

What remains of YEP MED and future plans

Although the YEP MED - Young Employment in Ports of the Mediterranean project officially concluded in 2023, its impact continues through a set of interconnected initiatives that ensure the long-term sustainability, replication, and evolution of its methodology, tools, and community. What began as a project has since grown into a broader ecosystem for skills development, innovation, and cooperation in Mediterranean port-logistics communities and beyond.

Port Virtual Lab (PVL): from YEP MED legacy to global flagship tool

One of YEP MED's most tangible and lasting outcomes is **Port Virtual Lab (PVL)**, a digital port-community simulator developed by the Escola Europea - Intermodal Transport. PVL uses **simulation and real-game methodologies** to train participants in international trade and logistics operations, allowing them to work with realistic maritime, rail, road, and airfreight scenarios. More recently, new learning paths such as **insurance-related modules**, among other things, are also being developed.

PVL was born within the YEP MED framework and served as a **core educational tool**, enabling hands-on, experiential learning for students, professionals, and trainers. Over time, it has evolved into an **independent flagship product of the Escola Europea**, while remaining deeply rooted in the project's values and pedagogical approach.

Today, PVL continues to expand beyond the original YEP MED scope. It is actively used across Europe and the Mediterranean and is increasingly reaching **new regions, including the Americas and the United States**, supporting training programmes, capacity-building initiatives, and international cooperation projects such as **OPEN TRADE MED** and **PLIKA**. Future developments will further extend its modular structure, enabling adaptation to emerging training needs and geographical contexts.

PLIKA: sustaining the YEP MED community

To ensure that the networks and knowledge created through YEP MED would not disappear with the end of the project, the Escola Europea launched **PLIKA - Port Logistics International Knowledge Academy**. PLIKA acts as the **structural legacy of YEP MED**, functioning as a living community that connects training centres, teachers, ports, professionals, and institutions across the Mediterranean.

PLIKA is conceived as a **network-based academy**, combining community-building with concrete programmes and activities. Its focus lies on **knowledge sharing, continuous capacity building, and institutional collaboration**, supported by initiatives such as webinars, online events, collaborative learning formats, and innovation-oriented activities (e.g. hackathons).

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Since its launch, PLIKA has continued to grow its visibility and outreach, notably through the creation of a **dedicated newsletter** and the steady expansion of its online community. Through PLIKA, the principles and partnerships of YEP MED remain active, adaptable, and open to new actors and regions.

Training the Trainers (ToT): building local capacity for long-term impact

A key pillar of YEP MED's sustainability strategy has always been its strong emphasis on **Training of Trainers (ToT)**. Rather than focusing solely on learners, the project invested heavily in empowering educators, ensuring that knowledge, methodology, and tools could be replicated locally and adapted to diverse contexts.

Through ToT programmes, trainers are equipped to:

- use digital tools such as the Port Virtual Lab,
- apply experiential and simulation-based learning methodologies,
- adapt content to local port-logistics realities.

This approach remains central to the Escola Europea's educational model and continues through **PLIKA** and **OPEN TRADE MED**. A particularly important by-product of YEP MED is **CHIRON**, a collaborative space where educators can exchange experiences, co-develop case studies, discuss pedagogical approaches, and jointly innovate teaching practices with peers from other institutions.

Looking ahead, the Escola Europea has planned **three new Training of Trainers programmes in the current semester**, with schedules adapted to different time zones. This approach aims to facilitate participation from trainers in both the **Western and Eastern hemispheres**, reinforcing YEP MED's original vision of inclusive, transnational capacity building.

OPEN TRADE MED: continuity and evolution of the YEP MED model

OPEN TRADE MED represents a continuation and evolution of the YEP MED experience, applying its methodology and tools to the field of international trade. Supported by **AECID**, the project builds on YEP MED's foundations while addressing new thematic and geographical priorities.

The project focuses on:

- international trade,
- ports and logistics,
- employability,
- sustainability and ethical decision-making.

OPEN TRADE MED combines **PVL-based learning**, Training of Trainers schemes, and pilot actions, currently implemented in **Algeria and Lebanon**, with a clear vision for progressive expansion across the Mediterranean. While grounded in realistic short-term objectives, the project

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maintains an open, long-term perspective, remaining adaptable to new partnerships, regions, and emerging needs.

20 years of the Escola Europea: looking ahead

“YEP MED demonstrated that education, when combined with cooperation and innovation, can create lasting change. Our goal has always been to build skills that empower people and communities to shape a more sustainable and connected Mediterranean.” Eduard Rodés, director of the Escola Europea.

In **October 2026**, the Escola Europea - Intermodal Transport will celebrate its **20th anniversary**, marking two decades of commitment to education, values, and innovation in logistics and intermodal transport.

Rather than focusing solely on past achievements, the anniversary is conceived as a **forward-looking milestone**, reflecting on the next 20 years of education and skills development. Planned initiatives include a dedicated course for educators titled “**Education Beyond Intelligence**”, addressing the evolving role of education, reskilling, and power skills in the age of artificial intelligence.

The anniversary will also recognise the contribution of **institutional, public, and private partners** that have supported the Escola’s journey, and will include the inauguration of “**Arete Plazas**”—physical spaces dedicated to excellence, ethics, and human development (inspired by the classical concept of *areté*). These plazas will be established in the **four ports where the Escola has a physical presence**, symbolising the long-term integration of education, ports, and society.

References

- Escola Europea - Intermodal Transport: <https://www.escolaeuropea.eu>
- Port Virtual Lab (PVL): <https://pvl.one>
- PLIKA - Port Logistics International Knowledge Academy: <https://plika.eu>
- YEP MED project: <https://www.enicbcmed.eu/projects/yep-med>

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