

# Report on the YUFE Pilot on Postdoctoral Training and Development

Deliverable 6.2: Report on YUFE Postdoc Training and Development pilot

**YUFE Alliance**

## 1. Executive Summary

Postdoctoral researchers play a critical role within universities and within the Young Universities for the Future of Europe (YUFE) Alliance we recognise them as an important target group. They contribute substantially to research, education, innovation and societal outreach across the partner institutions. Yet, their professional position is often characterised by temporary contracts, high performance expectations, and limited access to tailored support structures. To address the latter challenges and strengthen postdoctoral development across Europe, YUFE designed and piloted the YUFE Postdoctoral Training and Development Scheme. This pilot was informed by a shared vision across all partner universities. This report focusses on the YUFE Pilot on Postdoctoral Training and Development. It describes the design, implementation, and evaluation of the Pilot, the YUFE Vision on Postdoctoral Training and Development, the interuniversity and local training offer, and the effects on the local university level creating momentum for postdoctoral researchers and impact. Between November 2024 and December 2025, 163 postdoctoral researchers from the YUFE universities showed their interest in a broad interuniversity and local programme. The Pilot confirmed that targeted support, peer interaction, and structured training significantly enhance postdoctoral development within YUFE and at the local institutions. Key insights highlight the importance of structured communication, creating a sense of belonging, and ensuring top-level recognition of postdoctoral researchers as a distinct professional group. These outcomes will inform future YUFE strategies focusing on strengthening postdoctoral support, promoting a shared institutional vision, and positioning postdoctoral researchers as drivers of innovation, future-proof knowledge workers, and key contributors to European academic collaboration.

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### 3. Aim of this Report

This report aims to present the development, implementation and outcomes of the YUFE Pilot on Postdoctoral Training and Development, and to provide actionable and transferable insights for strengthening postdoctoral support and development. It outlines the rationale behind the Pilot, describes the YUFE-wide and institutional activities, tools and support offered, and summarizes insights from the evaluation. By documenting both the process and the impact, the document intends to support informed decision-making and offer practical guidance for the integration of a structured postdoctoral development and support framework across YUFE universities and beyond.

## 4. Design, Implementation and Outcomes of the YUFE Pilot on Postdoctoral Training and Development

### 4.1 European Background Postdoctoral Researchers

To define the target group of postdoctoral researchers, we rely on the working definition as proposed by the European University Association – Council for Doctoral Education (EUA-CDE) Thematic Peer Group working in 2023 on Postdoctoral researchers at European universities:

“A postdoctoral researcher is someone holding a doctoral degree, whose primary activity is conducting research and who is in a transition phase towards a long-term career path inside or beyond academia.” (Engels, Hasgall, Peneoasu, & Hanenberg, 2024)

In addition, the postdoctoral position is considered a transitional, temporary or limited-term appointment, which serves as a period of professional training and development.

Within universities, postdoctoral researchers play a key role in research, education and outreach to society. To sustain and reinforce postdoctoral positions, universities rely on a wide variety of structures, and often there are no support systems dedicated exclusively to postdoctoral researchers: sometimes there is a link to graduate and doctoral schools, sometimes to human resources (HR) departments and sometimes dedicated structures are in place. The EUA-CDE Thematic Peer

Group report (Engels, Hasgall, Peneoasu, & Hanenberg, 2024) focuses on four important areas of institutional support for postdoctoral researchers: career development, training, funding support, and support for postdoctoral researchers with childcare responsibilities. However, between European universities, there are large differences in the level of support.

## 4.2 Design of the YUFE Postdoctoral Training and Development Scheme

Within YUFE, postdoctoral researchers are recognised as a distinct target group. Postdoctoral researchers are crucial members of our academic institutions, where they should be recognized as promising intellectuals who have demonstrated their academic excellence by earning a PhD. The YUFE partners aim to identify and support postdoctoral researchers in their needs.

On June 19, 2024, a focus group was organized to gather insights from a diverse group of postdoctoral researchers. These researchers, affiliated with different YUFE universities, work across various scientific fields. The session was facilitated by three experts from YUFE universities. Based on the outcome of this focus group, the input from different YUFE experts, and literature recommendations, the YUFE Postdoctoral Training and Development Scheme was created. This process, including literature recommendations, is described in [the vision text for the Postdoctoral Training and Development Scheme](#). The scheme shows YUFE's aim to develop an approach to postdoctoral training and development that can be applied across different universities and can be summarised as follows:

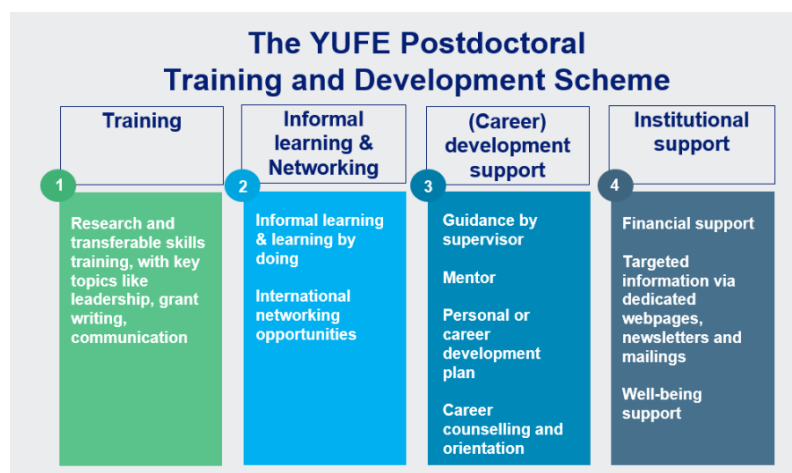


Figure 1: The YUFE Postdoctoral Training and Development Scheme

## 4.3 Implementation of the YUFE Postdoctoral Training and Development Scheme: YUFE Pilot on Postdoctoral Training and Development

### 4.3.1 Pilot objectives

In the next phase, the YUFE Postdoctoral Training and Development Scheme was translated into concrete training activities and tools, which were provided to postdoctoral researchers at the YUFE universities. The ten YUFE universities (Nicolaus Copernicus University (NCU), University of Antwerp (UAntwerp), University of Bremen (UBremen), University Carlos III of Madrid (UC3M), University of Cyprus (UCY), University of Eastern Finland (UEF), University of Essex (UEssex), University of Maastricht (UM), University of Rijeka (UNIRI), University of Sorbonne Nouvelle (USN)) committed to supporting their postdoctoral researchers participating in this Pilot programme that tested and evaluated the YUFE Postdoctoral Training and Development Scheme from November 2024 to December 2025.

It was also decided that a large menu of courses would be offered, of which the postdoctoral researchers could pick and choose, and that there would be no obligatory courses, as we want the postdoctoral researchers to follow courses that can further develop their competences, adapted to their personal needs.

As there was no number of participants defined as a KPI for the YUFE Pilot on Postdoctoral Training and Development, it was decided that every YUFE university would spread the word about the Pilot as broadly as possible. There would also be no cut-off registration date to enable as many postdoctoral researchers to participate in the Pilot programme, as the programme is open and flexible without mandatory aspects.

Some of the courses on topics that came up in the focus group were organized locally as they were more suited to a local approach (e.g., language, local culture, teaching skills, ...), while other courses were organised on an interuniversity level. Note that the vision goes beyond offered courses and therefore development and institutional support are also important aspects that are taken into account.

The evaluation of this Pilot programme gave the YUFE universities the opportunity to learn from concrete experiences and adapt the programme based on lessons learned by the universities and the experiences of the postdoctoral researchers who were part of the Pilot Project.

### 4.3.2 Selection approach and participation

Table 1 lists the selection processes that were used by each partner university, and the corresponding number of participants reached by the end of the YUFE Pilot on Postdoctoral Training and Development. A total of 163 participants expressed their interest. Of these, 101 participants signed up for the Virtual Campus, the online platform providing registrations to programs, courses and activities for students, staff, early career researchers, citizens, and organizations within the YUFE Alliance. Table 1 also presents the number of active participants. Participants are considered active if they attended at least one training or event at the YUFE-wide or local level. Note that participants could join YUFE-wide trainings or events, local trainings or events, or both; therefore, they could have been active in the Pilot programme without attending YUFE-wide events nor being registered to the Virtual Campus.

| University | Selection process                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Number of participants       |
|------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| NCU        | An email was sent to postdoctoral researchers with an invitation to participate in training programs targeted to them.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Interested: 0<br>Active: 0   |
| UAntwerp   | An open call was launched to recruit interested postdoctoral researchers. The call was open to all fields, and interested candidates registered via a concise motivation form. Participation was limited to 10 participants to keep the group manageable. The Talent Center, part of the HR Department, supports the professional and career development of doctoral and postdoctoral researchers and was responsible for the local implementation of the Pilot programme. | Interested: 10<br>Active: 10 |
| UBremen    | An open call was published via the postdoc newsletter and the website. The call was open to all fields.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Interested: 12<br>Active: 5  |
| UC3M       | An open call for postdoctoral researchers was launched. They filled in a specific application form to confirm that they were eligible to participate in the Pilot programme. The Vice Rectorate for Teaching and Research Staff and the Human Resources Service facilitated this process by targeting the                                                                                                                                                                  | Interested: 14<br>Active: 5  |

|                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                               |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
|                                   | specific collective to be reached and confirming the suitability of the candidates.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                               |
| UCY                               | An email was sent to postdoctoral researchers inviting them to participate. This provided an overview of the programme, highlighting its benefits and application process. The applications were reviewed to ensure they met the programme's criteria, and the selected participants were notified. The Research and Innovation Support Service facilitated this process and addressed inquiries regarding the programme.                                    | Interested: 15<br>Active: 15  |
| UEF                               | An open call was launched via UEF Viva Engage to recruit interested postdoctoral researchers from all fields.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Interested: 37<br>Active: 26  |
| UEssex                            | There was an open call to all postdoctoral researchers across the university.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Interested: 11<br>Active: 1   |
| UM                                | The call was open to all interested participants.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Interested: 40<br>Active: 20  |
| UNIRI                             | An open call was launched to recruit interested postdoctoral researchers from all fields.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Interested: 9<br>Active: 3    |
| USN                               | The call was open to all interested participants. USN is unique in its definition of Postdoctoral Researchers as there are very few members with that formal status in USN. Therefore, all assistant professors without tenure and staff members who defended their PhD in the past 4 years were included. The programme was presented during collective meetings, face-to-face and via emails. A specific email was sent to research lab directors as well. | Interested: 15<br>Active: 4   |
| Total across all ten universities |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Interested: 163<br>Active: 89 |

Table 1: Selection process and participant numbers per university, including interested and active participants

### 4.3.3 Communication strategy

The communication strategy for the YUFE Pilot on Postdoctoral Training and Development aimed to inform and engage participating postdoctoral researchers. Furthermore, it created visibility of the Pilot across the YUFE Alliance.

The details related to the start of the YUFE Pilot on Postdoctoral Training and Development and its communication efforts are described in “[Start of the YUFE Pilot on Postdoctoral Training and Development](#)”. Of course, communication efforts extended beyond the start of the Pilot programme. They are important both at the YUFE-wide and at the local level, allowing for a balance between central coordination and local contextualization for flexibility and a more personal connection. A summary of the communication efforts throughout the full Pilot programme is included in Annex 9.1.

#### 4.3.4 Interuniversity training and development offer

In working out the interuniversity course offer, we on the one hand tried to maximise reworking already existing courses in the offer for doctoral researchers for postdoctoral researchers and on the other hand developed courses specifically for postdoctoral researchers, making sure that the overall course offer is broad enough. The concrete selection of courses was based on the training needs identified in the focus group. It became clear from the focus group<sup>1</sup> that it is very important for postdoctoral researchers to have hands-on trainings where they learn new skills, whilst having the opportunity to already practice this new skill. Thus, having a new, already practiced skill needs to be a clear take-away from a training. The format of the trainings was said to be preferably online for short type courses (2-3 hours) and live for longer type courses (1-3 days). As these courses take up a considerable amount of time, it was stated as very important to very clearly mention the content of the course, the practical takeaways from this course (which new skills they will learn and practice) and how these skills have an immediate impact on their work. Furthermore, topics linked to broader values and research-related priorities, such as Equity, Diversity & Inclusivity and Open Science, were incorporated. We considered it important to include a number of sustainable training topics (for example regarding leadership and career management), while also responding to more current themes, such as Artificial Intelligence. In this way, the Pilot contributes to bridging research activities with transferable skills development and broader career preparation for postdoctoral researchers.

In the framework of the YUFE Pilot on Postdoctoral Training and Development, a YUFE Personal Development Plan (PDP) was developed. This template builds on the

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<sup>1</sup> Details related to this focus group can be found in [the vision text for the Postdoctoral Training and Development Scheme](#).

UAntwerp Personal Development Plan and the YUFE4Postdocs<sup>2</sup> Career Development Plan. The PDP is intended to support postdoctoral researchers in systematically reflecting on their competencies, career reflection and professional development needs.

In line with pillars one and two of the Postdoctoral Training and Development Scheme (Figure 1) both formal and informal learning opportunities are taken into account.

### Formal learning

An overview of the interuniversity YUFE-wide training and event offer, together with the number of participants that attended the corresponding training/event, can be found in Table 2. A strength of the YUFE Pilot on Postdoctoral Training and Development has been the close collaboration with YUFE4Postdocs, which helped to align activities and create a more coherent programme. Through this collaboration, synergies were exploited in the form of three trainings organised jointly with YUFE4Postdocs: Introduction to Horizon Europe, Leadership Training for Postdoctoral Researchers, and AI Tools, Academic Writing and Ethics. In addition, both the YUFE Pilot on Postdoctoral Training and Development and YUFE4Postdocs worked with the same external trainer for certain training sessions, such as the one on international career development. Beyond the joint organisation of specific training activities, YUFE4Postdocs also acted as a strategic partner throughout the Pilot. During the Pilot, the YUFE4Postdocs management team and local Navigators in the partner universities and the YUFE Pilot on Postdoctoral Training and Development team met regularly to exchange experiences and reflect together on the needs in postdoctoral professional development.

| Date                  | Training/event                                                               | Number of participants         |
|-----------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 19/11/2024            | Meet & Greet YUFE Pilot on Postdoctoral Training and Development kick-off    | Registered: 22<br>Attended: 21 |
| Asynchronous offering | Research Ethics and Integrity Mind the GAP Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) | Registered: N/A                |

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<sup>2</sup> In parallel, the YUFE universities, under the lead of the University of Antwerp, are running YUFE4Postdocs, a large scale MSCA Cofunded training program (Grant agreement ID: 101081327) for 55 postdoctoral researchers that were attracted to the YUFE universities following two competitive calls in 2023. Those “YUFE4postdocs” are frontrunners in the new approach towards postdoctoral training, with the specific objective for them to become future-proof researchers, all pursuing research (training) projects around societal challenges and opportunities in connection with non-academic stakeholders.

|                      |                                                                               |                                              |
|----------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|
|                      |                                                                               | Attended <sup>3</sup> : 5                    |
|                      | Equity, Diversity and Inclusivity MOOC                                        | Registered: N/A<br>Attended <sup>3</sup> : 5 |
| 26/11/2024           | Navigating Sustainability: Eco-Responsible Research Strategies                | Registered: 6<br>Attended: 5                 |
| 28/11/2024           | Meet & Greet YUFE Pilot on Postdoctoral Training and Development kick-off 2   | Registered: 28<br>Attended: 24               |
| 6/03/2025            | Open Science and Open Access Publishing                                       | Registered: 4<br>Attended: 3                 |
| 13/03/2025           | Open Innovation and Entrepreneurship                                          | Registered: 8<br>Attended: 5                 |
| 26/03/2025           | International Career Development                                              | Registered: 12<br>Attended: 1                |
| 29/04/2025           | International Career Development                                              | Registered: 7<br>Attended: 4                 |
| 06/05/2025           | Equity Diversity and Inclusivity – Feedback workshop                          | Registered: 9<br>Attended: 6                 |
| 17/06/2025           | Intercultural Communication in Academic European Contexts                     | Registered: 5<br>Attended: 2                 |
| 23 & 24/09/2025      | Introduction to Horizon Europe                                                | Registered: 8<br>Attended: 6                 |
| 07/10/2025           | “Synergy in Science: Advancing Research Through Interdisciplinary Approaches” | Registered: 3<br>Attended: 1                 |
| 23/10 and 13/11/2025 | Leadership training for postdoctoral researchers                              | Registered: 7<br>Attended: 6                 |
| 21/11/2025           | International Career Development                                              | Registered: 3<br>Attended: 2                 |
| 24/11/2025           | Peer Support Celebration Session                                              | Registered: N/A<br>Attended: 3               |
| 9/12/2025            | AI Tools, Academic Writing and Ethics                                         | Registered: 3<br>Attended: 3                 |
| 19/01/2026           | Connect & Reflect                                                             | Registered: 6<br>Attended: 2                 |

Table 2: Interuniversity training and event offer for postdoctoral researchers within the YUFE Pilot on Postdoctoral Training and Development: formal learning

Several planned events were cancelled due to low registration numbers. This applied to the ED&I – Equity, Diversity, and Inclusivity Workshop (March 12, 2025), two

<sup>3</sup> The listed figures are likely an underestimate of the actual participation numbers. Participants were able to complete the courses independently through the respective platforms and received their certificates directly. As a result, we only have records for participants who shared their certificates or informed us of their completion.

editions of the Research Ethics and Integrity – Mind the GAP (Good Academic Practices) Feedback Workshop (March 19 and May 5, 2025), and Navigating Sustainability: Eco-Responsible Research Strategies on April 25, 2025.

Participation levels varied across activities. These reflected the realities of postdoctoral careers: high workload, short-term deadlines, and voluntary engagement. Events addressing broadly relevant topics, particularly those linked to leadership and funding opportunities, tended to attract higher participation. More specialised workshops generally involved smaller but more targeted groups of participants.

Postdoctoral researchers who successfully completed the YUFE-wide training activities offered through the Virtual Campus were awarded a YUFE certificate of participation. The template for this certificate is provided in Annex 9.2.

### **Informal learning**

Postdoctoral researchers are also looking for semi-structured environments to share their experiences with peers. With this in mind, postdoctoral peer support groups were set up, which were an open space to share experiences on different topics. The general framework for the peer support groups consisted of two parts:

- Firstly, postdoctoral researchers were trained as ‘facilitators’ on how to organize and facilitate their own peer groups. These facilitators had ownership over their own group: they determined the overall group theme, decide on whether to organise the meetings local, online or hybrid, in which language, set the meeting dates, suggested discussion topics, etc.
- Secondly, the general participants were recruited through multiple channels. The facilitators were encouraged to promote their own group, and, by extension, the other groups through their preferred channels. Those included LinkedIn posts, sharing on university boards and word of mouth. Additionally, members of the project team advertised the peer support groups at their respective universities.

This process is visualized in Figure 2.

## YUFE Postdoc Peer Support Groups

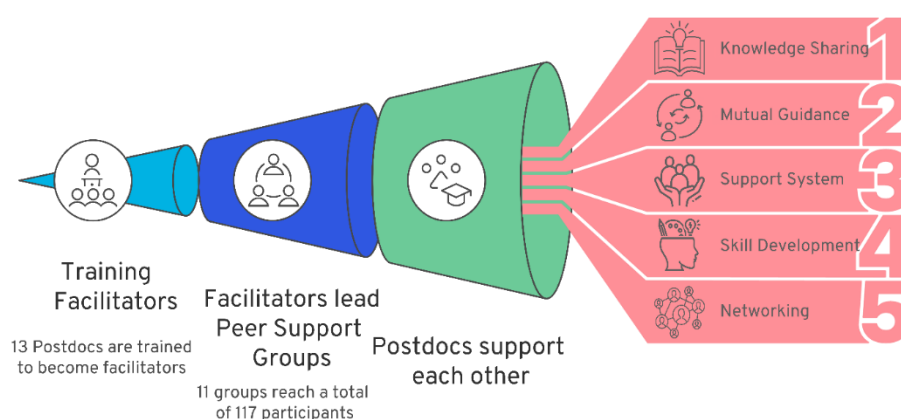


Figure 2: Peer Support Groups: informal sessions on varying topics that aim to stimulate and nurture the researchers' needs.

Maintenance sessions were also organised to further assist the facilitators while running their groups. Here the facilitators could discuss challenges and obstacles they encountered and think about way on how to tackle those (attendance possible without registration). The details related to the Facilitator Training and the corresponding Maintenance Sessions are listed below.

| Date                                                                   | Training/Maintenance Session                              | Number of participants                      |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| 21/01/2025,<br>28/01/2025,<br>11/02/2025                               | Peer Support Facilitator Training                         | Registered: 12<br>Active: 12                |
| 25/03/2025,<br>29/04/2025,<br>18/06/2025,<br>16/09/2025,<br>21/10/2025 | Peer Support Facilitator Training<br>Maintenance Sessions | Registered: N/A<br>Active: 3, 3, 3,<br>2, 1 |

Table 3: Peer Support Training and Maintenance Sessions for postdoctoral researchers within the YUFE Pilot on Postdoctoral Training and Development: informal learning

This initiative is the first of its kind across all YUFE partner universities for this target group. It directly addresses the need for networking and peer support, which was previously identified by the postdoctoral researchers. 13 postdoctoral researchers were trained as facilitators and started 11 groups, reaching 117 active participants. The group themes are included below:

- Peer Support Group for Queer Postdocs<sup>4</sup>
- Food & Travel Aficionado Parent Postdocs
- Write & Thrive: Peer Group for Scientific Writing: Biweekly sessions to keep your research moving
- Postdocs wishing to diversify their skillsets: A peer support group
- WRITE & THRIVE COLLECTIVE Peer Support Group
- Postdocs with Kids: A Peer Support Group for Postdoc Parents
- Early Career Researchers Abroad: Support for the Experience
- Wellbeing and Professional Resilience: How to thrive in Academia as a Postdoc
- Bridging Postdoc Minds: The AI & Humanities Nexus
- Career Development and Research Growth
- Resilience & Wellbeing: Peer Support Group for Postdocs at UEF

All topics were closely tied to postdoctoral life.

#### 4.3.5 Local training and activity offer

Each university had the opportunity to offer a local Pilot programme as well, besides the YUFE-wide training and development offer described in Section 4.3.4. The actions selected, were dependent on the starting situation of each university as can be seen in Table 4. This action plan was created by the end of February 2025.

| Starting situation and existing good practices                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Action plan                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Nicolaus Copernicus University</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| No activities targeted to postdoctoral researchers                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are no specific activities related to the Pilot other than training in Horizon proposal writing</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>University of Antwerp</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A wide range of trainings from different departments, including e-learnings (Nature Masterclasses, OASE (ICT), Altissia (languages), Mind the GAP,...), Dive-into Projects / Business, Science Communication, Linguapolis (languages, a Flemish interuniversity course offer, ...)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local Kick-off Network Lunch</li> <li>• WhatsApp group with all UAntwerp participants</li> <li>• Individual Career Development Support</li> <li>• Informal Meetings on a chosen topic               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ ‘Choosing the academic path towards a ZAP position’</li> <li>▪ ‘Dealing with insecurity/ies’</li> </ul> </li> </ul> |

<sup>4</sup> The term “postdocs” refers to postdoctoral researchers.

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Talent Center: individual and collective career counselling sessions, mentoring (on hold), other trainings include 'Project Management', 'Grow your future career', 'Career Development',...</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ ...</li> <li>• Trainings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 'Networking &amp; Personal Branding'</li> <li>▪ An initiative on the topic 'Science Communication' – format TBD</li> </ul> </li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| <b>University of Bremen</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• BYRD (<i>Bremen Early Career Researcher Development</i>): support center for all early career researchers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Workshops on e.g. academic career development, careers beyond academia, personal development</li> <li>◦ One-on-one consultations</li> <li>◦ Networking via Postdoc networks</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Individual coaching for postdoctoral researchers</li> <li>• Central Staff Development Department: variety of trainings and seminars</li> <li>• Other departments: additional support and trainings (e.g. Equal Opportunities &amp; Diversity Office, Knowledge Transfer Office, International Office)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are no additional local workshops for the Pilot, because there already is a wide range of local workshops for postdoctoral researchers.</li> <li>• The two Peer Support Group Facilitators from Bremen were informed about possibilities for financial support. At UBremen, Postdoc Networks can apply for funding (e.g. to hire a trainer for a workshop or organise a conference). The two YUFE Peer Support Groups facilitated by postdoctoral researchers from Bremen can also apply for it.</li> </ul> |
| <b>University Carlos III of Madrid</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <p>Since 2024, training courses have been organized for postdoctoral researchers. The objective of these courses is to assist newly appointed faculty in acquiring the competencies and skills needed to enhance their teaching profile. This ensures high-quality instruction, while fostering lifelong learning within the educational model and guaranteeing teaching excellence. The program consists of both mandatory and elective modules.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are no specific local activities related to the Pilot</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <b>University of Cyprus</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <p>A wide range of trainings such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data Management</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ERC proposal writing</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Open science</li> <li>• Research Project Management</li> <li>• Research Networking and Societal Impact in Research</li> <li>• Meta data analysis</li> <li>• ...</li> </ul>                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a website dedicated only for postdoctoral researchers in UCY. This will serve as a central hub for postdoctoral researchers, providing them with essential resources, networking opportunities, career development support, and a sense of community.</li> </ul>                     |
| <b>University of Eastern Finland</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| No activities targeted to postdoctoral researchers                                                                                                                                                                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local kick-off</li> <li>• Establishment of a Teams group for the UEF postdoctoral researchers</li> <li>• Expanding the existing Doctoral School curriculum for postdoctoral researchers in 2025</li> </ul>                                                                                   |
| <b>University of Essex</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bespoke training for those involved in teaching as part of their role</li> <li>• Coffee mornings for networking and support</li> </ul>                                                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creating an email list for postdoctoral researchers</li> <li>• Regular communication about YUFE activities for postdoctoral researchers</li> <li>• Developing contacts and relationships with Research and Enterprise Office to support postdoctoral researchers in grant writing</li> </ul> |
| <b>University of Maastricht</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Content specific training offer at the faculties</li> <li>• Soft-skill trainings at the talent development centre</li> <li>• Software and research skills trainings at the library</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formalising postdoctoral researchers support across the whole university, e.g., with a postdoctoral researcher's representatives panel</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                            |
| <b>University of Rijeka</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| No activities targeted to postdoctoral researchers                                                                                                                                                                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establishment of a postdoctoral contact database at UNIRI</li> <li>• Continuous provision of information about YUFE activities for postdoctoral researchers</li> <li>• There are no specific local activities related to the Pilot</li> </ul>                                                |
| <b>University Sorbonne Nouvelle</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training in pedagogy to new teaching assistants and first year assistant professors.</li> </ul>                                                                                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are very few actual postdoctoral researchers at USN: USN funds two postdoctoral researchers a year on top</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                   |

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The contract of first year assistant-professors includes time off for pedagogical training purposes.</li> <li>• Access to a training catalogue that includes modules such as using open access, using a variety of tools for research...</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• of the 5 to 10 positions across various funded research projects.</li> <li>• Penetrate and formalise support to include and consider YUFE initiatives for postdoctoral researchers outside of the prescriptive scope defined by our starting point.</li> <li>• Working with the vice president for research and Research Engineers to develop viable, sustainable strategies.</li> <li>• Working on developing postdoctoral researcher positions to extend USN's numbers. Help of the French ministry's co-funding for YUFE: 2 to 3 positions will be funded in the next 2-3 years.</li> </ul> |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

Table 4: Starting situations and action plan of each piloting university.

The actual local offer, reached by the end of the YUFE Pilot on Postdoctoral Training and Development, is given in Table 5. It includes both training and activity offers for postdoctoral researchers at their local university, together with the number of participants reached. No specific training or activities were organised at NCU, UBremen, UC3M, UEssex, UM and UNIRI. More details related to the offers can be found in Table 10 in Annex 9.3.

| Local training and activity offer                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Number of Pilot participants |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| <b>University of Antwerp</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                              |
| Local Kick-off Network Lunch (09/01/2025)                                                                                                                                                                                                      | 7                            |
| Individual Career Development Support (January – February 2025)                                                                                                                                                                                | 8                            |
| Intervision 'Choosing the academic path' (13/02/2025)                                                                                                                                                                                          | 4                            |
| Workshop 'Grow your network' (09/05/2025)                                                                                                                                                                                                      | 4                            |
| Monthly online check-in (16/04/2025, 14/05/2025, 19/06/2025, 30/07/2025, 03/09/2025, 5/11/2025)                                                                                                                                                | 8, 6, 4, 3, 3, 2             |
| Focus group (08/01/2026)                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | 5                            |
| In addition to these opportunities, which are specifically organized for participants of the Pilot, postdoctoral researchers may also take part in UAntwerp's existing range of offerings. This existing offer is not included in this report. |                              |
| <b>University of Cyprus</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                              |
| The following trainings were larger events open to all early career researchers in UCY, not only the participants within the Pilot.                                                                                                            |                              |
| Research Project Management                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | 5                            |

|                                                                                       |    |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| How to become a successful and responsible author                                     | 2  |
| Researching for a Better Future: Investigating Your Impact on Sustainable Development | 3  |
| Legal and Ethical Frameworks for Responsible Research                                 | 2  |
| Open Science and Data Management                                                      | 2  |
| Gender and Research Assessment                                                        | 1  |
| Unlocking ERC Funding: Proposal Preparation                                           | 5  |
| YUFE2030 Training Sessions on Responsible Research Practices                          | 2  |
| Introduction to Intellectual Property Rights & Knowledge Transfer                     | 2  |
| “Crafting Competitive Proposals for Horizon Europe Pillar II”                         | 2  |
| University of Eastern Finland                                                         |    |
| Kick-off                                                                              | 19 |
| University Sorbonne Nouvelle                                                          |    |
| One-to-one coaching sessions to facilitate integration.                               | 3  |

Table 5: Training and activity offer for postdoctoral researchers at each partner university, offered via the YUFE Pilot on Postdoctoral Training and Development

#### 4.3.6 Institutional support changes

Since the start of YUFE, a number of changes have taken place at the institutional level concerning the support structures for postdoctoral researchers. Although these developments are not solely linked to YUFE, the Alliance has contributed to creating momentum and visibility for issues related to postdoctoral support.

In line with the fourth pillar of the YUFE Postdoctoral Training and Development Scheme (Figure 1) – institutional support – YUFE has strengthened awareness and accelerated concrete improvements in areas such as targeted information provision. Table 6 summarises the changes reported by the local universities.

| Institutional changes related to support for postdoctoral researchers |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>NCU</b>                                                            | N/A                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <b>UAntwerp</b>                                                       | The <a href="#">charter for postdoctoral researchers</a> has been approved. While it is not directly linked to YUFE, it could serve as a reference for other partners in the context of postdoctoral support.                                    |
| <b>UBremen</b>                                                        | N/A                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <b>UC3M</b>                                                           | The Vice rectorate for Teaching and Research Staff has proposed integrating the calendar of YUFE Courses into the training programs for postdoctoral researchers, particularly for international scholars who are not yet proficient in Spanish. |
| <b>UCY</b>                                                            | The leadership of the University of Cyprus has acknowledged the strategic importance of postdoctoral researchers.                                                                                                                                |
| <b>UEF</b>                                                            | Doctoral training courses have been opened to postdoctoral researchers. A training programme on supervision, aimed at                                                                                                                            |

|               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|---------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|               | postdoctoral researchers and senior staff, has been established. The Postdoc Teams group is also active and running well.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <b>UEssex</b> | No institutional changes at this point in time, although the YUFE Pilot on Postdoctoral Training and Development was welcomed by those among the UEssex postdoctoral community who participated. UEssex aims to grow the number of participants and beneficiaries of the YUFE Postdoctoral programme over the coming years.                                                                           |
| <b>UM</b>     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Dedicated webpage</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Postdoc network</a> (self-organised)</li> <li>• Pushing on general scale of university (taking momentum to continue on these efforts towards postdoctoral researchers)</li> <li>• Discussion with the vice deans of research about setting up a postdoc coordinator at the faculty level</li> </ul> |
| <b>UNIRI</b>  | N/A                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>USN</b>    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promoted the status at the local level</li> <li>• Co-fund from the French Ministry of Higher Education and Research, through the French National Research Agency (ANR), for 3 YUFE postdoctoral researchers</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                       |

Table 6: Institutional changes concerning the support for postdoctoral researchers

## 4.4 Outcomes of the YUFE Pilot on Postdoctoral Training and Development

### 4.4.1 Methodology

The outcomes of the YUFE Pilot on Postdoctoral Training and Development are based on qualitative and quantitative feedback collected throughout the Pilot implementation. Data collection aimed to capture participant experiences, perceived impact, and recommendations for future programming.

Feedback was gathered using the following methods:

- **Post-event surveys** completed by participants after each training session or event, providing quantitative ratings and qualitative comments. This anonymous survey took about 2 minutes to complete. The questionnaire consisted of four sections:
  - Introduction & consent: information about purpose, anonymity, and voluntary participation
  - Background information
    - Institutional affiliation (YUFE partners)
    - Activity attended (course / MOOC / event)
  - Satisfaction assessment: overall satisfaction (5-point Likert scale)

- Specific aspects:
  - Communication prior to the activity
  - Organisation
  - Content delivery
  - Materials
  - Duration
  - Skills development
  - Networking / interaction (where applicable)
- Open feedback: free-text comments and suggestions
- **Peer Support Celebration Session** (closing event of the Peer Support Groups) held on 24 November 2025, during which structured group discussions were conducted.
- **Connect & Reflect session** (closing event of the YUFE Pilot on Postdoctoral Training and Development) organised on 19 January 2026, focusing on reflection and evaluation.
- **Testimonials** collected for social media dissemination, offering concise qualitative insights into participant experiences.
- **Local focus groups/one-on-one sessions with participants**, organised at partner institutions to collect in-depth qualitative feedback:
  - University of Antwerp, 8 January 2026
  - University Sorbonne Nouvelle, Winter 2025-2026

In addition, feedback from training participants was shared with the trainers to make sure this feedback was taken into account for upcoming sessions.

#### 4.4.2 Post-event surveys

The analysis of the collected data is summarized below. The detailed survey results can be found in Annex 9.4.

The training offer was carefully selected. A series of kick-off events, MOOCs, and training sessions were organised between November 2024 and December 2025.

- Kick-off events: 45 participants in total
- MOOCs & related workshops: typically 5–6 participants per session
- Training sessions: generally small groups (1–6 participants per session)

Participation remained relatively limited, enabling interactive sessions but restricting overall reach.

Feedback indicates a generally high level of satisfaction across the programme. Most sessions achieved 70% to 100% satisfaction rates, with highlights of 100% satisfaction for Leadership Training, AI Tools & Academic Writing and several Career Development sessions. This suggests that the programme content is highly relevant and well received. Despite overall positive outcomes, some sessions received mixed evaluations (Open Innovation & Entrepreneurship, Sustainability training, etc.), which can point to inconsistencies in perceived relevance or format.

Based on the open comments some future recommendations are listed below.

Improving the registration process for the virtual campus could be a key priority, as it currently represents a significant barrier to participation and may limit the overall inclusiveness and reach of the programme. It's already improved compared to the start of the Pilot programme, however, it's seen in feedback from participants. At the same time, a more balanced distribution of time slots is needed to avoid the current concentration of activities—particularly around 10:00 CET—which constrains accessibility and reduces engagement across diverse participant groups.

A clearer structuring of activities along major disciplinary fields would further enhance the programme's effectiveness by facilitating meaningful peer interaction and supporting the development of sustainable academic networks at the European level. In this context, the introduction of a structured one-week in-person programme is strongly recommended. Such a format could combine interdisciplinary sessions in the morning with field-specific workshops in the afternoon, complemented by follow-up online activities, in line with the Blended Intensive Programme (BIP) model or through discipline-specific in-person meetings.

Looking ahead, strengthening the programme's strategic impact will require a stronger focus on community-building and career development. The creation of postdoctoral networks should be prioritised as a key driver of collaboration and knowledge exchange. In parallel, the peer support groups, which have demonstrated strong effectiveness, should be scaled up and used as a reference for the design of other online activities, reinforcing collaborative learning and mutual support.

#### 4.4.3 Participant feedback gathered via local institutions

- University of Antwerp

At the University of Antwerp, the Pilot was evaluated through a combination of qualitative and quantitative feedback, including an end-of-trajectory focus group, an evaluation survey, and activity-level feedback forms, all collected locally. A detailed

report can be found in Annex 9.5.1. Overall, the Pilot was perceived as relevant and valuable, particularly at the local level, but sustained engagement was constrained by time pressure, competing priorities, and varying expectations.

Participants highly valued the individual career coaching, which functioned both as meaningful developmental support and as an effective entry point to local institutional resources that many participants were previously unaware of. The Pilot also succeeded in fostering local peer connections, evidenced by continued peer meetings beyond the programme.

However, engagement decreased over time, largely due to workload, shifting postdoctoral priorities, and perceived relevance of activities. Online participation, especially in YUFE-wide activities, was often experienced as an additional barrier. While participants expected stronger international interaction, this expectation was only partially realised. The Virtual Campus platform, in particular, was perceived as difficult to use and ineffective in supporting community building. It is important to note that facilitating community building was never the original purpose of the Virtual Campus; this example, however, illustrates how important expectation management, and communication about it, is.

Communication emerged as a critical factor. WhatsApp was experienced as effective, whereas newsletters and platform-based communication were less successful. Participants also reported confusion about the distinction between local and YUFE-wide activities.

In terms of content, participants expressed a strong demand for career-oriented transferable skills, academic career skills (e.g. teaching, mentoring, CV-relevant experience), and mentoring opportunities, including peer and cross-institutional formats.

Overall, the Pilot demonstrated clear added value at the local level and the participants highlighted important recommendations for future editions, particularly regarding communication clarity, international community building, platform usability, and alignment with postdoctoral career realities.

- University of Sorbonne Nouvelle

Due to data protection considerations, no local report could be produced from the participant feedback collected at the University of Sorbonne Nouvelle.

No other partner universities held local focus groups or collected participant feedback via alternative ways. In the future, all institutions are strongly encouraged to adopt a standardised and anonymisation-ready approach to ensure participant feedback on the programme as a whole can be systematically collected, safely processed, and integrated into the overall evaluation.

#### 4.4.4 Summary

The YUFE Pilot on Postdoctoral Training and Development offered a range of high-quality and relevant activities designed to support career reflection, peer connection, and professional development. Several postdoctoral researchers actively engaged in multiple activities, joined peer support groups, attended local events, and continued networking beyond the formal Pilot period, highlighting the added value of the programme.

An overview of key quantitative indicators of the YUFE Pilot on Postdoctoral Training and Development is given below. The data offer insights into the engagement of partners and participants, both across YUFE and at the local level, as well as into the offerings and participation in trainings and events. Table 7 and Table 8 summarize the number of participating partner universities, interested and registered participants, certificates awarded, active participation on the Virtual Campus and locally and the number of trainings and events organized. These figures offer a clear picture of participation and reach.

| Metric                                               | Value |
|------------------------------------------------------|-------|
| Number of YUFE partners that signed up for the Pilot | 10    |
| Number of interested participants                    | 163   |
| Number of registered participants (Virtual Campus)   | 101   |
| Number of certificates assigned (Virtual Campus)     | 64    |
| YUFE-wide trainings + events + MOOCs                 | 24    |
| Local trainings + events                             | 25    |

Table 7: Summary of key quantitative indicators related to the YUFE Pilot on Postdoctoral Training and Development

| University   | Number of active participants |           | Number of local trainings/events |
|--------------|-------------------------------|-----------|----------------------------------|
|              | Virtual Campus                | Local     |                                  |
| NCU          | 0                             | —         | —                                |
| UAntwerp     | 7                             | 10        | 11                               |
| UBremen      | 5                             | —         | —                                |
| UC3M         | 5                             | —         | —                                |
| UCY          | 10                            | 15        | 10 (as part of larger events)    |
| UEF          | 9                             | 19        | 1                                |
| UEssex       | 1                             | —         | —                                |
| UM           | 20                            | —         | —                                |
| UNIRI        | 3                             | —         | —                                |
| USN          | 4                             | 4         | 3 (mentoring sessions)           |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>64</b>                     | <b>48</b> | <b>25</b>                        |

Table 8: Summary of key quantitative indicators per partner university related to the YUFE Pilot on Postdoctoral Training and Development

Although 163 postdoctoral researchers expressed interest in the Pilot, participation in some sessions and events was lower than expected. Feedback from participants suggests several contributing factors. Postdoctoral researchers often work under high pressure, and because participation was voluntary, sessions sometimes had to compete with urgent deadlines and other responsibilities. Participation was also generally not linked to financial support or formal recognition in most institutions. While flexibility was a key feature of the programme, engagement therefore depended on individual motivation and available time.

In comparison, YUFE4Postdocs experiences fewer attendance challenges. A key difference is that participants are formally appointed within that programme and receive funding, making participation part of a structured trajectory with a clearer commitment.

These insights provide valuable guidance for the future design of postdoctoral development initiatives: maintain a flexible approach, foresee stronger structural support mechanisms, in-person events for clearer international peer connection, and strategies to sustain engagement. Section 7.1 lists future recommendations on how to tackle these aspects in the future.

## 5. Impact

The YUFE Pilot on Postdoctoral Training and Development had a clear impact at different levels: for individual postdoctoral researchers, for academic and professional staff, for participating universities, and for the wider European research and innovation ecosystem. The impact can be divided into internal and external effects.

### 5.1 Internal Impact

#### 5.1.1 Individual Level

##### **Postdoctoral researchers**

The YUFE Pilot on Postdoctoral Training and Development improved the recognition of postdoctoral researchers as a distinct group with specific needs. Participants reported improved resilience and a sense of belonging through peer support group. Targeted trainings and tools in career development, entrepreneurship, research context, etc. were delivered and led to more better career planning. These changes help in the development of “future-proof researchers.”

## Impact on participants: testimonials

To better understand the impact of the YUFE Pilot on Postdoctoral Training and Development, this paragraph gathers testimonials from participants of both the peer support groups and the full Pilot programme. Their personal experiences offer valuable insight into how the programme affected their well-being, sense of belonging, and personal development. They highlight changes in well-being, sense of belonging and career progression. Several postdoctoral researchers reported that engagement in peer support groups reduced feelings of isolation and strengthened skills directly affecting their professional growth.

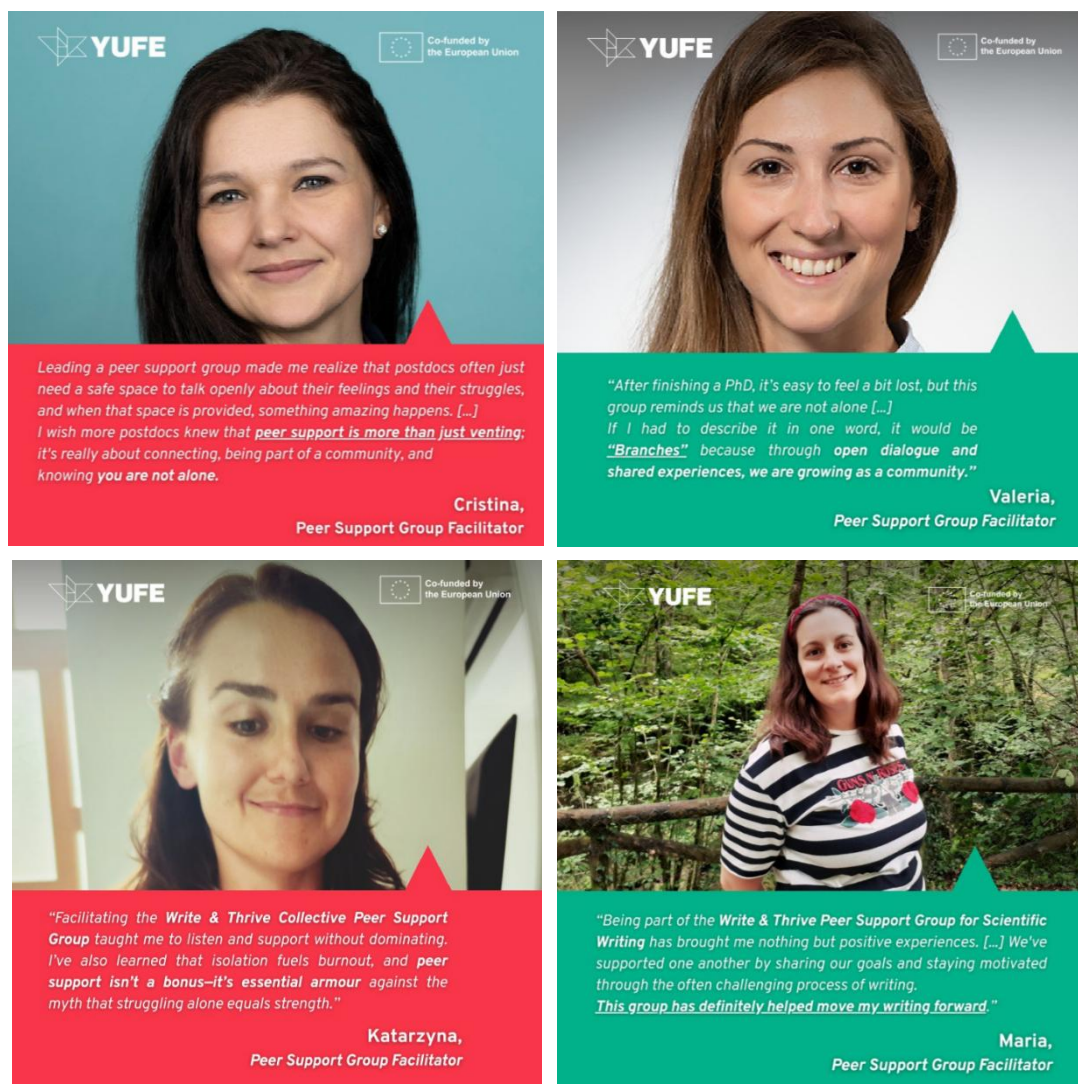


Figure 3: Testimonials of peer support facilitators



Figure 4: Testimonials of participants of the YUFE Pilot on Postdoctoral Training and Development

## Supervisors and Academic Staff

The YUFE Pilot on Postdoctoral Training and Development increased understanding of postdoctoral needs and the value of European alliances, providing access to complementary trainings, learnings, etc.

## Professional Staff

Professionalisation and knowledge exchange across partner universities enhanced institutional expertise in postdoctoral policy and support. This led to institutional changes related to support for postdoctoral researchers, as highlighted in Table 6.

### 5.1.2 Institutional / Collective Level

#### Universities

The project strengthened institutional postdoctoral positions and created structured support mechanisms at some partner universities, including dedicated webpages for postdoctoral researchers. Existing training programmes were supplemented with an English-language, internationally oriented YUFE layer. Postdoctoral researchers' contributions to research and innovation gained better internal recognition, and a shared vision for postdoctoral training and support was developed across all partners.

#### YUFE Alliance

Postdoctoral researchers became a strategic focus within YUFE, increasing academic visibility through a joint vision statement "[YUFE Postdoctoral Training and Development Scheme](#)" across partners. The project established inter-university

collaboration around training and peer support, which improved shared practices and established the Alliance as a frontrunner in postdoctoral support.

## 5.2 External Impact

### 5.2.1 Institutional / Collective Level

#### Universities

The YUFE Pilot on Postdoctoral Training and Development has the potential to serve as an example for universities seeking to strengthen their support structures for postdoctoral researchers. By implementing a cross-institutional approach, the Pilot demonstrates the added value of sharing practices and expertise at European level.

Through dissemination activities, the Pilot contributes to increased awareness of the importance of dedicated postdoctoral support. While still a pilot phase, it provides an inspiration for universities to professionalise and expand their postdoctoral training, career development and support frameworks.

The experience gained through the Pilot helps universities to design more structured and visible support mechanisms for postdoctoral researchers.

#### European University Alliances / Research Community

Within European University Alliances and the wider research community, the Pilot strengthens awareness of postdoctoral researchers as a distinct and strategically important group. By piloting joint training, peer exchange, and shared development activities across institutions, the initiative illustrates how alliances can play a key role in shaping postdoctoral support at European level.

### 5.2.2 European Policy and Stakeholders

#### European Commission

The Pilot contributes to increased awareness within the European Commission of the importance of postdoctoral researchers as a key group within the European research and innovation ecosystem. Despite their central role in knowledge production and innovation, postdoctoral researchers often face structural challenges related to recognition, career progression, funding opportunities, and long-term perspectives.

By highlighting the potential of postdoctoral researchers, the Pilot feeds into ongoing policy discussions on research careers and talent development. It supports the broader ambition of improving training, career and professional development and support structures for postdoctoral researchers across Europe.

## Other European Policy Stakeholders

The Pilot also contributes to awareness raising among other stakeholders involved in European research and higher education policy, including funding bodies, university networks, and organisations active in research careers and skills development.

By sharing outcomes from the Pilot, it supports knowledge exchange on how structured postdoctoral support systems can be developed.

### 5.2.3 Societal and Economic Impact

#### Research and Innovation Ecosystem

By supporting the professional development of postdoctoral researchers, the YUFE Pilot on Postdoctoral Training and Development helps to build a more skilled research workforce. This strengthens the wider research and innovation system, where postdoctoral researchers play an important role in creating new knowledge and support innovation.

#### Society and Public Engagement

Postdoctoral researchers contribute to society in many ways beyond academic research. They are involved in science communication, teaching, outreach activities, and cooperation with external partners. By improving their skills, networks, and career development opportunities, the Pilot helps them to have a stronger impact on society.

#### Labour Market and Career Development

By supporting postdoctoral researchers, the Pilot helps more researchers to enter the labour market with stronger skills, both in academia and beyond. This benefits the wider knowledge economy and improves their career prospects. It also shows postdoctoral researchers that support and development opportunities are available, helping them to grow.

## 6. Dissemination

The activities and outcomes of the YUFE Pilot on Postdoctoral Training and Development were disseminated through a combination of digital communication channels, website content, newsletters, presentations, and external networks.

Regular updates were shared via social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn) to promote the YUFE Pilot on Postdoctoral Training and Development,

increase visibility of YUFE's support for Early Career Researchers, and engage both the academic community and a broader audience.

In addition, monthly updates were distributed through the YUFE Newsletter for Postdoctoral Researchers, providing information on upcoming courses, learning opportunities, and testimonials related to the YUFE Pilot on Postdoctoral Training and Development. This channel ensured continuous engagement and timely information for Postdoctoral Researchers across the YUFE Alliance.

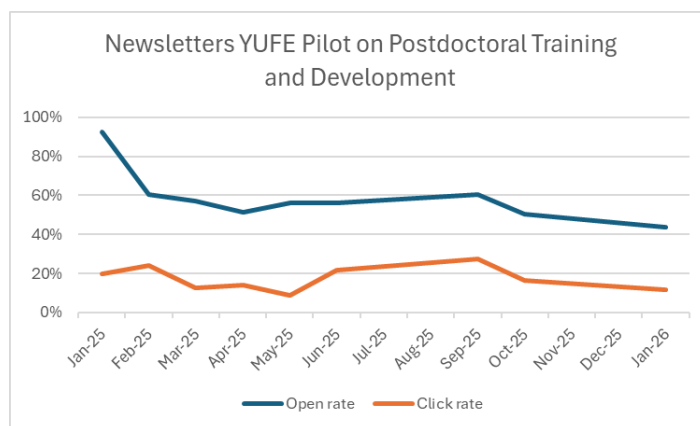


Figure 5: Open and click rates for the YUFE-wide Newsletter for Postdoctoral Researchers

- The newsletters reached over 160 postdoctoral researchers.
- Open rates between 44–92% indicate strong relevance for the target group.
- Click rates between 9–28% show active engagement with opportunities.
- Most clicked link: 31 unique clicks for the call to the training "Introduction to Horizon Europe: How to Find Opportunities and Build Competitive Proposals".
- Very low unsubscribe rates confirm sustained interest in the mailing list.

The YUFE website served as a central dissemination hub for Early Career Researchers, with frequent updates to dedicated pages on postdoctoral training and the publication of targeted news items. In particular, a [news article](#) highlighted the success of the postdoctoral peer support groups, which have reached over 100 postdoctoral researchers across the Alliance.

Internal dissemination within the Alliance was further supported through YUFENet and the [YUFE Knowledge Hive](#). YUFENet ensures knowledge sharing across institutions, while the Knowledge Hive functions as a space to share materials and good practices related to the YUFE Pilot on Postdoctoral Training and Development.

Beyond online communication, dissemination also took place through presentations and contributions to external events and networks, including meetings within the FOREU4ALL framework and a webinar in the R&R series on well-being in academia.

These activities enabled the sharing of experiences and good practices, and positioned the YUFE approach within a broader European context.

## 7. Future recommendations and conclusion

### 7.1 Future recommendations

Based on the evidence gathered through participation data, focus groups, and partner collaboration, several recommendations become clear for the next phase of postdoctoral development within YUFE:

- **Prioritise quality over quantity**  
A carefully selected, high-quality, and well-communicated training offer should remain the guiding principle. A “less is more” approach to make sure relevant and sustainable topics are addressed.
- **Maintain peer support groups**  
Peer support groups proved to be one of the most impactful elements of the Pilot, enhancing well-being, motivation, and interuniversity connection. Furthermore, these formats are scalable and therefore sustainable. The training can be readily repeated and adapted to different contexts. It profits from the input of the collaborators, as they approach with different ideas and perspectives.
- **Strengthen institutional support and commitment**  
For the programme to work in the long term, university leadership needs to clearly support it. They should recognize postdoctoral researchers as a distinct group with specific needs and should be willing to act accordingly at the institutional level.
- **Invest in in-person events**  
While the Pilot was primarily online in the YUFE-wide context (in-person events only at the local level), participants highlighted the added value of physical workshops for strengthening commitment and networking.
- **Ensure harmonised and targeted communication**  
Clear, consistent communication across all partners is essential to raise awareness, manage expectations, and reduce participation barriers. YUFE-wide newsletters contribute to this by providing regular updates.
- **Offer training in English to support international context**  
An English-language offer is a clear added value for fostering inclusivity and

international collaboration, ensuring all postdoctoral researchers can participate regardless of their home institution or language.

- **Reinforce networking opportunities**

There is a clear need for structured networking. Future initiatives could explore dedicated collaborative platforms, digital tools, or informal formats to strengthen connections across institutions.

- **Maintain a flexible, non-mandatory approach**

The choice to keep participation voluntary and flexible should continue, allowing researchers to engage in activities that are most relevant to their individual needs.

- Greater alignment with existing **scientific networks within YUFE** would also contribute to increasing coherence, visibility, and overall impact.

- Finally, placing a stronger **emphasis on professional integration and participation in European projects** would enhance the long-term outcomes of the programme, particularly in terms of employability, research collaboration, and engagement with the European research and innovation landscape.

These recommendations will be used to further develop the YUFE Approach to Postdoctoral Training and Development across partner institutions.

## 7.2 Conclusion

The YUFE Pilot on Postdoctoral Training and Development has clearly demonstrated that postdoctoral researchers are a distinct professional group, requiring tailored support, targeted training, and explicit recognition. By focusing this Pilot programme on postdoctoral researchers, YUFE made clear that it values their work and wants to support them in playing an active role in research, education, and societal engagement.

A key achievement within YUFE was the development and piloting of a shared vision on postdoctoral training and development. This joint vision aligned strategies across partner institutions while allowing flexibility for local implementation. Following the Pilot phase, the vision was reviewed and formally reapproved by the partner institutions.

Informal learning through peer support groups proved particularly valuable, combining professional development with European networking and fostering motivation, confidence, and a sense of belonging.

Overall, the Pilot has laid a solid foundation for structured postdoctoral development and support within YUFE. It shows that coordinated European action, defined via a shared vision and supported by local institutions' commitment, can significantly enhance postdoctoral professional development and strengthen the future of European research and innovation. Overall, the Pilot offers a basis for strengthening postdoctoral training and development within YUFE, through institutional support, collaboration across universities, and a focus on researchers' needs.

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## 9. Annex

### 9.1 Communication efforts

A summary of the communication efforts throughout the full Pilot programme is included below:

| Communication efforts at YUFE-wide and local level |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|----------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| YUFE-wide                                          | Communication was organised through a combination of channels: a dedicated webpage <sup>5</sup> (updated monthly), bimonthly social media posts to ensure regular visibility, targeted newsletters to provide structured updates on activities and programme developments. In addition, communication took place via email, which was used for practical information related to the training offer. The YUFE Virtual Campus also served as an important communication channel, offering a central platform where participants could access relevant information related to trainings and events. Furthermore, common promotional materials were developed to support consistent communication and dissemination across partner institutions. These included a PowerPoint presentation template, a promotional video, and other visual materials that could be used locally to ensure consistent messaging and visibility of the programme. |
| NCU                                                | N/A                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| UAntwerp                                           | Communication happened via a combination of channels. Email was used for official announcements, invitations to activities, practical information, and follow-up communication related to the different components of the local programme. In addition, a WhatsApp group titled “YUFE Postdoc Connect” was established and actively used as the day-to-day communication channel with participants (reminders, logistical updates, and informal check-ins). This supported peer interaction among participants, contributing to a sense of community.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| UBremen                                            | Email communication via the University of Bremen BYRD team (Bremen Early Career Researcher Development) targeted at all local early career researchers.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| UC3M                                               | Communication via the UC3M newsletter, posts in the YUFE section of the UC3M website and direct emails to Postdoctoral Researchers regarding activities and general information of the pilot.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |

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<sup>5</sup> [YUFE Approach to Doctoral and Postdoctoral Learning - YUFE](#)

|        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|--------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| UCY    | Email served as the primary channel for disseminating official announcements, extending invitations to activities, providing practical information.                                                                                                                                                                          |
| UEF    | A Teams group for postdocs was created at the beginning of the Pilot. It was opened to all interested UEF postdocs to help establish the group and encourage participation. In addition to the Teams group, Viva Engage—the official communication channel at UEF—was used to share information about events and activities. |
| UEssex | Direct mail to UEssex postdoctoral researchers regarding YUFE-wide events, invitations and follow-up                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| UM     | Direct mail to UM postdoctoral researchers, posts on intranet and communication screens.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| UNIRI  | Open call on the website for the trainings, email invitations and/or reminders for activities/peer support groups.                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| USN    | Email, online meetings and face-to-face meetings                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |

*Table 9: Communication related to the YUFE Pilot on Postdoctoral Training and Development: YUFE-wide and at the local institutions*

## 9.2 YUFE certificate of participation

This paragraph contains the template of the certificate that will be awarded to postdoctoral researchers upon successful completion of the YUFE-wide training activities delivered via the Virtual Campus.





Figure 6: YUFE-wide certificate of participation, sent out to participants via the Virtual Campus

### 9.3 Local training and activity offer

The details related to the local trainings and activities are summarised in the table below. No specific training or activities were organised at NCU, UBremen, UC3M, UEssex, UM and UNIRL.

| Local training and activity offer                               | Aim                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Number of Pilot participants |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| University of Antwerp                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                              |
| Local Kick-off Network Lunch (09/01/2025)                       | Welcome participants to the YUFE Pilot on Postdoctoral Training and Development, introduce the goals and structure of the programme, and foster informal networking among peers.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | 7                            |
| Individual Career Development Support (January – February 2025) | To provide guidance and support to postdoctoral researchers participating in the YUFE Pilot on Postdoctoral Training and Development, helping them to reflect on their career goals, explore career paths inside and outside academia, and develop actionable strategies for their professional growth.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | 8                            |
| Intervision 'Choosing the academic path' (13/02/2025)           | The session aims to help participants gain clarity on whether and how they wish to continue within academia by learning from peers' experiences and identifying potential next steps.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | 4                            |
| Workshop 'Grow your network' (09/05/2025)                       | Why are introverts better at building lasting networks? Why is faking it a bad strategy? What do extraverts need to learn to grow better relationships? In this interactive workshop, you will learn networking strategies that align with your strengths, allowing you to connect with people authentically. The session will also cover: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How to personalize networking approaches that work for you</li> <li>• How to leverage LinkedIn effectively</li> <li>• How to start conversations that lead to real connections</li> <li>• Creating a personal plan to become a better networker, whether you are introverted or extroverted</li> </ul> | 4                            |
| Monthly online check-in (April –                                | Monthly Check-ins are informal virtual gatherings designed for participants of the YUFE Pilot on                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | 16/04: 8<br>14/05: 6         |

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                                             |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| November 2025)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Postdoctoral Training to share updates, exchange experiences, and receive guidance in a supportive peer environment.                                                                                                                                                                                                         | 19/06: 4<br>30/07: 3<br>03/09: 3<br>5/11: 2 |
| Focus group (08/01/2026)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | A focus group gathering to evaluate the YUFE Pilot on Postdoctoral Learning & Development program                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | 5                                           |
| In addition to these opportunities, which are specifically organized for participants of the YUFE Pilot on Postdoctoral Training and Development at UAntwerp, postdoctoral researchers may also take part in UAntwerp's existing broad range of offerings. However, this existing offer is not included in this report. |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                                             |
| University of Cyprus                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                                             |
| The following trainings were larger events open to all early career researchers in UCY, not only the participants within the YUFE Pilot on Postdoctoral Training and Development                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                                             |
| Research Project Management                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Practical 'hands on' group-work workshop, which supported the ERs in their endeavors to manage their project. The focus was two-fold: 1) enhancing research project management skills 2) enhancing interpersonal skills, particularly in relation to cooperation with supervisors and other important stakeholders.          | 5                                           |
| How to become a successful and responsible author: Editor perspectives                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | To help postdoctoral researchers to understand what journal editors expect and how to meet those expectations while maintaining high ethical standards. The overall goal was to equip participants with both the practical skills and ethical awareness needed to publish successfully and responsibly in academic journals. | 2                                           |
| Researching for a Better Future: Investigating Your Impact on Sustainable Development                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | In this session, you explore the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as introduced by the United Nations, gaining a deeper understanding of the crucial role researchers play in advancing sustainability. The primary objective of this workshop is to help you align your research with specific SDGs.                 | 3                                           |
| Legal and Ethical Frameworks for Responsible Research                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Training followed by workshop - Recommended for researchers working with human materials, personal data, or human subjects.                                                                                                                                                                                                  | 2                                           |

|                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |   |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|
| Open Science and Data Management                                  | <p>Topics Cover:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What is Open Science?</li> <li>- What is Open Access?</li> <li>- What is Open Access to Research Data?</li> </ul> <p>And publication and research data requirements, recommended practices, and useful tools.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | 2 |
| Gender and Research Assessment                                    | This workshop focuses on addressing the persistent gender bias in academic metrics and evaluation systems, particularly in audit exercises like the REF and TEF. It highlights how traditional journal metrics, such as citation indexes and impact factors, disadvantage female researchers, contributing to gender inequality in career progression, funding, and publication opportunities.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | 1 |
| Unlocking ERC Funding: Proposal Preparation from Concept to Grant | <p>The two-day training workshop aimed at early career researchers interested in applying for ERC Starting and Consolidator Grants. This workshop will provide essential guidance on the proposal preparation process.</p> <p>During the first day, participants will be introduced to the ERC funding schemes and available resources for proposal preparation. ERC grantees and evaluation panel members will share valuable insights from their experiences in proposal preparation and evaluation.</p> <p>The second day will focus on a hands-on proposal writing workshop, offering practical tips and in-depth guidance on crafting a successful proposal.</p> | 5 |
| YUFE2030 Training Sessions on Responsible Research Practices      | As part of the YUFE2030 project (WP5 – Responsible, Interdisciplinary and Inclusive Research), organises a series of four short training modules designed to support the application of responsible, ethical, and open research practices.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | 2 |
| Introduction to Intellectual Property Rights & Knowledge Transfer | Discuss the importance of intellectual property rights as assets for an organisation, the various types of intellectual property rights, why it is important to commercialise Intellectual property rights stemming from Research, the various modes of valorisation of research results and the associated commercialisation channels and                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | 2 |

|                                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |     |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
|                                                               | finally a few words on Knowledge transfer in UCY and the associated policies and procedures.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |     |
| “Crafting Competitive Proposals for Horizon Europe Pillar II” | This proposal writing workshop provided essential guidance on the proposal development process, offering practical tips on crafting strong applications to be submitted under the 6 thematic Clusters.                                                                                                                                                                               | 2   |
| University of Eastern Finland                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |     |
| Kick-off                                                      | Welcome participants to the YUFE Pilot on Postdoctoral Training and Development (online).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | 19  |
| University Sorbonne Nouvelle                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |     |
| N/A                                                           | The local training offer for staff is very rich (and delivered in French), and postdoctoral researchers have access to it (e.g., open science, specialized software, sustainable development, gender issues, etc.). Postdoctoral researchers affiliated with the French National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS) also have access to its full range of training opportunities. | N/A |

Table 10: Training and activity offer for postdoctoral researchers at each partner university, offered via the YUFE Pilot on Postdoctoral Training and Development

## 9.4 Participant feedback on YUFE-wide trainings and events, gathered via post-event surveys

| Dates                                              | Training/event                                                 | Number of participants<br>(Postdocs only) | Feedback on the training/event                                                                                                                                                                       |
|----------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Kick-off events</b>                             |                                                                |                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <b>19/11 and 28/11/2024</b>                        | Meet & greet                                                   | 21<br>24                                  | Number of respondents: 7 in total<br>Satisfaction rate: 67% were satisfied and 33% were neutral.                                                                                                     |
| <b>MOOCs and feedback sessions related to them</b> |                                                                |                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <b>Continuous (JOINT)</b>                          | Research Ethics & Integrity Mind the GAP MOOC                  | 5                                         | Number of respondents: 14<br>78% were satisfied or very satisfied, 7% were neutral, 15% were very dissatisfied.                                                                                      |
| <b>Continuous (JOINT)</b>                          | ED&I MOOC                                                      | 5                                         | Number of respondents: 23, including participants other than Postdocs.<br>Satisfaction rate: 86% were satisfied or very satisfied, 5% were neutral, 5% were dissatisfied, 5% were very dissatisfied. |
| <b>06/05/2025 (JOINT) – 2 sessions</b>             | ED&I - workshop                                                | 6                                         | Response rates: 7, including participants other than Postdocs.<br>Overall satisfaction: 86 % were very satisfied or satisfied, 14 % were neutral                                                     |
| <b>Trainings events</b>                            |                                                                |                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <b>26/11/2024 (JOINT SESSION)</b>                  | Navigating Sustainability: Eco-Responsible Research Strategies | 5                                         | Number of respondents: 5, including 4 postdocs<br>Satisfaction rate: 40% were very satisfied or satisfied, 60% were neutral.                                                                         |
| <b>6/03/2025 (JOINT)</b>                           | Open Science and Open Access Publishing                        | 3                                         | Number of respondents: 7, including 3 Postdocs<br>Satisfaction rate: 86% were very satisfied or satisfied, 14% were neutral.                                                                         |

|                                                                                                      |                                                                               |             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>13/03/2025</b><br>(JOINT)                                                                         | Open Innovation and Entrepreneurship                                          | 5           | Number of respondents: 7, including 4 Postdocs<br>Satisfaction rate: 57% very satisfied or satisfied, 43% were dissatisfied.                                                                                                         |
| <b>26/03/2025</b><br>(Only Postdocs)<br><b>29/04/2025</b><br>(JOINT)<br><b>21/11/2025</b><br>(JOINT) | International Career Development                                              | 1<br>4<br>2 | Number of respondents:<br>26/3/25: 1<br>29/4/2025: 5, including 1 Postdoc<br>21/11/2025: 6, including 2 Postdocs<br>Satisfaction rate:<br>100%/83%/100% of the respondents were very satisfied or satisfied, 0%/17%/0% were neutral. |
| <b>17/06/2025</b><br>(JOINT)                                                                         | Intercultural Communication in Academic European Contexts                     | 2           | Number of respondents: 7, including 2 Postdocs<br>Satisfaction rate: 71% were very satisfied or satisfied, 29% were neutral.                                                                                                         |
| <b>23 &amp; 24/09/2025</b>                                                                           | Introduction to Horizon Europe                                                | 6           | Number of respondents: 3<br>Satisfaction rate: 66% were satisfied or very satisfied, 33% were neutral.                                                                                                                               |
| <b>7/10/2025</b><br>(JOINT)                                                                          | “Synergy in Science: Advancing Research Through Interdisciplinary Approaches” | 1           | Number of respondents: 2, no postdocs responded<br>Satisfaction rate: One indicated that they were satisfied, the other that they were neutral.                                                                                      |
| <b>23/10 and 13/11/2025</b>                                                                          | Leadership Training for Postdoctoral Researchers                              | 6           | Number of respondents: 5<br>Satisfaction rate: 100% were satisfied or very satisfied.                                                                                                                                                |
| <b>9/12/2025</b><br>(JOINT)                                                                          | AI Tools, Academic Writing and Ethics                                         | 3           | Number of respondents: 10, including 3 Postdocs<br>Satisfaction rate: 100% were satisfied or very satisfied.                                                                                                                         |

Detailed evaluation reports per training/event are included below. It concerns the analysis of survey results for each training/event.

- Meet & Greet

## Summary and analysis

### November 19<sup>th</sup> Summary

Event organisers relayed the important information displayed on the slides, answered questions either verbally or through the chat. Participants were able to participate in 2 networking and team building activities. One of the activities (timed before the bulk of the information session) used a Padlet where information was exchanged regarding participant research and potential collaborative avenues. This was followed by a recap and then the information segment of the presentation. The peer support training offer was presented and participants were able to apply some pre-peer support skills to the case study discussion prepared. Finally, there was a recap and a reminder of the importance to properly register to the Virtual Campus and the YUFE Pilot on Postdoctoral Training and Development.

#### Discussion after session with event organisers

It was agreed that timing could be tightened up and the following suggestions were made:

- Increase the number of breakout rooms so that participants will be able to discuss in less time
- Increase the amount of time for the Padlet to 10 minutes
- Reduce the time of the last activity to 15 minutes rather than 35

Most of the participants came from 5 YUFE institutions (UM, UCY, UEF, UBremen, and UAntwerp). Despite having potential interested parties from UC3M, USN, UEssex, NCU, and UNIRI, there were no attendees.

#### Changes made to second offer

Change the breakdown as suggested above

Advertise with greater force

### November 28<sup>th</sup>

#### Discussion after session with event organisers

We were able to attain the goals on timing and interaction we set out in the previous recapitulation discussion

Most of the participants came from 8 YUFE institutions (UM, UCY, UEF, UNIRI, UBremen, UC3M, USN and UAntwerp). Despite having potential interested parties from UEssex and NCU there were no attendees nor registrants on the Virtual Campus.

### **Survey Results November 19<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup>**

Considering so few answered the survey (many sent us feedback right after the session and overall response was extremely positive), we will be summarising the results together.

Of the 45 participants in attendance there were only seven responses to the survey (despite multiple requests to fill it in at the event and via email).

Five of the YUFE Alliance institutions were represented (three from UM, one from UBremen, UCY, UEF, and UNIRI).

Three expressed that they were very satisfied, two expresses satisfaction, one expressed neutrality, and one was dissatisfied.

- Communication and practical organisation: there was one expression of neutrality, four expressions of satisfaction and two expressions of great satisfaction.
- Content delivery: one participant expressed dissatisfaction, one expressed neutrality, three expressed satisfaction and two expressed great satisfaction.
- Materials: 4 participants expressed neutrality, one expressed satisfaction, and two expressed great satisfaction.
- Duration: participants expressed neutrality (3/7), satisfaction (3/7), and great satisfaction (1/7).
- Peer interaction: participants expressed neutrality, satisfaction and great satisfaction (2/7, 3/7, 2/7 respectively).
- Networking opportunities: participants expressed neutrality (4/7), satisfaction (3/7).
- Qualitative feedback
  - The duration of the event could have been a little longer to permit more time to network,

- In the breakout room there was not enough time or devoted direction to stay on task and therefore the conversation went in another direction than intended.

Overall satisfaction was expressed via face-to-face feedback we received after the event and from the results of this survey.

- Research Ethics & Integrity Mind the GAP MOOC

### Summary and analysis

This session is part of the YUFE Pilot on Doctoral Learning and the YUFE Pilot on Postdoctoral Training and Development.

The MOOC remained continuously accessible throughout the entire duration of the pilot phase. 14 survey responses were received.

78% of the respondents indicated that they were satisfied or satisfied, 7% were neutral and 14% were very dissatisfied

- Communication: 86% were very satisfied or satisfied, 7% were neutral and 7% were very dissatisfied
- Organisation of the activity: 76% were very satisfied or satisfied, 8% were neutral, 8 were dissatisfied and 8% were very dissatisfied
- Content delivery by the lecturer: 82% were very satisfied or satisfied, 9% were neutral and 9% were very dissatisfied
- Materials: 61% were very satisfied or satisfied, 31% were neutral and 8% were very dissatisfied
- Duration: 77% were very satisfied or satisfied, 15% were neutral and 5% were very dissatisfied
- Skills development: 85% were very satisfied or satisfied, 7,5% were neutral and 7,5% were very dissatisfied
- Qualitative feedback:
  - Several respondents described the course as comprehensive, useful, and well organized
  - one participant specifically highlighted satisfaction both with the training content and with the communication from the training organisers.

- Participants also appreciated the availability of materials that could serve as future reference resources.
- At the same time, some suggestions for improvement were raised. Two respondents reported that several links to additional resources within the MOOC were not functioning properly.
  - One participant expressed interest in including more theoretical content in future iterations of the course.
  - Another respondent noted that they had attended both the VLIR and the UAntwerpen “Mind the Gap” course and observed that the content and materials were largely identical.

Overall, the comments reflect a generally positive reception of the MOOC while also identifying some technical and pedagogical aspects that could be further refined in future editions.

- Ethics, Diversity and Inclusivity MOOC

### Summary and analysis

This session is part of the YUFE Pilot on Doctoral Learning and the YUFE Pilot on Postdoctoral Training and Development.

The MOOC remained continuously accessible throughout the entire duration of the pilot phase. 23 survey responses were received.

86% of the respondents indicated that they were satisfied or satisfied, 5% were neutral, 5% were dissatisfied and 5% were very dissatisfied

- Communication: 75% were very satisfied or satisfied, 20% were neutral and 5% were very dissatisfied
- Organisation of the activity: 80% were very satisfied or satisfied, 15% were neutral and 5% were very dissatisfied
- Content delivery by the lecturer: 85% were very satisfied or satisfied, 5% were neutral, 5% were dissatisfied and 5% were very dissatisfied
- Materials: 85% were very satisfied or satisfied, 5% were neutral, 5% were dissatisfied and 5% were very dissatisfied
- Duration: 85% were very satisfied or satisfied, 10% were neutral and 5% were very dissatisfied

- Skills development: 75% were very satisfied or satisfied, 15% were neutral, 5% were dissatisfied and 5% were very dissatisfied
- Qualitative feedback: Among the more than 20 survey respondents, and an even larger number of participants who completed the MOOC, only five participants provided open qualitative comments. These remarks should therefore be interpreted with caution, as they reflect the views of only a very limited subset of participants and do not allow for broader general conclusions about the overall perception of the course.
  - Overall, feedback was mixed but generally constructive.
  - Two respondents expressed strong satisfaction with the course, describing it as insightful and valuable.
  - Participants also appreciated the importance of introducing ED&I principles to new YUFE members and valued the flexibility of the online format.
  - At the same time, three respondents expressed specific suggestions for improvement:
    - Some examples and exercises were perceived as overly stereotypical and suggested incorporating more nuanced and contemporary discussions related to inclusion, including topics such as decoloniality and wokeism.
    - Certain aspects of the course were perceived as overly simplistic or infantilizing and raised concerns regarding the phrasing of some quiz examples, particularly in relation to LGBTQ+ representation and disability inclusion.
    - The course could potentially be shortened or divided into mandatory and optional sections in order to better accommodate participants' workload.

- Ethics, Diversity and Inclusivity Workshop

## Summary and analysis

This session is part of the YUFE Pilot on Doctoral Learning and the YUFE Pilot on Postdoctoral Training and Development.

The first session took place on 10 December 2024 and was jointly delivered across both pilot cohorts. 5 respondents completed the survey.

100% of the respondents indicated that they were satisfied or satisfied

- All evaluation categories (including communication and information prior to the start of the activity, practical organisation, content delivery by the lecturer(s), materials, duration of the activity, and skills development) received a 100% satisfaction rate. Only the “networking opportunities” category showed a slightly different result, with one respondent out of five indicating a neutral level of satisfaction.
- Qualitative feedback: There were only two comments.
  - They expressed a positive appreciation of the ED&I programme, describing it as an eye-opening experience and underlining its practical relevance.
  - Both respondents highlighted the quality of the workshop and facilitation, particularly the open and supportive environment that enabled free expression and meaningful engagement.
  - One participant also referred to the session as an inspiring and very positive experience.

The second session took place on 06 May 2025 and was split between the two pilot cohorts (one for doctoral candidates and one for postdoctoral researchers). However, the survey results are reported jointly for both cohorts. 7 respondents completed the survey.

86% of the respondents indicated that they were satisfied or satisfied and 14% were neutral

- Communication: 67% were satisfied or very satisfied, 33% were neutral
- Organisation of the activity: 72% were satisfied or very satisfied, 14% were neutral and 14% were dissatisfied
- Content delivery by the lecturer: 86% were very satisfied or very satisfied and 14% were dissatisfied

- Materials: 86% were very satisfied or satisfied, 14% were neutral
- Networking opportunities: 33% were very satisfied or satisfied and 67% were neutral
- Duration: 86% were satisfied or very satisfied and 14% were dissatisfied
- Skills development: 72% were satisfied, 14% were neutral and 14% were dissatisfied
- Qualitative feedback: Among the three survey respondents, and within a broader cohort of participants, these comments should be interpreted with caution as they represent only a very small subset of feedback and do not allow for general conclusions about the overall perception of the session.
  - Overall, feedback was mixed.
  - One respondent reported a less positive experience, mentioning technical issues with the online environment, an overly small group size, and a perception of imbalance between theoretical input and practical application, while also noting that the session contained valuable insights that could have been further explored.
  - Another respondent evaluated the overall quality of the course positively, appreciating the interactive format and active participation required through tasks.
  - A third respondent briefly noted minor connectivity issues during the session.

Overall, the sessions were positively received, with satisfaction levels ranging from 86% to 100%. The first session was assessed more positively and consistently, while the second session showed more dispersed evaluations and a wider range of improvement points, though both datasets are based on a limited number of responses and should be interpreted with caution.

- Navigating Sustainability: Eco-Responsible Research Strategies

## Summary and analysis

This session is part of the YUFE Pilot on Doctoral Learning and the YUFE Pilot on Postdoctoral Training and Development.

### Description of course

This training session identifies and offers approachable solutions regarding sobriety in research choices.

The workshop was designed to raise awareness among researchers about sustainability practices in research. With the intent of initiating the learner into the state of knowledge of the existing planetary limits of climate-change, this course offers opportunities for reflective, interactive, and transformative action. Combining theoretical and practical approaches (lecture, discussion, and hands on experimentation), this 4-hour workshop aims to provide the learner with intellectual and practical tools to actively participate in sustainable research practices.

### Survey results

Five participants responded to the survey, representing institutions from UM, UAntwerp, UBremen and UEF.

60% (3) of respondents were neutral, while 40% (2) were satisfied.

- Communication & Organization: Responses were mixed, with 20% dissatisfied, 60% neutral, and 20% satisfied.
- Content & Materials: The majority were satisfied or neutral, with appreciation for content delivery (3/5 satisfied or greatly satisfied) where neutrality was expressed by 1/4 respondents.
- Networking Opportunities: This was the lowest-rated category, with 75% neutral and 25% satisfied, suggesting limited engagement opportunities.
- Duration & Skills Development: Most responses were neutral (60%), where one respondent expressed satisfaction and another expressed dissatisfaction.
- Developed skills: Most responses were neutral (4/5) where one person expressed satisfaction.
- Qualitative feedback

- **Broader Inclusion of Research Disciplines:** Participants from humanities and non-laboratory fields felt the content was overly focused on lab-based sciences. Future workshops should integrate a wider range of research perspectives.
- **Clearer Scheduling & Logistics:** Some dissatisfaction stemmed from unclear session times. Ensuring accurate information in YUFE communications could improve participant experience.
- **Stronger Focus on Implementation:** Attendees valued the awareness-building aspects but felt unsure about translating insights into action. More structured discussions on implementing sustainability at institutional levels were suggested.
- **Enhancing Interactivity:** The workshop was largely lecture-based, with interactivity concentrated in the latter half. A more balanced approach with earlier participant engagement, such as breakout discussions, could improve engagement.
- **Optimizing Workshop Structure:** Some found the session too long for an online setting, recommending a condensed format or more dynamic pacing. The sustainability game was well-received but could be redesigned for stronger real-world applicability.
- **Marketing & Attendance:** Participation was lower than expected. More proactive outreach across YUFE institutions could increase engagement.

While the workshop effectively raised sustainability awareness, opportunities exist to enhance engagement, inclusivity, and practical application. Implementing improvements suggested above could create a more impactful and accessible experience for future participants.

According to the results, the more focused the workshop is, the more successful it seems. Given that observation, in future offers of this workshop, should the theory and practical activities both require more time, it could be offered in two sessions of 2 hours each. In addition, it might be a good idea to have two distinct similarly themed workshops with activities with focused targeting to the learning public – one course catering to postdoctoral researchers and another catering to the needs of DCs. Finally, through experience and adaptability of the facilitator, this workshop has the potential for sustainability and true development of future skills of the participant.

- Open Science and Open Access Publishing

## Summary and analysis

This session is part of the YUFE Pilot on Doctoral Learning and the YUFE Pilot on Postdoctoral Training and Development.

### Workshop Description

This one-day workshop, Open Science and Open Access Publishing, was designed for researchers, academics, and professionals seeking to deepen their understanding and practical application of Open Science principles in their work. The session offered a comprehensive introduction to Open Access, equipping participants with the knowledge and tools necessary to navigate the evolving landscape of scholarly publishing.

Delivered through a blend of interactive discussion, engaging activities, and real-world examples, the workshop encouraged active participation and peer-to-peer learning. The format fostered not only conceptual understanding but also hands-on application relevant to the participants' academic and professional contexts.

The workshop followed a structured format, with 1.5-hour learning sessions interspersed with coffee and lunch breaks. The full-day session ran from 9 AM to 4:15 PM CET.

### Survey Results

A total of 7 early career researchers attended the workshop on Open Science and Open Access Publishing, and all 7 participants completed the survey, resulting in a 100% response rate. Respondents were affiliated with several YUFE institutions, including UAntwerp (3), UEF (2), UNIRI (1), and USN (1).

When asked about their overall satisfaction, 4 out of 7 respondents (57%) indicated they were very satisfied, and 2 respondents (29%) reported being satisfied. One respondent (14%) selected a neutral response. No participants expressed dissatisfaction.

- Communication: 6 respondents (86%) were either satisfied or very satisfied, while 1 respondent (14%) felt neutral. None reported dissatisfaction.
- Practical organization: 5 respondents (71%) expressed satisfaction, 1 respondent (14%) was neutral, and 1 respondent (14%) was dissatisfied.

- Duration: 5 respondents (71%) indicated satisfaction, and 2 respondents (29%) were neutral. No participants were dissatisfied with the length of the session.
- Peer interaction: 4 out of 7 respondents (57%) were satisfied or very satisfied, 2 (29%) were neutral, and 1 respondent (14%) expressed dissatisfaction.
- Networking opportunities: 3 respondents (43%) expressed satisfaction, 2 (29%) were neutral, and 2 respondents (29%) indicated dissatisfaction. This was the area with the most notable room for improvement.
- Qualitative feedback
  - Facilitator's input was praised. Respondents described the speaker as "excellent," "clear," and appreciated their ability to balance theoretical explanation with personal and practical experience.
  - The diversity of perspectives and international background of participants was viewed as enriching the discussion.
  - Several attendees mentioned enjoying the interactive format, stating that it created a comfortable space for open discussion.
  - One participant noted the session had a "very good vibe," with an inclusive and encouraging tone that allowed for a natural exchange of ideas.
  - Suggestions for Improvement
    - Technical difficulties were a recurring theme. Some participants experienced audio and video issues, which disrupted the flow and may have limited participation.
    - A few respondents suggested incorporating breakout rooms or smaller group interactions, to allow for deeper exchange between participants.
    - There were mentions of a desire for more time or a slightly longer session, especially to allow everyone to contribute more fully.
    - Networking was highlighted as an area to enhance. One respondent suggested providing an informal space or contact list to facilitate further connections post-session.

The session was well-received and fulfilled its objective of engaging early career researchers on Open Science and Open Access Publishing. While satisfaction rates were high, feedback highlights the importance of technical reliability,

structured interaction, and networking opportunities. These elements could be integrated more deliberately into the planning of future Open Science and Open Access Publishing events, but as it stands the workshop does not need to be altered in any major way.

### Follow-up

A short post event briefing was exchanged after the workshop. Both the facilitator and the project manager agreed on their interpretation of the perceived success of the event. A comment was made regarding the length where the facilitator underlined the difficulty of keeping on track had the one-day workshop been divided into two days.

- Open Innovation and Entrepreneurship

### Summary and analysis

This session is part of the YUFE Pilot on Doctoral Learning and the YUFE Pilot on Postdoctoral Training and Development.

#### Workshop Description

The Open Innovation and Entrepreneurship Workshop was developed for doctoral and postdoctoral researchers, particularly ECRs, with the stated goal of introducing key concepts in innovation and entrepreneurship. The workshop combined theoretical content with practical elements, including group discussions and case studies, to encourage participants to consider the application of entrepreneurial thinking in their academic or future careers.

The course followed a methodology based on the Harvard Business School approach, using case studies, teamwork, and interactive sessions. Participants were expected to work in groups to develop business ideas, improve them with feedback, and present a final pitch. Breakout rooms were used to support collaboration, with input from experienced trainers.

While the intended audience was early career researchers, the workshop content appeared more suited to individuals who already had some familiarity or prior experience with entrepreneurship. Participants without this background may have found some elements less accessible or overly condensed.

The workshop was attended by researchers from multiple institutions. Participants came from NCU (1), USN (1), UAntwerp (1), UCY(2), UEF (2), and UEssex (2).

### Survey Results

Participants expressed varied levels of satisfaction with the workshop. While a small proportion of attendees (14%) (1) reported being very satisfied with their experience, the majority (43%) (3) were satisfied. However, an equal number of participants (43%) (3) indicated that they were very dissatisfied. These results suggest that aspects of the workshop did not meet their expectations.

- Communication: 71% of respondents very satisfied and 29% satisfied.
- Practical organization: 86% of participants very satisfied and the remaining 14% satisfied.
- Content delivery: 71% of participants were very satisfied, while 14% were satisfied. However, 14% of respondents expressed strong dissatisfaction in this area, indicating a potential need for improvement in the way content was presented or tailored to participant needs.
- Materials: 43% of attendees very satisfied, another 43% satisfied, and 14% very dissatisfied.
- Networking opportunities: while 43% of respondents were very satisfied and 14% were satisfied, another 43% remained neutral, suggesting potential improvements in fostering meaningful interactions.
- Duration: while 43% of participants were very satisfied and 14% were satisfied, 28% expressed neutrality, and 14% were dissatisfied.
- Skill development: most attendees (57%) felt very satisfied with their progress, while 43% were satisfied, showing an overall positive reception to the workshop's learning objectives.
- Qualitative feedback
  - Additional materials post-session could enhance the learning experience.
  - Considering a modular format for longer workshops could improve engagement and reduce participant fatigue.
  - Overall, the workshop was well-received by a majority of participants, but refinements in session duration, supplementary materials, and participant engagement strategies could enhance future offerings.

## Follow-up

A short post event briefing was exchanged after the workshop. Both the facilitator and the project manager agreed on their interpretation of the perceived success of the event. A comment was made regarding the length where the facilitator underlined the difficulty of keeping on track had the one-day workshop been divided into two days.

- International Career Development

## Summary and analysis

The first session is part of the YUFE Pilot on Doctoral Learning (not included in this document), the second is part of the YUFE Pilot on Postdoctoral Training and Development and the third and fourth session is part of both pilots.

### Course Summary:

The International Career Development workshop provided PhD researchers and postdoctoral researchers with essential insights and practical strategies for pursuing global career opportunities. Participants explored various international career paths, identified their professional goals, and developed a structured approach to job searching beyond their home country. Through pre-work assignments and interactive discussions, they reflected on their personal motivations and learned how to leverage online tools and networking strategies to enhance their career prospects.

The session also emphasized the importance of building an international professional network and provided practical resources to support participants in their job search.

All registered participants received a virtual meeting link before the event.

### March 26<sup>th</sup> event:

The facilitator was able to successfully adapt the course content and delivery to adjust to the low participation.

### Post event briefing

The Project Manager and the Facilitator briefly discussed the overall feel of the workshop. Due to the low attendance, no group interaction occurred. The

consensus is that the workshop was successful, relevant, and flowed well. But, given the low enrollment it is difficult to gauge of overall success.

### **Survey**

The participant had expressed initial issues with survey access but underlined how great of an experience he had while in session and commented positively on the facilitator. The survey was eventually accessed and given the low number a detailed report does not seem valuable. Briefly, the participant indicated “very satisfied” in all evaluated areas: communication before the course, practical organisation, content delivery, materials, and so on.

### **Survey results – April 29<sup>th</sup> event:**

Six participants completed the Qualtrics survey; five doctoral researchers and one postdoctoral researcher. The respondents represented the following institutions: NCU (2), USN (1), UAntwerp (1), and UBremen (2).

In terms of overall satisfaction, 2/6 indicated great satisfaction, 3/6 were satisfied and one respondent expressed neutrality.

- Communication before the activity: 5/6 were very satisfied and 1/6 expressed satisfaction;
- Practical organisation: 4/6 expressed great satisfaction and 2/6 were satisfied;
- Content delivery: 3/6 were very satisfied, 2/6 were satisfied and one expressed dissatisfaction;
- Materials: 4/6 expressed that they were very satisfied, 1/6 satisfied but 1/6 expressed dissatisfaction;
- Networking opportunities: 2/6 were very satisfied, 2/6 satisfied, and 2/6 were expressed neutrality;
- Duration: 2/6 were very satisfied, 2/6 were satisfied, 1/6 expressed neutrality and 1/6 expressed dissatisfaction;
- Skill development: 3/6 expressed that they were very satisfied with the workshop, 2/6 expressed that they were satisfied, and one expressed neutrality.
- Qualitative feedback participants expressed their satisfaction.

### **Survey results – November 21st Event**

Six participants responded to the survey (3 from UEF, 1 from UBremen, 1 from UAntwerp, and 1 from USN), including 4 doctoral researchers and 2 postdoctoral researchers.

Overall, 100% of respondents reported being satisfied or very satisfied with the training.

- All other aspects received similarly high satisfaction ratings, including communication, practical organization, content delivery by the lecturer, materials, duration of the activity, and skills development.
- Networking opportunities were rated slightly lower, with 67% of participants satisfied or very satisfied and 33% neutral.
- Qualitative feedback: one respondent noted that, although the group activities were designed for full attendance and ultimately ran smoothly, there were too many unjustified absences among registered participants. They suggested that measures to encourage greater accountability for attendance could be beneficial.

Overall, the training was perceived as highly valuable, well-tailored, and exceptionally delivered, with participants expressing strong appreciation for its quality and impact.

### **Overall conclusion**

Across the four workshop sessions, participant feedback was consistently positive, highlighting the relevance, quality, and practical value of the training for doctoral and postdoctoral researchers across the YUFE Alliance. High levels of satisfaction were reported regarding content delivery, organisation, communication, and skills development, with participants particularly appreciating the expertise of the facilitators and the supportive learning environment.

Some challenges were nevertheless identified, notably fluctuating attendance and limited networking opportunities in sessions with lower participation. Participants also suggested minor improvements, including more hands-on activities, additional focus on country-specific career preparation, and adjustments to session duration and structure.

Overall, the workshops successfully met their objectives and demonstrated strong impact and relevance for early-career researchers' professional development.

- Intercultural Communication in Academic European Contexts

### Summary and analysis

The first session is part of the YUFE Pilot on Doctoral Learning and the second session is part of both pilots.

#### Course summary:

Given the geographical, political, and cultural interconnectedness of YUFE partner institutions, effective communication across diverse cultural contexts is both essential and unavoidable. Targeting ECRs (Early Career Researchers), this interactive three-hour online workshop explores the dynamics of intercultural communication within academic and professional settings in Europe. The workshop aimed to support participants in developing the awareness and skills necessary to navigate these realities with confidence and clarity by focusing on the following objectives /deliverables:

Understanding how cultural norms and expectations influence communication styles.

Recognizing and responding to challenges in intercultural academic and workplace interactions.

Developing practical strategies for effective communication with international peers, colleagues, and supervisors.

Reflecting on the role of their own cultural identity and communication style in shaping interactions.

The workshop combines expert-led presentations, real-world case studies, and interactive group discussions where participants engage in reflection, collaborative exercises, and scenario-based learning to explore common communication pitfalls and best practices in intercultural settings.

#### Survey results – May 14<sup>th</sup> Event

There was a total of three participants, one of who was a postdoctoral researcher and the other two doctoral candidates from UNIRI, UM and NCU.

Overall satisfaction was expressed where one participant expressed extreme satisfaction, one satisfaction, and one expressed neutrality.

- Communication and practical organisation: 2/3 respondents expressed satisfaction where 1/3 respondents expressed neutrality.
- Content delivery: the respondents were satisfied, expressing satisfaction in 2/3 responses and great satisfaction in 1/3 responses.
- Materials: one participant was dissatisfied, one expressed satisfaction, and one expressed great satisfaction.
- Networking opportunities: one participant expressed neutrality and other expressed satisfaction noting that one participant did not answer the question.
- Duration: two participants expressed neutrality and one participant was satisfied.
- Skill development: one participant was dissatisfied and 2 were satisfied.
- Qualitative feedback:
  - One participant felt that the course stayed "very surface level" and would have preferred a deeper dive into specific situations or group intercultural exchanges.
  - Another noted that while the workshop was enjoyable, but commented on the flow, suggesting that it felt unstable in terms of time allocation, but anticipated improvements with more iterations.

### **Session 2: June 17, 2025**

3 doctoral researchers, 1 postdoctoral researcher.

Participants came from NCU, USN and UAntwerp.

Overall satisfaction was expressed where one participant expressed extreme satisfaction, two satisfaction, and one expressed neutrality.

- Communication: all participants expressed satisfaction.
- Practical organisation: half of the respondents expressed satisfaction where the other half respondents expressed great satisfaction.
- An identical expression of satisfaction was expressed regarding content delivery, networking opportunities, and developed skills.

- Duration: two participants expressed satisfaction, one participant was extremely satisfied, and one participant expressed neutrality.
- Qualitative Feedback: One participant provided a brief "Thanks!" comment. No critical or developmental feedback was submitted.

### **Comparative Analysis and Conclusions:**

Given the reduced number of neutral responses and the absence of expressed dissatisfaction among participants in the second session, it can be concluded that the facilitator effectively incorporated the feedback from the first session.

### **Recommendations:**

Continue refining interactive components to allow deeper dives into specific intercultural situations, perhaps incorporating role-plays or case studies.

Monitor time allocation to ensure that all key topics are covered in sufficient depth without feeling rushed.

Overall, both sessions were positively received, showing clear progress between the first and second iteration, particularly in organization and participant experience. The suggested structural adjustments may further enhance the course's depth and effectiveness

### **Follow-up**

The facilitator observed that the timing issues noted in the first session were not fully resolved in the second session. They recommend that the course structure be reconsidered to better support the learning objectives.

Specifically, they suggest dividing the course into two 2-hour sessions. The first session would focus on theoretical foundations, including individual definitions of culture and personal approaches to intercultural communication (either in session or a hybrid DIY session) which serve as crucial groundwork. The second session would then build on this foundation with practical case studies and interactive discussions, allowing for deeper engagement with real-world intercultural scenarios.

- Introduction to Horizon Europe

## Summary and analysis

These sessions are part of the YUFE Pilot on Postdoctoral Training and Development.

The training took place over two days: the first session on 23 September, entitled “Introduction to Horizon Europe” lasted two hours, while the second session on 24 September, entitled “Writing Competitive Proposals for Pilar II” lasted one hour.

There were six participants, of whom three responded to the survey.

One respondent indicated that they were satisfied, one that they were very satisfied, and one that they were neutral.

- Communication: Two respondents were very satisfied or satisfied, while one was neutral.
- Organisation of the activity: 100% of respondents were very satisfied or satisfied.
- Content delivery by the lecturer: 100% of respondents were very satisfied or satisfied.
- Materials: 100% of respondents were very satisfied or satisfied.
- Networking opportunities: One respondent was satisfied, one was neutral, and one was dissatisfied.
- Duration: One respondent was very satisfied, one was satisfied, and one was very dissatisfied.
- Skills development: One respondent was very satisfied, one was neutral, and one was very dissatisfied.
- Qualitative feedback: due to the limited number of survey responses, the results should be interpreted with caution.
  - Concerning the duration of the activity, one respondent indicated a preference for a longer format.
  - It should also be noted that a qualitative comment was received, stating that the activity was “great and contains a lot of useful information.”

- “Synergy in Science: Advancing Research Through Interdisciplinary Approaches

### Summary and analysis

This session is part of the YUFE Pilot on Doctoral Learning and the YUFE Pilot on Postdoctoral Training and Development.

The session took place on 7 October 2025 and lasted 1 hour and 30 minutes. The survey received two responses.

One indicated that they were satisfied, the other that they were neutral.

- Communication: Both respondents were very satisfied
- Organisation of the activity: Both respondents were satisfied
- Content delivery by the lecturer: Both respondents were very satisfied
- Materials: No response was provided
- Networking opportunities: No response was provided
- Duration: Both respondents were very satisfied
- Skills development: Both respondents were satisfied
- Qualitative feedback: No comments were provided, and the response rate is too low to enable a robust analysis of the survey results.

- Leadership Training for Postdoctoral Researchers

### Summary and analysis

These sessions are part of the YUFE Pilot on Postdoctoral Training and Development.

The training combined online self-study (shared via a platform) with interactive group sessions (4 hours per session held on 23 October and 13 November).

There were six participants, of whom four responded to the survey.

100% of the respondents were satisfied or very satisfied.

- Communication: 75% were satisfied, while 25% were neutral.
- Organisation of the activity: 75% were satisfied, while 25% were dissatisfied
- Content delivery by the lecturer: 100% were very satisfied
- Materials: 100% were very satisfied or satisfied.

- Networking opportunities: Two respondents were neutral, one was satisfied, and one did not provide an answer
- Duration: 75% were satisfied, while 25% were neutral
- Skills development: 75% were satisfied or very satisfied, while 25% were neutral
- Qualitative feedback: Due to the limited number of survey responses, the results should be interpreted with caution.
  - One respondent suggested that the course would benefit from more inclusive language, noting the frequent use of “he or she” in hypothetical scenarios and recommending the use of “they” instead for greater inclusivity and fluency.
  - Another respondent described the course as useful, innovative, practical, and well adapted to the academic context, and praised the instructor’s engagement and experience, while highlighting significant shortcomings in the digital platforms used for virtual sessions, which they felt required improvement.

- AI Tools, Academic Writing and Ethics

### Summary and analysis

This session is part of the YUFE Pilot on Doctoral Learning and the YUFE Pilot on Postdoctoral Training and Development.

The session took place on 9 December 2025 and lasted 2 hours and 30 minutes.

100% of the respondents answered that they were globally satisfied or very satisfied.

- Communication: 80% were satisfied or very satisfied, 20% were neutral
- Organisation of the activity: 100% were satisfied or very satisfied
- Content delivery by the lecturer: 100% were very satisfied or very satisfied
- Materials: 90% were very satisfied or satisfied, 10% were neutral
- Networking opportunities: 67% were neutral, 33% were satisfied
- Duration: 100% were satisfied or very satisfied
- Skills development: 90% were satisfied or very satisfied, while 10% were neutral

- Qualitative feedback:
  - One participant commented that it was a great session
  - Another noted that the time allocated for the exercises was too limited.

## 9.5 Evaluation report local focus groups

The evaluation report listed below is specific for YUFE, but as they can be applicable to other postdoctoral researchers' activities, they may be relevant for other European alliances as well. One report from the University of Antwerp is included.

### 9.5.1 University of Antwerp

At the local level, a structured programme of activities was organised to support a cohort of ten postdoctoral researchers participating in the YUFE Pilot on Postdoctoral Training and Development. The exact activities are listed in Table 10 in Annex 9.3. Evaluation and feedback from participants were gathered through multiple ways:

1. **End-of-trajectory focus group (qualitative)**

A live focus group was organised on Thursday 8 January 2026, with 5 out of 10 enrolled participants present. The aim was to evaluate what worked well and what could be improved.

2. **End-of-trajectory evaluation survey (quantitative + open comments)**

An overall survey was circulated at the end of the trajectory; with a response rate of 7 out of 10.

3. **Activity-level feedback forms**

Separate feedback forms were collected for:

- career coaching sessions,
- the kick-off lunch,
- the networking session (with very limited response).

The key findings are listed below.

#### **Overall experience: high perceived relevance, but limited capacity to engage**

Participants expressed motivation at the start. Over time, however, time pressure and competing priorities strongly influenced attendance and engagement. Personal circumstances (e.g., parenting responsibilities, international career considerations) further shaped participation patterns.

A consistent signal was that online participation (YUFE wide offer) can be experienced as an additional barrier, particularly when sessions require sustained concentration. Several participants indicated a preference for more physical, in-person encounters, especially for community building and networking.

At the same time, a positive outcome was observed: three participants decided to continue meeting on their own to discuss how academia could be improved. This suggests that the Pilot helped create peer connections.

### **Perceived value of the local offer: early career coaching as a strong entry point**

Participants highlighted the career coaching at the start as particularly meaningful. Beyond individual reflection, it also functioned as an effective “gateway” to local support structures: participants could discover the broader offer (e.g., local Talent Center support) and explore what would be relevant for them. Many participants stated that they were not aware of the Talent Center offer beforehand.

This suggests that, within the local trajectory, individual coaching can serve a dual purpose:

- direct developmental support for participants, and
- improved visibility and navigation of local institutional support.

### **Expectations versus reality: “international” promise and the limitations of online formats**

Several participants expected the Pilot to support international community building. Others primarily hoped for skills development that would strengthen their profile as postdoctoral researchers, including transferable and soft skills, opportunities to improve their academic or professional CV, and support aligned with individual postdoctoral training objectives.

In practice, the Pilot was experienced as successful in fostering local peer connection and offering relevant reflection and training opportunities. However, expectations related to international interaction were only partially met. Participants explicitly expressed a desire for more contact with postdoctoral researchers at other YUFE institutions and for a stronger sense of shared experience beyond the local context. This included the wish to feel less alone in dealing with common challenges such as job insecurity, performance pressure, and structural constraints within academia.

A recurring suggestion was to create more visible and accessible spaces for cross-institutional connection, such as a shared online community space or forum where YUFE postdoctoral researchers can interact and exchange experiences.

### **Communication: WhatsApp works; boundaries between “YUFE wide” and “local offer” were unclear**

A major finding concerns communication clarity. Participants reported that communication about what was offered, when, and by whom was sometimes unclear or fragmented; newsletters were not consistently read.

In contrast, WhatsApp communication was experienced as more effective. Participants also reported confusion about the distinction between YUFE-wide activities and local activities.

Participants recommended:

- more frequent and more explicit reminders of organized initiatives,
- a “commitment checkpoint” closer to the event date (e.g., two weeks before) with a clear option to confirm/cancel attendance.

### **Virtual Campus platform: usability**

Participants described the Virtual Campus experience as unpleasant and not intuitive, with navigation difficulties, login issues, and a lack of clear structure. Two-factor authentication was experienced as particularly burdensome.

Beyond usability, the most important functional critique was that the platform did not create a meaningful sense of community. It was seen as a place to centralise courses rather than a place to connect people. Participants asked for features that create a reason to log in (e.g., a forum or shared space that enables contact with other postdoctoral researchers).

### **Engagement and no-shows**

Both the end-of-trajectory evaluation survey and the focus group discussions show that non-participation and no-shows were caused by both practical constraints and the perceived relevance of the content.

Survey responses show that workload and competing priorities were the most frequently reported reason for non-participation (6 out of 7 respondents). In addition, topics/themes, career relevance, and scheduling/timing were each mentioned by a majority of respondents (5 out of 7).

Focus group discussions further contextualised these findings. Participants explained that postdoctoral work is characterised by rapidly shifting priorities, often driven by supervisor requests, teaching obligations, or emerging deadlines. As a result, activities that are perceived as less immediately relevant, or that come at less favourable moments, are more likely to be deprioritized, even when overall interest in the programme remains high.

Based on both survey results and qualitative discussion, several mitigation strategies were suggested:

- communicating the thematic focus and expected added value of activities as clearly and concretely as possible;
- sending confirmation requests approximately two weeks in advance;
- contacting participants on ‘waiting list’ when cancellations occur;
- and introducing a light form of commitment at registration, while avoiding barriers that could discourage participation.

### **Content needs**

Both the end-of-trajectory evaluation survey and the focus group discussions highlighted a set of content priorities for future editions of the Pilot.

Participants expressed a strong interest in training that supports transferable skills development, particularly in relation to career orientation. Topics related to career development were consistently identified as relevant.

In addition to general transferable skills, participants indicated a need for academic career skills. This included interest in opportunities that strengthen academic profiles, such as teaching-related experience, mentoring or coaching skills, and other activities that could meaningfully contribute to an academic CV. Participants noted that access to such opportunities is often highly dependent on supervisors, suggesting a potential role for the Pilot in providing more equitable access.

Mentoring emerged as another content area, both in formal and informal forms. Participants valued peer learning and expressed interest in structured mentoring formats that would allow them to learn from more experienced researchers or from peers at different stages, potentially including cross-institutional mentoring within the YUFE Alliance.

### **Overall conclusion**

The local implementation of the YUFE Pilot on Postdoctoral Training and Development successfully revealed meaningful development opportunities for postdoctoral researchers, particularly through early individual support and the facilitation of peer exchange. However, the Pilot also faced challenges related to communication clarity, engagement over time, personal relevance of content, and the limited international interaction that participants expected from a YUFE-wide programme.

### **Recommendations for future editions**

#### A. Strengthen engagement through communication design

- Use a structured communication rhythm with short reminders and clear action requests.
- Introduce a two-week confirmation checkpoint (“Are you still attending?”) and enable easy cancellation to reduce no-shows.
- Make the distinction between local and YUFE-wide activities explicit in every message (“Organised locally by... / Organised YUFE-wide by...”).

#### B. Create international connection

- Develop a shared online space accessible to all YUFE postdoctoral researchers (forum/community), designed for people
- Explore hybrid designs where universities run similar workshops locally but connect cohorts internationally during or between sessions (shared discussions, joint peer groups).
- Consider buddy or peer pairing systems across universities.

#### C. Improve the Virtual Campus user experience

- Reduce friction in login and navigation, and ensure the platform supports identity/profile features.
- Add interactive features that stimulate ongoing engagement (e.g., searchable member directory, discussion spaces, thematic groups).

#### D. Expand the learning offer with academic-career relevant practice

- Include practical opportunities that help postdoctoral researchers strengthen their CV