

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS | ÉVORA, PORTUGAL | JULY 5–11

YOUTH LEADERSHIP LAB 2026

Twenty young diabetes advocates from across Europe spent a week building leadership skills, launching advocacy projects and forming a network built on shared lived experience.



20

PARTICIPANTS

20

COUNTRIES

8

MENTORS

4

ADVOCACY
PROJECTS

20+

SESSIONS &
ACTIVITIES

50+

PEOPLE BROUGHT
THE LAB TO LIFE

YOURAH is IDF Europe's network of young people living with diabetes across the region. Its flagship programme, the **Youth Leadership Lab (YLL)**, has run for 15 years — first as in-person Youth Leadership Camps (YLC), now as a hybrid journey of online preparation and an immersive in-person week — supporting young advocates as they develop their skills, confidence and connections to shape change in diabetes care.

This year's YLL took place in Portugal for the first time, hosted in Évora in partnership with Associação Protetora dos Diabéticos de Portugal (APDP), the world's oldest diabetes association, as it marked its 100th anniversary. The edition also honoured co-founder of YLC, João Nabais, a native of Évora, for his lasting contribution to youth advocacy across Europe. Throughout the week, participants shared experiences with peers from different countries and backgrounds, building meaningful relationships and gaining new perspectives on life with diabetes. The programme also gave them space to reflect on their own journeys, learn from others and explore how they can use their voices to contribute to change.

THE PROGRAMME – A WEEK OF LEARNING, CONNECTION AND 20+ SESSIONS

Two online sessions in June brought participants and mentors together ahead of the programme, laying the foundations for a week of learning, collaboration and connection. In Évora, more than 20 sessions brought together expert-led discussion, practical workshops, role-play and peer learning, alongside opportunities for reflection, connection and team building throughout the week. Across the week, participants developed practical advocacy and leadership skills while exploring the realities of living with diabetes across Europe, building confidence to use their voices and create change in their communities.

SESSIONS ON ADVOCACY, LEADERSHIP & COMMUNICATION

- **Youth-Led Advocacy** — developing advocacy pitches and learning how to communicate with decision-makers.
- **How to Engage with the Media** — exploring storytelling, media relations and how to shape public perceptions of diabetes.
- **Patient & Public Engagement** — learning how to meaningfully involve people with diabetes in healthcare and advocacy.

SESSIONS ON PARTNERSHIPS, POLICY & ECONOMICS

- **Partnerships & Collaborations** — exploring how to build meaningful partnerships through practical role-play.
- **Health Economics (HEOR)** — using evidence and data relating to country-specific challenges to strengthen advocacy.
- **The Power of AI in Project Management** — exploring responsible ways to use AI to support advocacy projects.

SESSIONS ON CONFIDENCE, WELLBEING & GROWTH

- **Imposter Syndrome Workshop** — recognising self-doubt and building confidence as advocates.
- **Volunteering & Risk of Burnout** — exploring boundaries, fair compensation and sustainable advocacy.
- **The Role of healthcare professionals & lived experience** — bringing clinical expertise and lived experience together.

SESSIONS ON CONNECTION & REFLECTION

- **Shared Experiences** — exchanging personal stories in a safe space and strengthening peer connections.
- **Taboo Session** — an anonymous, judgement-free Q&A around sensitive topics of living with diabetes.
- **Sporting Activities** — Exploring the role of physical activity in diabetes management through daily movement, team building games, Tai Chi and a flashmob.

NEAR-PEER MENTORING APPROACH

In 2023, the IDF Europe YLL Programme introduced a near-peer mentoring approach, creating a two-way learning opportunity for both participants and mentors. This year, eighth mentors — four Project Mentors, two Support Mentors and two Bridge Mentors — supported participants throughout the week, providing peer guidance, facilitating group work and strengthening connections. Participants were divided into four groups, each supported by a Project Mentor who helped turn ideas into action. Participants were divided into four groups, each supported by a Project Mentor who helped turn ideas into action. Together, participants developed youth-led projects around four themes: “What’s in My Bag?”, Youth Voices in Diabetes, Mental Health, and Access to & Safety of Diabetes Tech. Through this process, they also developed practical skills in teamwork, project management and advocacy.

"What's in My Bag?"

Travel guidelines and a packing checklist to reduce diabetes-related stigma at airports.

Youth Voices in Diabetes

A youth-led webinar series sharing lived experience and peer-to-peer learning.

Mental Health

Participant-led recommendations feeding into a policy paper on mental health in diabetes care.

Access to & Safety of Diabetes Tech

A campaign and website advocating for equitable access to continuous glucose monitoring.



VOICES FROM THE YLL

"Through the YLL, I had the opportunity to meet young people living with diabetes from different countries, backgrounds and experiences. What surprised me the most was how quickly we built such a strong connection. In just a few days, a group of strangers became a supportive community that felt like a family"

Waleed Haider
Shah, Denmark

"The YLL gave me a deeper understanding of what advocacy truly means: turning personal experience into connection, courage and action. I returned home with new ideas, international friendships and a stronger sense of responsibility to make sure that children with type 1 diabetes feel that diabetes does not make their lives smaller."

Nail Zakiyev,
Kazakhstan

"I learned advocacy starts with simply using your voice. I'm leaving with new knowledge, more confidence, lifelong friendships, and so much motivation to bring these ideas back to my local diabetes community. If you're thinking about applying, DO IT. It might just be one of the experiences that changes your life."

Ūla Tamošiūnaitė,
Lithuania

"The YLL reminded me that leadership isn't about having all the answers – it's about listening, connecting people and turning ideas into action. Meeting young people living with T1D from across Europe showed me that, despite our different backgrounds, we face many of the same challenges and share the same ambition to improve life for our community."

Léa Calvez,
France

"It inspired me to launch new initiatives at home and grow into a more confident advocate. YLL also equipped me with the essential tools to collaborate with healthcare professionals, diabetes associations and policymakers to drive positive changes nationally and across Europe." **Luisa pelz, Germany**

This report summarises the key moments and outcomes of IDF Europe's Youth Leadership Lab 2026, highlighting a week of learning, connection and growth for young people living with diabetes.

We warmly thank APDP and its Youth Group for their exceptional collaboration and hospitality, Lilly and Minimed for their valuable support and Dexcom for their participation. We also extend our special thanks to our guest speakers Oria James, Liam Eaglestone and Harry Bligh for sharing their knowledge, experience and perspectives and to Martina Mallia for her contribution to this report. Finally, we are grateful to all alumni, faculty, mentors, staff and participants whose commitment, energy and contributions continue to make the Youth Leadership Lab a meaningful and impactful programme.

[Read the full 2026 report](#)

