CREATING OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT FOR YOUNG PROFESSIONALS
Young Professionals in Foreign Policy (YPFP) BRUSSELS, as part of a global non-profit, non-partisan organization, strives every day to empower its members and volunteers with the knowledge, skills, networks, and exposure required to become change makers and the leaders of tomorrow. What started as a small gathering of a few friends interested in foreign policy, today represents one of the biggest and most influential platforms of its kind for debate in Brussels.

After nearly 15 years, we can confirm that our organization is not only a platform for engagement for young professionals in the capital of Europe: we can wholeheartedly say that it transcends this city. Our members and followers come from all over the world and engage in debates and informal exchanges, and we are confident that the views acquired in Brussels with YPFP support will echo in their home countries too.

YPFP Brussels is proud to present its Impact Report, depicting our contribution to addressing global challenges and optimizing opportunities for our members during 2020–2022. This report aims to shed some light on our achievements and present our work, while introducing our volunteers who have dedicated their time and efforts to foster the next generation of foreign policy leaders.

We would like to thank each one of our speakers, partners, and sponsors. Our partnerships and collaborations with NATO, the U.S. Mission to the EU, the UK Mission to the EU, and the UK Joint Delegation to NATO have left a considerable mark by greatly contributing to our events.

With new leadership taking responsibility for the branch in January 2020, the first few months were a period of uncertainty and challenge brought on by the global COVID-19 pandemic. As an organization whose work it is to bring together young professionals and give them the skills, connections, and knowledge to grow and succeed we relied heavily on in-person events and creating opportunities to forge relationships. Therefore, we had to oversee a rapid and fundamental reinvention of YPFP Brussels’ priorities, operations, and vision. Thanks to the resilience and commitment of our staff, and a willingness to innovate and adapt that belies our volunteer nature, not only did we succeed in weathering the storm of the pandemic – we embarked on new partnerships, pioneered new event formats, and continued to deliver dozens of high-quality events for our members without breaking stride. We are proud to have organized 100 events, gathering 2500 participations. We also reached over 800,000 people through multi-channel communications and promotional content, distributing news, announcements, and calls-to-action via owned YPFP digital platforms.
To select a few highlights: through our flagship Ambassador Series events, we were honored by the presence of a wide-range of diplomats among which Ambassador Thomas Ossowski, Representative to the Political and Security Committee, Permanent Representation of the Federal Republic of Germany to the European Union; Ambassador Stephan Klement, Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the International Organisations in Vienna; Ambassador Daniela Morari, Head of the Mission of Republic of Moldova to the EU; Ambassador Joao Aguiar Machado, Permanent Representative of the European Union to the World Trade Organisation; Ambassador Olof Skoog, Ambassador and Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations in New York.

Our Tools of the Trade events “Boosting your Interviewing Skills: Essential tools to succeed”, “Career Opportunities within the EU Institutions in Brussels”, or “Breaking the glass ceiling at work” helped once more our members to build skills necessary to thrive in the professional spheres. Our events sponsored by the US Mission to the EU and NATO tackled the state of transatlantic affairs as well as the security challenges and priorities of the North Atlantic Alliance. Through all these events, YPFP Brussels has followed its guiding values of serving its members through ethical leadership while engaging in informed, constructive, non-partisan discussion of international affairs, and of promoting professionalism and camaraderie within our community. We are grateful to all the speakers and members for their participation.

To conclude, we would like to express our sincere appreciation to our members, our partners, current and former staff members for their continued engagement and to each one of you for your feedback, ideas, and support. 15 years of YPFP Brussels represent only the beginning and we are looking forward to successful partnerships and constructive discussions in the months and years to come.

With best regards,

Adrian Garcia Esteve, fmr. Executive Director (2020–2022)
Cristiana Lavinia Badulescu, fmr. Managing Director (2020–2022)
Marija Sulce, Managing Director (2023–Present)
YPFP Brussels is a non-profit organization that is reliant on its volunteers, partners, grants, and sponsors. Many events would not be possible without the outstanding support of partners such as NATO and the U.S. Mission to the EU. We have also continued our fruitful collaboration with SAAB EU Office and Quaker Council for European Affairs while developing links with UN Women Brussels and the UK Mission to the EU. YPFP Brussels is always on a lookout for mutually beneficial partnerships.

Part of the globally network
MEMBERSHIP & BENEFITS

Membership and Benefits handles all applications, renewals, and queries, as well as represents YPFP at job fairs and trainee information sessions in Brussels. The team also organizes regular social events for our community, including the foreign policy pub quiz.

COMMUNICATIONS & MARKETING

Communications & Marketing works to promote regular YPFP events and activities, coordinating with all the other teams to help raise the profile of YPFP Brussels. Our communication service includes a weekly newsletter, daily management of social media outputs through Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram and YouTube, and management of the Brussels section of the YPFP website.

SECURITY & DEFENCE

Security and defence is responsible for the development of events (simulations, workshops, panels) with speakers from international organizations, think-tanks, NGOs, and the private sector on a wide range of topics among which cyber and hybrid threats, cooperative security, strategic communications, deterrence and defense.

PROGRAMMES

Programmes aims to inform and expand the knowledge of YPFP members through events on diplomacy, economics, political affairs as well as professional trainings focused on building skills needed to succeed in the workplace.
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Gender is at the top of YPFP Brussels’ organizational agenda and integrated into the internal organigram. We have gender balanced team structures and we strive to promote a respectful and inclusive working environment that embraces diversity in a spirit of openness and honesty. In 2020, we launched our Gender Initiative aimed at raising awareness about the UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. We brought to the forefront several gender related themes in a series of digital events, interviews, and publications. In total we hosted 32 speakers and experts from Brussels and beyond working in think tanks, research institutes, EU institutions, academia, & international organizations. We also brought to the discussions practitioners with experience working on the ground in Syria, Ghana, Cyprus, Kosovo, South Sudan, Mali to gain a broader picture of what’s happening in these countries from a WPS angle. In partnership with the Brussels office of UN Women, we hosted events on the main achievements reached in the area of gender equality and women’s rights since launching the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, continued by a panel with members in the European Parliament’s Committee on Women’s Rights and Gender Equality. We also hosted an event on the UNSCR 1325 and the WPS agenda while touching upon the direct impact of the main developments in this area for women in conflict-affected regions, and a Book Club discussion on Women as War Criminals: Gender, Agency, and Justice, written in 2020 by Izabela Steflja and Jessica Trisko Darden. To complement the thematic discussions, we published a couple of papers written by our staff, members and partners on women’s role in building peace as well as in perpetuating violence; the underrepresentation of women economists across academia, the private, and public sectors; and on the impact of the current pandemic on reducing gender inequalities across Europe.

YPFP Brussels is also very proud of partnering with Microsoft and other six organizations to put in place Conversations Unscripted, a multistakeholder initiative initiated by Microsoft aiming at bringing together European leaders to explore avenues to reduce the gender gap in the fields of politics and technology.

"One element of the Gender Initiative I’m personally very proud of is how successful we were in reaching out to partners, speakers, contributors, and how many organizations were not just willing but enthusiastic to meet us halfway. Moreover, this initiative galvanized the team to advocate for gender equality and set the tone for new flagship projects initiated and managed by the volunteers themselves on topics they are passionate about, such as Let’s Talk Race in the EU where we hosted The European Commissioner for Equality, Helena Dalli, or the Innovation & Technology Initiative."

Cristiana Lavinia Badulescu, fmr. Managing Director (2020–2022)
As a NATO’s annual grant recipient, throughout 2020–2022, YPFP Brussels brought young audiences the most relevant events on NATO-related topics such as emerging disruptive technologies, climate change, the space domain of operations, Arctic security, cooperation with the Asia Pacific region, and many more. These events demystify and simplify the most relevant topics in the field of security and defence for our audiences not only through high-level panel events, but also through more practical sessions, such as a workshop on negotiation and diplomacy in security or a half-day simulation of the North Atlantic Council.

In 2022, a delegation from YPFP Brussels was invited to participate in the NATO Youth Summit at NATO HQ. In 2022, YPFP Brussels partnered with the UK Joint Delegation at NATO to organize a panel discussion with the UK Ambassador to NATO on engaging youth on the topics to be discussed at the Madrid NATO Summit and about the future of the Alliance.

“I have been with YPFP now for almost three years, starting as a Security and Defence officer, slowly taking on more and more responsibilities through the years and now stepping into the Managing Director’s role. YPFP has been an incredibly rewarding experience – it provides a safe space to learn new skills, such as moderation, organisation, public speaking, community building, team management, and many more. It also provides you with exposure to various organisations and high level speakers, helping you build your network in Brussels. One of my highlights through these years has been speaking on a panel together with the UK Ambassador to NATO, discussing the NATO Summit in Madrid and youth engagement. If not for YPFP, it would be difficult to imagine having such an opportunity as a young person, at the start of your career.”

Marija Sulce, Managing Director (2023–Present)
YPFP’s Disinformation Series

In addition, YPFP Brussels organized a Disinformation Series, exploring the intersection between strategic communication, technology, and security through various panels and workshops. Other focus areas within the sphere of security and defence have been the EU’s Strategic Compass, international peace and security, and the defence industry – topics explored with partners such as SAAB and The Quaker Council for European Affairs.

YPFP’s Security Talks

To encourage members to share their knowledge and opinions, while learning from their peers, in 2021 YPFP Brussels launched the Security Talks, a discussion group that meets in an informal environment to discuss the newest developments in security and defense. Topics are chosen according to the latest developments in current affairs as well as ever-green debates within security. Some past topics have included: the war in Ukraine, women in battle, regional conflicts, the future of NATO, Chinese maritime assertiveness, right-wing extremism, emerging technologies, and many more.

"Through my engagement with YPFP, I was given the ability to hone and develop my knowledge, organizational and public speaking skills. I was also given the platform to expand my professional and social network. YPFP did this by giving me the freedom, trust, and cooperation to create The Security Talks, an event series with an innovative format which I have been very proud to lead ever since its inception."

Louis Bout, Security & Defence Officer
During the last two years, YPFP Brussels has organized numerous events linked to a diverse array of topics ranging from nuclear energy to anything that has to do with the Asia Pacific to Ambassador Series events and many more. On a personal note, the highlight of my year was the speech I had the opportunity to deliver at the UK Mission to the EU on global challenges faced in leadership, where I spoke about the obstacles that women leaders face in this day and age. During this panel, I spoke alongside high profile speakers, which was truly an honour.

Other event topics organized by YPFP Brussels include Humanitarian Aid in Times of Crisis; “Hallyu” – the South Korean Secret to Leverage Influence on the World; EU Trade and Environmental Policy as Foreign Policy Tools; Children in Armed Conflict; Humanitarian Affairs and Coordination in International Organizations; Communication and Advocacy in International Organizations.
Our Tools of the Trade events “Boosting your Interviewing Skills: Essential tools to succeed”, “Career Opportunities within the EU Institutions in Brussels”, “Breaking the glass ceiling at work”, and workshops on communications and public speaking helped once more our members and staff to build skills necessary to thrive in the workplace and beyond.

YPFP’s Tools of the Trade

We continued our events dedicated to improving our knowledge about the UN and its agenda. We organized a panel on “The Politicization of Humanitarianism in Africa” with Chris M. A. Kwaja, Ph.D., Senior Lecturer and Researcher at the Centre for Peace and Security Studies (CPSS) at Modibbo Adama University; Member of the Working Group on the Use of Mercenaries at the UN Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner (OHCHR); and a discussion on “Children in Armed Conflict” with Brigid Kennedy Pfister, Senior Child Protection Specialist for UNICEF in New York, and Sharon Riggle, Chief of Office and Chief of Advocacy and Outreach for the UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict (SRSG CAAC).
We are also happy to share some of our social activities, networking aperos, and in-person discussion groups.

YPFP trip to the Brussels Military museum

YPFP trip to the Waterloo Battle Reenactment

I greatly enjoy the plethora of events organized by YPFP which allows me to harness various skills. I for instance loved the North Atlantic Council simulation – I tremendously improved my understanding of NATO decision-making processes and benefited from the networking opportunities. As a director of Membership and Benefits I want to maximize our members benefits and experience in Brussels

Lena Eisenreich, Director of Membership & Benefits

The community YPFP has is quite exceptional. It brings together people who are all interested in the same subjects as you are and passionate about what Brussels has to offer. You will always feel understood and you will always be welcome no matter whether it is a high-level panel event, a trip to the Waterloo re-enactment, or a game of laser tag

Marija Sulce, Managing Director (2023-Present)
Find out more at www.ypfp.org/brussels