



2024 REPORT

We thank our partners for their support

The IDF Europe Youth Platform and the IDF Europe Youth Leadership Lab

The IDF Europe Youth platform is one of the pillars of IDF Europe activities. At the start of their journey, engaged young people are role models for their peers. As they progress in their professional lives and civic engagement, they 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 and by equipping them with the relevant knowledge and skills. An equally important goal is to strengthen and nurture an active pan-European network of young diabetes advocates. We strongly 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 continue engaging with new youth advocates, we were incredibly excited to return to the in-person reality in 2022 and 2023 with the camps in Poland and 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 Diabetes Association of Serbia and was held on July 7-13 in Ub, Serbia. The collaboration between all 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 Lilly Diabetes and Medtronic for their support.





This year’s camp welcomed 19 participants, four junior mentors and four senior mentors representing 18 countries: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cyprus, Denmark, France, Georgia, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Portugal, Scotland, Serbia, Slovakia, Turkey, Ukraine, and England.



Strengthening the youth diabetes communities at local and national levels

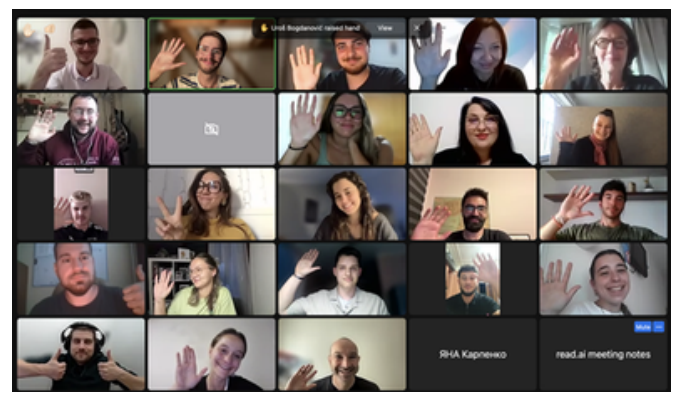
The overarching theme of the YLL 2024, selected by the YOURAH Steering Committee and the IDF Europe Organising Committee, was “Strengthening the youth diabetes communities at local and national levels.” Participants were divided into four groups, each exploring a specific sub-theme related to this central topic:

- ▶ Transgenerational collaboration
- ▶ Youth engagement and community building
- ▶ Future-proof youth communities
- ▶ Cross-border cooperation

This report was co-written with YLL participant Martina Mallia, whose sections are marked in italics.

ONLINE SESSIONS

Leading up to the Youth Leadership Camp, two online events were organised to set the stage for this eventful week. During the opening session on June 11, participants had the chance to get to know each other and to meet with leaders from IDF Europe, the hosts of this year’s YLC from the Diabetes Association of Serbia, the mentors who guided their journey during the camp and representatives of the YLL sponsors and partners.



During the online workshop on June 22, participants were introduced to the YLL theme and started working in groups on the four sub-themes.

“These virtual sessions set the tone and established the foundations for our expectations for the physical camp, leaving us participants bursting with motivation, excitement, and energy for what was yet to come just one week later.”



WELCOME AND INSPIRATIONAL LECTURES

"Excitement slowly began to fill the room as everyone started to arrive to the hotel where we will be spending the next few days. You can sense the passion and energy of the inspiring people as the networking began. The camp kicked off with a few icebreakers to get to know each other and start learning about each other's countries. The next morning, we were also welcomed by wonderful inspirational speakers, and officials from our hosting country, Serbia."

Jezi Sethi, Founder and Director of the Diabetics Foundation, shared her story as a young leader in India advocating for better access to care and building a supportive and understanding community. Her journey demonstrated to participants that change is always possible. Her advice to participants was to never give up on their values nor on their objectives.

Fredrik Dejong, an entrepreneur in medical technology and cofounder of mySugr and hi.health, shared his experiences and successes in this highly competitive field as someone living with Type 1 diabetes (T1D). Though he did not sugarcoat the challenges he faced, he consistently encouraged participants to strive for a better future.

Aleksandar Opacic, previous IDF YLD participant and President of the Diabetes Association of Serbia, shared his journey as the youngest president of his Association, while also playing an active role in the Serbian sports and news field. He emphasised that young people should never fear taking on leadership roles and should always fight for their rightful place at any table where decisions about them are made.



The Camp was officially opened by **Uros Bogdanovic, YOURAH Steering Committee Coordinator, Prof. Nebojsa Lalic, IDF Europe Regional Chair, Elisabeth Dupont, IDF Europe Regional Manager and Aleksandar Opacic, President of the Serbian Diabetes Association.**

State Secretary of Health, Prof. Ferenc Vicko and Deputy Mayor Ivana Nikoloć also welcomed the participants on behalf of the national and local governments. Their welcoming words set the tone for an empowering and motivating week ahead.





THE NEAR-PEER MENTORING APPROACH

Although mentors were already part of the organisation of previous YLC/YLL editions, near-peer mentorship became a fully integrated part of the IDF Europe Youth Leadership Programme in 2023, turning the mentoring concept into two-way learning opportunities for both participants and mentors.

At IDF Europe we believe that the most effective mentors are those with the most relevant experience. In the context of the youth programme, YLC/YLL alumni are best placed to play this role as they can empathise with the YLL participants, 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, eight YLC/YLL alumni joined the programme as junior and senior mentors.

Junior mentors Alyssa Faulkner (Scotland), Lazar Begovic (Serbia), Liv Olivia Fritzen (Denmark) and Kristinn Ingi Reynisson (Iceland) supported participants by drawing from their own experiences and challenges. They acted as guides during group work, offering insights, practical advice and personal support.

As senior mentors, having completed their term as junior mentors during last year's camp, Cameron Keighron and Jean Langford (both from Ireland), Javir Pall (UK) and Uros Bogdanovic (Serbia), have taken on crucial roles within the programme. They actively contributed to organising the YLL and other IDF Europe youth-related initiatives, while supporting and guiding both junior mentors and new participants, fostering an environment of continuous learning and growth.

All mentors joined the camp with great enthusiasm and 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 projects.





LEADERSHIP AND COMMUNICATION SKILLS

"Throughout the week, several educational sessions were held to educate and empower us aspiring youth leaders. By providing us with the necessary skills in advocacy, leadership, communication, diabetes management, and policy engagement, we were given the key to becoming influential voices in our communities, raising awareness, and supporting others living with diabetes. Additionally, this year's camp showcased a wonderful diversity, enriching our experience and fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation of different perspectives and backgrounds."

How to run a project

As one of the first educational sessions of the week, we wished to provide participants with essential tools and knowledge to successfully start, manage, and execute projects. Cameron guided the young advocates through the key phases of project management, planning, implementation and evaluation. Practical exercises and real-life examples made project management concepts easily understandable, empowering participants to lead impactful initiatives in their own communities.



Imposter syndrome workshop

"Amongst the first workshops we had was one on imposter syndrome held by Julie Taplin, registered Dietitian and Certified Coach, from Medtronic. This session was the perfect way to start camp, as many of us initially felt that we lacked the skills or confidence to be youth advocates in diabetes. Julie posed a few thought-provoking questions to our four groups through a post-it-note brainstorming method, asking questions like Where, when, with whom do you feel confident/like you belong?"

"We each answered these questions individually and then posted our responses on the table for everyone to see and discuss. This sparked intriguing conversations and discussions about how we may feel like imposters at times in our own ways. We left the room already feeling more empowered than when we began. Little did we know, this emotion only went up from there."

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The YLL helped me realise my potential as a leader and boosted my confidence significantly. It was a transformative experience where I discovered my capability to make a meaningful impact and support others. – Joana Vicente

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Volunteering and fair compensation

Uros Bogdanovic and Kyle Jacques Rose, former IDF Europe Board Member, led a thought-provoking discussion on authenticity, integrity, and partnership in volunteer work. The session encouraged participants to critically evaluate the dynamics of volunteering and fair compensation, fostering a deeper understanding of these concepts. This awareness is intended to guide the advocates in approaching future partnerships with greater consciousness and ethical consideration.



Language Matters and Unites

“An eye-opening session was presented to us by Jean and Cameron, former camp participants and now mentors, on language matters and how the language we and others including doctors and medical staff use, may have a psychological impact on others and too often lead to stigma and discrimination both for people living with Type 1 diabetes and those living with Type 2 diabetes. This was a reflective session for us, and challenged us to consider what language has been used that has had an impact on us and how we can turn that around.”

This brought about interesting discussions on how we can make that change, with two participants even sharing personal projects and campaigns that they carried out in their respective countries to raise awareness on such language matters.

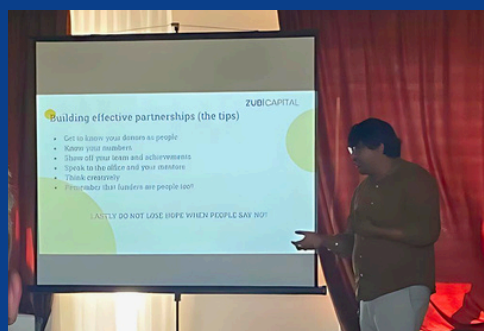
It was also very interesting to learn how language that may be problematic in one country might be acceptable in another. With that said, astonishingly but not surprising, whilst we all had different backgrounds and came from different countries, it was the same language that bothered us all. By the end of this session, we were left with such new ideas that we even created a cross-border project idea that was executed throughout the course of the camp itself. ”

“The conversation we had on language matters was really interesting and they spoke about a lot of topics that I hadn't considered before which was really beneficial to me in my own advocacy journey, especially how there can be different attitudes towards language in different countries and I think this is something that all of the participants can take forward in their journeys and be aware of” – Sophie Miller

Partnerships and collaborations

Another key session was led by Jaivir and Liv, former camp participants and mentors, along with Kyle, and Beatrice Zaccardo, External Engagement Associate at Lilly Diabetes. This session focused on partnerships and collaborations. The speakers emphasised the value that can be attained from partnerships and collaborations, while reminding us to always maintain our integrity and stay true to our core values and purpose, which can sometimes be challenging.

Once again, animated conversations and debates arose, with participants sharing personal experiences on collaborations. It was particularly interesting to hear stories from both an individual's perspective and a partner/collaborator's standpoint. The session resulted in fruitful discussions on how to approach collaborations, inspiring participants to use a more tactful and structured method when engaging with others.



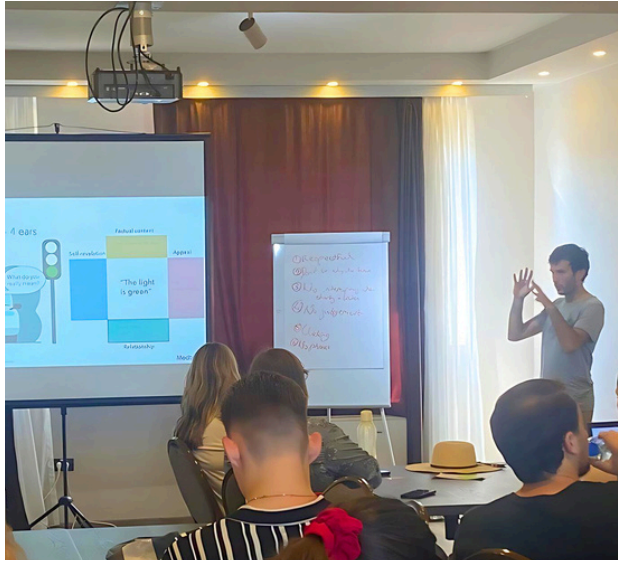
Leadership styles and skills

In her workshop, Cristina Petrut, also former IDF Europe Board Member, introduced participants to various leadership concepts and encouraged them to reflect on what leadership means to them personally. By identifying key leadership skills and exploring different leadership styles, the workshop aimed to equip participants with the knowledge and tools to become effective leaders in their communities. The session was interactive and thought-provoking, inspiring participants to develop their unique approach towards leadership.

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For anyone who wants to help improve the diabetes situation in their country but doesn't know where to start, the camp is an excellent opportunity to learn and grow. – *Stephanie Nicolaou*

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Four sides of communication

Paco Orengo, a communication specialist at Medtronic, led the "Four Sides of Communication" session, which introduced the complexities of communication. Using relatable examples, Paco explained the different angles present in even simple discussions, making participants more aware and empathetic in communication. As he said, "communication is complex, but it doesn't have to be difficult." After this session, participants were equipped with new skills and knowledge to navigate diverse communication scenarios effectively.

Communicating with decision makers

"Building on Paco's session, Adam, the IDF Europe Youth Programme Coordinator, and Alyssa, former camp participant and mentor, introduced us to the concept of advocacy, covering essential terminology such as leadership, activism, and influencing. Participants were encouraged to share personal experiences and issues, leading to the exchange of numerous inspirational ideas on how they tackled problems in their respective countries. Additionally, a workshop using scenarios was conducted, focusing on strategies to convince people and influence policymakers and politicians to identify needs and catalyse change."

"This session fostered idea-sharing on a cross-border level, emphasizing the importance of having a multi-cultural group capable of adopting different strategies to address personal scenarios."



DIABETES LANDSCAPE IN EUROPE

IDF Europe Regional Manager, Elisabeth Dupont, and IDF Vice President, Iryna Vlasenko, presented on the diabetes landscape in Europe, showcasing data from the [country profiles](#) developed by IDF Europe in collaboration with its Member Associations and discussed the status of access to diabetes care across European countries. They highlighted various aspects, including the availability of healthy living policies, national diabetes plans and registries, screening for diabetes-related complications and access to diabetes medicines and devices. Their presentation highlighted the areas where inequalities in access to diabetes prevention, management, and care require improvement.





COMMUNITY

“The evening sessions were more intimate and personal, offering an opportunity to share and exchange personal stories in a typical late-night conversation style. Three sessions, in particular, stood out as they focused on our experiences with diabetes and the emotional impact of living with it. These sessions allowed us to comfort each other and alleviate feelings of loneliness in our personal journeys with diabetes.”

Coming out of your comfort zone

This session, led by Cameron and Kristinn, was a memorable experience for participants, aiming to explore the usual boundaries that we set for ourselves and how to overcome them. This exercise set a positive tone for the days ahead.

By engaging in conversations that addressed their common fears and barriers, participants began to build confidence and resilience. This session complemented by the "Imposter Syndrome" workshop, provided a comprehensive approach to dealing with internal obstacles. These sessions allowed participants to confront their insecurities head-on, creating a supportive environment that encouraged growth and self-discovery throughout the Camp.



Shared experiences

This emotional session, led by Jean, was a heartfelt and impactful part of the Camp. Participants engaged first in pairs, sharing personal stories and experiences that had significantly shaped their lives. This session provided a safe and supporting environment, allowing everyone to express themselves openly and authentically. The deep and meaningful exchanges deepened the connection and understanding between participants, further strengthening the sense of community.



During the YLL, I learned many valuable lessons, such as how to interact with others more effectively and how to fight the stigma associated with diabetes. I also gained lifelong friends who were strangers before the camp but have now become like family.

– Stephanie Nicolaou



Taboo session

The traditional taboo session, led by Clinical Psychologist, Cristina Petrut, stimulated open and honest conversations among participants 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 judgement-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 participants to share their experiences, fears and challenges, further deepening their connections.

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We gained valuable knowledge not only from the sessions but also from each other. The program's design naturally fosters strong connections among participants, especially through the evening sessions where we exchanged stories and discussed our daily experiences, anxieties, and sources of encouragement. – *Martina Mallia*

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Participants' presentations

Each year, participants' presentations are one of the YLL's highlights. All participants introduce themselves and their countries, talk about the status of diabetes care where they live, describe the activities of their diabetes association, their own involvement, and their future plans as diabetes advocates.

This exchange of experience and information allows participants to learn about the unique challenges that people in other countries face as well as their initiatives to improve the lives of PwD.





GROUP WORK

“Throughout the Camp, we worked together with our groups on the sub-themes we were introduced to during our online sessions. We each shared ideas on how to improve the situation of our countries in relation to the sub-theme we were working on. Each working group generated a realistic project-idea that could be executed after the camp to tackle the issues arising from each theme. With the help of our mentors, we were able to prototype and present our project-ideas to the rest of the groups, leaving us passionate and hopeful that these projects will be executed in the near future with the assistance of the IDF Europe network.”

TRANSGENERATIONAL COLLABORATION

This group pitched the idea of a magazine tailored for people living with T1D. This magazine aims to bridge technological gaps and create new connections across different generations. By providing accessible content that resonates with both young and older individuals, this project embodies the programme’s overarching sense of unity and inclusivity. It highlights the importance of leveraging diverse perspectives to strengthen the diabetes community.

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNITY BUILDING

The second group proposed the development of an app designed to connect young people with diabetes. This app would allow communication between individuals, local youth groups, and associations, fostering a supportive network. By creating a digital space for connection and resource sharing, this project aligns with the camp's goal of empowering all young PwD and strengthening local community engagement.



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The YLL motivated me to start new projects. It's been five days since the end of the camp, and I'm already working to implement new initiatives in Bosnia and Herzegovina.
– Lea Leleta

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FUTURE-PROOF YOUTH COMMUNITIES

The third working group introduced a creative project involving a set of cards to be distributed to local diabetes youth groups and associations. These cards will address common challenges faced by these groups in a fun and easily understandable way. This initiative aims to provide practical tools to ensure the effectiveness and resilience of youth communities in the diabetes space.



CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION

The Cross-Border Cooperation group presented an exciting project idea: a TID Erasmus-style exchange programme. This programme aims to connect young PwD and their associations across Europe, enabling them to gather new experiences, initiate collaborative projects and share best practices. With a focus on new cross-border connections and learning opportunities, this initiative underscores the camp's emphasis on international collaboration within the diabetes community.



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The YLL was an unforgettable experience that not only broadened my knowledge but also opened doors to new projects and ideas. Inspired by the supportive environment and the compassionate community, I'm already collaborating with fellow participants to plan awareness campaigns that leverage my skills and passion for supporting young people. – *Joana Vicente*

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Thanks to the YLL, I will be able to work towards creating a fairer environment for people living with diabetes and develop new projects that encourage young people to get involved in their local associations. – *Manuel Pérez Lopez*

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SPORTING ACTIVITIES

“The camp’s schedule truly highlighted the importance of sporting activities in diabetes management and throughout the course of the Camp, physical activities were held by Kyle and Iryna twice daily. They were spread out during the day to ensure continuous engagement and energy among the participants. Our schedule began with early morning stretching and light warm-up exercises to energize everyone for the hours ahead. Throughout the day, activities included swimming, which provided a refreshing break, as well as team sports like football, volleyball, and basketball. These team sports served as excellent short breaks and bonding sessions, helping to foster a sense of team spirit and strong cooperation within the group.”

“We also had unconventional sporting activities such as the preparation and organisation of a flashmob that was organised in the town square of Ub to raise awareness on diabetes, and an afternoon at the Adventure Park, which was perhaps the most memorable sporting activity of the Camp. Whilst the adventure park was during our first day, it was admirable how everyone worked together and united together to help each other get through the most challenging obstacles which they encountered.”



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“Not only is physical activity important in diabetes management, we find that it’s an important way to create bonds and enhance group dynamics amongst YLL participants, outside of the conference room/classroom. Sports can transcend cultural and language barriers. Swimming is swimming and football is football. This is an integral part of our weeklong leadership training event, helping complement the time spent in presentation sessions and group exercises.” – Kyle J. Rose

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CLOSING

“Emotion started to fill the room as we all gathered to our conference hall for one last time to receive our certificates and bid our final farewells. After this jam-packed week filled with activities, project generation and creating close-knit networks across Europe, we became one international family and the realisation that we will not be in the same room with so many different nationalities all sharing one fundamental purpose in the near future began to kick-in. Throughout the night, we shared a lot of emotional stories about our week, how we all became one family and how we plan on staying in contact in the near future to maintain these beautiful connections that we have built. Laughter, tears and a significant number of hugs were shared. However, one comment that kept being brought up was how we were all able to build such close connections in just one week of knowing each other. We continued the dance by sharing a few dances and songs from different countries and celebrated the night away.”



“After we said our final farewells to all the inspiring and ambitious people, we all promised and reassured each other that this is not the end but just the beginning of something new, and it is not a good bye, but a see you later.”

Let’s hear directly from the YLL participants!

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I am really grateful to have found an international family through this camp. Opening up about diabetes used to be difficult for me, but attending the YLL and connecting with some of the most inspirational people from across Europe changed that. The bonds we formed are enough to last a lifetime. This program truly ignited a fire within me and I would definitely recommend it to others so that together, we can be the change we want to see. – *Martina Mallia*





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The YLL was an incredible opportunity to be inspired and motivated by people living with T1D with a shared interest in advocacy. The week in Serbia was filled with workshops that taught us skills to become better advocates as well as fun activities to help us connect with each other. I left Serbia feeling so empowered to make change and I am looking forward to using the skills and connections we gained in my own country to improve the lives of people living with T1D.

– Sophie Miller



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I highly recommend the IDF Europe YLC to anyone looking to grow personally and professionally within the diabetes community – Joana Vicente

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After 23 years of living with T1D, I never would have thought I needed this camp so much. For the first time, I felt like I truly belonged somewhere, with so few words I could feel so much understanding and support. I recommend it to everyone - it's a once-in-a-lifetime experience! – Lea Leleta

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Acknowledgements

We want to thank the Diabetes Association of Serbia for their exceptional professionalism and hospitality.

We are grateful for the partnership and continued support of Lilly Diabetes, and Medtronic for their longstanding support of the youth programme.

We thank Martina Mallia for her contribution to this report, showcasing her point of view as a returning participant.

We thank all Alumni, faculty, and staff who spare no effort to improve this programme year by year and support the participants like none could.






And a very special thanks to all participants who will undoubtedly continue filling this programme with life, energy and meaning.



YOURAH

Visit our website and follow us on social media to learn more about the YOURAH network and our youth projects

idfeurope@idf-europe.org
www.idf-europe.org

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