

## AER Youth Regional Network (AER)

### Activity Report 2024-2025

(March 2024 - February 2025)

Created by the Assembly of European Regions (AER) in 2008, **the Youth Regional Network (YRN) is a cross-regional youth platform, promoting active youth participation at regional level.** Composed of youth regional councils, youth county councils, youth organisations, and young people joining on an individual basis, in AER's network and membership, the YRN provides young people with opportunities to express policy recommendations, to foster debate and capacity-building, to exchange good practices, to reach out to decision-makers and to influence policies. **The YRN is a unique forum for young people from diverse regions to raise their voice collectively,** while introducing a European dimension to youth policy in those regions.

YRN activities include: capacity-building, debates, workshops, policy work, elaboration of toolkits and statements, exchange of best practices, international events... **all with the goal of making youth voices heard in regional and European policy-making, and in providing young people from all over Europe with a platform to meet, exchange views and learn from one another.**

## 1. The YRN General Assembly 2024

**Zalău, Sălaj County, Romania | 14-17 March 2024**

The General Assembly in Zalău gathered YRN members for strategic discussions, elections, and networking. As well as electing new leadership and setting the direction for 2024-2025, we held interesting and valuable committee workshops, a MEET Intergenerational Regional Debate and got to experience Romanian culture. The event was pivotal for reinforcing the YRN's commitment to youth participation across Europe.

<https://aer.eu/events/yrn-general-assembly-2024/>

<https://aer.eu/the-youth-regional-network-general-assembly-2024/>



Were elected:

- **President:** Norbert Nagy (Salaj, RO)
- **1st Vice-President:** Sigrun Myrvang (Innlandet, NO)
- **2nd Vice-President:** Kassandra Petsa (Nordland, NO)
- **Chair of the TC on Youth Participation & Governance:** Mathilde Colarte (Wallonia, BE)
- **Chair of the TC on Mental Health & Wellbeing:** Jack McLaughlin (Donegal, IE)
- **Chair of the TC on Green & Sustainable Europe:** Marsel Haka (Tirana, AL)
- **Chair of the TC on Gender Equality & Women Empowerment:** Elona Matoshi (Kosovo)

## 2. Online meetings and activities

### 2.1. Organised by the YRN

Internal online meetings of the YRN Thematic Committees, regularly organised by the Committee Chairs

[Open online meeting for World Environment Day](#) | 5 June 2024

[Sustainable Pathways: Youth-led Foresight for Territorial development](#) | 5 October 2024

### 2.2. Other online activities



**THE ROLE OF YOUTH IN COMBATING GENDER BASED VIOLENCE**

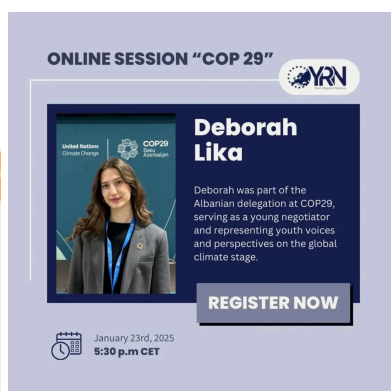
DECEMBER 10TH | 17:30 CET | ZOOM

**NINA ULLOM**

She holds a Master's Degree in Public Policy from George Mason University and a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology from the College of William and Mary.

**DALIYA SARSEMBIYEVA**

She is a Political Science and Project Management & IT student with a strong commitment to social impact and innovation.



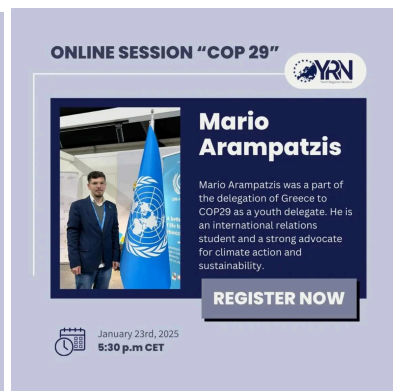
**ONLINE SESSION "COP 29"**

**Deborah Lika**

Deborah was part of the Albanian delegation at COP29, serving as a young negotiator and representing youth voices and perspectives on the global climate stage.

**REGISTER NOW**

January 23rd, 2025  
5:30 p.m CET



**ONLINE SESSION "COP 29"**

**Mario Arampatzis**

Mario Arampatzis was a part of the delegation of Greece to COP29 as a youth delegate. He is an international relations student and a strong advocate for climate action and sustainability.

**REGISTER NOW**

January 23rd, 2025  
5:30 p.m CET

## 3. In-person activities

### 3.1. Organised by the YRN

[YRN Capacity-Building Weekend](#) | Zürich | 31 October - 3 November 2024

This weekend-long event focused on building leadership skills, enhancing the capacity of YRN members, and equipping young leaders with the tools needed for effective advocacy and regional work. Hosted in Zurich, Switzerland, the Capacity-Building Weekend included workshops, team-building activities, and practical sessions on policy-making, youth participation, and project management. The event was designed to empower members to become advocates for positive change in their regions and improve their skills for cross-cultural collaboration. The weekend culminated in



the development of a shared action plan for YRN members to implement in the coming year, strengthening the network's visibility and impact.

### **YRN workshop: “Sustainable pathways: youth-led foresight for territorial development” | Tirana | 5 October 2024**

The “Sustainable Pathways” workshop brought together youth from across Europe to explore strategies for sustainable development in their regions. The workshop focused on the role of youth in territorial development, promoting environmentally sustainable practices, and addressing social challenges related to climate change. Participants discussed the integration of sustainability into youth policies and shared examples of regional projects that are contributing to the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The workshop fostered a collaborative environment where young leaders brainstormed innovative solutions to common challenges faced by rural and urban areas alike.

## **3.2 Joining AER activities**

### **AER Black Sea Summit and General Assembly 2024 | Batumi, Adjara, Georgia | 12-14 June 2024**

Joined by the two YRN Vice-Presidents

- Sigrun presented the YRN updates and report at the Executive Board meeting and at the General Assembly
- Cassandra presented the AER Summer Academy 2024 and the YRN involvement in it, also in her position of County Councillor in Nordland, host region of the Summer Academy

At the Black Sea Summit and General Assembly, YRN Vice-Presidents contributed updates on regional youth initiatives and discussed the role of young people in shaping European policy. YRN members actively participated in workshops that explored the political, economic, and social issues affecting youth in the Black Sea region. The event also included a focus on youth inclusion and empowerment, with discussions on creating youth-led solutions to address regional challenges such as climate change, unemployment, and migration.



### **AER Summer Academy 2024 | Bodø, Nordland, Norway | 12-16 August 2024**

- 3 Presidium members
- YRN members covered by Nordland’s Youth Solidarity Fund + youth delegates from the SAOC regions
- Co-facilitation of the Mental Health workshop



The Summer Academy, held in Bodø, Norway, served as a key moment for youth from across Europe to engage in discussions on regional development, leadership, and youth participation. Members of the YRN participated in various workshops that focused on empowerment, leadership development, and creating youth-led policies. Key themes and ideas included new projects for youth mobility, educational exchange, and volunteerism, as well as initiatives aimed at fostering greater inclusion of young people in policy-making. Through interactive sessions, participants gained practical insights into how youth can drive change in their local communities and develop stronger ties with political and civil society actors.



### **Mental Health Challenges in Today's Youth – A Regional Perspective | Rijeka, Primorje-Gorski Kotar County, Croatia | 22-23 October 2024**

- Jack McLaughlin, YRN Chair for Mental Health & Wellbeing, was a speaker

Mental health has become a critical issue for young people across Europe. In this event, YRN Chair for Mental Health & Wellbeing, Jack McLaughlin, led a series of discussions on the state of youth mental health in the region and how local governments can respond. The event included workshops on creating mental health awareness campaigns, increasing access to mental health resources, and fostering peer support networks. The session aimed to bring together stakeholders to design mental health policies that prioritize the needs of young people, especially in light of the ongoing challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and its aftermath.

## **3.3 Joining external events, platforms and fora**

### **EYCA Rural Youth Camp | Cazorla, Spain | 11-17 April 2024**

- Joined by YRN Vice-President Sigrun Myrvang and other YRN members

The event brought together 50 young people from rural areas across Europe, allowing us to exchange practices and experiences on rural initiatives taking place in other regions, to better understand how to energise our community and create connections between the many young rural people in Europe.

We worked with a variety of interesting topics including employment, education, cultural and volunteering activities, youth work, public transport, health care and intergenerational dialogue.







### **[LevelUP! European Parliament and European Youth Forum](#) | Brussels | 12-13 April 2024**

- YRN delegation at the event

On the 12th and 13th of April, a dozen of members from the Youth Regional Network (YRN) had the chance to join LevelUP!, a large-scale youth event organised by the European Youth Forum (YFJ), and which gathered around 1,300 young people from across Europe at the European Parliament, ahead of the European elections. During two intense days, they had the opportunity to benefit from capacity-building activities, training and debates with politicians, institutional representatives, and youth organisations, to share their experience, and to exchange views and best practices with young people.

### **[Maastricht Debate](#) | 29 April 2024**

- Joined by Mathilde Colarte, YRN Chair for Youth Participation and Governance

### **[Europa Forum Wachau - Youth pre-event](#) | Bratislava | 12-14 April 2024**

- Joined by YRN members Maylinda Bajrami and Hugo Beauvais

Ahead of the 2024 Europa Forum Wachau (EFW), the AER/YRN delegation joined a youth pre-event in Bratislava for a weekend of capacity-building, networking, and policy discussions.

The program included a dialogue with MEP Vladimír Bilčík, meetings with local representatives, and a movie night at the Austrian Cultural Forum. Participants then worked in groups at Pistori Palace, developing policy proposals on key EU topics before exploring Bratislava's rich history on a guided tour. The weekend wrapped up with proposal presentations, laying the groundwork for continued discussions at EFW in June.

### **[Europa Forum Wachau](#) | Lower Austria | 19-21 June 2024**

- Joined by Marsel Haka, YRN Chair for Green & Sustainable Europe, and by YRN member Maylinda Bajrami

YRN members contributed to pre-events and main discussions, addressing sustainability and youth engagement in European policies.

### **[Art of Change Training Course](#) | Oslo, Utøya Island, Norway | 17-21 June 2024**

- Joined by Sigrun Myrvang, YRN Vice-President

Focusing on youth empowerment through arts and dialogue, this course fostered creative approaches to activism and resilience-building. Through workshops, discussions, and performances, participants engaged in dialogue on democracy, human rights, and activism, using music, visual arts, and storytelling as tools for impact.

### **[Consultative meeting for the revision of the European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life - Congress of the Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe](#) | Strasbourg | 5 July 2024**

- Joined by Mathilde Colarte, YRN Chair for Youth Participation & Governance

YRN participated in the revision of the European Charter on Youth Participation, ensuring that young voices shape policy frameworks.



#### [EU Youth Test, European Economic and Social Committee](#) | Online

Application and selection of Mathilde Colarte, YRN Chair for Youth Participation & Governance

#### [Gender Equality Forum 2024](#) | Brussels, European Institute for Gender Equality | 10-11 December 2024

- Joined by Elona Matoshi, YRN Chair for Gender Equality & Women's Empowerment

Elona Matoshi, YRN Chair for Gender Equality, represented the network in discussions on gender parity, contributing youth perspectives on systemic barriers and opportunities.

## 4. YRN publications

### [Position paper on COP29](#)

## 5. Communications

### [YRN Photo Contest for the EU elections 2024](#)

#### **YRN State of Membership as of 21/03/2025**

- Individual members: 205
- Member organisations: 8, namely Akershus Youth Council, Donegal Youth Council, Generația Activă Jebel / Tineri pentru tineri din jebel, Innlandet Youth Council, Noordvoerders, Nordland Youth Council, Salaj Youth Council, Timis Youth Foundation