

# Reflections on STYPA 2022

(05/08/2022)

This year's Summer Training Course for Young Patient Advocates (STYPA) 2022 took place in Strasbourg, on the 14<sup>th</sup> to the 17<sup>th</sup> of July. During four days of trainings and workshops, 40 young patients advocates or representatives of young patients advocates, from all across Europe, explored both the challenges they face themselves as young patients, but also ways to better address these specific obstacles in a meaningful and constructive way, that changes the lives of others battling the same problems.

Throughout the course, the participants had the opportunity to be a part of workshops and interactive games focusing on the importance of communication with HCPs, partners and potential partners on the delicate topic of sexual health and well-being.

## What is STYPA?

STYPA represents a highly tailored training, designed to empower young patient advocates, to strengthen their voices, and to provide them with the proper advocacy tools, so they can play an active part in the healthcare ecosystem and to drive change in the communities they represent. The training addresses young patients or representatives of young patients (aged from 18 to 30), passionate about advocating for patients' rights and who are dedicated to become a part of the larger patients' rights movement.

From its first edition, in 2017, to the latest one, STYPA trained generations of young patient advocates on topics such as inclusion and overcoming social stigma, patient advocacy, and sexual health.

While the first three editions were in-person events, STYPA translated into an online training in 2020 and 2021, and it settled for a hybrid approach this year – with a face-to-face four day training, followed by interactive webinars held this autumn.

## What were the main topics discussed this year?

As a result of dealing and growing up with a chronic condition many young patients experience body confidence issues, problems in intimacy communication with their partner or HCP and taboos around

sexuality and people with chronic conditions in society, as shown by the results of the “Sexual Health and Well-Being” survey, conducted by the EPF Youth Group in 2021. Considering this, EPF with the support of the EPF Youth Group decided to focus on the theme of sexual health and wellbeing for the 2022 edition of STYPA.

During their training in Strasbourg, the participants, guided by trainers, were encouraged to develop the confidence to communicate about sex and sexual wellbeing, while exploring taboos and misperceptions about young people with chronic conditions and sex. By creating a safe common space, the participants were then able to develop acceptance and body-positivity. Later, the discussions focused on exploring the issues and principles for communication with partners and potential partners, having in mind potential discriminatory attitudes relating to sex, sexuality and chronic illness. Also, the group became more familiar with the principles for communication between young patients and their healthcare providers about their sexual health and well-being.

All in all, the training provided insight on the importance of peer-to-peer support, while enhancing participants’ confidence to raise awareness and change taboos and misperceptions about young people with chronic conditions and sex.