that they already are instrumental in shaping the present.

Between 2011 and 2019, IDF Europe organised **Youth Leadership Camps (YLC)** that were co-hosted by member associations in Slovenia, Italy, the Netherlands, Croatia, Cyprus, Romania, the Czech Republic and Turkey. Reflecting the health situation during the COVID-19 pandemic, IDF Europe set up an online leadership training programme, the **Youth Leadership Lab (YLL)**, which acted as a replacement for in-person camps while restrictions for such gatherings were in place in 2020 and 2021.



While this allowed us to engage with new youth advocates, we were incredibly excited to return to the in-person reality last year in Poland, and this year in Bulgaria. Building on the 2020/2021 experience, the YLC programme has now also been enriched with **two online events** being held in preparation for the **physical camp**.

This year's Youth Leadership Camp was hosted by the Bulgarian Diabetes Association and was held on 9-15 July in Bankya, Bulgaria. The collaboration between all the stakeholders in preparing the event reflected the passion and determination to deliver a truly memorable YLC to all participants. We are immensely grateful to our partners for their support.





This year's camp welcomed **17 participants** and **six mentors** representing **17 countries**: Bulgaria, Croatia, the Faroe Islands, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Ireland, Lithuania, North Macedonia, Poland, Portugal, Serbia, Ukraine, United Kingdom and Uzbekistan.



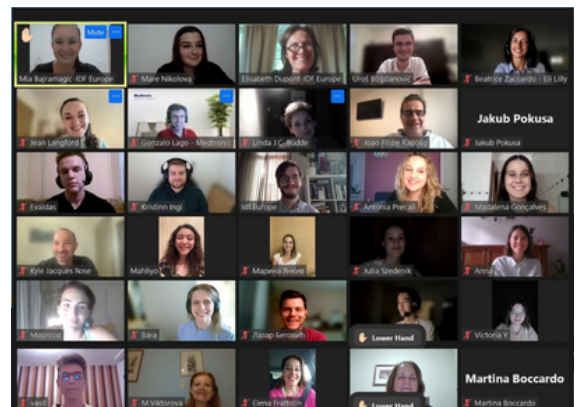
Health for all

The overarching theme was selected by the YOURAH Steering Committee and the IDF Europe Organising Committee. Aligned with the **WHO theme** used to celebrate its **75th anniversary**, “**Health for all**” was chosen to reflect on the differences and inequalities in access to diabetes care across Europe. Two sub-themes allowed participants to focus more specifically on **the role of young people** and **that of diabetes technology** to address these inequalities.



Online sessions

Leading up to the Youth Leadership Camp, **two online events** were organised to set the stage for this eventful week. Having met at the **opening session** on June 7, the participants took part in an **online workshop** where they were reminded of the key principles of effective presentation, before starting working as a group on the two sub-themes.



The first group focused on the role young people can play in achieving health equity. The second group researched the transformative potential of new diabetes technology. Both groups presented their findings at the end of the session. These online events laid a strong foundation for the in-person camp, providing the young leaders with the motivation and preparation to actively engage in the camp in Bulgaria.





Welcome and inspirational lectures

Maya Victorova, President of the Bulgarian Diabetes Association and IDF Europe Board Member, **opened the YLL by welcoming the participants** and wishing them an unforgettable week.

Mr Mihail Okoliiski, Deputy Minister of Health, Chair of the Supervisory Board of the National Health Insurance Fund and Head of WHO's Bulgarian Office **presented the challenges of transforming the Bulgarian healthcare system into a more prevention and person-focused system**. He shared his optimism in achieving such a change, emphasizing the role that young people can play in the transition.



Ms Rositsa Pandova, member of the Bulgarian Parliament from the group of "We continue the changes" and "Democratic Bulgaria" and a mother of a child living with type 1 diabetes, **welcomed the youth advocates in Bulgaria and wished all the participants a productive and memorable time**.

Professor Tsvetalina Tankova, Head of the Endocrinology Clinic of the Sofia University Hospital, Deputy Dean of the Medical University of Sofia and member of the Board of the Endocrinology Society of Bulgaria, **gave a highly informative and engaging lecture on the status of diabetes and diabetes care in Bulgaria**. She highlighted both the needs for improvement and the unique solutions that the Bulgarian state and civil associations offer for people living with diabetes.

The opening ceremony was also attended by **Professor Maya Kinstantinova**, Chair of the Board of the Bulgarian National Endocrinology Society for Children, who **actively engaged in the Q&A session**.





Traditionally, on the **first day** of the camp, participants have the opportunity to hear from **inspirational speakers**.

This year, **Kyle Jacques Rose**, former IDF Europe and IDF Board Member, shared his journey as a **diabetes advocate, professional cyclist and diabetes tech entrepreneur**. With great passion, he demonstrated the impact of advocating for improved diabetes care and awareness at all levels.



The second inspirational speaker, **Sana Ajmal**, joined online from Pakistan to share her story and the work of the association she founded, **Meethi Zindagi**, which is the **only diabetes community organisation in Pakistan**. She shared her successes and challenges in promoting diabetes education and in providing insulin and other diabetes supplies to those who are most in need. She encouraged participants to never give up as this is how sustainable change can be achieved.

The opening ceremony ended with a presentation from **Elisabeth Dupont**, IDF Europe's Regional Manager. She shared the organisation's belief that young people are not only shaping the future, but the present also. She briefly presented the **“three pillars” with which IDF Europe supports youth participants during the process of their development as individual diabetes advocates, as leaders at national and European level and throughout the process of their engagement and sustainable participation in the larger network and in the diabetes community at large.**





The near-peer mentoring approach

Although mentors were already part of the organisation of previous YLC/YLL editions, **near-peer mentorship has now become a fully integrated part of the IDF Europe Youth Leadership Programme**, turning the mentoring concept into two-way learning opportunities for both the participants and the mentors.

At IDF Europe we believe that **the most effective mentors are those with the most relevant experience, not necessarily the most experienced**. In the context of the youth programme, **YLC/YLL alumni are best placed to play this role** as they can empathise with where the YLL participants are, while still being able to recall the specific actions that helped them with their own development. For mentors, this brings the satisfaction to give back to their community, to gain new perspectives, to improve their communication and leadership skills and to boost interpersonal skills and self-confidence.

This year, **six YLC/YLL alumni, Jean Langford and Cameron Keighron** (both from Ireland), **Mia Bajramagic and Antonia Precali** (both from Croatia), **Uros Bogdanovic** (Serbia) and **Jaivir Pall** (UK) **joined the programme as mentors**. Prior to the in-person camp, they all engaged closely with the IDF Europe Youth Committee to design the agenda and shape the content of the sessions. The mentors joined the camp with a clear **mission – to guide and support the participants throughout their journey**. Their guidance and encouragement played a pivotal role in the overall success of the camp and in helping the participants refine their project.



Leadership and communication skills

Equipping the participants with essential leadership and communication skills is a key component of the programme. Throughout the camp, several sessions were organised to further develop the participants' leadership capabilities. These sessions also focused on developing **effective communication, decision-making, problem-solving and teamwork, empowering the young leaders to become catalysts of change in their communities**. By providing a diverse platform for skill-building and personal growth, the programme ensured that the participants left the camp with the confidence and tools necessary to drive positive impact in the world of diabetes advocacy and beyond.





Project management

During Cameron's session, participants gained valuable insights into project management. Cameron discussed **effective project planning**, emphasising the importance of **setting clear goals and objectives, defining tasks** and **setting realistic timelines**. This session was of particular interest, as the participants were tasked with developing their own projects during the camp.



Leadership styles

Cristina Petrut's lecture on leadership styles was an insightful experience for all participants. With her background in psychology, she **explained the various leadership approaches, helping the young leaders understand their own leadership styles and strengths**. She then explored the mental challenges that come with being a leader, emphasising the **importance of self-awareness and resilience** in navigating the complexities of leadership.



Active listening

In her interactive session on active listening, **Jean Langford** focused on empathy. Through practical exercises, she **demonstrated the value of active listening to establish trust, mutual respect and effective communication**.

Verbal communication

As Medtronic's Social Media Coordinator for the EMEA region, **Paco Orengo** then **shared his insights on the importance of clear communication and its impact on various interactions, using the four-sides model**. The participants learned to understand the different levels of verbal communication (factual, rational, self-revealing and appealing) from the viewpoints of both the sender and receiver of the message.





European Patient Forum Youth Group

For IDF Europe, collaboration and partnership are critical to drive sustainable changes. In this context, **Borislava Ananieva**, the Youth Strategy and Capacity Building Assistant at the European Patients Forum (EPF), **was invited to present the activities of the EPF Youth Group**. Borislava shared **information on several successful projects developed by the Youth Group**, including the Sexual Health and Wellbeing project, and the Works And Youth Strategy (WAYS), that focuses on the struggles of young patients across the EU relating to employment. Projects for collaboration between the EPF and the IDF Europe youth groups were also discussed.



Healthcare trends in Europe

Iryna Vlasenko, Vice-President of the International Diabetes Federation, delivered an informative presentation on healthcare trends in Europe. Her talk centred on the **different approaches relating to the provision of healthcare in Europe**, presenting the **challenges faced by various regions**, including shortages of insulin and other essential diabetes medication. Iryna then led an engaging **debate session**, dividing the participants into two groups – advocates and government representatives. This mock debate allowed the participants to gain valuable insights from both perspectives, stepping into the shoes of those whom they are supposed to convince.





Partnerships and collaborations

The session on "Partnerships and Collaborations" further highlighted the **value of uniting stakeholders sharing a common vision**. **Kyle Jacques** emphasised the importance of **maintaining authenticity and staying true to oneself while collaborating with partners**. **Jaivir Pall**, a young entrepreneur and a YLC alumni himself, explained the **essential principles of fundraising**, equipping the young leaders with practical knowledge to support their advocacy projects. **Beatrice Zaccardo**, External Engagement Associate at Lilly Diabetes, discussed how **Eli Lilly engages with the diabetes community**, emphasising the vital role of building strong relationships and partnerships within, and beyond, the healthcare industry. **Mia Bajramagic** shared her experience of how **collaboration helped her set up a new diabetes association** in her hometown of Split. After the presentations, a **panel discussion** gave all participants the opportunity to share insights and advice on cultivating successful partnerships and collaborations.



“ *The camp equipped us with practical tools to drive positive change and create impactful initiatives within our diabetes communities. From building awareness campaigns to organising educational events, we are now confident in our abilities to lead effectively and inspire others to join the cause.* ”





Community

Creating a strong and cohesive community is one of the programme's central goals. The traditional **taboo session**, led by Cristina and Mia, fostered **open and honest conversations on a series of sensitive topics**. Throughout the week, participants anonymously submitted questions, which were then addressed in a session designed to provide a safe and judgment-free environment for discussion. The exchanges were incredibly liberating, as the only rule of the session was that "the stories stay in the room, only the lessons leave". This approach nurtured trust and allowed the participants to share their experiences, fears and challenges, further deepening their connections.

The **participants' presentations** were one of the YLL's highlights. **All participants introduced themselves and their countries, shared the status of diabetes care where they live, described the activities of their diabetes association, their own involvement, and their future plans as diabetes advocates**. This exchange of experience and information allowed participants to learn about the unique challenges that people in other countries face. Many of the camp's most memorable moments happened during these presentations.



The YLC was something totally different from any other camp I have ever had before. I learned a lot of interesting things not only about diabetes, but also about the problems of different people and how they solved it. I also met a lot of great people and experienced the culture of their home countries. I am very grateful for this experience.



This camp was life-changing and so inspirational. Each one of us stepped out of our comfort zones and did something we never thought we would be able to do. After this week I feel very much motivation and all I want is to make my city's association something similar to the YOURAH community.





Group work

During dedicated timeslots during the camp, participants worked on the project ideas that had been discussed during the online working group sessions. The projects had to be designed such that they could be realistically implemented with the help of IDF Europe. Two mentors were assigned to each group to guide and advise the participants.

Both groups presented their project ideas on the last day of the camp. One group pitched the idea of an **IDF Europe Youth Podcast**, aimed at young people living with diabetes and at people wishing to learn more about diabetes. The other group presented a **social media campaign strategy** based around the idea that **#OneSizeDoesNotFitAll**.



Both groups implemented the lessons learned during the week, in terms of both content and presentation. We have high hopes for the projects and will follow the groups to discuss their next steps.



Sporting activities

Physical activity is an essential part of diabetes management. This was reflected in the camp's schedule. **Frequent physical activities were organised, led by Kyle, Iryna and our Bulgarian hosts.** On the camp's first day, Iryna Vlasenko and Reni Koleva presented why and how to engage in physical activities.





At least twice a day, participants took part in **sporting activities** such as water polo, volleyball and football. Each day began with a short energising exercise to get the day going. One morning was spent **hiking** in the Vitosha mountains near Sofia. Not only was the hike a great opportunity to exercise but it was also an ideal activity for bonding and engaging in more informal conversations. Some sessions were dedicated to the preparation of the **flashmob** that was organised in the historic centre of Sofia.



Closing

The camp's traditional closing ceremony featured dances, songs and stand-up performances, that all set a cheerful mood for the last night of the camp. The following morning, participants left the camp with new skills, valuable experiences and connections, ready to join the YOURAH network of young advocates.





Participants' feedback showed that the Youth Leadership Camp was a huge success. The feedback **highlighted the friendships developed, the new knowledge gained, the dedication and engagement of the speakers and the constant interaction during the week.** Participants left with high hopes, and with great motivation towards advocating for the diabetes community.

Let's hear directly from the YLL participants!

"It is wonderful to feel the power of youth influence on the world of diabetes. So, just think that step by step, project by project we change, the environment changes and after some time we set trends. So they are completely new, but we are changing the world little by little, because before our intervention it had a completely different vector. Per Aspera Ad Astra"

"I really enjoyed the YLC, It is a really huge opportunity to be part of a big Association, like IDF Europe, that fights for the rights of PwD. During the week, I learned a lot about leadership, how to create events and projects with other people and how to be part a huge group. I totally recommend this experience!"

"Being thrown out of your comfort zone everyday allows you to enter the learning zone - it's amazing how far you can develop in terms of skills and personality in just one week! If you are looking for further development and inspiration for yourself and your advocacy work, the YLL is the place to be!"

"The Youth Leadership Camp helped me to develop fundamental skills as a youth advocate. It was a week where I gained a lot of knowledge and skills that I intend to apply in order to help my association and the diabetes community in the best and most effective way. For those who want to make a difference in the lives of people with diabetes, I think IDF Europe YLC is an excellent opportunity to learn how to do it."

"Manage diabetes with YLC - is easy and simple!"





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