



IO1 REPORT BUILDING BRIDGES - POTENTIALS & TOOLS

List of Contents

1. State of the Art: Generational Gap and Intergenerational Dialogue in Workforce in Europe	2
A. General Trends	2
B. OECD data and projections	2
C. Eurostat Data	2
2. Overview of YES Forum organisational structure as a European network.....	4
A. Members	5
B. Board of Directors	5
C. Secretariat.....	5
3. YES Forum experience with Junior and Senior workers.....	6
A. Communication and Cooperation between Junior and Senior Workers	6
B. Potential Map of Junior and Seniors.....	7
C. Optimisation of Cooperation between Junior and Senior Workers.....	8
D. Impact and Recommendation	9
E. Process during the IO1 (organisational working group)	9

1. State of the Art: Generational Gap and Intergenerational Dialogue in Workforce in Europe

A. General Trends

There is no doubt that the way work will look in the future is changing. Two mega-trends are driving this transformation: a shift in who is entering and leaving the workforce. Even though the baby boomer generation is coming to an age of retirement, other developments are happening simultaneously. Some of them are the rise in the general population's health levels and life expectancy and the willingness of older-aged individuals to remain professionally active for more years. On the other hand, due to low birth rates over the past decades, fewer young people are set to enter the workforce in the near future – particularly in European countries. These demographic trends favour multigenerational workplaces with a greater mix of workers at all ages rather than a pyramid of much larger numbers of younger workers and relatively few older workers.

The diversity of experience, generations and skills mix brings several benefits to the workplace. Therefore, it is essential to improve intergenerational dialogue between colleagues with different experiences. On a personal level, by enhancing multigenerational integration within the workplace, employees can expect intergenerational knowledge and experience sharing to be expanded, increasing their productivity and performance. Also, collaboration between people from different generations prevents segregation, discrimination, and social exclusion.

B. OECD Data and Projections

Population ageing is profoundly changing the workplace. Significant demographic changes will mark the coming decades. According to the latest UN population projections, by 2050, the number of individuals aged 15 to 29 will shrink by seven per cent in Western Europe. Furthermore, they are entering the labour market at a later age, often pursuing post-secondary education and further reducing the pool of young people for hire. Meanwhile, a significant part of the workforce is approaching retirement age. Since 2010, the large baby boomer cohorts have been reaching older ages, and successive generations are smaller or grow at a slower pace. By 2050, the share of the population aged 50 and older will increase from 37% in 2020 to 45% on average in the OECD.

C. Eurostat Data

According to the most recent European Union (EU) annual statistics on employment based on the EU Labour Force Survey (EU-LFS), the youth employment rate (people aged 15-24) shows a decrease at the EU level between 2005 and 2020 (-1.8 p.p.) going down from 33.3 % to 31.5 %. More than half of the EU Member States (17 countries) display decreased national figures. On the other hand, the senior employment rate (persons aged 55-64) has enormously increased from 2005 to 2020 at the EU level: from 40.0 % to 59.6 % (+19.6 p.p.).

Figures 1 and 2 below show the youth and senior employment rates in the EU and Austria, Germany, France, Italy and Sweden. Considering the partner countries of the BRIDGE project, in all countries but Germany, there is a decrease in youth employment in 2020. This decrease in youth employment is particularly visible in Sweden, where the drop is almost 5 p.p. between 2019 and 2020. Italy shows, in general, the lowest youth employment rate compared to the other partner countries, and the decrease is around -10 p.p. between 2005 and 2020 (see Figure 1). On the other hand, looking at Figure 2, all the countries recorded significant increases in the senior employment rate between 2005 and 2020. Germany shows the highest increase of around 25 p.p. between 2005 and 2020.

Similarly, taking the whole population of employed people aged 15 to 64 as a reference, young people accounted for 10.0 % of this population in 2005 against only 7.6 % in 2020, people aged 25-54 accounted for 79.1 % in 2005 against 73.8 % in 2020, while people aged 55-64 represented 10.9 % of the employed people aged 15-64 in 2005 against 18.7 % in 2020.

These data clearly show that employment is up for seniors and down for young people in Europe compared to the past. This trend indicates that different generations will continue to work together, and there is a need to improve the intergenerational dialogues in the workplace. For this reason, the BRIDGE project focuses on the importance of improving the intergenerational dialogue between Junior and Senior youth workers by identifying their strengths, knowledge and competencies. It also investigates effective formal and informal methods and techniques to transfer knowledge from Seniors to Juniors and vice versa. *Juniors* are defined as workers with less than 10 years of experience in the field, and *Seniors* are defined as workers with 10 or more years of experience in the same field.

Even though the data presented above is relevant to this project and essential to understanding the current employment situation in Europe, there is a need for more information/data to improve intergenerational dialogue. For this reason, we have developed a common data gathering tool, a questionnaire on the topic. It will be published, and the results and the analysis will be integrated into this report.

Figure 1: Youth Employment in the EU and BRIDGE Partner countries



Source: Eurostat

Figure 2: Senior Employment in the EU and BRIDGE Partner countries



Source: Eurostat

This report proceeds as follows. Next section will present the organisational structure of YES Forum to better explain YES Forum's experience with Senior and Junior workers. Then, the third section will focus on the cooperation and communication between Seniors and Juniors and how to improve the intergenerational dialogue in the workplace.

2. Overview of YES Forum organisational structure as a European network

YES Forum is composed of 39 members in 17 EU countries, organisations that act on national and regional level and work in the diverse fields of youth and social work. Together with our members in the UK and Norway, the network has 43 members, who offer (youth) social services, education, training and qualification, youth work. They work with young people that are most likely to experience social exclusion.

The YES Forum is driven by its members, who have overall decision-making authority. The network is represented by the appointed Managing Director, who is responsible for running its business and internal organisation. The management Board elected by the members supervises budget and activities. Planned aims are implemented through our democratic structure with the full participation of members. The diversity of members involved in the YES Forum's work requires multiple ways of engaging with. To coordinate the activities and to support effective internal and external communication, the YES Forum is supported by the Secretariat in Stuttgart. In the Secretariat, experienced staff works together in a dynamic environment.

Although all the members of the YES Forum are working with and for young people, their form of action, approach and structure vary greatly between each other. That is why the YES Forum provides room for peer learning and inspiring practices and organises workshops, trainings and webinars open for member organisations and also for professionals working with marginalised young people. Tailor-made assistance to young people helps in breaking the intergenerational cycles of disadvantage, thus fostering social inclusion and combating poverty.

A. Members

More than events in which members can simply share their successful stories, the capacity building activities aim at helping organisations understand a practice and/ or a method, recognise which parts of it could be applied on their own context and learn how to adapt it. Capacity building is an important aspect to the YES Forum membership development. YES Forum aims to grow as a network in order to be a stronger actor to contribute to a more social Europe, where no one is left behind and which invests in the full potential of young people.

Even though there is a general trend in employment in workforce in Europe, there are still national and regional differences in employment and workforce. The generational gap differs according to each country's economic and employment situation. For this reason, it is important to keep in mind the context and differences for developing and implementing tailor-made methods to improve intergenerational dialogue. YES Forum is aware of the situations in different European countries by having members throughout Europe and also serves as a platform where good practices and methods are shared to improve intergenerational dialogue.

B. Board of Directors

The management Board elected by the members supervises budget and activities. The Board of directors are elected at the General Assembly from the EEIG organisations for a term of two years.

C. Secretariat

To coordinate the activities and to support effective internal and external communication, the YES Forum is supported by the Secretariat in Stuttgart. In the dynamic environment of the Secretariat experienced staff works together with young graduates and students.

YES Forum gives students the opportunity to gain real experience in the daily business of a European network. Supporting European projects on different topics with young people and professionals in youth work and engaging with fresh ideas is a main goal of an internship with YES Forum. In this win-win setting, young people gain practical and first-hand experience, facilitating their access to the labour market while working in an environment that allows them to understand the positive aspects of European cooperation; and the experienced staff benefit from fresh ideas and better understanding of the issues that are treasured by young people. The working procedures of the YES Forum Secretariat are based on continuous self-assessment, daily briefings and longer working meetings on certain occasions.

That's why; YES Forum is experienced in working with different age groups with diverse experiences in the Secretariat as well as in its Board of Directors. Next section will focus on these experiences and methods to improve the communication and cooperation between Junior and Senior workers.

3. YES Forum experience with Senior & Junior workers

A. Communication and Cooperation between Junior and Senior Workers

In this section, YES Forum experience with Senior and Junior workers in the context of the Secretariat and the Board of Directors will be explained. By doing this, it is important to consider the cooperation and communication of Juniors and Seniors in the Secretariat, in the Board and between the Secretariat and the Board.

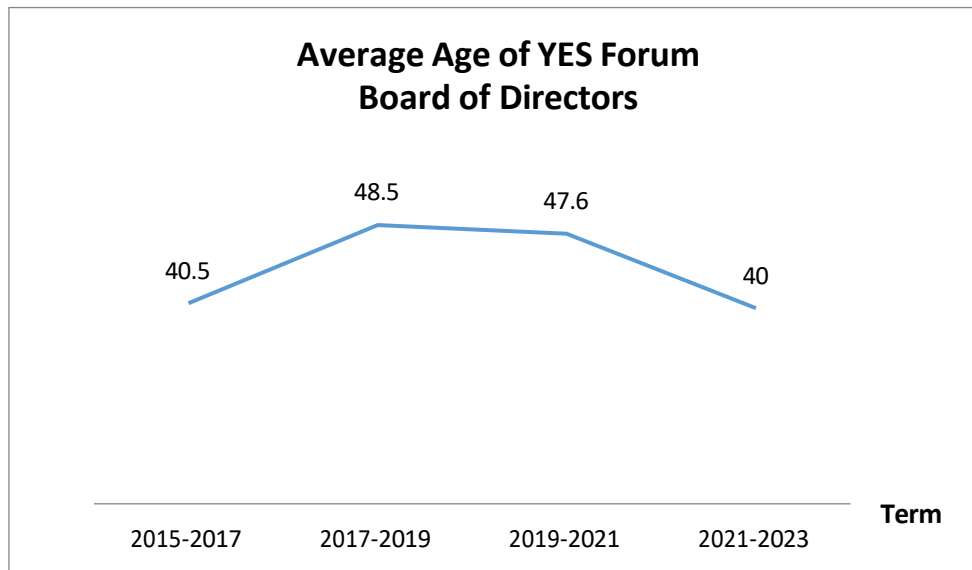
Collaboration and communication between Seniors and Juniors are essential parts of almost every organization and also in YES Forum work. We are constantly in the process of transferring knowledge and experience and also creating safe space for communication while working together. This is especially visible in the Secretariat which continuously gives opportunities to students to work with the experienced/senior staff in the field. While Juniors bring fresh ideas and practices to the work, they are also receiving supervision and feedback from the experienced staff. However, this is not only one way process, to make sure that the experience is sufficient for everyone, each intern is completing an appraisal form in the middle of their internship to evaluate their internship experience thus far. This method gives an opportunity to both sides to reflect and evaluate the communication and collaboration between the staff and for the service. It also improves the intergenerational dialogue and facilitates the work quality.

In addition to the Secretariat, the Board also undertakes ongoing communication and collaboration between Junior and Senior members with different experience levels. Every term, while there are new members of the board, there are also members from previous terms that already have experience as a Board member. These members always share their knowledge and experience in a way that benefits everyone. For example, the current Board was elected in 2021, and in their first board meeting, the previous chair of the board shared his experiences and made suggestions for the new term while creating a safe space. Following is a short overview of the current board and an analysis of the average age from last four Board terms.

The current Board of directors (2021-2023) is composed of five members elected at the General Assembly from the EEIG organisations for a term of two years. They stem from member organisations from Austria, Germany, Greece, the Netherlands, and Sweden. Furthermore, a Chairperson of the Board is appointed by the Board to represent the rights and duties of the Board towards the managing director, as well as represent the YES Forum in relation to third parties.

Figure 3 shows the average age of last four Board terms ranging from 40 to 48.5. The current board is our youngest ever board, average age being 40. There are still generational differences; oldest board member is 58 and the youngest is 28. This is because we value the mixture of young/junior and senior/more experienced youth workers.

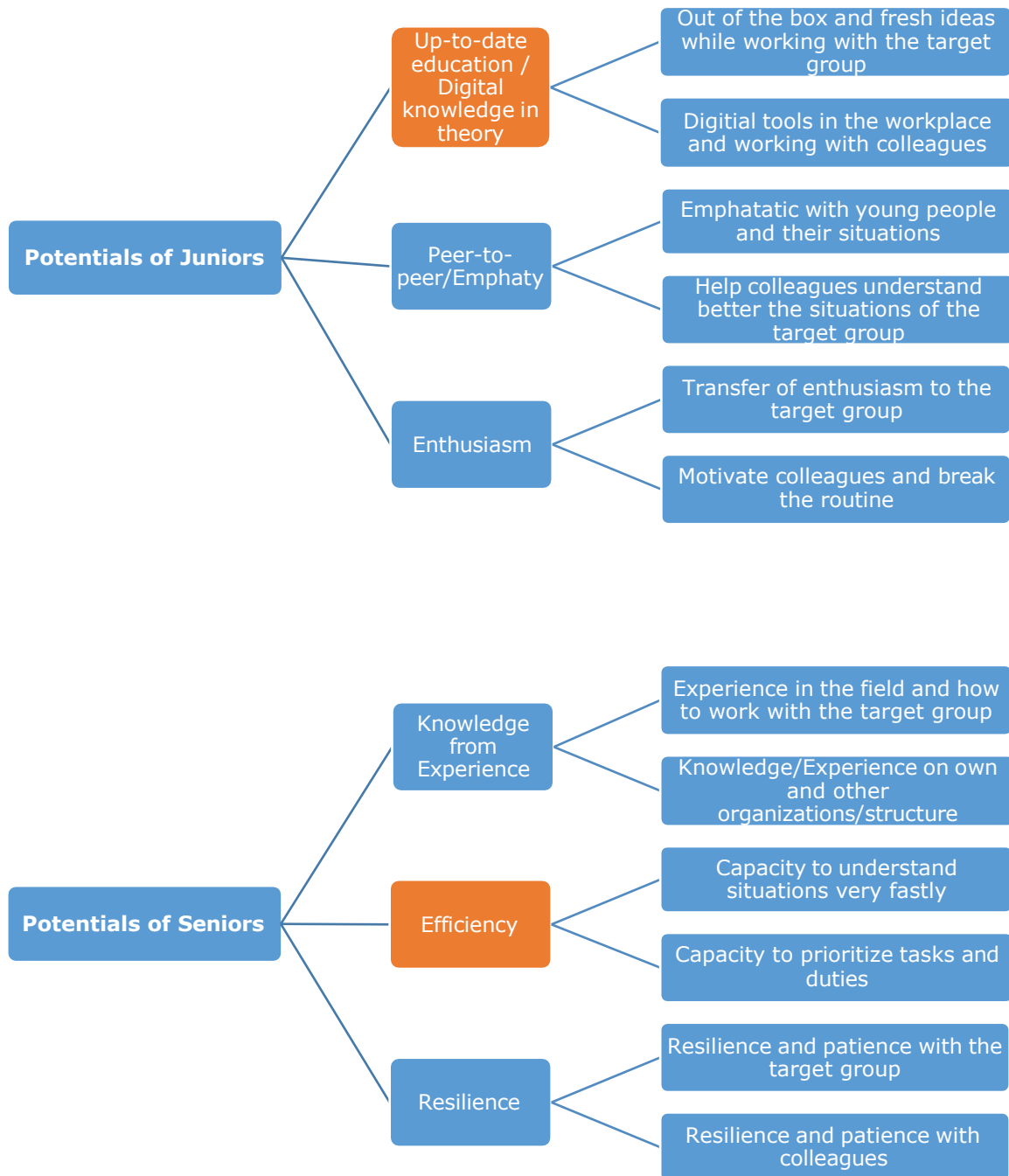
Figure 3: Average Age of YES Forum Boards



Even though we mostly benefit from the intergenerational environment in our work places, sometimes there are challenges with the cooperation and communication between Juniors and Seniors. These can be because of different mind-sets, social backgrounds or use of language. However, from our experience when there is a difficulty in collaboration or communication, it does not only arise from the generational/experience gap but also other variables play a role such as language difference, different cultural backgrounds in an international working environment (network). For example, as YES Forum is an international network and our members are from different countries, sometimes problems arise because of different cultural communication methods. Additionally, in the European youth work context, staff from different professional backgrounds/education/experience work together such as the social workers, political scientists and sociologists. And, this can also cause some difficulties in communication and collaboration.

B. Potential map of Juniors and Seniors

Explicit knowledge/strengths are highlighted in orange.



C. Optimisation of communication and cooperation between the Juniors and Seniors

Communication and cooperation between Juniors & Seniors can be optimized through using the methods “intergenerational learning” and “reverse mentoring”.

- Intergenerational Learning

Intergenerational Learning occurs when intergenerational projects or activities are purposefully planned to include one, or several, learning aims and outcomes across the generations, i.e. both sides

learning from or with each other, to gain skills, values and knowledge. This learning could take place in a formal, non-formal or informal setting but one or more of the primary aims would include an intergenerational learning outcome. Both generations need each other to share skills and experiences and learn from their differences to bridge the gap between them. Intergenerational learning (people of different ages learning together and from each other) can do that. While senior workers often lack the digital skills and fresh/out of the box ideas, younger workers lack the life experiences of seniors and soft skills that can make them more successful.

- Reverse mentoring

Reverse Mentoring is a possible solution to bridge the age and generational gap within the workforce. Reverse or reciprocal mentoring was initially a way to close the skills gap and introduce new technology to senior managers using a basic mentor partnership but reversed. For example, a younger employee would 'mentor' an older, more senior employee. For the reverse mentoring relationship to work, it must have clear objectives; although the arrangement need not be too formal or rigid. Mentors and mentees should be at ease with the arrangement so they receive the most value from it. Like any form of mentoring, reverse mentoring in any organisation should be based on trust, confidentiality, mutual respect and sensitivity. Reverse Mentoring is a bridge-building exercise between the generations where the conversation can range from integrating new digital communications tools to discussing what younger people believe the world of work should look like.

D. Impact and Recommendation

There is a need to build mixed/diverse teams to build multigenerational work places. One of the biggest problems is for juniors to be included in the hierarchical structure in the organization and take responsibilities. To be able to solve this problem, power sharing and flatter hierarchical structures in organizations are essential. So, our recommendation to other organizations is to flatten this structure and give also Juniors more responsibilities while working with young people and their colleagues.

As the project started rather recently, 6 months ago, we did not yet observe concrete impact in YES Forum. However, TC1 in Bologna, especially for the tandems that participated in, has certainly raised our awareness on the issue of intergenerational dialogue.

E. Process during the IO 1 (organisational working group)

As YES Forum is a European network of organizations, its organisational structure differs from the other partner organizations and thus the contribution of the Forum was translated accordingly. For this reason, tandems are formed not only within the Secretariat in Stuttgart but also from the Board and member organizations from other countries of the Forum. Our working group consists of the colleagues in the Secretariat and a Board member. Tandems might change over time as the work of YES Forum in nature includes moving staff and interns to give more young people a chance to work with the Forum.

With our working group, we held regular meetings and discuss about the topics written in this report. Thus, this detailed report can serve as an outcome of our work.

Sources

https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Employment_-_annual_statistics#Employment_up_for_seniors_but_down_for_young_people

https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/LFSI_EMP_A_H_custom_1832411/default/line?lang=en

<https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/ce/Documents/about-deloitte/voice-of-the-workforce-in-europe.pdf>

<http://generationsworkingtogether.org/downloads/5252d276ca45a-GWT%20brochure%20FINAL.pdf>

https://knowledge4policy.ec.europa.eu/foresight/changing-nature-work_en

<https://learngen.eu/2021/08/06/1482/>

<https://learngen.eu/2021/12/10/multigenerational-workforce-from-an-optional-choice-to-an-inevitable-necessity/>

<https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/237dd702-en/index.html?itemId=/content/component/237dd702-en#section-d1e1134>

https://research.tees.ac.uk/ws/files/6433049/Accepted_manuscript.pdf