Youth Voices Leading the Way:
A Year of Impact from the IFSBH Youth Group

In 2026, the IFSBH Youth Group SBH demonstrated how young people with Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus are not only voices in advocacy, but active contributors to shaping it.

Chaired by Jurn Anthonis, the Youth Group brought young people's perspectives into international discussions, helped shape events and webinars, and created opportunities for exchange across generations. From policy discussions in Brussels to online conversations connecting people across continents, here are some of the group's highlights from the year.

March: Making young voices heard

On 6 March, Youth Group member Viktoria Peykova contributed to IFSBH's International Women's Day webinar, *Rights. Justice. Action. For ALL Women and Girls*, sharing her reflections and an encouraging message: "Believe in yourselves!"

Later that month, from 18 to 20 March, Chair Jurn Anthonis represented young people with SBH at the Youth Dialogue with European Commissioner Hadja Lahbib in Brussels. Joining young people with disabilities from across Europe, he highlighted the importance of accessibility and inclusive infrastructure and services.



August: Opening pathways to education and employment

On International Youth Day, 12 August 2026, the Youth Group designed and hosted the webinar *Inclusive Pathways: Education & Employment for Youth*.

Through two roundtable discussions, young people, adult disability advocates and experts from Ethiopia, Bulgaria, Ireland, Uganda, Malaysia and Sweden explored what is needed to make education and employment more inclusive.

Discussions on education highlighted the importance of reasonable accommodations, accessible learning environments and supportive networks. The employment discussion focused on inclusive recruitment, accessible workplaces, mentoring and self-advocacy.

The webinar provided a space to exchange experiences and identify practical ways to help young people with disabilities access opportunities and participate fully.

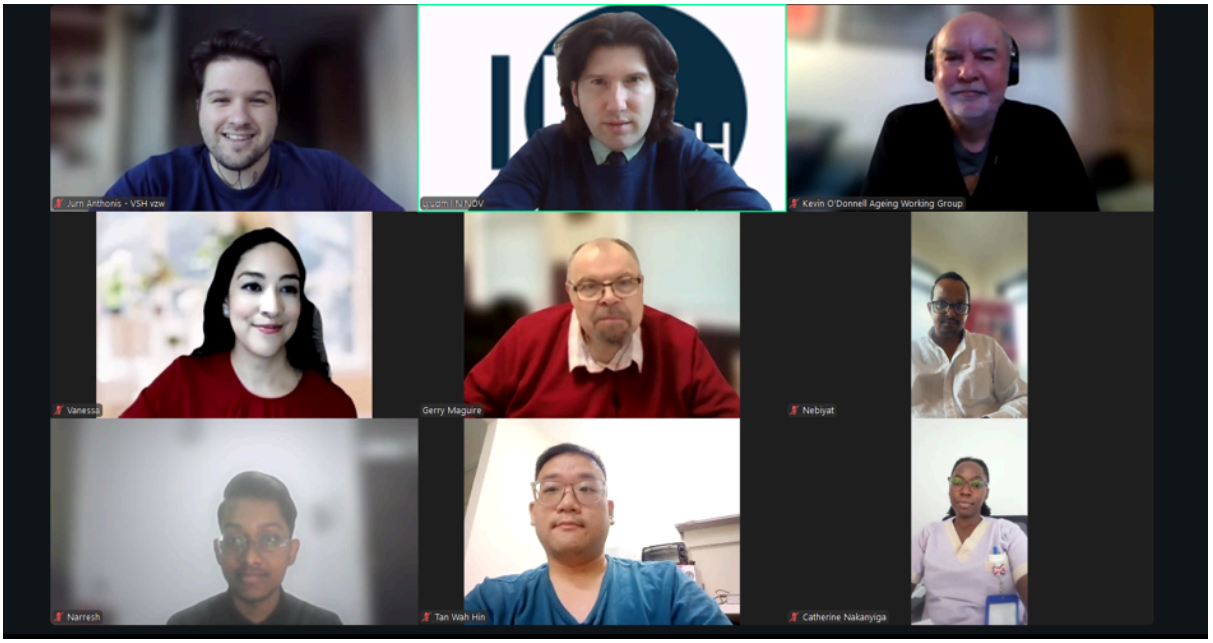


October and November: Wellbeing and intergenerational exchange

On 8 October, Youth Group members helped co-design and lead IFSBH's webinar on *Mental Health, Wellbeing and Ageing in the Global SBH Community*, marking the International Day of Older Persons and World Mental Health Day. Together with members of the Adult Working Group, they shared perspectives from different stages of life and discussed the factors that support mental health and wellbeing.

The Youth Group also contributed to the global webinar for World Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus Day (WSBHD) on 25 October, ensuring that young people's experiences and perspectives were part of the celebration.

In November, the group continued this exchange through its annual Meet & Greet with the Adult Working Group. The meeting offered an opportunity to connect, learn from one another and strengthen relationships across generations.



Looking ahead

Throughout 2026, the IFSBH Youth Group has shown the value of meaningful youth participation: young people sharing their experiences, contributing to discussions and helping shape the issues that affect the SBH community.

From international advocacy to peer exchange, their message is clear: **young people's voices belong at the table, and they have an important role in shaping the future.**

IFSBH looks forward to continuing to support the Youth Group and its members as they build connections, develop their leadership and contribute to a more inclusive future for people with SBH.