

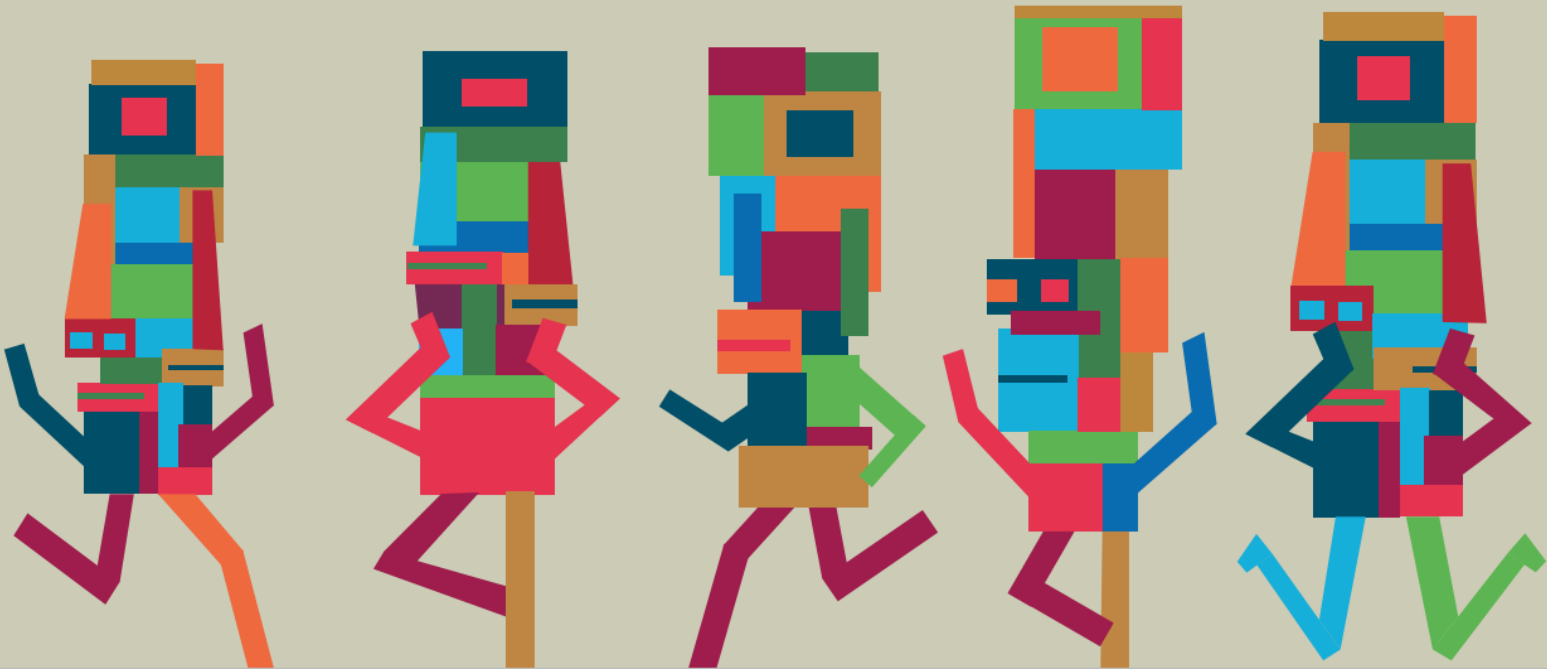


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# World Higher Education Conference – WHEC 2022 YOUTH STRATEGY

Reinventing Higher Education for a Sustainable Future

Barcelona • 18-20 May 2022



*The [WHEC2022](#) is organized by UNESCO in collaboration with the Government of Spain, the regional Government of Catalonia, the City Hall and the Regional Authority of Barcelona, with the technical assistance of GUNi/ACUP and the Scientific Steering Group led by the Futures of Education initiative, IESALC, UIL, UIS, IIEP, and others.*

## The World Higher Education Conference (WHEC2022)

The third edition of the World Higher Education Conference ([WHEC2022](#)) – to be held in Barcelona, 18-20 May 2022 – will bring together all relevant stakeholders to define and prepare their roadmap for a new era of higher education systems and institutions. This roadmap will be responsive to the challenges faced by humanity and the planet, as a result of diverse forms of crises, with special attention to the global disruption created by COVID-19. Furthermore, higher education must anticipate and prepare for its role in societies that goes beyond the next decade, inspired by [the Futures of Education initiative](#).

The WHEC2022 aims at breaking away from the traditional models of higher learning and opening doors to new, innovative, creative, and visionary conceptions that not only serve the current global agendas for sustainable development, but also pave the way for future learning communities that overcome barriers, speak to all and are inclusive of all lifelong learners.

The WHEC2022 will be the culmination of a dynamical and open process that will include the creation of an interactive platform that will call for the participation of the entire higher education community, including youth, private stakeholders, academics, higher education institutions and the UNESCO network. The process will invigorate different activities such as surveys, consultations, blogs,

panels and webinars. This will result in the production of knowledge geared towards the success of the Conference, while allowing a wider audience to learn and become informed about good practices in higher education.

## The recognition of youth in higher education

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With the expansion of globalization and the new digital era, traditional higher education systems have also been jolted. In the last decades, higher education has been distancing itself from new generations' unfolding and trends defined by the emerging needs of coexisting in an interconnected planet.

Worldwide, youth are called to play a crucial role in driving this ambitious agenda towards the future of higher education. UNESCO believes that youth are essential to finding solutions to some of the most pressing challenges we face – from poverty to inequality to conflict – driven by [SDG 4](#), particularly targets 4.3 and 4.4, which call for equal access and to empower youth for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship. Young people have the right to be nurtured and protected, and to be involved in decision-making that impacts them, which requires the articulation and representation of their views and interests, and their participation. UNESCO works to recognize the talent of young women and men and to ensure they have the skills to participate in and contribute to the development of their societies.

We have an opportunity to reimagine a higher education that is prepared to respond to the pressures and emerging challenges of today's world, and to provide students with competencies and skills required for a better future. In raising their voices, youth play a seminal role in contributing to the rethinking of higher education systems and the futures of higher education towards the achievement of the [2030 Agenda](#) and its pledge to [leave no one behind](#).

## WHEC2022 youth engagement strategy

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The WHEC2022 presents this strategy to ensure youth participation by means of dedicated youth programming that will: (i) empower youth from every background in order to leave no one behind; (ii) spark mutual inspiration among youth and the higher education community; (iii) involve youth in a co-building process of redefining higher education.

The foundation of the strategy aligns with youth imaginary in higher education, appealing and emerging youth trends as new learning scenarios, communication patterns and channels, benchmarks, among others, converging traditional and modern methods to reach youth from different backgrounds and recognizing all talents. Therefore, the WHEC2022 youth engagement strategy bears in mind the importance of providing access to people of all abilities and potentials.

This Conference recognizes youth as game-changers to contribute to the redefinition of higher education and its future demands. By taking action and producing knowledge, they will contribute to the WHEC2022 through active participation in an intergenerational, global conversation that will feed into the HED 2030 Roadmap.

To ensure youth engagement along the working process, the youth engagement strategy is presented together with an open-access digital platform that will host WHEC2022 programme activities and act as a global community dedicated to youth.

## Youth participation

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While the United Nations defines “youth” as persons between the ages of 15 and 24, UNESCO recognizes that youth is a fluid, ever-changing category, which varies according to country and region. In that sense, the WHEC2022 calls for the participation of youth aged 15 and up, including all respective youth ranges established in various contexts. Youth participation contemplates students within both formal and non-formal higher education settings, as well as youth outside of higher education that have either dropped out of the system or have never had the opportunity of access. The WHEC2022 recognizes all youth participants worldwide, independently of their cultural and economic background, gender, and identity.

## UNESCO WHEC Youth Platform

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The UNESCO WHEC Youth Platform<sup>1</sup> (herein referred to as Youth Platform) is an open-access virtual and vibrant community focused on higher education where youth feel part of something greater as *higher education game-changers*.

The interactive platform presents opportunities for youth participation (before and during the Conference) and will remain active after the WHEC2022. Users will have the opportunity to attend online master classes, seminars, open discussions and forums as well as participate in surveys, consultations and calls for entrepreneurs, artists, researchers, among others. At the same time, they will enjoy fresh, digital content uploaded regularly, such as higher education talks (HED Talks), podcasts, video messages by youth leaders, blog posts, etc. In addition, the Youth Platform contains all the information regarding the WHEC2022, and users can subscribe to a newsletter to stay tuned on the Conference and all youth activities.

## UNESCO WHEC2022 Youth Programme

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A disruptive and innovative programme has been designed to empower youth to respond to the new challenges they are currently facing. It will serve as a window to the world to recognize and showcase their views, thoughts, sentiments, talents and actions.

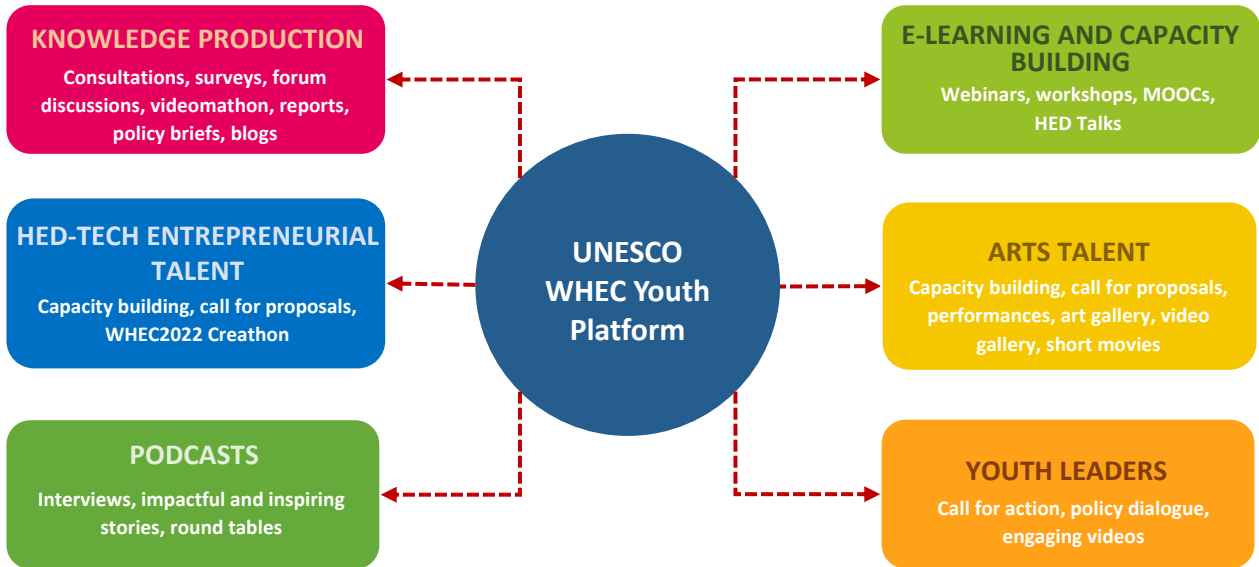
Among the different initiatives that constitute the programme is the production of knowledge and data, which will feed into the HED 2030 Roadmap. Therefore, the programme seeks a boundless

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<sup>1</sup> [www.youthwhec.org](http://www.youthwhec.org)

impact among the audience and helps set the tone for how the world can achieve the education-focused Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) and all 17 goals of the 2030 Agenda.

The WHEC2022 Youth Programme is structured by pre-Conference activities, Conference events and beyond. They aim to encompass the different domains of concern that currently occupy higher education, emerging phenomena and trends, working on the main topics of the Conference. Specifically, the programme incorporates the following initiatives, which will be integrated into the Youth Platform: knowledge production; e-learning; HED-Tech entrepreneurial talent; arts talent; podcasts and storytelling; youth leaders call for action. More information about how and when to make submissions for the youth strategy initiatives will be provided on the Youth Platform.



**Alliances and sponsorships: How to contribute**

UNESCO encourages organizations, companies and NGOs to contribute to preparing and implementing different activities of the youth strategy for inspiring, empowering, and involving young people as changemakers in reinventing higher education.

Partners and sponsors have the opportunity to provide financial or in-kind support to the WHEC2022 youth strategy preparatory activities and the engagement of youth in the WHEC2022 three-day programme. Depending on their priorities and level of support, interested stakeholders may choose among three categories: partner/golden, sponsor/silver or supporter/bronze. Correspondingly, they may access a variety of benefits, including visibility, participation, knowledge production, joint projects, exhibition spaces and networking.

**Working languages**

English, French, and Spanish will be the working languages of the WHEC2022.

**Learn more:**

[WHEC2022](#)

[UNESCO Higher Education](#)

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