



YOUNG

The past and present chairs of the young committee look backward and forward

As Pierfrancesco Franco hands over his position of yESTRO chair to Steven Petit, they look backward and forward regarding the yESTRO committee.



Steven Petit: Pierfrancesco, if you look back over the last four years during which time you have been chair, what are you most proud of?

Pierfrancesco Franco: I am particularly happy since young members have been continually more involved in the activities of the European Society for Radiotherapy and Oncology (ESTRO) as a proactive force able to push forward the Society. I am also happy because the young ESTRO (yESTRO) committee is perceived as a reliable interlocutor by the other bodies of the Society, such as the other standing committees and the different councils. These two aspects are crucial if young members are to be integrated fully into the societal life of ESTRO and they can take part in fruitful collaborations and initiatives. The two projects that were developed during my years as chair of the yESTRO committee that I am most proud of are a) the project on burn-out in radiation oncology (PRO BONO) and b) the diversity, equity and inclusion project. In those studies, we addressed the topics of a) professional well-being and burn-out amongst oncology professionals and b) diversity, equity, and inclusion in the field of radiation oncology. We noticed that those themes were underrepresented in Europe and we wanted to raise awareness and tackle the issues. These projects are a nice example of how yESTRO can detect gaps and unmet needs, evaluate the context, and propose targeted solutions. As a matter of fact, we are following up these initiatives with dedicated workshops and qualitative research projects to improve the situation.

Steven Petit: what did you enjoy most?

Pierfrancesco Franco: I loved being part of the European radiation oncology community. I had a very pleasant and rewarding interaction with the other members of the yESTRO committee. It was also very nice to be able to convey the voice of the young members of the Society. Through interaction with the other committees and bodies of the Society, I also had the chance to learn a lot from experienced colleagues and radiotherapy professionals. This was very important and valuable for my professional growth. I was also exposed to the organisational aspects and driving mechanisms of ESTRO and so I was able to perceive how complex, multi-layered and interconnected such a scientific society is. The part I liked the most was being an active member, being able to fully contribute and help ESTRO to achieve its goals and fulfil its vision. Finally, it was a lot of fun for me.

Steven Petit: do you have any recommendations for the young committee for the coming years?

Pierfrancesco Franco: I am sure yESTRO will proceed smoothly and do even better than it has in the past. I know the people in the committee, a group of highly motivated and talented radiation oncology professionals, so I am confident they will succeed. I would suggest that they work to integrate further the committee and young members of the Society. I would advise them to: a) have a clear idea of where they want to go, with goals and achievements to be reached; b) set out how to get there, with standards of behaviour; c) measure periodically the results and re-frame the strategy as necessary; and d) bring the results to the Society. But, most importantly, I would suggest that they enjoy the run.

Steven Petit: do you have any specific advice for early career members?

Pierfrancesco Franco: if you have an idea and want to contribute, don't be afraid to reach out to the yESTRO committee and ESTRO in general. I am sure you will find people who are willing to help and collaborate. Consider yESTRO and ESTRO as your home and the right place for your professional development. Don't be shy and help us to help you to contribute.

Pierfrancesco Franco: now Steven, let's move our focus towards the future. Why do you think the yESTRO committee is important within ESTRO?

Steven Petit: the number of young members we represent as yESTRO is huge, more than 2700, or 42% of all ESTRO members. But if you look at the members of committees, councils and the Board, the vast majority (84%) of them do not qualify as young, and are probably not completely aware of what is of importance to young members. Indeed, we often hear that young members would like to be involved more in ESTRO but do not know how to get more involved. As the yESTRO committee, our role is to ensure that we increase the relevance of ESTRO to young members and involve more young members within ESTRO.

Pierfrancesco Franco: what is your vision for the young committee for the coming five years?

Steven Petit: Our vision is that by 2027, young radiation oncology professionals will feel at home in ESTRO, and will be being prepared to lead it and the profession into the 2030s.

Feeling at home means that young members should know what ESTRO can do for them, but also how they can contribute to ESTRO, and they should feel comfortable contributing. Regarding preparation to lead, we believe that ESTRO should actively support young members to develop professionally and scientifically, and should invest to contribute to the development of the leaders of the 2030s and beyond; for instance, through the mentoring programme.

Pierfrancesco Franco: what are the challenges you foresee?

Steven Petit: as a group of 12 committee members from all over Europe, we have a considerable network of young members we know. However, there are many more young members that we do not know, so we do not know what they think and find important. Our main challenge is to reach these young ESTRO members, find out what is important for them and try to involve them more within ESTRO.

One of the initiatives we have started is the opinion panel. Young members that sign up fill in a 10-minute questionnaire every two months. This allows us to find out what they think. Moreover by contributing to the Opinion Panel they take a first easy step to get involved in ESTRO. More information about the opinion panel can be found at the yESTRO website.

Pierfrancesco Franco: what message would you like to send to the young members of ESTRO?

Steven Petit: we want to know what you think and involve those of you who want to be involved! So join our opinion panel and let us know what is important for you! Do not think that ESTRO is not for you; it is, whether you have just started your training or PhD, or if you do not get the chance to attend ESTRO activities, and wherever in Europe you are from. Your voice is important: help us to increase the relevance of ESTRO for young members such as yourself and take a part in it.

For our vision, strategy and regular updates on our initiatives and the progress we make, check the [yESTRO website](#).





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