

EUROPEAN
RESEARCH
AREA

ERA POLICY
AGENDA

CITIZENS'
SCIENCE

TALENT

EUROPEAN STRATEGY
FOR UNIVERSITIES

RESEARCH
ASSESSMENT

OPEN
SCIENCE

2021 ANNUAL REPORT

ENGAGED
INSTITUTIONS

SUSTAINABILITY

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FOREWORD

Prof. Snježana Prijić-Samaržija
Rector of the University of Rijeka and YERUN President



After the outstanding chairmanship of YERUN's former President Bernd Scholz-Reiter, I am incredibly honoured for having been unanimously chosen as new YERUN President at the end of this challenging year. I will endeavour to honour the trust I was given with my firm belief that our network of European young research universities is invaluable to each member university. It is in fact a network that multiplies our visibility and impact as well as our prospects for growth through internationalisation, innovation and inter-connectedness.

In 2021, our lives and our work have continued to be altered by the COVID-19 pandemic. This year has been another test for us all. The expectation that the pandemic was just a temporary interruption matured into the consciousness about our society's vulnerability and the irreversibility of new institutional processes. In YERUN, we fully grasped that the pandemic would have accelerated the beginning of wider university transformations, but also that universities have a historically unique social responsibility for preserving Europe and fostering the European virtues of peace, harmony, solidarity, and enlightenment. In YERUN, we know that our cooperation and friendship crucially strengthen our potentials for renewal, resilience, and transformation, channelled into the "The Future Starts Today! Inspiring initiatives from Young European Universities" publication.

Again, in 2021, we have successfully commenced our Strategic Plan 2021 – 2025, aiming to develop Talents, an Open Culture of Excellence, and Responsible and Engaged Universities. We mobilised our tremendous collective intelligence in reflecting upon how to successfully develop the agenda of digital citizenship and the green transition, but also how to authentically preserve the European values and Global Europe. We wisely approached reflection upon the European Strategy for Universities and publicised our conclusions in the YERUN paper "From Talent to Societal Impact: An Evolutionary Journey for Universities". YERUN has welcomed the adoption of the Pact for R&I in Europe and will continue to push for a real strive to mobilise the entire R&I community under the new ERA. For YERUN, the central topic of 2021 was, and will continue to be, reforming research assessment in Europe, an initiative that we particularly welcomed, as we consider a holistic and qualitative approach to research assessment a necessary step forward for the future of universities.

This year, YERUN welcomed four new members. In February, YERUN welcomed the University of Limerick and the University of Rijeka, followed in July by the University of Cyprus and in October by the UiT-The Arctic University of Norway. We are profoundly convinced that we will be strengthened by these new members: YERUN will be an even more relevant stakeholder in advancing our goals and internally more prosperous for new perspectives and insights.

In 2021, YERUN members actively worked as members of six European University Alliances: CIVIS, ECIU, EELISA, ERUA, EUTOPIA and YUFE. The synergy of being a constituent of both YERUN and the European University Initiative renders us more resilient frontrunners within the European Education Area.

These and many other activities in 2021 have strengthened YERUN's role as European stakeholder. They would not have been possible without the knowledge and engagement of all our members, to whom I wish to display my particular respect. YERUN owes substantial gratitude to all academic and non-academic staff from our universities. Through the YERUN Executive Board, Coordinators, Policy Platform and different ad hoc groups, strong ties are connecting their expertise and advice, resulting in quality progress for YERUN. Our work gained an irreplaceable contribution from our Brussels office's professionalism and enthusiasm, without which YERUN today would not enjoy the reputation we now possess. Emboldened by our achievements in 2021, we now expect to continue strengthening our voice in the European Education and Research Areas.

2021 AT A GLANCE



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GENERAL ASSEMBLIES



8

**EXECUTIVE BOARD
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2021 AT A GLANCE



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EXTERNAL NEWSLETTERS ON:

Open Science
Citizens Science
Micro-credentials
Fundamental Research
European Universities alliances

MSCA stories
Sustainability
Women in Science
Knowledge Valorisation
YERUN Rectors' reflections



13

INTERNAL NEWSLETTERS

LINKEDIN FOLLOWERS



+ 1340

TWITTER FOLLOWERS



+ 2220

FOCUS ON EU POLICY

The YERUN Policy Platform

Launched in March 2021, the YERUN Policy Platform (YPP) works closely with the YERUN Brussels office and ad hoc groups to transform YERUN members' expertise into advice and recommendations on EU policies with the aim of shaping the future of universities in Europe. Thanks to its advanced understanding on EU policymaking and of the role that young research universities can play in shaping it, the YPP works in the development of the network's positioning on different policy topics that touch on research, innovation and education. It also serves as an incredible capacity building activity in policy advocacy for YERUN members.

The YPP is a very dynamic and interdisciplinary group that has met regularly, in average once per month, throughout 2021.



YERUN Policy Platform meeting, May 2021.



DCU welcomed the facilitation provided by YERUN, to develop position papers in response to a number of important EU calls for input to policy in areas such as research assessment, the future of Higher Education and ERA Governance, amongst others.

Dublin City University.



FOCUS ON EU POLICY

The Future of Education and Research: what role is there for European universities, its alliances and networks?

Two main streams have guided the work of the YPP and YERUN members in 2021: the European Strategy for Universities and the European Research Area and its future governance.

As announced in the European Commission's [Communication on Achieving the European Education Area by 2025](#), DG EAC and DG RTD have been working during 2021 on a **European Strategy for Universities** aimed at empowering the future higher education sector, considering the challenges brought by the COVID-19 pandemic and the digital and green transitions. YERUN was invited to all the consultation meetings organised by the European Commission, during which the network had the opportunity to share its views and advocate for the needs of young research universities. YERUN also had the opportunity to discuss more thoroughly this upcoming European Strategy for Universities with Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth, Ms. Mariya Gabriel, in a meeting that took place on 16 March 2021.



Meeting of the YERUN Executive Board and YERUN Office with Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth, Ms. Mariya Gabriel, March 2021.

The topic of **Education for Environmental Sustainability**, also part of the Communication on Achieving the European Education Area by 2025, resonates closely with YERUN's 2021-2025 Strategy. In 2021, DG EAC has been following closely this policy dossier with the objective of providing guidance for schools, higher education institutions and teachers on how to cooperate and exchange experiences across Member States on education for environmental sustainability. YERUN has been developing with the YPP and the ad hoc group on SDGs its network position on the topic. Thanks to this work, YERUN provided detailed feedback to the online consultation that was launched by DG EAC on 18 June 2021.

FOCUS ON EU POLICY

The second stream that has guided the work of the YPP is related to the European Commission's Communication on A new ERA for Research and Innovation. This Communication announced that **the governance of the ERA needed to be revitalised** and, as such, in 2021 DG RTD together with the Slovenian Presidency and EU Research Ministers, have been designing the ERA Policy Agenda and its future governance. YERUN has actively participated in this process, by taking part of the numerous Member State and stakeholder consultations organised by DG RTD and by joining forces with the R&I community to advocate for the need to involve stakeholders in such ERA governance architecture.

As part of the new European Research Area, DG RTD also launched a new initiative in 2021: **the reform of the research assessment system in Europe**. Being this topic very close to YERUN's 2021-2025 motto "enabling talent to grow", the network has been involved in all DG RTD stakeholder consultations on the topic and has had a series of bilateral meetings with representatives of the DG. These exchanges, together with the work done by the YPP and the ad hoc group on the development of academic careers, have allowed YERUN to develop its own position on this policy dossier. In 2022, YERUN will continue closely following the implementation of the initiative and ensuring a dialogue among its members towards this important change in research culture.



This year, YERUN has been more crucial than ever. As the European Union draws up long-term plans for universities that will impact how we research, teach, serve our society, and connect with the world, the benefits of speaking with a united voice at the European level cannot be understated. The excellent cooperation with colleagues at the YERUN Office and YERUN Policy Platform has greatly contributed to gaining a better understanding of the complex policy landscape that lies ahead, and to identify the risks and opportunities that come with it.

Despite the challenges posed by remote working, the network has successfully brought our universities closer together - not only to share best practices and technical expertise, but also from a human perspective. Working with such inspiring, dedicated, diverse, and collaborative colleagues has made 2021 a better year!

Felix Ruiz Cabre,
YPP member & Policy Officer at Maastricht University Brussels Campus.



Finally, the YPP has also been addressing the topic of **knowledge valorisation**. The aim of DG RTD is to update and develop the Guiding Principles for Knowledge Valorisation and a Code of Practice for the smart use of intellectual property (IP). The YPP and representatives of the different knowledge transfer offices of YERUN universities worked together to provide feedback to the online consultation on this policy dossier launched by DG RTD on 1 July 2021.



Cover YERUN Publication "From Talent to Societal Impact: An Evolutionary Journey for Universities", July 2021.

FOCUS ON EU POLICY

Main publications



*One word to describe your university in 2030. Result of roundtable discussion with YERUN Rectors on 9 April 2021.

To accompany its policy work, YERUN has developed the following publications in 2021:

FROM TALENT TO SOCIETAL IMPACT: AN EVOLUTIONARY JOURNEY FOR UNIVERSITIES (2 JULY 2021)

YERUN contributed to the discussions on the future of the universities in Europe with this paper which highlights some of the most pressing challenges that higher education institutions will face in the coming years, identifies enabling factors and conditions that could allow institutions to evolve in the next decade and provides a series of recommendations to policy makers to support universities in this journey. [Read the paper here.](#)

THE FUTURE STARTS TODAY! INSPIRING INITIATIVES FROM YOUNG EUROPEAN RESEARCH UNIVERSITIES (2 JULY 2021)

YERUN published a collection of inspiring initiatives and practices from its members that demonstrate how young research universities have already started their evolutionary journey. The collection presents initiatives and practices in the following fields: fostering talent & careers; sustainability; gender equality, diversity, inclusion and student support; digitisation & new forms of teaching and learning; cooperation with other sectors; and citizen engagement & impact. [Read the full collection of inspiring initiatives here.](#)

THE NEW PACT FOR R&I IN EUROPE, WHAT NEXT? YERUN'S REFLECTION ON THE FUTURE ERA GOVERNANCE (20 JULY 2021)

YERUN contributed to the discussions on the future governance of the European Research Area (ERA) with this position paper, which provides a series of recommendations on the adequate participatory mechanisms and monitoring systems to be put in place in order to ensure an effective and inclusive governance and implementation of the ERA. [Read the position paper here.](#)

REFORMING RESEARCH ASSESSMENT IN EUROPE: YERUN'S TAKE ON THE ISSUE (23 NOVEMBER 2021)

YERUN contributed to the ongoing debate on the reform of the research assessment system in Europe with this position paper, which sets out 7 recommendations that aim to make this initiative more inclusive, effective, and attractive for the university sector: [Read the position paper here.](#)

THE NEW YERUN GROUPS

The new YERUN Strategy 2021-2025, has introduced flexibility to open new YERUN groups, bringing on board many new colleagues, expertise, insights and ways of working.

Currently, a total of 7 groups are up and running. Four of them are meant to focus on a key topic for a determined period: namely, Development of Academic Careers, Open Science, European Universities and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The other three are more transversal to the YERUN Strategy 2021-2025 and are permanent: Research Support Offices; YERUN Open Science Awards and YERUN Research Mobility Awards.



YERUN infographic with the three Focus Areas of YERUN Strategy 2021-2025.



The new YERUN strategy has provided a more structured direction and view of what we need to achieve as a network, our strengths and weaknesses, and finally, what we desire to accomplish. Having new groups of work (ad hoc groups and the policy platform) have facilitated identifying our goals, being more proactive, and being more determined to achieve them.

Inma Andrés,
YERUN Coordinator and Student Programme Manager & Research Advisor at Brunel University London.



All these groups have one key characteristic in common: **ownership**. The bottom-up approach followed by these groups means that group members start their work by identifying expectations, obstacles and possible solutions, and as a group they come up with activities that YERUN can do to put those solutions in practice. The idea is to use the network level in an instrumental, strategic way, to reach those objectives that cannot be reached by one institution alone.

Of course, we regret not having had the possibility to work with our colleagues in person, and we truly hope that 2022 will allow us to see each other face-to-face again after so long.

At the same time, we greatly value the fact that, thanks to the possibility of meeting online, we could organise many more virtual meetings, which equals less time spent on travels, less CO2 emissions, less resources used in favour of more collaborations, more exchanges, more results. This is certainly one positive take-away from the pandemic which will be kept in the future.

In the next sections, we present you with the groups that have been active in 2021 and their main achievements so far.

TALENT DEVELOPMENT

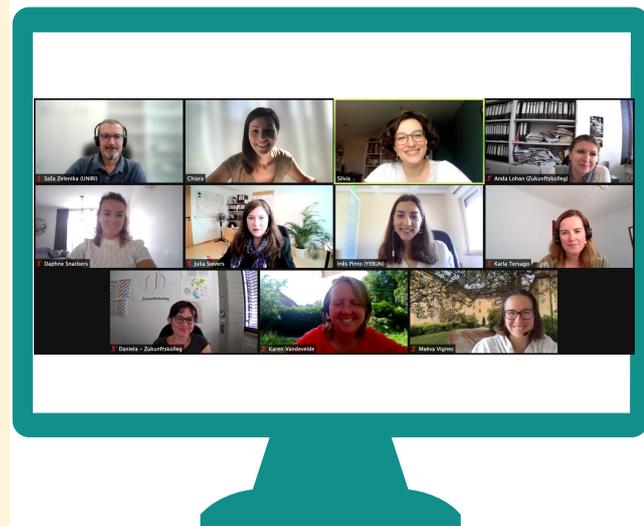
YERUN AD HOC GROUP ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF ACADEMIC CAREERS

Launched under the focus area "Talent Development" of the YERUN Strategy, this group was created with the objective of developing a common understanding of the state of play of academic careers, of the metrics used in academic performance as well as of the innovative methods for academic assessment and development. The group started by organising an internal peer learning activity to get a better understanding of how academic development works at the different YERUN universities. After this initial exercise, the group followed with great interest the European Commission's initiative on the reform of research assessment and put their expertise into developing the YERUN position on the topic with a clear focus on its implementation. The [publication](#) saw the light in November 2021.

The participation in the YERUN ad hoc group on the Development of Academic Careers confronts one with its own limits of knowledge: "I've learned how little I know". I was fortunate to learn from my international colleagues how valuable the variety of academic systems is. Despite the diversity we are united by the same dream/goal: to make academia and the research systems an ideal place and to help talented researchers grow.

The exchange of ideas within the network provides a great incentive to reflect about and rethink one own's work and create new solutions in a constantly changing academic system.

Anda Lohan,
member of the YERUN ad hoc group on the Development of Academic Careers and Programme Director for Research and Fellows, University of Konstanz, Germany.



Working with YERUN has provided a strong network of like-minded colleagues who are working to deliver the YERUN strategy of "Enabling Talent to Grow" at local, national, and European levels. The network allows us to learn from each other and strengthens our shared voice.

Alison O'Regan,
member of the YERUN ad hoc group on the Development of Academic Careers and Head of Staff Learning and Development, University of Limerick, Ireland.

OPEN CULTURE OF EXCELLENCE

YERUN AD HOC GROUP OF EUROPEAN UNIVERSITIES ALLIANCES

The creation of the European Universities Alliances is deeply transforming the higher education sector in Europe. Backed up by considerable political and financial support, the 41 alliances, soon to be joined by new ones, are piloting new collaborative methods in education, research and service to society, with the objective of achieving the European Education Area by 2025.

YERUN is proud that 75% of its members are currently involved in six alliances: CIVIS, ECIU, EELISA, ERUA, EUTOPIA and YUFE. While these alliances are working on many different activities, they all have one ambition in common: transforming higher education in Europe.

The YERUN ad hoc group on European Universities Alliances aims to encourage a channel of communication and information sharing among YERUN members with a view to build on the network as a place of trust to share intelligence on the future roll-out of the initiative and to exchange good practice on their implementation.



Logos of the different European University Alliances in which YERUN members are participating.

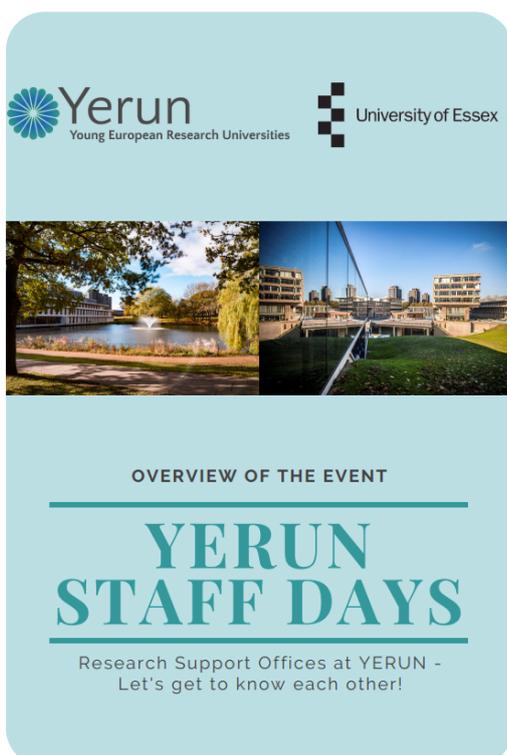
OPEN CULTURE OF EXCELLENCE

YERUN GROUP OF RESEARCH SUPPORT OFFICES

Fostering interdisciplinary and international research collaboration has been a priority for YERUN since its foundation. With the new strategy, the network aims at strengthening the work done in this area by identifying a collaborative approach in research support and a strategy to have structured research collaborations across YERUN. It is with this aim that the YERUN Group of Research Support Offices was founded in June 2021. Since then, the group has met on several occasions to study the structures of the different research support offices across the network, the advantages of each of them and the challenges they are facing. These meetings led to the organisation of the YERUN Staff Days on 9 and 10 November 2021 that brought together the representatives of the Research Support Offices of YERUN institutions. During these two days participants were involved in a series of workshops that helped them identify their key challenges and prioritise on the activities to be implemented in the coming years to develop such structured research collaborations across YERUN.



Participants of the YERUN Staff Days, November 2021.



Cover of the YERUN Staff Days overview document, November 2021.



The University of Essex was delighted to virtually host the 2021 YERUN General Assembly and the YERUN staff days. With its focus on research collaboration, EU funding and best practice sharing of research support officers, the YERUN staff days have inspired us to include some of the excellent ideas of our YERUN partners in our own work.

Nadine Rossol,
YERUN Coordinator and Deputy Dean of Partnerships (Europe) & Senior Lecturer at the University of Essex.



OPEN CULTURE OF EXCELLENCE

YERUN RESEARCH MOBILITY AWARDS

Fostering collaborations among YERUN Early Career Researchers

Among the many activities that have been impacted by COVID-19, the YERUN Research Mobility Awards (YRMAs) were no exception. This year, the YRMAs piloted 24 collaborations in a virtual format. While this alternative format was a response to the uncertainty that came from physical mobilities, it has also shown some positive sides: thanks to the online format, in fact, researchers have had the possibility to organise their collaboration over a longer period of time and meet their hosting team more often than what a physical visit would have allowed for. This opens new scenarios for the future, in which research collaboration will be intended in flexible, blended formats, complementary to each other. Collaborations will continue during 2022, but many are already the positive experiences that the YERUN early career researchers have been able to enjoy.

“

I unexpectedly benefited from the disruption caused by COVID-19 during my proposed travel period in 2020. With travel restrictions making a physical visit impossible, I met my hosts virtually and participated in their weekly virtual seminars throughout spring and summer 2021. I was invited to present my own research there, and subsequently I learned about the research of different members in the group. This longer stretch of collaborative activity gave us the chance to get to know each other better.

Holford Dawn Liu,
YERUN Research Mobility Awardee
University of Essex.

”

“

This collaboration was the largest source of new ideas for my project and it also helped me establish contact with many people who could help me use methods I was unfamiliar with. I would highly recommend this type of collaboration to researchers who are exploring new fields.

Joel Mario Vej-Nielsen,
YERUN Research Mobility Awardee
University of Southern Denmark.

”

This activity within YERUN is asking us to question the role we give to virtual mobilities in our institutions, and how they are promoted, supported and recognised. Within the YERUN network, the decision our members took was to recognise them in the same way (physical or virtual) in light of fostering inclusion, accessibility to this scheme and innovation in our collaborative methods.



“

I had a wonderful time during my mobility at Essex Law School. Professor Konstadinides and the whole faculty of Essex Law School were extremely welcoming to me. Despite that my mobility took place virtually, I felt fully integrated and had a very close connection to Theodore. During my time at Essex, I could improve and rethink various aspects of my research while at the same time actively engaging in discussion with different scholars from the school. One of the highlights was the presentation of my research projects at Essex Law School's Faculty Meeting. A subsequent achievement was presenting our joint research project at a conference at the University of Belgrade. Both instances provided great opportunities for me to showcase my research and gain further feedback.

Niels Kirst,
YERUN Research Mobility Awardee
Dublin City University.

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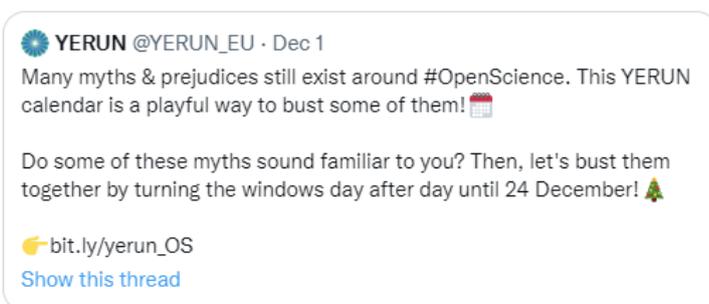
OPEN CULTURE OF EXCELLENCE

YERUN AD HOC GROUP ON OPEN SCIENCE

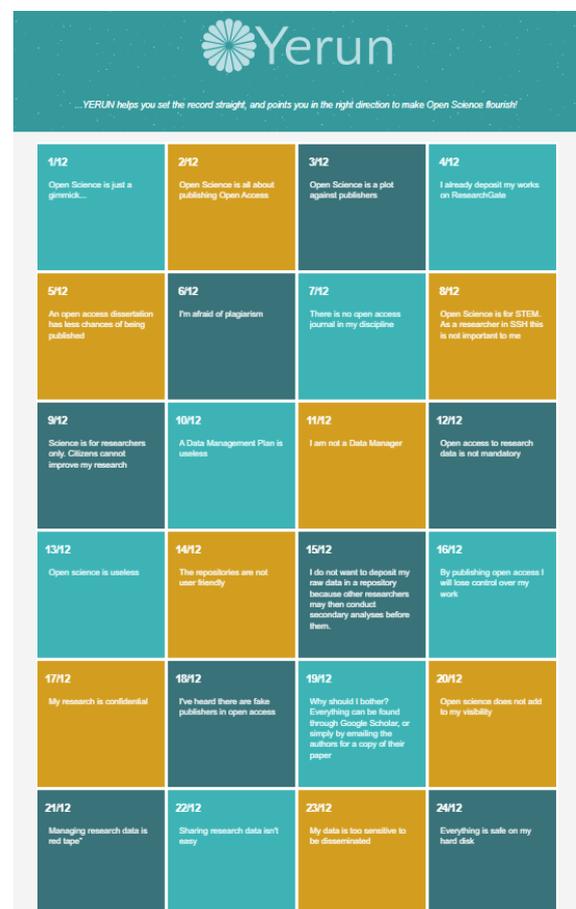
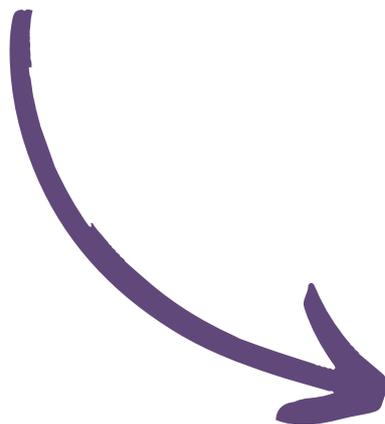
Being Open Science a priority for YERUN since the network's foundation, this group focuses on another fundamental aspect of its implementation: training. This group has benefited from the experiences shared in the past years among YERUN members and, since June 2021, has decided to focus its work on mapping existing training activities on Open Science carried out at YERUN institutions.

One of these activities has been a YERUN Open Science Calendar. Inspired by a similar initiative run at the University of Paris Dauphine-PSL, the YERUN Open Science Advent Calendar, in a playful way, aims to bust persisting myths and prejudices surrounding Open Science.

This is the first of more activities that the group aims to complete by 2022!



YERUN Tweet on the Open Science Calendar, December 2021.



YERUN Open Science Calendar 2021.

OPEN CULTURE OF EXCELLENCE

YERUN OPEN SCIENCE AWARDS

With the new YERUN strategy, the network's ambitions on advancing Open Science have been brought to the next level. Strong of its convictions and of the shared understanding of Open Science developed over the past five years, YERUN has confidently moved from saying how things should be done, to actively doing it. In YERUN, we have always said that recognising and awarding good practices in Open Science is a crucial step in keeping motivation high and motivating others to make the results of their publicly funded research open. The YERUN Open Science Awards, whose pilot call was launched on 15 November 2021, are a concrete example of how to do it. The awards target two categories: researchers (individually or as a team) and staff (individually or as a team). An awards ceremony event will be organised in the first quarter of 2022.

“The YERUN Open Science Awards are meant to showcase the wonderful work that's going on at YERUN partner institutions to open up science. Furthermore, it is also a great opportunity for the partners – boards, deans and policy makers - to get to learn more about best practices that have been adapted in the home institution and build further upon work that's already been done.

Ingrid Wijk,
member of the YERUN group of Open Science Awards Officers
and Director of UM University Library.



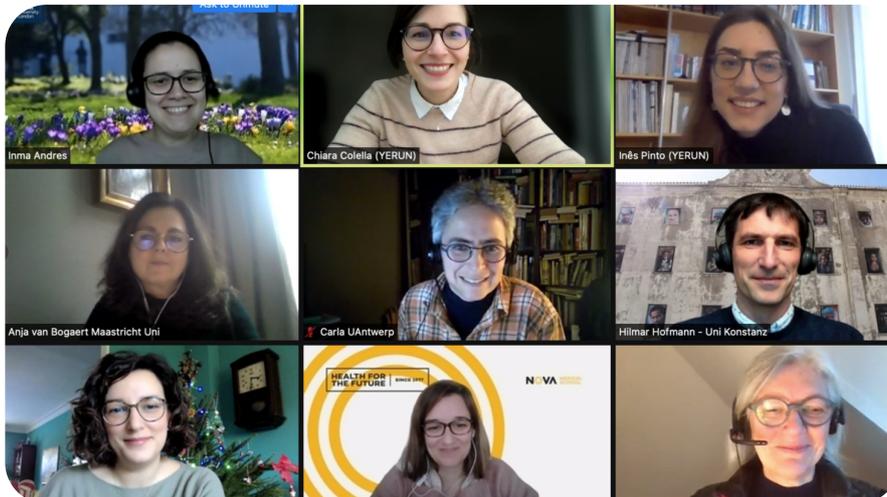
YERUN infographic to promote the YERUN Open Sciences Awards 2021.

RESPONSIBLE AND ENGAGED UNIVERSITIES

YERUN AD HOC GROUP ON SDGs

The YERUN ad hoc group on SDGs was launched in July 2021 with the objective of fostering a common understanding on sustainability among members. Nowadays, sustainability is high on the agenda of most institutions, but there are still many obstacles that hinder it from becoming a mainstream modus operandi. This leads to a situation where its advancement often relies more on individual initiatives rather than on a shared vision of how sustainability should be actually achieved.

This group has built a dialogue among YERUN partners on what means for young research universities today working with and for sustainability. They have shared experiences, insights and practices that have proved successful in integrating sustainability in the academic curriculum (education in sustainability), in empowering students to be actors of change, in creating research agendas that address the SDGs, in developing a leadership's vision and in creating fruitful channels of communication with the citizens on sustainability-related themes.



Meeting of the YERUN ad hoc group on SDGs, December 2021.



Supporting SDG education in HEIs is a relevant, pressing and challenging agenda. While many researchers are engaged in SDG related research, which they share with their students, it can be more challenging to keep SDG education as a universal entitlement for students and staff on the HEI agenda. Inter-HEI organisations like YERUN facilitate our access to HEI networks and through those networks we share inspiring and reassuring HEI stories and experiences. We all need allies and YERUN is definitely a reliable and progressive ally in our pursuit of an entitlement to SDG education for all.

Donna Hurford,
member of the YERUN ad hoc group on SDGs and Senior Educational Consultant at the University of Southern Denmark).



OUR PARTICIPATION IN EU PROJECTS

EDUSC PROJECT



Together with two YERUN members (University Carlos III of Madrid and University of Rome Tor Vergata) and two other educational partners (Kiron and CONFIA), in 2021 YERUN embarked on its first Erasmus+ KA2 Strategic Partnership as a full partner. The project, awarded late in 2020, resulted from the immediate lessons learnt from the first COVID-19 lockdown and the consequent need to move towards online activities. The project focuses on developing digital skills and online educational resources for staff working on internationalisation and academics providing online education. It tackles three key aspects: virtual mobilities, online quality teaching and digital management of international mobilities. A key output from the project is the creation of a collaborative and educational platform covering these three aspects. Dissemination and training events will be also organised all along 2022 to which we will invite YERUN members and the wider European university community!

>>> [Click here](#) to see the **EDUSC Project website!**

LINK EDU-RES PROJECT



Link EDU-RES focuses on the internationalisation of doctoral education and the establishment of collaborative and interactive frameworks for its operation. In particular, its main objective is to lay ground for the creation of joint programmes at doctorate level in YERUN.

One key activity of the project in 2021 has been the [staff week](#) "From Cotutelles to Joint Programmes – Challenges and Opportunities" hosted by the University of Bremen as a hybrid event from 21 to 23 September 2021. The staff week offered the chance to meet in person and digitally to strengthen relationships among YERUN universities. In presentations and discussions on site and online, YERUN universities advanced their collaboration for the creation of joint programmes at doctoral level.

>>> [Follow the project on Twitter and LinkedIn](#) and [click here](#) to see the **Link EDU-RES Project website!**

ProcToGo PROJECT



When looking at the role of universities in sustainability and covering the area of responsible and engaged institutions, five YERUN members joined efforts in an Erasmus+ KA2 Strategic Partnership called ProcToGo.

In many universities, procurement is taught in a very "disciplinary" way: looking either at its managerial implications, or at its engineering requirements or, eventually in courses of administrative law, at the legal constraints in public procurement. Such a training gap is even more relevant considering that new digital technologies are reshaping the procurement processes and that companies are asking for procurement professionals with new digital skills. The project also examines how micro credentials can better respond to the need for more transparency coming from the stakeholders on the educational experience in order to facilitate, also thanks to the digital technology, the recognition, transferability and portability of learning outcomes at different levels. In particular, two blended courses on digital sustainable procurement practices, structured on micro-credentialing learning modules, and the recognition through a digital badge will be at the core of this project.

>>> [Click here](#) to see the **ProcToGo Project website!**

NEW YERUN MEMBERS IN 2021

Among the many highlights of 2021, one of the most important ones has been the entrance of four new members in YERUN. The Universities of Limerick and Rijeka set the ball rolling, joining in February, followed by University of Cyprus in July, and by UiT – The Arctic University of Norway in October. Welcoming these new members into the network has greatly contributed to bringing new dynamics, new expertise and fresher perspectives to the network. Colleagues are now well integrated in the YERUN activities, and it feels like they have been with us for way longer than just a few months. Having a new YERUN President, Prof. Snježana Prijić-Samaržija, precisely from one of these new members (University of Rijeka) says it all.



We are delighted to be invited to join YERUN. YERUN is a dynamic, open and innovative network that aligns perfectly with the University of Limerick's philosophy and ethos. We are impressed by the breath of their members' joined up engagement across the academic spectrum and look forward to working with and learning from our YERUN partners.

Prof. Kerstin Mey,
President of the
University of Limerick,
February 2021



Πανεπιστήμιο Κύπρου
University of Cyprus

UCY joined YERUN only six months ago, in July 2021. The decision to become a member of the network was not at all difficult since, being also a member of the YUFE Alliance, the participation in the YERUN activities was the next step in enhancing the cooperation of UCY with its partners, especially in the area of research. Still a very young addition to the Network, UCY sees the results from its membership and considers YERUN as one of its most important strategic partners.

Prof. Tasos Christofides,
Rector of the University of Cyprus,
December 2021



Prof. Prof. Dag Rune Olsen,
Rector of UiT - The Arctic University
of Norway, October 2021



UNIRI Sveučilište u Rijeci
University of Rijeka

Prof. Snježana Prijić Samaržija,
Rector of the University of Rijeka,
February 2021

UiT has set high ambitions for our participation in Horizon Europe, and we are continuously seeking to build our international network to foster high quality research- and education collaboration. I am both pleased and honored to see that UiT becomes a part of YERUN, and believe that we will contribute substantially to the network. We will add strong competences in all topics related to the development of the North of Europe and the Arctic into the network.

It is a true honor to have the opportunity to contribute to the realization of the vision, mission, and strategic goals of YERUN. As a YERUN member, through a partnership aiming to develop inclusive, innovative, connected, and open universities that truly work to transform the European higher education, we will do our best to contribute to the well-being of all citizens and the sustainable future of Europe.



These new memberships match YERUN's ambition to strengthen its role to represent the young research universities in Europe, by bringing in the network perspectives coming from countries that were not yet represented such as Croatia, Cyprus and Norway. Far from being a box-ticking exercise, this is a genuine effort in being more inclusive and developing a truly European approach on the issues we deal with.

2021, FLEXIBILITY REMAINS KEY



Silvia Gómez Recio
YERUN Secretary General



When we published the YERUN reflection paper "The World of Higher Education after COVID-19", which presented three potential scenarios of transformation post-COVID-19, I did not think that today we would have actually found ourselves in scenario three. The most outward looking one.

This is somewhat striking and yet, kind of exciting, if one considers the positive consequences that such 'extreme' scenario entailed. "Driving away from simply 'surviving' or 'winning' over the pandemic, universities will have reflected on how to build a sustainable system of teaching, doing research and engaging with society." For us, that scenario also contained a very positive message, a hidden call to use this crisis as an opportunity to rethink the way we were working in the higher education sector, and by doing so, being institutions that today more than ever, can be points of reference to their students, researchers, staff and surrounding societies.

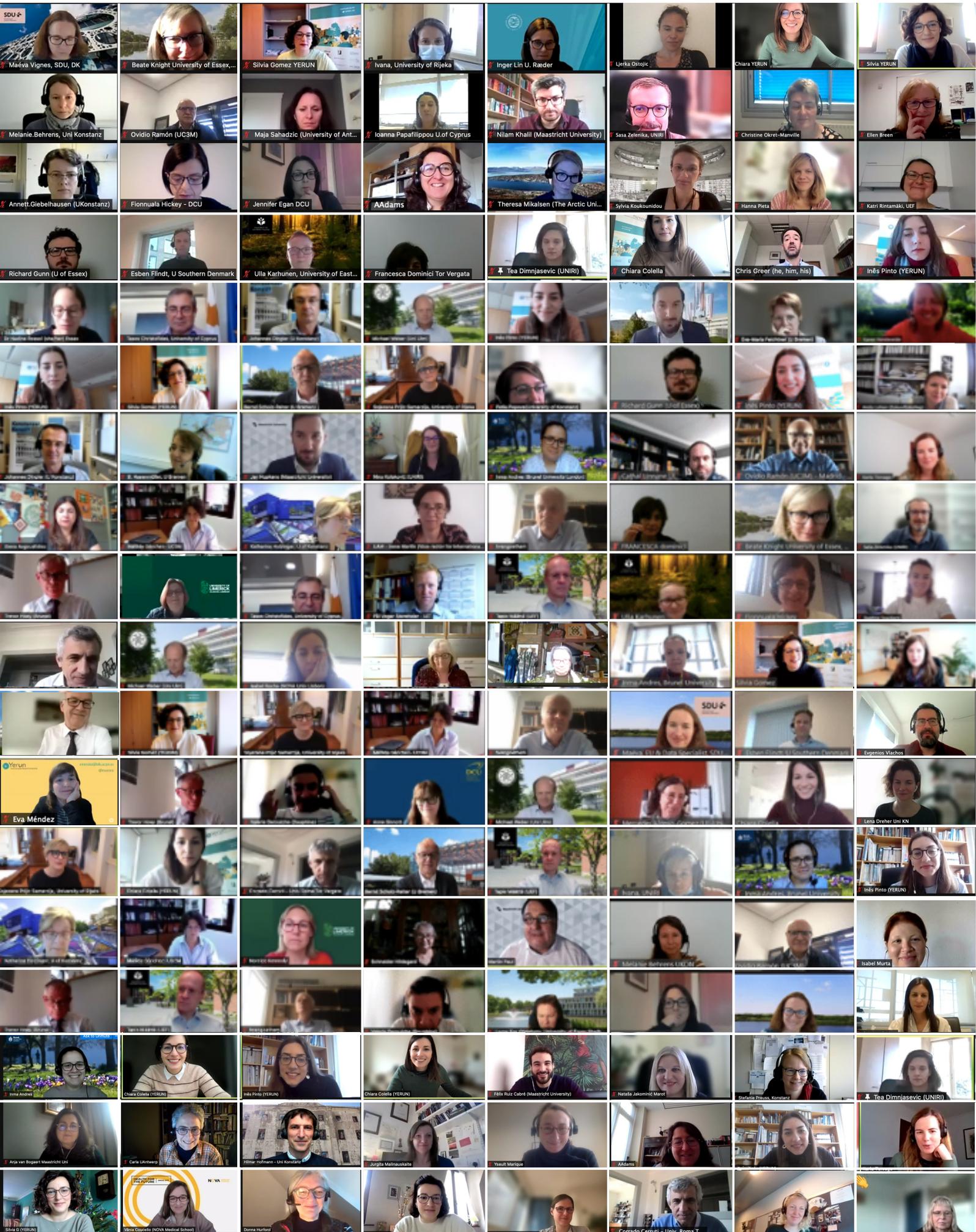
For YERUN, the more flexible ways of working with partners from across Europe has meant more collaboration and more activities. Supported by a new ambitious strategy, we have welcomed four new members, kicked off seven new groups, and launched new awards and activities. More is to come in 2022 but YERUN members are effectively cooperating in new areas of common interest, such as sustainability, development of academic careers, research assessment and universities alliances, while reinforcing already existing collaborations such as those in Open Science and research.

All this would not be possible without the extraordinary engagement of the many YERUN colleagues working with us from the four corners of Europe, in a spirit of openness in sharing knowledge, insights and resources, courage to challenge ourselves in becoming better at a personal and institutional level, and partnership in joining forces to advance altogether the role of young research universities in Europe. For that, we are very grateful to all our members, the founding ones, and the new generation that joined us in the course of 2021, making this year a very special one.

We close 2021 very proud of what we have achieved. Externally, we have consolidated strong ties of collaboration with our European partners and the European institutions. YERUN is a reliant partner to advance and make progress in the higher education sector in Europe. Internally, I am grateful to all the YERUN members that every day of the year, join our calls, respond to our requests, engage in our activities and share their expertise with us completely voluntarily. They do so in a trustful and open atmosphere of collaboration, convinced of the added value of sharing with link-minded colleagues, and looking at each other as equals in the higher endeavor of improving the work they do and the contribution they provide to our society. These values are common to our members and are carefully nurtured by our YERUN Brussels Office.

I am proud of guiding such a network of outstanding colleagues and of having the pleasure to lead a wonderful team at our Brussels Office. Their attitude and motivation contribute to making our world a better place, every day.

YERUN'S DNA





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