



## Association of European Schools of Planning Young Academics Network

### 20<sup>th</sup> Young Academics Conference

#### CALL FOR PROPOSALS

As a part of its remit, each year the Association of European Schools of Planning Young Academics (AESOP YA) network invites AESOP member schools to host the annual YA conference. We are now opening the Call for Proposals for hosting the **20<sup>th</sup> YA conference** which will take place in **March 2025**.

As the Coordination Team, we would like to express our sincere gratitude for the funds made available by AESOP, supporting our efforts for geographical inclusion and diversity being reflected in all Young Academics (YA) activities. These funds are intended to support the conference budget of the host institution by up to €8,000 split between organisational support and the bursaries for participants. Please reach out to us for more information on the budget. We highly encourage proposals from YAs affiliated with [AESOP member schools](#) as potential hosts of the next round of the YA conference.

YA conferences have been very beneficial for the former host institutions and members of the local organising committees since they provide the hosts with an exposure to a broader network and have long-term effects such as new institutional partnerships, better local and international connections, and more influence. Moreover, it is an extraordinary opportunity for the under- and postgraduate students enrolled at host institutions, as the conference will introduce an international and interdisciplinary platform of knowledge sharing and exchange to their everyday environment. Organising and hosting a YA conference is therefore a great responsibility and an equally rewarding and fulfilling professional experience.

We are looking forward to receiving your proposals. Please read the following guidelines and send your proposals to [yamail@aesop-youngacademics.net](mailto:yamail@aesop-youngacademics.net) until **January 31, 2025**. Please reach out to us as early as possible to discuss the proposal and to support you in the bid-preparation process.

#### HOSTING A YA CONFERENCE

##### Guidelines

This document provides the guidelines for AESOP YA from member schools interested in hosting the yearly YA conference.

YA conferences:

- are held yearly during Spring – preferably during the months of March,
- are open to students, early-career scholars and young practitioners and activists – all YA members can participate to a YA conference, whether they are affiliated to AESOP or not,
- have a duration of 4 days (Depending on the budget, it can be adjusted) ,

- include plenary keynote lectures (usually 4), parallel sessions (8/10 total sessions for 40/50 presentations) and a conference dinner,
- host a best paper prize in collaboration with an international journal.

Please see the themes and programs of previous YA conferences on the [YA website](#) for further details.

All details that are not specified in this document should be agreed upon with the YA Coordination Team (CT) – e.g., decision to postpone the deadline, late submissions, special requests by participants.

### Applying to host a YA conference

The CT selects the location of YA conferences at the latest two weeks after the beginning of the AESOP Congress, usually held in the month of July (changes to this timeline can be made when the AESOP Congress is held outside Europe, together with the other world associations).

YA members from AESOP member schools can submit an application which will be evaluated by the CT. However, interested applicants are warmly encouraged to contact the CT some weeks in advance to informally discuss their ideas. The application, one single Word or PDF document of around 3.000 words, should consist of:

- a description of the conference theme and preliminary list of tracks,
- a list of potential keynote speakers,
- a tentative program – with number of presentations, theme of the workshop and public event throughout the conference duration,
- a list of possible dates – the final date should be agreed upon with AESOP ExCo,
- a main preliminary budget plan and 2 back-up budget plans with financial commitment from the hosting institution (see below for further details),
- the Local Organising Committee (LOC), that should be composed primarily of YA members from the hosting school, and a conference coordinator,
- a plan for Accommodating Best Paper Award Submissions (with invitation to an international journal to host the award).

Applications will be evaluated taking in consideration the quality and originality of the proposals. Priority will be given to:

- schools from historically **underrepresented regions**,
- conference themes of **wide inter-disciplinary interest**,
- conference themes capable of attracting participants from outside Europe and non-member schools.

A decision will be given to applicants during the annual YA conference.

## Timeline

The following timeline serves as the **standard framework** and should be adhered to closely. Only minor adjustments (up to 2 weeks) may be accommodated, provided they are communicated promptly and agreed upon in advance.

- 15 September 2025: Call for Papers (CfP) online,
- 15 October-22 October 2025: Extension of CfP, Closing the submission of abstracts
- 15 Nov 2025: Notification of Acceptance and Request of Registration with Bursary application info
- 1 December 2025: Confirmation of Participation, Starting Bursary Application, Preparation of the visa process (Invitation letter)
- 15 December 2025: Confirmation of Bursary Award,
- 15 February 2026: Deadline for full paper and registration submission,
- March 2026: Conference

This timeline offers several key advantages for the Local Organizing Committee (LOC) and the participants:

- 1) Ample Preparation Time: Finalising the participants four months before March provides sufficient time to organise and fine-tune all aspects of the conference.
- 2) Visa Arrangements: It allows young academics from outside Europe adequate time to secure their visas, ensuring greater participation stability for the LOC.
- 3) Best Paper Submission: Participants submitting for the Best Paper award will have more time to focus on their full paper.

Once the final timeline is established, the LOC will be responsible for drafting the complete conference description (including the program) and initiating informal contact with potential keynote speakers.

## Communication LOC & CT

The LOC has to communicate any change in the agreed program, conference theme, choice of keynotes to the CT. The CT will provide assistance, guidance and suggestions following the experience of the previous years and the relation with AESOP. The CT won't interfere with the LOC organisation in terms of inviting keynote speakers or changing the on-going organisation, unless this would be requested by the LOC.

Specific key moments can be agreed to discuss particular points of the conference between LOC and CT (i.e. theme, keynotes, program, venue). Cooperation between CT and LOC can be fostered by clear initial definitions of roles and expectations. An appointed person in the LOC can be the intermediary in the communication between LOC and CT.

The communication between LOC and CT is made via email. The creation of a conference email managed by the LOC is strongly encouraged. The LOC will also create a google drive or an external

online folder, accessible to all LOC and CT members, where all relevant documents (conference description, abstracts, full papers, program, budget documents, receipts, evaluation files, etc.), in English, will be stored.

### Budget

The LOC is responsible for the management of the conference budget – the CT will provide all necessary assistance.

Costs generally include:

- 4 keynote speakers' travels, accommodation and meals (no honorarium is provided),
- Travel, accommodation and meals of the editor of the journal awarding the best paper prize (although, depending on the details of the selection process, optional),
- Lunches and coffee breaks during the conference,
- Conference materials (book of abstracts, badges, conference bag),
- Venues (although, often the host university provides the venue free of costs),
- Conference dinner (although, in case of limited financial resources, this cost could be covered by participants),
- Costs related to the workshop and city tour,
- Wire transfer costs.

AESOP contributes to the conference with:

- A partial coverage of costs up to €8,000 for the host institutions and bursaries for participants.
- CT travel and accommodation costs (AESOP YA CT annual budget).

#### Non presenting attendees:

YA conferences are free for participants. AESOP YA encourages LOC to open the event to young academics, even if they would be non-presenting attendees. Up to 10 non-presenting attendees, (the number can be agreed with the CT according to the conference venue, requests of the host university, etc.), can be accepted and will pay a small fee (50 to 75 Euros) to cover the costs of meals and conference material. Using a waiting list could ease the response to the non-presenting attendees.

#### Funding plans:

The LOC is strongly encouraged to seek additional external funding sources to ensure the financial stability and success of the conference. The YA CT will fully support and collaborate with the LOC in this effort, including offering assistance with application processes and providing the possibility to apply under the name of AESOP YA where applicable.

- One main preliminary budget plan outlining the primary funding strategy.
- Two alternative backup budget plans to address potential shortfalls or unforeseen circumstances.

These plans should clearly indicate:

- The expected amount of funding from each source.
- The timeline for funding applications, including when the application should start and the expected notification date for results.

A suggestion for acquiring funding is to involve the local authorities in organising the conference and defining the conference theme. In return, their employees can attend the event and learn from it. As such, the conference can be advertised as a way to gain new knowledge.

The final budget should be delivered to AESOP YA and AESOP a few weeks after the conference.

### Advertising and accessibility strategies

The CT is primarily responsible for advertising the CfP among YA members and beyond. However, the LOC is warmly encouraged to share the call through their networks as well. We strongly encourage the LOC to create a new website to provide the whole information by 3-4 menus. The main information of the conference should also be uploaded to the AESOP YA website as a matter of visibility and advertisement at the same time.

The conference website can also be hosted on the AESOP YA website. In this case, the LOC should provide all information to be included in the conference website (see the website of the previous edition as reference); the CT is responsible for updating the conference website. All the information should be sent to the responsible CT member on time, who will set up the conference pages.

### Selection of abstracts

The LOC and CT agree whether the abstracts will be submitted through the YA website or by e-mail (YA email or specifically created email managed by the LOC). The LOC is responsible for verifying the eligibility and for notifying promptly the authors that their abstract will/will not be evaluated – in case any controversy will happen, the LOC and CT will jointly decide.

All YA members can submit a maximum of one abstract. Multi-author abstracts are welcome; however, **all authors must be Young Academics** – the definition of YA is broad; in general, a YA is a student or not-tenured scholar (however, submissions by recently tenured scholars may be evaluated in exceptional cases, the LOC and CT will agree on the single cases). Particularly, **abstracts co-authored by a PhD student and her/his supervisor are not eligible**.

The abstracts are selected in collaboration between the LOC and the CT, using a simplified evaluation system from 0 (poor) to 3 (excellent) for a) Content and clarity, quality of writing, b) Theoretical framework, and c) Research design/Methodology. Abstract selection should take place competitively but take into consideration:

- the potential quality and originality of the full paper – taking in consideration that English-speaking scholars are advantaged in the drafting of English abstracts and papers,

- the relation to the conference theme,
- the geographic distribution of participants,
- gender balance.

40 to 50 abstracts are selected for presentation. 8 to 10 abstracts are selected for the waiting list. After the selection process is completed, the LOC should immediately mail all authors with the notification of acceptance, rejection or waiting list. The accepted authors are requested to confirm their participation within 7 to 10 days. After that date, their seat is offered to a person in the waiting list.

### **Best Paper Prize (BPP) & Workshop**

The YA conference BPP is awarded as part of the YA annual conference. Every year the YA-committee invites an international journal to host the award. The awarded paper will receive unique feedback from the journal editor and the chair of the conference tracks to become qualified for publication in the invited journal.

#### Plan for Accommodating Best Paper Award Submissions:

##### 1. Identification of an International Journal Partner:

In the proposal, the LOC, in collaboration with the YA CT, should reach out to relevant international journals within the field of planning and related disciplines to explore the possibility of hosting the Best Paper Award submissions.

##### 2. Securing an Invitation:

Once a journal agrees to host the Best Paper Award submissions, the LOC will finalize guidelines for the invited submissions (e.g., length, formatting, submission timeline).

##### 3. Communication to Award Participants:

During the conference, the winner and other selected participants will be formally invited to submit their full papers to the designated journal. Clear submission instructions will be provided.

##### 4. Recognition:

Accepted papers will be highlighted as part of the Best Paper Award recognition, both on the AESOP YA website and in conference communications.

#### Award Criteria:

The YA BPP Award is awarded according to the following criteria:

- Originality and innovativeness of research,
- Relevance to the conference theme,
- Clarity of research argument and methodology, and

- Overall scientific quality.

#### Evaluation Process:

1. Collection:  
A designated LOC member will collect all submitted full papers after the Best Paper Presentation (BPP) deadline. To ensure fairness and impartiality, this individual must not share any information about the submissions with other LOC members.
2. Transfer to YA Coordination Team (YA CT):  
The collected full papers should then be handed over to a responsible YA CT member. This member must be someone within the YA CT who is not directly involved in the organisation of the YA Conference.
3. Anonymization:  
The assigned YA CT member will anonymize the collected full papers by removing identifying information such as file names and author names.
4. Evaluation:  
A panel of LOC members and YA CT members will review the anonymized full papers based on pre-defined criteria and collectively decide on the Best Papers.

#### The Prize:

- Certificate from the AESOP YA Network,
- Unique feedback from the editor of the journal and chairs of the conference sessions in order to help the author qualify the paper for publication, and
- (Optional) Free access for 1 year to the Journal (to be decided by the journal)

#### Eligibility and Participation:

All papers accepted for oral presentations at the annual YA conference are qualified for the award. However, authors must clearly express their interest in taking part in the contest and their commitment to publish their papers in the host journal in order to be qualified for the award.

#### Journal:

The LOC and CT discuss the journal to be contacted and the details of the selection process. The normal procedure is that the keynote speakers and track chairs select the best paper of their sessions, then the decision is jointly taken during the conference and announced at the conference dinner – see programs of previous editions.

#### Special issue:

The BPP is mostly selected based on a top 5 to 10 of papers, usually the best two papers preselected by the track chairs and co-chairs. These papers will be invited to publish their paper in the AESOP YA-managed open-access international peer-reviewed journal [PlaNext](#). Here, one of the keynotes is asked to act as guest editor together with someone from the CT and/or LOC. Check the previous volumes of PlaNext for more information.

### **Bursary award**

Since the bursary awards are funded by the YA CT budget, the YA CT holds ultimate responsibility for their allocation. However, potential candidates for the bursary awards will be identified and carefully evaluated in close collaboration with the LOC to ensure a fair and inclusive selection process.

### **Workshop**

During the YA Conference, traditionally one day is dedicated to organising workshops which reflect more detail on – preferably – the conference theme. It is free to the LOC to plan in this workshop. For inspiration check previous conference programs.

### **During the conference**

The LOC is responsible for the organisation of the event, but the LOC can benefit from the assistance of CT members that are present at the conference.