



Young European Associated Researchers

Annual Report 2025



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Young European Associated Researchers
www.year-network.com

1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2025 has been another successful year where we accomplished to gain a new RTO member joining our organisation for the second year in a row. As of 1st of May we welcomed the Institute for Systems and Computer Engineering, Technology and Science, or INESC TEC. With Portugal coloured in on the map, our YEAR network now consists of 9 RTO members. With new representatives joining the Board and terms ending, during our annual General Assembly we voted in a new Secretary General and Vice President among other roles. With the help of EY Law, the Board of Directors was again updated in the Crossroads Bank of Enterprises (CBE) and the Ultimate Beneficial Owners (UBO) register.

YEAR continued on delivering a diverse set of events ranging from webinars and trainings, all to develop the careers of researchers within its member RTO's. During the spring, SINTEF hosted us in Trondheim, Norway for a two-day training on elevating our impact by learning how to master time, brand and presentation skills. Next, the YEAR Annual Conference brought us to TNO in the city of The Hague, The Netherlands where the theme of the event was "The Future Researcher". During a 2 day session we explored how the future of research would change with the emergence of new tools such as artificial intelligence (AI). Also, participants were given a workshop in scientific storytelling. As always, these events provided an excellent opportunity for both networking and professional development.

Complementing our face-to-face events, we had a number of online webinars ranging from *Forecasting with AI and RD&I policy* to *Shaping Tomorrow's Energy by going Nuclear* and *Success Spin-off stories from YEAR's RTO members*.

YEAR resumed its presence at the EARTO Annual Conference, which was held in Valencia, Spain where we had a small stand with interactive activities. New discussions were initiated which led into follow-up meetings. Being visible at this event also helps with our current members, meeting their management and getting their continuous support. We are optimistic that we can continue our growth during the coming years.

On a final note, we initiated a first workshop on our YEAR Roadmap & Strategy renewal during our face-to-face Board Meeting in June. Having new members joining us and a world that is ever-changing, we plan to adapt for the future, by looking e.g. at our strengths, weaknesses and opportunities. We will define what types of events and other activities that we wish to arrange in the coming years. This work will continue in another workshop during the spring of 2026, and our hope is to have the updated plans ready by the summer of 2026.

Lastly, we are going to continue organising high-quality events hosted by our members — including our next Annual Conference which this time will be hosted by VITO in Belgium, as well as two face-to-face training sessions at RISE in Sweden during the spring, and INESC TEC, Portugal in the autumn.

Nicolaas van Strien

President, Young European Associated Researchers

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 to support the career of young researchers, providing them with opportunities to increase their skills, spread their professional network and gain international experience.

2.2 OUR MEMBERS

At the end of 2025 the YEAR member organisations were:

- **AIT** – Austrian Institute of Technology (Austria)
- **CEA** – French Alternative Energies and Atomic Energy Commission (France)
- **INESC TEC** – Institute for Systems and Computer Engineering, Technology and Science (Portugal)
- **RISE** – Research Institutes of Sweden (Sweden)
- **SINTEF** – The Foundation for Industrial and Technical Research (Norway)
- **TNO** – Netherlands Organisation for Applied Scientific Research (The Netherlands)
- **TYNDALL** – Tyndall National Institute (Ireland)
- **VITO** – Flemish Institute for Technical Research (Belgium)
- **VTT** – Technical Research Centre of Finland (Finland)



2.3 OUR MISSION

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 the internationalisation of research, and we achieve our mission through the three following pillars:

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



“
At INESC TEC, we are committed to advancing early-career researchers in science and technology. As a Research and Technology Organisation, we recognise young researchers as central to Europe's capacity for innovation and societal impact. By joining YEAR in 2025 and launching our internal initiative BEAR - Boosting Early-stage Researchers - we reaffirm our commitment to international collaboration, skills development,
”
and a strong European community for the next generation of research leaders.

João Claro
Chairman & CEO, INESC TEC

3 REPORT 2025

3.1 ACTIVITIES

3.1.1 Summary of activities

In 2025, the new formats were tried for both the annual conference and the webinars to align more with the pillars of YEAR. In the following section we provide a short summary of each of the events that were organised by us in the past year, for further details please check the event page on the YEAR website (<https://www.year-network.com/events/>). In summary, in 2025, we organised a total of 10 events. These were composed of 7 webinars; 1 training in Trondheim, Norway; one hybrid pub quiz; and our annual conference in The Hague, the Netherlands.

3.1.2 YEAR Annual Conference 2025

The YEAR Annual Conference was held on 16-17 June and hosted by TNO, Netherlands Organisation for Applied Scientific Research, The Hague (the Netherlands). The event targeted young and early-career researchers from YEAR member organisations.

The key focus of this year's YEAR annual conference was to create a vision on how the profession as a researcher will change in the future. The first day of the event was facilitated by TNO, whereas on the second day the goal was to focus on the method of sharing this vision through storytelling workshops facilitated by Marloes ten Kate and David Redeker from Scientific Storytelling. During a two-day conference 45 young researchers from AIT, CEA, INESC TEC, SINTEF, VTT, VITO, TNO, Tyndall, and RISE were given the opportunity to learn the theory and apply different tools in highly interactive sessions.

The first day of the conference started off with a welcome speech from the managing director strategy of TNO, Casper van der Veen, and YEAR board. During the first day topics were selected to challenge the young researchers on how to expand their vision. The first session gave the participants insights in how AI supports researchers in advancing their work. This session was led by Peter Werkhoven, chief scientist of TNO, and supported by two researchers, Jonah Poort and Erwin Walraven.

The second session explored how complex technological innovations can be integrated and prepared to become market innovations, which was organized by Roland Mathijssen, Teun Hendriks and Wim de Jong who are system engineers within TNO and TNO-ESI. During this session CAFCR framework to get a deeper understanding of their research and the relationship with the market.

The last session of the day was the exploration of the skills-based researcher, hosted by Joost van Genabeek. In this workshop a discussion was held on the shift from traditional education to a dynamic, skills-based model that fosters lifelong learning and continuous development

On the second day of the conference, a welcome speech was given by TNO's Director EU Affairs, Christine Balch, after which the participants continued with voicing their vision through the storytelling workshop by Scientific Storytelling. The workshop explored various methods in how you can turn your vision into a story, first exploring various script toolkits that can easily shape your story. The second part was about improvising your story, by continuing a conversation while adding constraints on what you should include in this conversation. The final part was about crafting your story and testing out your story to your peers, such that researchers can enhance their skills after the workshop as well.



Figure 1. YEAR participants at the YEAR AC hosted by TNO in The Netherlands.



Figure 2. Opening of the first day with Casper van der Veen (TNO managing director strategy).



Figure 3. Young researchers exploring their vision.

Prior to the conference, there was an optional social weekend planned (14-15 June). It started with a city tour on Saturday, in which the city of art and law were explored. During the city tour a break was made to have some delicious ice-cream and ended with a cooking workshop in which the participants had to collaborate to make a delicious 3 course meal. On Sunday the program started off with a pleasant canal boat tour in which the history of The Hague was further highlighted, the day ended with a visit to the Mauritshuis in which all the participants could feast their eyes on the Dutch masters.



Figure 4. The YEAR AC participants at the peace palace during the social weekend.

The annual conference was then accompanied on 18 June by a visit to various labs of TNO at the Stieltjesweg in Delft. Here a group of about 20 researchers visited the Structural Dynamics lab, various quantum labs and explored the labs that work in the field of optics for space.

The average overall rating for the YEAR Annual Conference was 4.5 out of 5, and 55.9% of participants rated the event as "very good", which was the highest possible choice.

3.1.3 Trainings and Webinars

In this year, we offered monthly online events– a mix of training sessions and topic-specific webinars. Apart from the organisation of YEAR's annual conference in The Hague, the Netherlands we had one extra training event in person this year: a training event about mastering your time management, your branding and your present style which was organised in Trondheim, Norway. In the remainder of this section, we provide a summary of the training and all the webinars organised in 2025.

EARTO and RD&I Policy (webinar on February 11th)

The first webinar held by YEAR in 2025 was about EARTO and RD&I Policy. In this webinar EARTO (European Association of Research and Technology Organisations) presented itself and how they connect with the YEAR network. They shared more details about what Research, Development & Innovation (RD&I) policies they focus on as EARTO and what changed now that a new EU commission is in place. The presenter during this webinar was Eleni Dritsakou, a Senior Policy Officer at EARTO. As a last topic within this webinar, there was a good interaction with the participants on how young researchers can connect their work towards these RD&I policies.

There were 55 participants.

Event page: www.year-network.com/ourevents/earto/

Forecasting with AI: what can modern machine learning tell us about the future?

(webinar on March 12th)

Interesting presentation where three different presenters showed their work on forecasting using AI. A large focus came to forecasting of weather/climate and biodiversity using foundation models, though there was also focus on building a network for climate research. Meeting with the speakers before the actual webinar proves to be a good way to get researchers aligned and in touch, fostering a culture of exchange and networking between the presenters.

Presenters are Aleksis Pirinen (RISE) talking about Climate AI Nordics, Kristofer Hasel (AIT) talking about weather modelling and Athanasios Trantas (TNO) talking about biodiversity modelling.

There were 144 participants

Event page: www.year-network.com/ourevents/forecasting-with-ai-what-can-modern-machine-learning-tell-us-about-the-future/

Elevate Your Impact: Mastering Time, Brand, and Presentations

(in-person training at SINTEF, Norway on April 10-11th)

In April, the YEAR network was hosted by SINTEF in Trondheim, Norway for a 1.5-day interactive workshop that gave the early-career researchers tangible strategies to unlock their professional potential. The trainer, Catherine Lemaréchal, is an NLP certified coach specialising in communication, branding and time mastery. She has worked as a consultant since 1992 and has run her own company Ticato AS since 2006. The training's key learning skills can be categorised as follows:

1. Time and energy mastery:

Researchers often have a varied workday: meetings, literature reviews, lab work etc. The participants learned how to better balance and budget their valuable time and energy to reduce stress and prevent burnout. This includes prioritising tasks by importance, avoiding procrastination and how to communicate and set boundaries with management.

2. Personal branding and networking:

The participants learned how to build and maintain connections targeted to specific goals: networking at scientific conferences, building industry connections, project development, mentorship, etc.



Figure 5. The trainer interacts with a participant.



Figure 6. Group work.

3. The science of presentation:

Different kinds of meetings require different approaches: team meetings, conferences, pitching a project, or talking with a potential industry partner. Through practice with peers, the participants learned applicable tools to deliver clear, engaging, and confident presentations.

Besides the training itself, the mayor of Trondheim invited the YEAR network to a reception at the city hall, where he held a speech emphasising the importance of young researchers for the future development of Trondheim. Additionally, the participants were afterwards treated to a historical tour inside the famous Nidarosdomen church.

The training had 27 participants, and they all answered “Yes” in the feedback form on whether they would recommend it to others. The material used was sent out to all participants after the event so that each one could share within their respective RTO.

Event page: www.year-network.com/ourevents/elevate-your-impact-mastering-time-brand-and-presentations-sintef-norway/

From Academia to Market: Success stories from YEAR's RTO members (webinar on May 21st)

Nils Wuytens, Program Director at VITO, presented his work leading the corporate startup accelerator VITO4STARTERS. He provided a comprehensive overview of how internal spin-offs are developed within VITO and explained how their ideation program fosters entrepreneurship across the organization. His presentation highlighted how employees are encouraged and supported in transforming innovative ideas into impactful ventures.

Christina Weiss from AIT followed with an insightful presentation on how entrepreneurship is nurtured within her institute through AIT's business and startup coaching initiatives. She offered a clear outline of the processes that help bridge research ideas to the market, showcasing practical steps and successful outcomes from AIT's internal innovation efforts.

Kariem Fahmi from the Tyndall Institute shared his experience developing his startup, HyperPath. He detailed the journey from concept to market-ready product, emphasizing both the challenges and achievements along the way. His honest reflections offered valuable firsthand lessons that were highly appreciated by the audience.

The session concluded with an engaging discussion among the speakers and participants. Numerous questions were raised, and the speakers actively addressed each one, sparking a lively exchange that deepened everyone's understanding of innovation and startup development within research environments.

There were 60 participants.

Event page: <https://www.year-network.com/ourevents/rto-spin-offs/>

Go Nuclear: Shaping Tomorrow's Energy Landscape (webinar on September 30th)

YEAR hosted the webinar "Go Nuclear: Shaping Tomorrow's Energy Landscape", and explored what innovations are currently occurring regarding nuclear power and the relation between nuclear and sustainable energy. The webinar was given by Darius Seyedi of CEA, Fares Alblouwy of VTT and Casper Versteyleen of TNO. Darius explained his ongoing research on the safety of nuclear facilities with respect to earthquakes; his work demonstrated the TAMARIS experimental platform and showed which innovations CEA is working on to assure that the structures and equipment will not falter. Fares Alblouwy highlighted his work with respect to the safety engineering of a novel nuclear reactor type; the LDR-50 small modular reactor. His work demonstrates that small reactors are feasible for the heating of cities. Lastly, Casper Versteyleen sketched the plans of TNO regarding nuclear propulsion for maritime transport and gave an insight into the Dutch consortium NuclearDrive. The presentations ended with an open invite to collaborate further within Europe with respect to nuclear innovation.

There were 110 participants.

Event page: www.year-network.com/ourevents/go-nuclear-shaping-tomorrows-energy-landscape/

YEAR RTO's — Get to know us! (webinar on October 30th)

This webinar was the first in the series of getting to know each of our fellow European Research and Technology Organisations (RTOs) in YEAR. Board members from three of our RTOs: Austrian Institute of Technology in Austria (AIT), the Institute for Systems and Computer Engineering, Technology and Science is a research & development institute at the Faculty of Engineering of the University of Porto in Portugal (INES TEC), and the independent Flemish research organisation in the area of cleantech and sustainable development based in Belgium (VITO), were presenting.

There were 58 participants.

Event page: www.year-network.com/ourevents/year-rtos-get-to-know-us/

Drones for Civil Applications (webinar on November 24th)

The YEAR Network held a webinar focused on drone technologies for civil applications. Speakers from AIT, SINTEF, and VITO presented advances including AIT's LiDAR-based autonomous indoor exploration for crisis response, SINTEF's enabling technologies for autonomous multi-drone operations and their geophysics-driven remote-sensing use cases, and VITO's agricultural drone-sampling methods for more targeted and scalable environmental data collection. Together, the talks showcased how UAVs are being applied across crisis management, infrastructure inspection, environmental monitoring, and precision agriculture.

There were 43 participants.

Event page: www.year-network.com/ourevents/drones-for-civil-applications/

3.2 BOARD MEETINGS

The YEAR Board convened for monthly online meetings throughout the year and held one in-person meeting in June, coinciding with our Annual Conference at TNO in The Hague. Additionally, two General Assemblies took place: one in-person in connection with the annual conference and the other online.

The aims of these meetings were to gather at least one representative per member organisation and to take representative decisions. Decisions were discussed and voted unanimously.

- We discussed and planned the organisation of our conference, trainings, as well as seminars/webinars.
- We renewed our Board and welcomed new board members.
- We have performed a Change of Seats with EY Law.
- We focused on expanding our network with finding new members.
- Initiated the process of opening a YEAR AISBL bank account with Beobank.
- Ensuring financial PEPPOL compliance.
- Keeping a healthy financial balance.

3.3 INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS & CONSULTANCY

Activities conducted under the pillar “Consultancy” enable YEAR to increase its visibility as the “voice” of young European researchers. Consequently, the Board was invited to present their views and perspectives at different occasions.

3.3.1 EARTO Annual Conference

YEAR participated in the EARTO Annual Conference which took place on 1-3 April. The event was hosted by REDIT in Valencia, Spain. This year the conference had the focus topic of “No EU Tech, No EU Competitiveness”.

EARTO brings together over 350 research and technology organisations in Europe from 32 countries. YEAR had a small stand with a roll-up and an interactive game of Jenga, which contained facts about the YEAR network as conversation starters. During the conference multiple connections were made with RTOs from several EU countries, such as Spain, Portugal, Switzerland, France. Meetings and follow-ups will continue on these interactions during 2025 and 2026.

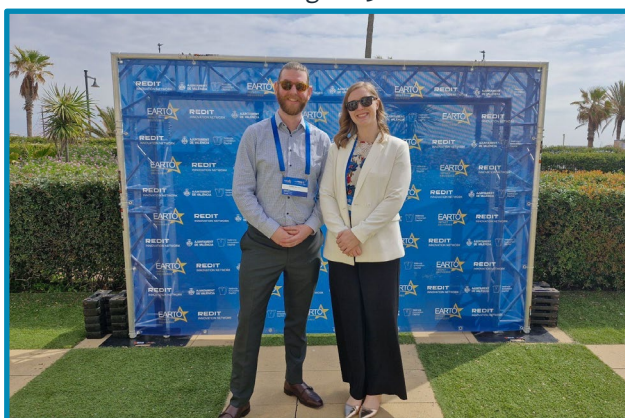


Figure 7. Year Board members at EARTO conference



Figure 8. Jenga game with former President of EARTO Françoise Jacque

3.4 GDPR

In 2025 we have prepared our cookie policy document and the privacy policy document. The structure has been set up for evaluating the data processing agreements of the suppliers for YEAR. The next step is expanding the data governance to formalize our data processing methods while assuring the privacy of our attendants. The final steps will result in evaluating the breach register to assure that it is fully compliant with the GDPR policy and to assure standard training on GDPR obligations for our new board members.

3.5 FINANCES

YEAR's funding is generated through the membership fees, which are determined based on the size of each member institute and calculated individually. The fees are structured at a nominal rate of 5.50€ per employee, with a minimum fee of 1,100€ and a maximum fee of 7,700€. Additionally, for member institutes running an internal young researchers network, a discount of 15% is calculated. During the General Assembly in June 2025, the Board decided that membership fees will be adjusted annually in line with inflation. The adjustment will be based on the forecast inflation rate for Belgium available in November of each year. For the year 2026 the rate will be increased by 2.5%.

A summary of the 2024 transactions is provided in the table below.

Bank account total balance on 01.01.2025	19,482.01 €
Membership fees 2025	+50,933.51 €
Board meetings	-818.99 €
YEAR Annual Conference (+General Assembly)	-12,351.73 €
External relations & EU affairs activities	-1,296.19 €
Training and webinar costs	-5,731.3 €
Legal and accounting costs	-10,540.98 €
Lawyer & Notary fees	incl. -7,040.98 €
EARTO accounting	incl. -3 500.00 €
Other costs (bank, hosting website, annual report, webinar solution, etc.)	352.42 €
Interest	38.75 €
Bank account total balance on 31.12.2025	35,843.05 €

4 EXECUTIVE BOARD



Figure 6. Some of the YEAR board and supporting members at the Annual Conference in The Hague.

4.1 COMPOSITION OF THE BOARD

At the end of 2024, the YEAR Board is composed as follows:



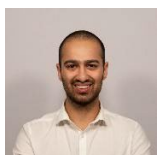
Nicolaas
van Strien
(VTT)
President



Hajo den Ouden
(TNO)
Vice President



Anna
Kozłowska
(AIT)
Treasurer



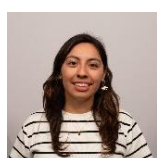
Aria Mirzai
(RISE)
Secretary
General



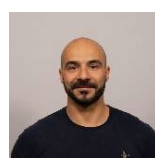
Jennifer Carreiro
Spencer (VTT)
Steering
Committee
member



Nikalet Everson
(SINTEF)
External
Relations



Paulina Rodriguez
Fiscal
(VITO)
Event Coordinator



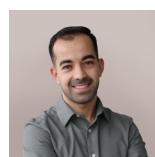
Walter Messina
(Tyndall)
Communications
Manager



Medina Andresel
(AIT)
European Affairs



Mike Wilmer
(TNO)
Technology
Manager



Romão Santos
(INESC TEC)
Mobility Manager



Anabelle Lopez
(CEA)
Board member

All member organisations have at least one board member, ensuring a voice for all YEAR Network members.

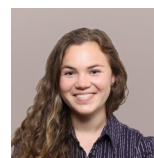
Alongside the board members, the following supporting members also facilitate the work of the YEAR Network:



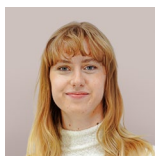
Amritha
Rajan
(RISE)



Carla Gonçalves
(INESC TEC)



Hilde Marie
Syvertsen
(SINTEF)



Sofia Ojasalo
(VTT)

4.2 CONTACT DETAILS

YEAR Young European Associated Researchers network

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1000 Bruxelles, Belgium

E-mail: contact@year-network.com

Website: year-network.com/

LinkedIn: linkedin.com/company/year-network/

5 BECOME A MEMBER

5.1 WHO CAN BECOME A MEMBER?

Any RTO or Research and Development departments of industrial organisations established in member countries of the European Union or of the European Economic Area who are 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 participation.

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

5.2 WHY BECOME A MEMBER?

Considering the three pillars of YEAR - networking, training and consultancy, 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 (conference) with a fine-tuned education programme** for young researchers on proposal writing, European programmes, interdisciplinary training, mobility opportunities, etc.
- **Topic-specific training 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.