Year

Young European Associated Researchers

Annual Report 2017

CONTENT

1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

During 2017, the YEAR Network has celebrated its tenth year. In the past decade, the network and its activities have significantly evolved; YEAR's voice has continued to gain eminence and recognition among our research centres and in the European Commission. To celebrate this milestone, YEAR Network has developed a new concept for its Annual Conference aiming at the training of young researchers in those horizontal skills and competencies that will help them to success in their research careers.

2017 was again, a year filled with inspiring and motivating activities. One highlight from the past year was the Annual Conference, in Brussels. The conference gathered numerous young researchers eager to learn more about idea development and innovative thinking. The conference was more focused on training compared to the previous years and this new concept was very much appreciated. In addition, a new type of event was launched this year, the YEAR Webinars. This is an easily accessible event that reaches a wide audience of our young researchers. To further elaborate on the innovative development of YEAR, a new concept of the seminars was arranged; combining a traditional seminar and a hackathon. The concept was piloted by VTT in Finland around the topic of Digital Solutions for Water. In addition, a workshop was arranged in collaboration with NTNU, SINTEF, and the French Institute of Norway about Big Data and Energy Networks.

YEAR has been very active in consultancy during 2017, increasing YEAR's gain visibility as the voice of the young European researchers. YEAR Network is represented in the EU high-level advisory group Open Science Policy Platform (OSPP) to represent the view of young researchers in the related policy discussions. The mandate of the OSPP is to provide advice about development and implementation of open science policy in Europe, and to represent the views of the European stakeholder groups.

After ten years, the consolidation of the network is a reality and therefore, we are at the right time and in the best position to strengthen our external relations with the firm intention of growing our membership.

2 YEAR VISION AND MISSION

2.1 WHO WE ARE

YEAR, the Young European Associated Researchers Network, is a non-profit organisation gathering young professionals from different Research and Technology Organisations (RTOs) and Industrial Research Bodies (IRBs) across Europe. YEAR aims at supporting the career of young researchers, providing them with opportunities to increase their skills, spread their professional network and gain international experiences.

2.2 OUR MEMBERS

At the end of 2017 the YEAR member organisations were:

- **AICIA** – Andalusian Association for Research and Industrial Cooperation (Spain)
- **AIT** – Austrian Institute of Technology (Austria)
- **RISE** –Research Institutes of Sweden (Sweden)
- **SINTEF** – (Norway)
- **TNO** – Netherlands Organisation for Applied Scientific Research (The Netherlands)
- **VITO** – Vlaamse instelling voor technologisch onderzoek (Belgium)
- **VTT** – Technical Research Centre of Finland (Finland)

2.3 OUR LEGITIMACY

The YEAR Network exists to support its member organisations by giving tailored opportunities to young researchers to develop their careers. We have a special emphasis on internationalisation of research and we promote the three following pillars:

1. NETWORKING in different fields of science and technology within an international context and supporting mobility initiatives of young researchers.
2. TRAINING through various events (specific topic seminars, annual conference, webinars and workshops), dealing with key issues able to improve young professionals' skills within the European Research Area.
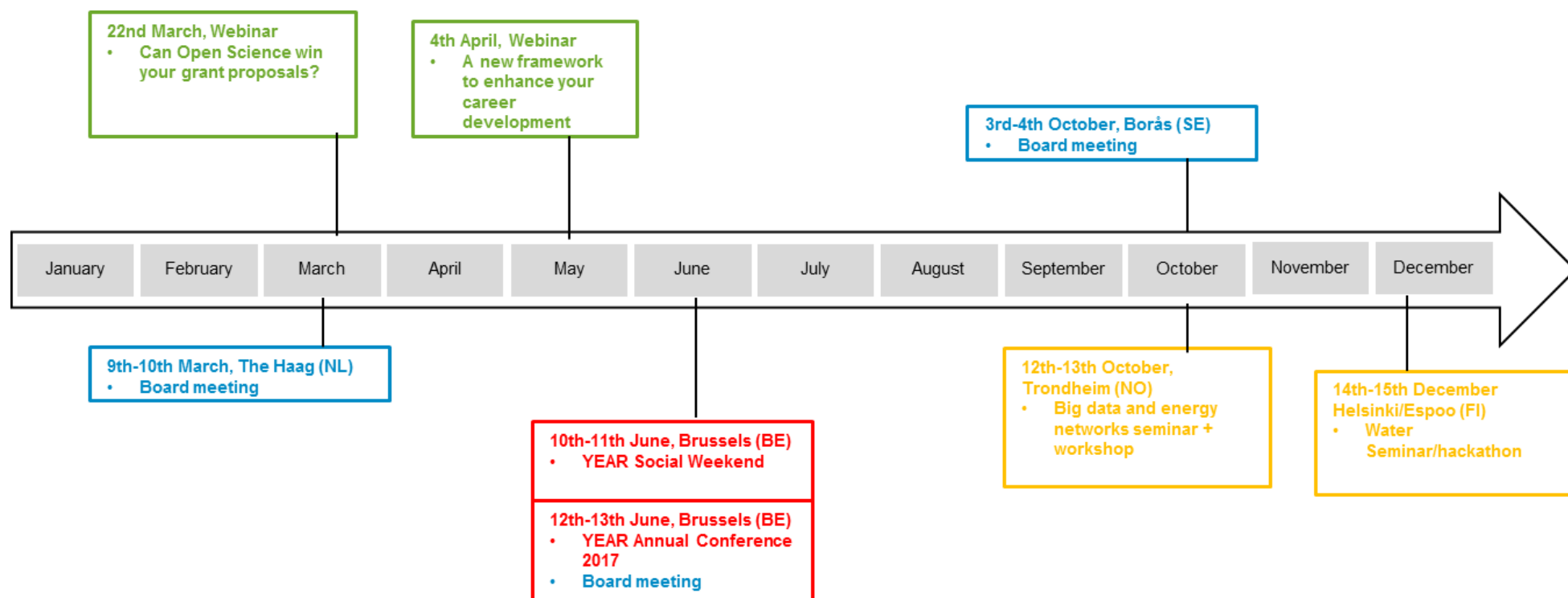3. CONSULTANCY to represent the young European researchers on timely topics at the European Commission level.

3 REPORT 2017

3.1 ACTIVITIES

3.1.1 Summary of activities

2017 was a very productive for YEAR. Different events and activities were organized, both at the members and network levels. YEAR has organized once again its main networking event, The Annual Conference with the topic of Solving Universal Challenges. The concept of the Annual Conference was modified this year, putting more focus into training of idea development, innovative thinking and pitching technique. The format of the topic specific seminars was further developed combining it to be a joint seminar/hackathon this year. Furthermore, the more extensive version of the seminar i.e. the YEAR Workshop was continued. One seminar/hackathon about Digital Solutions for Water and one workshop about Big Data and Energy Networks were organized. In addition, YEAR launched a new type of event: the YEAR Webinars. Two webinars were organized in 2017 about open science and how to enhance your career development as a young researcher. Furthermore, YEAR was consulted several times as representative of the Young Researchers community and was invited to take part in different events in order to share its perspective on Open Science.

The timeline in the next page will chronologically sum up the activities made in 2017. The following pages detail the content and the outcomes of these events.

22nd March, Webinar
- **Can Open Science win your grant proposals?**

4th April, Webinar
- **A new framework to enhance your career development**

3rd-4th October, Borås (SE)
- **Board meeting**

January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December

9th-10th March, The Haag (NL)
- **Board meeting**

10th-11th June, Brussels (BE)
- **YEAR Social Weekend**

12th-13th June, Brussels (BE)
- **YEAR Annual Conference 2017**
- **Board meeting**

12th-13th October, Trondheim (NO)
- **Big data and energy networks seminar + workshop**

14th-15th December Helsinki/Espoo (FI)
- **Water Seminar/hackathon**

3.1.2   Annual Conference 2017

The YEAR Annual Conference 2017 was this year held in Brussels 12-13 June. During this two-day event, professional trainers gave a hands-on training in ideation, pitching as well as collaborative and innovative thinking. For this training, YEAR contracted professionals, the company The Forge. The Forge is a training company specialized in innovation and efficient communication and they introduced an ideation process and offered pitch improvement techniques, which will greatly benefit early-career researchers going forward. Since the concept was well received, YEAR is planning to focus more on this kind of interdisciplinary training also for future events.

Solving Universal Challenges

The training techniques were applied to the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The participants selected five SDGs to focus on: "Clean water and sanitation", "Affordable and clean energy", "Industry, innovation and infrastructure", "Sustainable cities and communities" and "Responsible consumption and production".

On the first day of the conference, the participants were welcomed by Walter Eevers (R&D director at VITO) and Clara Lujan (YEAR Chairman). Afterwards, a general introduction on the SDGs was given by Gaelle Janssens of The Shift, the Belgian meeting point for sustainability. The five selected SDGs and their main challenges were presented by representatives of research and industry: Bastiaan Notebaert (VLAKWA), Pieter Vingerhoets (Energyville), Geert Jacobs (Agoria), Peter Defranceschi (ICLEI) and Theo Geerken (VITO).

After lunch, the participants were divided in six groups in order to develop an idea for one specific SDG. The afternoon session focused on idea selection and development. The team members shared their respective ideas and agreed on one idea to further develop. Everyone used their unique knowledge to think along and improve the proposed ideas. The day was closed by a tips and tricks session on pitching and charismatic speaking.

The second day was dedicated to idea development and pitching. The teams did extra research to improve their ideas and started working on their pitch. The Forge assisted them with close guidance regarding pitching techniques. In the end, the groups presented their idea before a jury. The jury assessed the presented ideas on novelty, impact, multidisciplinarity and pitch quality. Our congratulations to the winning team: Priyanka Banerjee (VITO), Katrijn Dirix (VITO), Pia Olli (VTT), Palash Saha (Sintef) and Visa Vallivaara (VTT) with their idea on ground water monitoring.

Social weekend

Prior to the Annual Conference, the participants had the opportunity to join a social weekend. The social weekend gave the conference participants a good opportunity to get to know each other before the event, and of course at the same time have a good time! This year, Young VITO invited the participants to discover Brussels and Belgian food and drinks. On Saturday, a guided tour was followed by a social dinner. On Sunday, the old neighbourhood Marolles and the Magritte museum were visited.

3.1.2.1   *Update on the YEAR Award winners*

The winning team later on participated in a combined seminar/hackathon arranged by YEAR with the topic Digital Solutions for Water (see 3.1.3.1). The topic of the hackathon was closely linked to the team's conference winning idea.

3.1.3   Seminars

YEAR regularly organises specific topic seminars dedicated to a small group of young researchers. The aim of these events is to bring people together from the same field and to discuss possible ways of cooperation in the framework of an EU call for research project proposals. The seminars are mainly built upon the agenda template below, but alterations can be made:

DAY 1

Time	Session
12:30	*Welcome and coffee*
13:00	*Round of individual presentations*
13:15	*Presentation of YEAR and goal of the seminar*
	By one of the YEAR board members
13:30	*Relevant activities performed in each participating research organization* (*each 15min + 5min questions*) *– Part I*
14:30	Coffee break / Mingling
15:00	**Relevant activities performed in each participating research organization (each 15min + 5min questions) – Part II**
16:30	*Orientation on the EU policy trends (funding possibilities, policy on innovation framework, political scenarios) (Remote-presentation)*
	By an external expert (spokesperson from the European Commission, European parliament, National Contact Point (NCP))
17:30	*Social Activity and Dinner (End of Day 1)*

DAY 2

Time	Session
09:00	*Round table discussion – Part I: Brainstorming based on a European call*
10:30	*Coffee break / Mingling*
11:00	*Round table discussion – Part II: Finding common directions*
11:30	*Wrap-up & Conclusions of the meeting*
12:30	*Lunch at seminar venue (offered by the hosting organization)*
13:30	*End of YEAR Seminar at the hosting organization*

Figure 3: Template of the agenda used for the specific topic seminars.

Organising the seminars on a two-day basis gives the participants an opportunity to get to know each other and facilitates future cooperation. In 2017, a seminar with a twist took place as described below.

3.1.3.1   YEAR Seminar/Hackathon: Digital Solutions for Water

YEAR piloted a new event concept in 2017. A hackathon was hosted by VTT in Finland on the topic Digital Solutions for Water. The event was based on the topic of this year's YEAR Conference winners, 'Water Rangers', and targeted towards a relevant upcoming EU call (SC5-11-2018). The two-day event gathered eight young researchers from VTT, VITO and AIT with a specific interest in subjects related to water issues and digital solutions for water.

The event was divided into two parts; a seminar and a hackathon. The first part consisted of a half day, hosted at VTT's main premises in Espoo. Here, in a formal setting, the participants heard from Finland's NCP on the related call, received insights from decades of experience in the water sector from Finnish Water Forum. In addition, expert researchers from VTT opened up the potential for innovation within water systems and introduced the catalogue of VTT developed technologies for the water sector. Each participant also presented themselves and their interests in the topic.

After lunch on the first day, the enthusiastic team was moved to an informal and inspirational venue in Helsinki city centre. The creative juices were set flowing from arrival when the team was led through a high intensity double diamond brainstorming session. The following 24 hours allowed the participants the freedom to develop their ideas, around the dinner table or in the sauna to identify their synergies and opportunities in their professional networks to build a consortium, and consider the needed elements in a proposal to answer the call.

3.1.4 Workshops

YEAR Workshops typically gather a wide variety of stakeholders from the field: junior and senior researchers in both technical and social areas, industries, SME, NCPs, etc. The different points of view allow the researchers to acquire widespread knowledge that gives the opportunity to enrich their work. Their research can therefore be put closer to the market and the expectations of end-users can be taken into account.

A typical agenda of a workshop could include the following:

DAY 1:

Time	Session
12:30	*Registration and coffee*
13:00	*Welcome and opening of the workshop*
13:10	*Keynote: Funding opportunities in Horizon 2020*
13:40	*Stakeholder presentations 1*
15:10	*Coffee Break*
15:30	*Stakeholder presentations 2*
17:00	**Panel discussion**
17:50	*Wrap-up, conclusions of Day 1*
18:00	*End of Day 1*
19:30	*Social Event*

DAY 2:

Time	Session
08:45	*Opening of the Workshop*
09:00	*Demos/visit*
10:00	*Quick round of introductions*
10:30	*World Café Discussion*
11:30	*Coffee Break*
12:00	*Break-out groups*
13:00	*Wrap-up & conclusions of the workshop*
13:30	*Lunch and end of the Workshop*

Figure 4: Template of the agenda used for the workshop format.

3.1.4.1 Big Data and Energy Networks (YEAR workshop)

NTNU, SINTEF, YEAR and the French Institute of Norway jointly organized a workshop on the theme: Big Data and Energy Networks on 12-13 October in Trondheim (Norway). It included plenary sessions of high level international speakers, Business-to-business meetings, laboratory visit and a dedicated Young Researchers' Workshop coordinated by YEAR.

This workshop presented in a multidisciplinary approach the latest developments offered by Big Data to achieve more sustainable tasks in energy networks. A special focus was set on the integration and regulation of energy networks in the context of electric car fleets and smart neighbourhoods. Personal data protection and data properties were also discussed in a public conference. Young researchers were encouraged to bring a poster describing ongoing relevant research activities at the poster session open to all.

The Workshop dedicated to young researchers and arranged by YEAR focused on the question "How can Big Data contribute to guarantee the sustainability of energy networks?" The goal was to stimulate interactions between the attendees to generate common project ideas to be developed further.

The workshop was a part of the French-Nordic cycle "Big Data and Sustainability" organized by the French Institutes and French Embassies of Norway, Sweden, Denmark and Finland. More than 70 relevant industry representatives and research scientists from Nordic countries and France attended the seminar.

3.1.5   Webinars

YEAR launched a new type of event in 2017: the YEAR Webinar. Two webinars were organized in 2017.

The first YEAR Webinar dealt with a burning issue: Can #OpenScience win your Grant Proposals? It was presented by Ivo Grigorov, on 22 March 2017 and gathered 28 people. Paola Masuzzo from Gent University also joined as a presenter to share her tips on good practice of Open Science in her research field.

Outline: Securing research grants to pursue one's curiosity driven research (and hopefully build a research group around it!) is becoming more and more competitive. Funds are scarce, and researchers are expected to be good at pushing the boundaries of knowledge, as well as applying that knowledge for societal benefit in measurable terms. The presentation introduced the concept of Open Science, showcased evidence of how it can make proposals more competitive in any research discipline, and suggested examples of best practices from evaluated proposals. The content was based on "Winning Horizon 2020 with Open Science" brief (https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.12247) funded by FP7 FOSTER (EC Grant Agreement 612 425) and H2020 FOSTER+ (EC Grant Agreement 741 839).

The video and the slides of the first YEAR webinar are available on the YEAR website.

The second YEAR Webinar dealt with a key issue for young researchers: A new framework to enhance your career development. It was presented by Kathrine Vangen and Iuliana Hussein from NTNU (Norway), on 04 May 2017, and gathered 25 people.

In today´s ever-changing world, systematic and focused career management is becoming increasingly important for both researchers and their employers. However, research organisations face the challenge of guiding researchers through this process and enabling them to become creative, critical and autonomous intellectual risk takers.

REFLEX – A two-year project joining forces of partners from five European countries, addressed these challenges through the designing of intelligent career development framework based on the direct involvement of researchers, their employers, HR departments, EURAXESS Service Centres and other relevant actors. The REFLEX framework is open access on the REFLEX website. The YEAR Webinar relied on this framework to show how to enhance one's own career development.

Outline of the second YEAR Webinar:

- Current situation: what do young researchers want?
- What is the REFLEX framework and how this is different from other initiatives?
- How to use it to enhance your career development?
- Your scientific career – how, where and who?
- Tools and resources: REFLEX and Euraxess webpages

The video of the second YEAR webinar is available on the YEAR website.

3.1.6   Consultancy

Activities conducted under the pillar "Consulting" let YEAR gain visibility as "voice" of the young European researchers. Consequently, the Board was invited to present their views and perspectives at different occasions.

3.1.6.1   *Open Science*
In 2016, Michela Vignoli from the YEAR Network was nominated member of the EU high-level advisory group Open Science Policy Platform (OSPP) to represent the view of young researchers in the related policy discussions. The mandate of the OSPP is to provide advice about development and implementation of open science policy in Europe, and to represent the views of the European stakeholder groups.

In 2017, two OSPP meetings took place (2017-03-20 in Berlin; 2017-10-13 in Tallinn). At the OSPP meeting in Berlin, Alexis Sevault from the YEAR board attended as a deputy. The minutes of the meetings are available on the Commission's OSPP website.

YEAR contributed to the discussions on all eight open science priorities set by the Commission. The priorities are in line with the five policy actions defined in the Open Innovation, Open Science vision by

the Commission (p. 45). In particular, YEAR contributed to the following documents and recommendations:

- Report on the Governance and Financial Schemes of the European Open Science Cloud
- Recommendations on Next Generation Metrics

In addition, YEAR contributed to the reports on Rewards and Skills, which will be adopted by the OSPP at the following fifth meeting on 2 March 2018.

3.1.6.2   *H2020 interim evaluation*

The European Commission contacted YEAR Network to participate in the interim evaluation of its R&D programme H2020. Specifically, to collaborate with other networks in the definition of a public stakeholder consultation aimed to gather feedback from young people and early-stage researchers. The consultation was launched in March and the results were presented during the conference "Highlights of Research and Innovation – Shaping our Future" organized by the EC and held in Brussels in July. The conclusions of the consultation will help to improve the current implementation of the R&D programme and will set the scene for the 9th Frame Programme (FP9).

After the conference, representatives of the High-Level Group encouraged the same stakeholders to provide input regarding their report "Lab-Fab-App: Investing in the future we want" and the FP9. Representatives of young researchers including YEAR Network worked together to provide a position paper that not only provides feedback to this report but additionally suggests those priority areas that early and mid-career researchers highlighted for FP9 and how the programme should look like to successfully empower young researchers.

3.2   BOARD MEETINGS

Board meetings were organised three times in 2017 in order to define the main orientations and prepare the planned activities of the network. The aim is to gather at least one representative per member organisation in order to take representative decisions. Decisions are discussed and voted unanimously. If some points need to be clarified in between, a teleconference is scheduled. The main objectives are to:

- Prepare the Annual Conference (main topic, dates of the event, potential speakers to be invited, organisation of the social weekend)
- Define the topics, schedule and host of the upcoming webinars, seminars and workshops
- Evaluation of the visibility of the communication channels/improvement of the communication material
- Enlargement of the network: potential new members
- Interactions with the EU: increase the visibility of YEAR towards the European Commission; get contact persons to support our actions
- Finances

3.3 COMMUNICATION

YEAR continued its communication strategy also this year. Communication within the research organizations was conducted by the board members as representatives of their RTO. In addition, the Young networks present at the respective RTOs are very important for promotion of the events arranged by YEAR. As for the external communication, webpages, LinkedIn and Twitter were used to inform the followers about the YEAR events.

The communication strategy will be continuously updated according to the needs of the network. The main goals remain which are improvement of the visibility and the attractiveness of YEAR and the support of its growth.

3.4 FINANCES

YEAR gets its funding through the YEAR membership fees. The YEAR membership fee is calculated for each member institute, based on 5€ per employee, with a minimum of 800€ and maximum fee of 6 000€. A 15% discount applies when the member institute runs an internal network of young researchers.

Since 2013, YEAR Network has significantly invested in the organisation of different events with a solid budget dedicated to the annual conference and the YEAR Award. It should be mentioned that each member organisation also allocates significant internal resources for supporting the participation and organisation of YEAR events. It is also of first importance for the board to reasonably use the resources available. In that sense, board meetings, for instance, are organised in parallel to other YEAR activities in order to reduce the travel costs.

Summary of transactions 2017

Bank account balance on 01.01.2017	**33 388.16 €**
Membership fees 2017	29 009.50 €
2 Board meetings	- 5 148.77 €
YEAR Annual Conference (sponsored by VITO)	- 11 093.01 €
YEAR Award 2016	- 3141.74 €
YEAR Award 2017 (Water Seminar sponsored by VTT)	-1941.02 €
RTOs conferences and meetings with potential members institutes	- 281.73 €
Bank, hosting address and accounting costs	- 3 627,73 €
Other costs (website, annual report, webinar software, etc.)	- 910,97 €
Bank account balance on 31.12.2017	**36 252.69 €**

4 EXECUTIVE BOARD

COMPOSITION OF THE BOARD

In 2017, the YEAR Board was composed as follows:

Clara Lujan (AICIA) The Chair and Finances

Simon Gunkel (TNO) Event organization *Joined Jan 2017*

Johanna Björkmalm (RISE) Secretary *Joined Oct 2017*

Axelle Gasne (AIT) Vice-Chair *Left June 2017*

Jan Rörden (AIT) Event organization

Martin Zelan (RISE) Board member

Colm Mc Caffrey (VTT) Vice-chair *Joined June 2017*

Michela Vignoli (AIT) Event organization

Jef Bergmans (VITO) Mobility

Alexis Sevault (SINTEF) External relations

Tiia-Maria Tenhunen (VTT) Communications

CONTACT DETAILS

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5 BECOME A MEMBER

5.1 WHO CAN BECOME A MEMBER?

Any RTO (Research and Technology Organisations) or Research and Development departments of industrial organisations established in member countries of the European Union or of the European Economic Area and willing to support the career of its young researchers can become a YEAR member. YEAR activities are specially intended for *young-minded people*; therefore, there is no age limit to participate.

An internal network of young researchers is not required for an institution to become a member. Nevertheless, and according to the YEAR's experience, an organised internal platform or group of young researchers helps increasing the visibility and efficiency of YEAR; young people feel more directly concerned.

5.2 WHY BECOME A MEMBER?

Considering the three pillars of YEAR - networking, training and consulting, the following advantages arise from a YEAR membership:

- **Frequent networking opportunities** with young researchers from all over Europe to get to know and find research partners, exchange experiences, develop new ideas, etc.
- **Yearly event with a fine-tuned education programme** for young researchers on proposal writing, European programmes, interdisciplinary training, mobility opportunities, etc.
- **Topic specific seminars, workshops and webinars** where experts from each member institution have the opportunity to talk about their research, establish new collaborations and share their questions and concerns with members of the European Commission or other important personalities linked to the development and financing of research.
- Opportunities of **young researcher exchanges** between two member organisations or assisting researchers in the process of getting funding for an exchange.
- Assistance in formalising an **internal network of young researchers**.
- Assistance to **develop initiatives around the YEAR pillars**.

5.3 HOW TO BECOME A MEMBER?

Contact us at contact@year-network.com and we will guide you through the steps. We have elaborated a simple, clear and efficient process diminishing the administrative burden.

NETWORKING – TRAINING – CONSULTANCY

www.year-network.com