

RiseUp

Youth Symposium in Greece- “Empowering Youth Employability through Collaboration and Innovation”

Project No: 2023-3-EL02-KA154-YOU-000184073



DAGNE



INTRODUCTION – SETTING THE STAGE

The Youth Symposium in Greece was the third local event of the RiseUp project, hosted by Pylon One in Thessaloniki. The event brought together youth councils, representatives of youth organizations, educators, and local policymakers to explore how collaboration and innovation can strengthen youth employability. Taking place in a city known for its vibrant student population and entrepreneurial spirit, the Symposium created a dynamic environment where ideas, experiences, and perspectives converged. Its central mission was to bridge the gap between young people and decision-makers, fostering mutual understanding and cooperation to improve employment prospects for the next generation.

OBJECTIVES

- Promote collaboration between youth, institutions, and employers.
- Encourage innovative approaches to addressing youth unemployment.
- Enhance youth participation in employment-related policy discussions.
- Develop practical strategies for skill development and job readiness.
- Foster partnerships between educational, governmental, and business sectors.

- Empower youth voices in shaping inclusive and forward-looking employment systems.
- Promote entrepreneurship and social innovation as pathways to employability.
- Encourage lifelong learning and adaptability in a changing labor market.



OPENING SESSION AND WELCOMING REMARKS

The Symposium opened with welcoming speeches by the organizers from Pylon One and representatives from local authorities. They introduced the RiseUp project and highlighted its alignment with EU Youth Goal #7 Quality Employment for All. Speakers emphasized that employability is not just about finding jobs but about creating systems that empower young people to adapt, innovate, and thrive. Participants were encouraged to see themselves as co-authors of change, capable of influencing policies, practices, and mindsets across Europe. The tone of the event was optimistic, inclusive, and focused on shared progress.

THE EVENT AIMED TO ENCOURAGE YOUNG PEOPLE TO SHARE THEIR EXPERIENCES AS ENTREPRENEURS OR ASPIRING INNOVATORS AND TO CO-DESIGN POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS THAT COULD STRENGTHEN YOUTH EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES IN LATVIA AND THE BROADER EUROPEAN CONTEXT. SPECIFIC GOALS INCLUDED PROMOTING ENTREPRENEURIAL THINKING, IDENTIFYING OBSTACLES YOUNG ENTREPRENEURS FACE, INCREASING AWARENESS OF EXISTING EU AND NATIONAL SUPPORT PROGRAMS, AND DEVELOPING PRACTICAL PROPOSALS FOR IMPROVING ACCESS TO FUNDING, MENTORSHIP, AND TRAINING.



KEYNOTE PRESENTATION: UNDERSTANDING EMPLOYABILITY IN THE 21ST CENTURY

The first session featured a keynote presentation titled “Youth Employability in a Transforming Europe.” Delivered by an academic from the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, the session explored how digitalization, climate change, and globalization are reshaping the future of work. Participants learned about emerging trends such as the green economy, remote work, and the growing importance of digital and entrepreneurial skills. The presentation encouraged young people to approach employability holistically – combining education, adaptability, creativity, and social responsibility.

INTERACTIVE PANEL DISCUSSION: COLLABORATION IN ACTION



A major highlight of the Symposium was an interactive panel discussion featuring youth representatives, policymakers, and industry professionals. The discussion focused on collaboration as a key factor in tackling youth unemployment. Youth participants voiced their concerns about the disconnect between education and the labor market, while employers shared their expectations for new graduates. Policymakers discussed government strategies to bridge this gap, such as promoting apprenticeships, internships, and partnerships between universities and businesses. The dialogue was open, solution-oriented, and driven by mutual respect.

WORKSHOP SESSIONS: INNOVATION FOR EMPLOYABILITY

After the panel, participants joined thematic workshops that encouraged hands-on engagement and idea generation. The workshops explored topics such as digital skills for employment, green jobs, social entrepreneurship, and inclusive workplaces. Using non-formal education methods, facilitators helped participants identify local challenges and propose innovative solutions. One group designed a concept for a youth-led social enterprise tackling environmental issues, while another developed a mentorship network connecting university students with professionals. These sessions captured the creative and collaborative essence of the Symposium.

GROUP PRESENTATIONS AND POLICY PROPOSALS

In the afternoon, each working group presented its findings and policy recommendations to the plenary. Suggestions included integrating entrepreneurial education into school curricula, expanding access to vocational training, supporting youth-led innovation hubs, and improving transparency in recruitment processes. Participants emphasized that employability must go beyond statistics — it should reflect meaningful, quality opportunities that allow young people to grow. These youth-generated proposals will later be compiled into the RiseUp Policy Report as part of the project's broader advocacy efforts at the European level.

Outcome:

- The dialogue fostered mutual understanding between youth and policymakers.
- Local stakeholders expressed interest in continuing cooperation with youth networks for future initiatives.



NETWORKING AND COLLABORATION FAIR

Following the workshops, the event hosted a Networking Fair, where youth organizations, employers, and educational institutions showcased their initiatives. Participants exchanged ideas, explored internship opportunities, and discussed future collaborations. Representatives from municipalities and NGOs expressed interest in working with the young participants on local employability projects. This session proved to be one of the most productive parts of the Symposium, as it helped create direct links between young job seekers and potential mentors, partners, and employers.

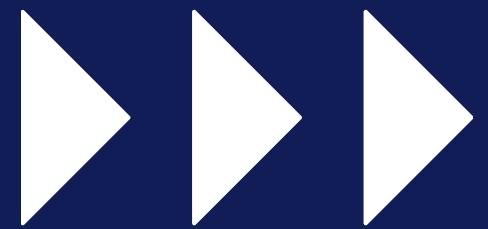
REFLECTION AND EVALUATION



Toward the end of the Symposium, facilitators led a reflection and evaluation session. Participants shared what they had learned, the challenges they identified, and the actions they intended to take after the event. Many participants highlighted how the Symposium had changed their perception of employability, from a personal struggle to a shared social goal. The evaluation results showed strong satisfaction with the event's organization, inclusiveness, and relevance. Several attendees expressed interest in forming a local youth employment working group to maintain momentum and continue collaboration beyond the project's duration.

CLOSING REMARKS AND LONG-TERM IMPACT

The Greek Youth Symposium concluded with heartfelt closing remarks from the organizers and youth representatives. They emphasized that the event was not just a one-time discussion but part of a continuing movement toward inclusive and innovative employment policies. The outcomes from the Symposium will feed into the project's transnational dialogue and influence the recommendations to be presented at the final RiseUp report. The event successfully fostered collaboration, inspired innovation, and gave participants the confidence to act as change-makers in their communities. Ultimately, the Youth Symposium in Greece reaffirmed the belief that the future of work in Europe depends on empowering its youth today.



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