YUFE Research Relay

Terms of Reference

1. Introduction

The **YUFE Research Relay** is a key initiative to foster research collaboration among YUFE Universities. Departing from valuable data obtained through an internal Survey filled in by more than 600 researchers, a program of activities is being designed within Work-package 5, *YUFE Responsible, Interdisciplinary and Inclusive Research* (task 5.3: *Fostering Research Collaborations*) to support researchers in creating multidisciplinary collaborative groups and conceiving project proposals that can obtain private and public funding for their implementation.

The first ambitious activity (**YUFE Research Relay**) proposed to YUFE researchers is specifically designed to support researchers in developing competitive, high-quality proposals for Horizon Europe funding. The activity incorporates three sequential stages: preliminary online sessions, an intensive virtual proposal *Ideathon*, and a comprehensive in-person training workshop in Brussels.

These Terms of Reference (ToR) detail the objectives, eligibility criteria, evaluation procedures, and responsibilities of participants. Detailed calls for participation and additional specifics can be found in Annex l.

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2. Objectives

The YUFE Research Relay seeks to:

- Foster robust interdisciplinary collaboration among researchers from YUFE universities to strengthen the development of proposals aimed at Horizon Europe.
- Provide targeted, practical training sessions focusing on the critical components of Excellence, Impact, and Implementation within EU-funded research frameworks.

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- Create a vibrant networking environment to promote knowledge sharing, partnership development, and collective innovation across the alliance.
- Improve both the quality and competitiveness of the research proposals submitted under Horizon Europe calls, thereby increasing the chances of securing funding.

3. Eligibility Criteria

To be eligible for participation in the YUFE Research Relay, researchers must:

- Be currently affiliated with a YUFE alliance member university.
- Have actively participated in and responded to the **YUFE Pilot Network survey**, circulated in December 2024, regarding research interests and collaboration.

Additionally, eligible researchers should:

- Have an active interest in submitting proposals within Horizon Europe's Cluster 2 (Culture, Creativity, and Inclusive Society) or Cluster 6 (Food, Bioeconomy, Natural Resources, Agriculture, and Environment).
- Commit to engaging meaningfully in interdisciplinary collaboration and fully participating in all phases of the program, including team-based proposal writing activities.

4. Program Structure and Key Activities

The YUFE Research Relay program is meticulously structured to optimize the engagement, training, and collaborative efforts of participants. This carefully designed format aims to progressively develop researchers' competencies, facilitate productive teamwork, and provide extensive practical experience in proposal writing and submission strategies. Key stages and activities include:

4.0 **Team Formation**

Teams will be strategically formed by the Organizing Committee based on the responses to the YUFE Pilot Network survey and participants' chosen Horizon Europe calls. The goal is to create diverse, multi- and interdisciplinary teams with international composition, striving whenever possible to include researchers from different YUFE universities.

4.1 **Online Information & Team Announcement Sessions (May 5th, 2025)**

- One initial one-hour online session will introduce the Relay structure, provide essential guidelines on proposal writing, and facilitate team formation, ensuring a clear and productive start to the collaborative process.

4.2 Online Ideathon (May 9th-10th, 2025)

- **Day 1 (Half-day, afternoon):** Participants receive targeted training focused on proposal _**Excellence**_, including how to clearly define project objectives and develop scientifically robust methodologies, followed by structured teamwork and peer-to-peer collaboration.
- **Day 2 (Full-day):** In-depth sessions on the critical dimensions of _**Impact**_ and _**Implementation**_, supported by expert guidance, with participants actively engaging in team proposal development. Teams finalize their efforts by submitting a concise 5-page **Concept Note**, which will undergo rigorous evaluation by an expert jury.

4.3 In-Person Proposal Training in Brussels (June 26th-27th, 2025)

- Comprehensive advanced training workshops designed to further deepen participants' understanding of Excellence, Impact, and Implementation in EU research projects.
- Direct interactions and personalized consultations with EU Project Officers specializing in Clusters 2 and 6, providing invaluable insights into funding priorities and expectations.
- Practical guidance sessions covering the use of the EU Funding & Tenders Portal and financial management strategies specific to EU-funded projects.
- Hands-on, facilitated proposal development workshops with individualized expert feedback.
- Structured networking opportunities designed to enhance consortium building and strategic planning for proposal submission.

5. Evaluation criteria and selection process

Submitted concept notes from the ideathon will be rigorously evaluated based on:

5.1 Excellence (0-5 points)

- Precision, ambition, and clarity of project objectives.

- Scientific merit and methodological soundness of the proposed research.

- Inclusion of gender perspectives and adherence to open science principles.

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5.2 Impact (0-5 points)

- Realistic and clearly defined anticipated outcomes and impacts.

- Quality and appropriateness of dissemination, exploitation, and communication strategies for maximizing the project's reach and influence.

5.3 Implementation (0-5 points)

- Practicality and coherence of the proposed work plan and methodologies.

- Suitability and balance of the assembled team, including the complementary expertise of consortium members.

A panel of experts will review and rank the concept notes, selecting the highest scoring 5-6 teams (up to 30 participants) to advance to the in-person training workshop in Brussels.

6. Participant Responsibilities

Selected participants are required to:

- Fully engage in all planned activities, contributing constructively to discussions and team activities.

- Adhere strictly to submission deadlines for concept notes and related program deliverables.

- Uphold high standards of professional integrity, collaborative spirit, and inclusive engagement with fellow researchers.

- Demonstrate commitment to further proposal development and eventual submission for Horizon Europe funding.

Winners of the online ideathon are expected to seek funding for travel to the Brussels training from their respective institutions (for example, via Erasmus mobility programs).

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7. Application Process

Interested researchers must complete and submit the designated registration form (open on *April 1st)* before **April 22nd, 2025 at 23.59 CET**. Participants will receive detailed instructions about subsequent steps upon successful registration.

Teams participating in the Online Ideathon must submit their complete Concept Note, developed during the online event, to info.yufe@uc3m.es by **May 10th, 2025, at 23:59 CET.**

For further queries, please contact info.yufe@uc3m.es.

8. Key Dates

- April 1st, 2025: Registration open
- April 22nd, 2025 at 23.59: Registration closed
- May 5th, 2025: Online Kick-Off & Team Formation Session
- May 9th-10th, 2025: Online Ideathon
- May 10th, 2025 at 23.59: Deadline for Concept Note Submission
- May 20th, 2025: Winning teams announcement
- June 26th-27th: In-Person Proposal Training Workshop in Brussels

Annex I

This annex presents the selected Horizon Europe calls identified as strategic priorities based on internal surveys and consultations within the YUFE alliance. These calls have been specifically chosen due to their alignment with the research strengths and collaborative interests of YUFE member universities. Researchers are encouraged to consult this annex for detailed information on relevant calls, topics, deadlines, and specific guidance for proposal development.

Topics List

- Topic 1.1: Leveraging artificial intelligence for creativity-driven innovation *(Culture, Creativity and Inclusive Society)*
- Topic 1.2: Tackling gender-based violence in different social and economic spheres *(Culture, Creativity and Inclusive Society)*
- Topic 1.3: Migration and climate change: building resilience and enhancing sustainability *(Culture, Creativity and Inclusive Society)*
- Topic 1.4: Impacts of culture and the arts on health and well-being *(Culture, Creativity and Inclusive Society)*
- Topic 2.1: Operationalization of bioeconomy sustainability principles *(Food, Bioeconomy, Natural Resources, Agriculture and Environment)*
- Topic 2.2: Open Topic: Innovative solutions for the sustainable and circular transformation of SMEs *(Food, Bioeconomy, Natural Resources, Agriculture and Environment)*
- Topic 2.3: Unleashing the potential and advancing the impact of the digitalization/Artificial Intelligence of the climate-neutral bio-based value chains *(Food, Bioeconomy, Natural Resources, Agriculture and Environment)*
- Topic 2.4: Nutrition and Mental Health *(Food, Bioeconomy, Natural Resources, Agriculture and Environment)*

Topic 1.1: Leveraging artificial intelligence for creativity-driven innovation

Summary: The project shall address how Artificial Intelligence (AI) can enhance cultural and creative industries through innovation. It aims to leverage AI technologies to boost creativity, enrich cultural experiences, and foster innovative approaches in the creative sector. Projects are expected to demonstrate how AI solutions can significantly enhance creative processes, facilitate artistic expression, and open new avenues for cultural engagement.

Expected Outcomes:

- Increased innovative applications of AI in creative processes.
- Enhanced capacity of cultural and creative sectors to adopt AI solutions.
- Promotion of new creative business models based on AI technologies.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Creativity, Cultural Innovation, Creative Industries, Digital Transformation, Artistic Expression.

You might find this call particularly relevant if your research or expertise is in:

- **Computer Science** (Artificial Intelligence; Computer Vision and Pattern Recognition; Human-Computer Interaction; Software)
- **Humanities and Social Sciences** (Arts and Humanities: Visual Arts and Performing Arts, Museology; Business, Management and Accounting: Management of Technology and Innovation, Strategy and Management; Social Sciences: Communication, Cultural Studies)
- **Engineering** (Media Technology)

Topic 1.2: Tackling gender-based violence in different social and economic spheres

Summary: The topic seeks research proposals addressing the persistent issue of gender-based violence (GBV), examining its manifestations across various social and economic contexts. The focus is on innovative measures, evidence-based interventions, and policies aimed at prevention, mitigation, and effective response mechanisms to GBV. It particularly encourages interdisciplinary and participatory approaches involving multiple stakeholders.

Expected Outcomes:

- Improved understanding of GBV across contexts.
- Development and validation of effective interventions.
- Enhanced societal and institutional responses to GBV.

Keywords: Gender-based Violence, Social Context, Economic Context, Prevention, Policy Intervention, Social Justice.

You might find this call particularly relevant if your research or expertise is in:

- **Humanities and Social Sciences** (Social Sciences: Gender Studies, Sociology and Political Science, Anthropology; Psychology: Clinical Psychology, Social Psychology, Developmental and Educational Psychology; Business,

Management and Accounting: Organizational Behaviour and Human Resources)

- **Health Sciences** (Medicine: Psychiatry and Mental Health, Public Health, Environmental and Occupational Health)
- **Computer Science** (Artificial Intelligence; Information Systems; Human-Computer Interaction; Software)
- **Engineering** (Electrical and Electronic Engineering; Safety, Risk, Reliability, and Quality)
- **Decision Sciences** (Information Systems and Management; Management Science and Operations Research)

Topic 1.3: Migration and climate change: building resilience and enhancing sustainability

Summary: Project shall address the intersection between migration and climate change, emphasizing how climate-related factors contribute to migration dynamics. Proposals should aim at understanding resilience mechanisms within communities affected by climate-driven migration, developing strategies for sustainability, and providing actionable insights for policymakers to enhance preparedness and resilience.
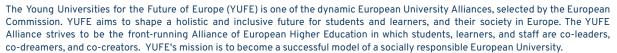
Expected Outcomes:

- Better understanding of climate-induced migration flows.
- Improved frameworks for community resilience and sustainability.
- Policy recommendations for managing climate-related migration effectively.

Keywords: Migration, Climate Change, Resilience, Sustainability, Policy Frameworks, Community Adaptation.

You might find this call particularly relevant if your research or expertise is in:

- **Environmental Science** (Global and Planetary Change; Management, Monitoring, Policy and Law; Nature and Landscape Conservation)
- **Humanities and Social Sciences** (Social Sciences: Geography, Planning and Development, Sociology and Political Science, Demography, Urban Studies; Business, Management and Accounting: Strategy and Management, Management of Technology and Innovation; Economics, Econometrics and Finance: Economics and Econometrics)
- **Earth and Planetary Sciences** (Atmospheric Science; Earth-Surface Processes)

Topic 1.4: Impacts of culture and the arts on health and well-being

Summary: The call targets research examining how culture and the arts significantly influence health and well-being. It seeks insights into the therapeutic and preventive roles of artistic and cultural activities in various contexts. The project should provide practical guidelines, methodologies, and strategies for effectively integrating cultural practices into health and social care frameworks.

Expected Outcomes:

- Evidence-based understanding of culture's impact on health.
- Increased integration of cultural and artistic practices in healthcare.
- Policy guidance on implementing arts-based health initiatives.

Keywords: Culture, Arts, Health, Well-being, Therapeutic Practices, Social Care.

You might find this call particularly relevant if your research or expertise is in:

- **Humanities and Social Sciences** (Arts and Humanities: Visual Arts and Performing Arts, Music, Literature and Literary Theory, Museology; Social Sciences: Cultural Studies, Sociology and Political Science)
- **Health Sciences** (Nursing: Nutrition and Dietetics; Health Professions: Physical Therapy, Sports Therapy and Rehabilitation, Occupational Therapy; Medicine: Public Health, Environmental and Occupational Health, Psychiatry and Mental Health)
- **Psychology** (Clinical Psychology; Experimental and Cognitive Psychology; Neuropsychology and Physiological Psychology)

Topic 2.1: Operationalization of bioeconomy sustainability principles

Summary: This call aims at advancing the practical implementation of sustainability principles within the bioeconomy. The main scope involves developing robust methodologies, indicators, and tools to assess and manage the environmental, social, and economic impacts of bioeconomy activities. Results are expected to support decision-making in policy development and governance, fostering a sustainable bioeconomy aligned with the goals of the European Green Deal and the EU Bioeconomy Strategy.

Expected Outcomes:

- Operational methodologies and tools for sustainability assessment in the bioeconomy.
- Clear, applicable indicators suitable across different regions and contexts.
- Practical guidelines for policymakers, industry, and communities.
- Increased social acceptance and political alignment with sustainable bioeconomy principles.

Keywords: bioeconomy, sustainability, indicators, governance, methodological tools, impact assessment, green transition, social acceptance.

You might find this call particularly relevant if your research or expertise is in:

- **Environmental Science** (Management, Monitoring, Policy and Law; Ecology; Nature and Landscape Conservation)
- **Life Sciences** (Agricultural and Biological Sciences: General Agricultural and Biological Sciences, Forestry, Agronomy and Crop Science)
- **Humanities and Social Sciences** (Economics, Econometrics and Finance; Business, Management and Accounting; Social Sciences: Sociology and Political Science; Political Science and International Relations; Public Administration)

Topic 2.2: Open Topic: Innovative solutions for the sustainable and circular transformation of SMEs

Summary: This call focuses on identifying and supporting innovative solutions facilitating the sustainable and circular transition of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). The scope covers the promotion of circular business models, innovative technologies, and processes that reduce natural resource use, minimize waste generation, and contribute to a green economic recovery. Solutions should be scalable, replicable, and tailored to the diverse contexts of European SMEs.

Expected Outcomes:

- Successful application of circular business models in SMEs.
- Demonstrable reduction of environmental impacts and waste.
- Increased competitiveness and resilience among participating SMEs.
- Replicable knowledge generation applicable to other SMEs and economic sectors.

Keywords: SMEs, circular economy, technological innovation, scalability, sustainable business models, waste reduction, resource efficiency, green recovery.

You might find this call particularly relevant if your research or expertise is in:

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- **Environmental Science** (Pollution; Waste Management and Disposal; Management, Monitoring, Policy and Law)
- **Physical Sciences and Chemical Engineering** (Process Chemistry and Technology)
- **Engineering** (Industrial and Manufacturing Engineering)
- **Humanities and Social Sciences** (Business, Management and Accounting: Management of Technology and Innovation; Strategy and Management; Economics, Econometrics and Finance)

Topic 2.3: Unleashing the potential and advancing the impact of the digitalization/Artificial Intelligence of the climate-neutral bio-based value chains

Summary: This call targets the advancement of digitalization and Artificial Intelligence (AI) within climate-neutral bio-based value chains. It seeks to leverage digital technologies to optimize the production, management, and commercialization of bio-based products, enhancing efficiency, sustainability, and climate neutrality. Expected results include advanced digital tools, intelligent decision-making systems, and improved practices reinforcing the competitiveness and sustainability of Europe's bioeconomy sector.

Expected Outcomes:

- Implementation of digital and AI-based systems in bio-based value chains.
- Significant improvement in resource efficiency and emission reductions.
- Enhanced competitiveness and climate resilience in the bioeconomy sector.
- Replicable and scalable solutions for various European contexts.

Keywords: digitalization, artificial intelligence, bio-based value chains, climate neutrality, production efficiency, sustainability, competitiveness, bioeconomy.

You might find this call particularly relevant if your research or expertise is in:

- **Computer Science** (Artificial Intelligence; Information Systems)
- **Environmental Science** (Management, Monitoring, Policy and Law; Environmental Engineering)
- **Life Sciences** (Agricultural and Biological Sciences: General Agricultural and Biological Sciences; Biotechnology)
- **Engineering** (Control and Systems Engineering)
- **Humanities and Social Sciences** (Business, Management and Accounting: Management of Technology and Innovation)

Topic 2.4: Nutrition and Mental Health

Summary: This topic explores the crucial relationship between nutrition and mental health. Its scope involves researching how dietary patterns, specific foods, and nutrients impact mental and emotional health across Europe's population, identifying opportunities to prevent or mitigate psychological disorders through nutrition. Outcomes are expected to inform clear dietary guidelines for consumers and health professionals and to influence food and public health policies aimed at enhancing mental well-being and disease prevention.

Expected Outcomes:

- Strong scientific evidence on the relationship between diet and mental health.
- Practical guidelines for health professionals and consumers.
- Tangible impacts on food and public health policies.
- Reduction in the prevalence and severity of mental health disorders via nutritional interventions.

Keywords: nutrition, mental health, healthy diets, psychological well-being, disorder prevention, dietary guidelines, nutritional intervention, health policy.

You might find this call particularly relevant if your research or expertise is in:

- **Health Sciences** (Medicine: Psychiatry and Mental Health, Public Health, Environmental and Occupational Health; Nursing: Nutrition and Dietetics)
- **Humanities and Social Sciences** (Psychology: Clinical Psychology, Developmental and Educational Psychology, Neuropsychology and Physiological Psychology; Social Sciences: Health)
- **Life Sciences** (Agricultural and Biological Sciences: Food Science; Biochemistry, Genetics and Molecular Biology: Biochemistry, Physiology)