

Position paper 2025/173

European Youth Strategy

Document adopted by the 33rd industriAll Europe Executive Committee
Brussels, 27-28 November 2025

At industriAll Europe's Congress on 3-5 June 2025 in Budapest, young members demanded more meaningful involvement in decision-making bodies, notably the Executive Committee. The Congress expressed support for increasing youth participation and asked the Youth Working Group and the Secretariat to develop a European Youth Strategy for the next 4 years mandate period.

This European Youth Strategy builds on the achievements of the Youth Working Group reached over the past mandate period. Together, they managed so far to:

- Transpose the European Youth Action Plan ([DE EN FR](#)) into 25 national action plans that, in some cases, led to a youth density increase of 10 percent
- Contribute to the youth study on the situation of young workers in industriAll Europe's member organisations, which showed that the average youth density lies at about 15 percent and presented recommendations for improvement (summary in: [CZ DE EN FR HU IT PL RO](#))
- Develop two youth documents that were adopted by the Executive Committee (the mentioned European Youth Action Plan and the position paper which includes to the recommendations of the youth study: [DE EN FR](#))
- Actively joined the two EU-funded projects carried out with the ITC ILO
- Take part in the many activities organized yearly with the support of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation (FES) and the European Trade Union Institute (ETUI): about three in-person workshops per year and the additional webinars.

These successes have provided the Youth Working Group with a strong basis and confidence, because they have shown that youth involvement pays off. It leads to more young members and contributes to stronger and more inclusive unions. Strong trade unions need young workers on board.

State-of-play of youth structures

The table below summarizes the results of the study carried out by ETUI's Senior Researcher Kurt Vandaele regarding the organisation of youth among industriAll Europe's affiliates. The research analysed union strategies towards recruiting and organising young workers, as well as the youth representation and youth structures. It is based on desk research and on the over 120 replies that we have received to the questionnaire sent to members of the Executive Committee and Youth Working Group in 2022. An reader-friendly summary of the study can be accessed here in: [CZ DE EN FR HU IT PL RO](#)

	North	South	Continental	East
Countries	Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden Also: Belgium	France, Greece, Italy, Portugal, Spain Also: Netherlands, United Kingdom	Germany, Switzerland, Austria, Ireland	Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechia, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia
Young Membership	High (30%)	Low (5%)	Moderate (15%)	Low (1–2%)
Unionization Rate	60–80%	10–20% (But: Italy – 30%)	20–25%	10–15%
Youth Structures	National youth committees (with independent departments, full-time youth officers, resources)	National youth committees and formal networks in some countries, not all (limited resources)	National youth committees and formal networks (with independent departments, full-time youth officers, resources)	National youth committees and formal networks in some countries, not all (mostly no resources)
Voting Rights	Yes, but not everywhere	No	Yes (e.g., IGBCE), but mostly no	No

Table 1. Summary of Youth Study by Dr. Kurt Vandaele, ETUI

Furthermore, the five key outcomes of the study are the following:

- **Average youth membership among our affiliates: 15.3 % (the number is heavily inflated by those members which have big youth organisations; many are at about 2-5%);**
- Youth membership is higher in organisations with strong youth structures that are equipped with strong internal capacities (with a budget and own staff) and that are represented in decision-making bodies;
- a youth structure with a weak internal capacity (= no budget, no staff) is less likely to identify the interests and needs of young workers; these are solely ‘cosmetic devices’, where youth is formally present but unable to have an impact;
- the interests and needs of young workers are barely mainstreamed within union decision-making structures;
- the internal capacity of youth structures interacts with the status of the youth representation within the executive committee or council. The power of youth-only structures can be ‘boosted’ if young workers have seats in the executive committee with voting rights; having a non-voting representation is less impactful.

The conclusions of the study are very clear. In order to increase youth members, it is fundamental to develop strong youth structure and to provide young members with a voice. This European Youth Strategy

aims to reach these goals and is intended to also be implemented at the national level, where members see fit.

A strategy for the next mandate period:

The European Youth Strategy aims to further strengthen the Youth Working Group, as well as youth structures at the national level, to increase youth membership and give young members a strong voice. In order to reach these goals, the strategy contains two building blocks, each coming with a set of recommendations and suggestions for implementation over the coming mandate period. The members of the Youth Working Group are invited to develop national implementation plans in order to translated this European strategy to their national context and needs.

I. Strengthening industriAll Europe's Youth Working Group:

- industriAll Europe's Youth Working Group has been operating in a transparent and inclusive manner. After the 2025 Congress, the Secretariat has invited members to nominate their representatives in the Group (members, substitutes, observers). The Secretariat will organise elections for the Chair of the Group and candidacies are open to all. The members of the Youth Working Group will elect the Chair in a democratic and transparent manner. The Chair will represent the Group in the Executive Committee as observer with the right to speak (but not to vote).
- Work together with affiliates to develop a structure for the 8 regions of industriAll Europe in the context of the youth work. This principle of regional representation could guide the way for the Youth Working Group to have a regional representation and decision making, ensuring additional democratic legitimization.
- Organise one Youth Working Group meeting (online or hybrid) ahead of each industriAll Europe Executive Committee (twice per year) to support the members to develop a common position on the agenda topics and support the Chair in voicing the Group's unanimous position.
- Address the most relevant topics for young members: youth in industry, youth employment, training and life-long learning, organising, twin transition, equality etc.
- Support young members in their capacity building and, in particular, in their youth organising activities by organising regular workshops, training and conference where young members can exchange best-practices and learn from experts, while developing national plans to implement and share the newly gained knowledge on the ground.
- Work to support the Youth Working Group in developing and implementing their youth demands through all possible means at all levels and with the support of national member organisations.
- Continue to send delegates to other European trade union structures and events (like those of the ETUC Youth Committee etc.).
- Develop the perspective of a youth voice with voting rights in industriAll Europe's Executive Committee at the next Congress in 2029.

II. Strengthening national youth structures for high youth membership

- Affiliates to develop action plan including clear annual targets for gaining new young members and for new young activists. Develop youth recruitment strategies targeted to gain new young members and to retain them.
- Develop and strengthen youth structures at all relevant levels (from the company to the sectoral and national level). This will show young workers that they have a place in the union.
- Empower your young members to be active by giving them the opportunity to get involved. Provide them with resources to develop campaign and activities targeted at attracting young members and at showing the added value of union membership for youth.
- Give young members a voice in the union by giving them seats with voting rights in all relevant bodies. This is a win-win, because it brings in the youth perspective and shows young people that they count.
- Modernise communication channels and use all available means, especially social media. It's not about replacing in-person communication, but it's about complementing it with a strong social media presence. Young people (and most others too) are on social media and it's high time that unions are also present there.