

3F YOUTH EXCHANGE PROGRAM ACTION PLAN

YOUROPE e.V.
The European Festival Association
Breite Straße 38
53111 Bonn
Germany

www.yourope.org

YOUROPE
THE EUROPEAN FESTIVAL ASSOCIATION

3F FUTURE - FIT
FESTIVALS



Co-funded by
the European Union

Action Plan: How to create an exchange program

Based on the 3F Youth Exchange Program for young festival professionals

The 3F Youth Exchange Program is YOUROPE's way to help young professionals expand their network and facilitate the exchange of ideas and best practices between festivals in the association. Young professionals (18-30) from YOUROPE member festivals can apply to participate in short work stays at other member festivals.

YOUROPE supports six such visits each year with €1000 each. The program is part of 3F – Future-Fit Festivals, co-funded by the EU, and will be hosted annually at least until the end of 3F in 2028.

This action plan describes how the Youth Exchange Program (YEP) was set up and implemented for the first time. It is intended to serve as a template for other organizations wanting to set up similar programs. Feel free to copy and adapt this action plan for your own purposes.

Phase 1: Preparation

What you need to do: Form a steering group that consists of experts in festival organization and project management. Pay attention to inviting a good mix of members regarding characteristics like gender, age, and ethnicity/skin color, to bring many different perspectives into the group and the decision-making process.

Discuss which framework and application requirements your program should have and put them into writing. Determine a period with a start and a deadline for applications. Choose someone to be a contact person for festivals and exchanges throughout the program and during the exchanges.

What happened in the YEP: The Youth Exchange Program (YEP) was built on a pilot program initiated by the YOUROPE Event Safety (YES) Group, so members of the YES Group management were vital in shaping the YEP. Experiences made during the pilot informed the creation of the new program.

Members of the YES Group and members of the YOUROPE management, all with years of experience in project and festival management, formed the steering group of the YEP. In several calls, they came up with the framework of the YEP, which was influenced by the YES Group pilot program and the requirements derived from the underlying 3F program.

Further, the steering group determined criteria that applicants must fulfill to be eligible for participation (for more details, see next section). The application deadline for the inaugural

edition of the YEP was set to May 9, 2025, leaving about six weeks between call release and deadline.

Phase 2: Going Public

What you need to do: Release a call for your program, including all necessary information for applying. This can be either public or restricted to your organization, network, members, etc. Share it wherever necessary to attract the target group (website, newsletter, social media, etc.).

What happened in the YEP: YOUROPE provided information on the program publicly via a project page on their website (accessible at <https://yourope.org/project/youth-exchange/>) but restricted applications to member festivals due to 3F being a network project. The call was also shared electronically with all network members via YOUROPE's member newsletter, and the program was announced at several of the association's in-person members meetings.

The webpage includes all the necessary information for young professionals wanting to apply, for festivals wanting to apply as hosting festivals, for festivals sending a young professional to another event, and on the role that YOUROPE plays in the program.

Summary of information relevant to everyone involved in an exchange from the call:

- Each year, YOUROPE supports 6 young professionals from its network to work at another member festival for a few days, ideally during the event days.
- The hosting festival will receive the €1000 funding only after the exchange has successfully taken place.
- A "one-way exchange" is possible, meaning festivals can send a young professional without receiving one, and vice versa.

Summary of information for sending festivals from the call:

- They were asked to figure out together with the receiving festival how the young professional would be insured during their stay at the hosting festival. All young professionals must have a workplace accident insurance and health insurance covering their stay, even when working abroad.

Summary of information for young exchangees from the call:

- They can determine together with the festivals which areas they will be involved in during their stay.
- The exchange must last for a minimum of two days.
- They are expected to be curious and act professionally.
- They need to write a short report about their experiences via filling in an online form provided by YOUROPE. YOUROPE will share the results with the EU to prove the funding was spent as intended.

Summary of information for hosting festivals from the call:

- They were reminded to treat the young professional as an opportunity and not as free labor.
- They will receive €1000 to cover any costs related to the exchange after the exchange.
- The exchange must last for a minimum of two days.
- It is possible to host more than one young professional at once.
- They received a list of things they should provide the exchangee with (money to cover **travel costs**, **accommodation**, access to crew **catering**, an **AAA pass**, the chance to **shadow their staff** in one area or more of event production, a general **supervisor** and/or a contact person per work area, close **supervision**, a **challenge** to work on).
- YOUROPE suggested examples of challenges for the exchangees to work on.

To apply, festivals and young professionals had to fill out an online form that was accessible only during the application phase (see screenshot). Young professionals were asked for personal information like their name, age, and contact info, their home festival, which festivals or type of festivals they would like to work at, and when they are available for an exchange. They were also asked to provide a short motivational statement (300 words maximum) and their CV.

Festivals were asked for a contact person, dates when they would be available to receive a young professional, and which challenges or tasks they could give to the exchangee.

As a facilitator, the YOUROPE Office acted as a main contact for all involved, serving as a general contact as well as emergency contact for festivals and young professionals during the visit, answering questions and solving problems during the entirety of the program.

YOUROPE's Youth Exchange Program – Application

Hi there!

Become part of YOUROPE's Youth Exchange Program! Young festival professionals (30 or younger) can apply here, if they want to work at another festival to gain new insights and experiences. Festivals can apply here, if they want to host such a guest from another festival. Before filling this out, please find out what's required of you here: <https://yourope.org/project/youth-exchange/>

Which one are you? *

- I want to apply as a young festival professional!
- I want to apply as a hosting festival!

Next

First page of the online application form.

Phase 3: Selection of applicants

What you need to do: A jury must be formed to determine the exchangees. After the deadline, this jury must read all applications and meet to discuss which festivals and young professionals will be invited to the exchange. The decision should be made based on a list of solid criteria and, if necessary, further influencing factors. Afterwards, inform all applicants (festivals and young professionals) of your decision, positive or negative.

What happened in the YEP: A jury was formed from a smaller selection of members of the steering group. YOUROPE received more applications from young professionals and festivals than spaces available in the program, so the jury determined a list of selection criteria based on the framework determined by the steering group. Its goal was to help choose applicants while limiting the influence of personal biases:

- The **age** of applicants when applying had to be at least 18 and not higher than 30.
- A good **geographical spread** of applicants was the goal, meaning not more than one applicant per country was selected. The jury paid special attention to include Eastern European countries, which often lack cultural support programs.
- Achieving a fair **gender balance** among the selected applicants was another goal.
- **Not more than one applicant per sending festival** was to be selected.
- Only applicants that applied within the given **deadline** were considered.
- Did the applicants' **preferred festivals** to work at coincide with festivals that applied as hosting festivals?
- Did the applicants' **availabilities** and the festivals' dates coincide?
- Did the applicants' **interests** and the fields of work the hosting festivals offer coincide?
- The **quality of applicants' motivational letters**.

In the week after the end of the deadline, each jury member read the applications and evaluated the applicants individually. Then the jury convened in an online call to make the final decisions. Since all applications were great, the jury worked out the following process:

1. Identify and exclude applicants that don't fit the list of criteria.
2. Identify and exclude applicants whose visit can be covered by means outside the Youth Exchange Program.
3. Each jury member was free to nominate an applicant they wanted to include in the 2025 program for varying reasons. The applicants were discussed and in all cases selected.
4. The jury looked at home festivals with more than one applicant, discussed which applicant fit the criteria and further influencing factors better (see below), and selected them.
5. The jury discussed the remaining applicants. At this point, some applicants had to be excluded to keep the desired gender balance and geographical mix, resulting in the final selection.

While comparing the applications, the jury found other influencing factors that were less tangible than the criteria above but still relevant to finding a decision:

- Nuances in **applicants' motivational letters**, e.g., did they mention selfless motives like wanting to enhance the festival industry in their country?
- When comparing individual applicants, e.g. applicants from the same home festival, it was also taken into consideration **how much an applicant needed this program**. E.g., it could be to their advantage if they hadn't advanced that far in their careers yet or if they came from a country with few support options for young professionals.
- It could be a plus if the young professionals who applied also applied with their festival as a **hosting festival**, and if they were the listed contact person for said festival.
- It did not matter to the jury whether the young professional was **employed** at the festival full-time or worked for the festival part-time as a **freelancer**.

After the jury call, the YOUROPE Office prepared and sent out individual emails to all applicants, either welcoming them into the program or explaining why they were not selected this time. The successful applicants received info on their hosting festival and the dates of their visit. All unsuccessful applicants were invited to reapply next year.

If there was a match between a potential hosting festival and an applicant that wasn't selected because there was only funding for six spots, the YOUROPE Office offered to connect the unsuccessful applicants with the unselected festivals, so they could arrange work visits without funding from the program.

Two additional applicants were covered by means outside the Youth Exchange Program, resulting in a total of eight exchanges for the first edition of the YEP.

Phase 4: Pre-exchange

What you need to do: Ask all selected applicants and festivals to confirm their final participation. Once they have accepted their spot in the program, connect the young professional and their respective hosting festival. Arrange individual calls with hosting festival and exchangee to discuss the details of the work stay.

Draft a written agreement with vital information for each individual exchange, and have it signed by all participating parties. Create a means to collect feedback from the participants for your reporting and to evaluate and improve the project.

What happened in the YEP: When inviting the selected applications to officially participate in the YEP, the steering group told them which hosting festival the jury had selected for them and asked them to confirm whether they wanted to accept their place in the program. The selected festivals were informed that they had been selected and asked to confirm their participation.

After all parties had confirmed their willingness to participate, the steering group connected the exchangees with their respective festivals and arranged individual video calls to figure out the details of each work visit. They discussed questions like: When should the exchangee arrive and depart? Can the hosting festival help with travel arrangements? Where will the exchangee stay? Who is the main contact on site? What does the exchangee want to work on? Does the exchangee have special needs the hosting festival should be aware of?

The steering group asked the exchangee, the sending and the hosting festival to clarify how the exchangee would be insured during their stay regarding health insurance and workplace accidents.

To collect feedback and photo/video material by the young professionals as well as to evaluate the project after the exchanges, the steering group created an online form. It was shared with each young professional prior to the exchange. They were also asked to take pictures/videos of their work and the festival environment during their visit.

Finally, the steering group prepared agreements for each exchange, including:

- a description of the Youth Exchange Program and the underlying 3F project
- information on how the partner festival is supposed to use the funding
- Information on the exchangee: name, email address, and date of birth
- information on the sending festival: name, company name, full address, name of contact person, their position and email address
- in case the exchangee was a freelancer, information on their self-employment: name of exchangee, name of their company and its full address
- information on the hosting festival: name, company name, full address, name of contact person, their position and email address
- bank details of the hosting festival for grant transfer (IBAN & BIC)
- dates of the exchange
- travel dates of the exchangee
- further details:
 - The parties involved confirmed that the €1,000 grant will only be transferred to the hosting festival after the completion of the exchange and the submission of the reporting form by the young professional.
 - It was agreed that the hosting festival may reimburse the young professional or the sending festival for any costs covered by them in advance (e.g. travel).
 - The young professional, the sending festival, and the hosting festival were responsible for clarifying how the young professional will be insured during the exchange period and the name of the insurance-providing party was included in the agreement.
 - All parties agreed to provide YOUROPE with communication material related to the youth exchange (e.g., quotes, photos, video clips) for promotional and reporting purposes.

Each agreement was signed by the four parties involved: the exchangee, a representative of the sending festival, a representative of the hosting festival, and a representative of YOUROPE.

Phase 5: During the exchanges

What you need to do: Whoever you determined as a point of contact for the program's participants should now be available in case the participants need to get in touch about questions/emergencies.

What happened in the YEP: The YOUROPE Office was available to answer any questions that the exchangees, hosting or sending festivals had, serving as a general contact as well as emergency contact for festivals and young professionals. Luckily, all exchanges went smoothly and no emergencies occurred.

Phase 6: Post-exchange and evaluation

What you need to do: If you offered funding, transfer the money to the receiving party. Remind the participants to give you feedback. Collect feedback in a structured way and evaluate your program. If necessary, make changes to the process for the next edition. If you want, you can use the participants' feedback to prepare promotional material to disseminate your project.

What happened in the YEP: The steering group sent the reporting form to the exchangees once more to collect feedback and picture/video material. The feedback was collected in a report to be handed in to the EU, which provided the YEP's funding.

YOUROPE used the provided pictures and videos to create social media posts (for an example, see screenshot on the next page), sharing what the participants experienced, with the goal to inspire others to create similar programs for the benefit of young event professionals. The association also invited some of the young professionals to speak about their experiences in panels at two popular industry meet-ups, Future of Festivals in Berlin, DE, (November 2025) and ESNS in Groningen, NL, (January 2026).

Once YOUROPE had received both the filled-out feedback form and the signed agreement for an exchange, it transferred the €1000 grant to the hosting festival.

Throughout all phases of the program, the steering group had made a note whenever things didn't work out as intended, as well as ideas on how to improve. In urgent cases, the steering group applied changes immediately. After the last exchange was wrapped up, all notes were collected and discussed within the group, informing next year's call for the Youth Exchange Program.

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It's not always the case in our Youth Exchange Program that we can match a young professional with a hosting festival they requested, but in the case of Paul and [Festival Rock en Seine](#) it was a match made in heaven!

At his home festivals, Superbloom and Lollapalooza Berlin, Paul works as a freelancer supporting the festival director in cross-departmental project management, coordinating meetings and site inspections, and ensuring smooth workflows across production, safety, marketing, and creative departments. He also leads projects in premium hospitality and experience areas, where he designs concepts, manages logistics, and supervises on-site implementation.

During his visit in Paris, Paul could shadow Rock en Seine's project manager Manon. Her responsibilities include booking a stage for newcomer artists, leading the Mini-Rock area with activations for children, and running the "Step Up" program for young professionals. "This gave me valuable insights into both artistic programming and educational initiatives," Paul said.

Attending "Step Up" sessions gave him backstage insights plus lessons from panels and workshops. In addition, he had the chance to connect with the brand partnership leads and accompany the festival management on a site tour. "Meeting with the festival directors allowed me to ask questions about their priorities and challenges, and to compare these perspectives with my experiences at my home festivals."

Paul learned a great deal about talent development in France, brand partnerships and how to manage the sometimes competing interests of commercial partners and festival culture. He appreciated the openness and generosity of the Rock en Seine team, who gave him honest insights into their work.

His one-sentence summary: "The program is a rare chance to dive into another festival's world, build international connections, and return with both inspiration and practical learnings."

By the way, Manon is also an exchangee in our program. She will visit [ESNS](#) in January, performing the last exchange of our program's first edition.

Paul Schäfer

#3f #futurefitfestivals #europe #yourope #rockenseine #superbloom #lollapalooza



Maiju Talvisto und 15 weitere Personen

1 Kommentar

Source:
<https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:7384147696208584705>