

# YERUN ANNUAL REPORT

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# 2023

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YERUN's DNA



## **Prof. Dag Rune Olsen**

**Rector of UiT - The Arctic University of Norway & YERUN President (since October 2023)**

It is a pleasure to provide my first foreword as YERUN President in the YERUN annual report. First and foremost, I would like to thank my predecessor Prof Snježana Prijić Samaržija for her leadership and relentless work over the past two years. It is also thanks to her work that I took over the lead knowing that I could count on a sound network, with a clear path to follow and a shared commitment to strengthening the voice of young universities in Europe.

UiT – The Arctic University of Norway, has been a YERUN member for a bit more than 2 years, but it feels like we have been part of the network for much longer. YERUN members have opened the doors to UiT and to other new members by being true to the spirit of collaboration, partnership and openness that characterises this network and its strategy. This is why, on the occasion of the last elections for YERUN President in the October General Assembly, it was for me a natural choice to put my nomination forward to lead the YERUN network in the next two years. I am humbled and grateful for the trust that my fellow colleagues at the lead of YERUN's partner institutions have given me with this nomination and I will do my best to live up to them by driving the network with the dedication and strategic approach that it deserves.

Looking at the year 2023, I am impressed by the variety of avenues that YERUN has left its mark on: whether in improving academic careers, reforming the research assessment methods, fostering knowledge valorisation strategies, exploring future pathways for the European Universities Alliances, promoting Open Science and inclusiveness, encouraging a global approach to research, learning from each other about sustainability, lifelong learning strategies, innovative teaching methods, etc. YERUN has not only been present but contributed to the discussions with its own perspective and insights. I am proud of the achievements reached in the past year and look forward to an even richer year ahead.



# LOOKING FORWARD

I am convinced of the key and growing relevance of YERUN as a key agent in enhancing the voice of young research universities across Europe. With many new challenges emerging continuously on different fronts, now more than ever we need to implement the strategic actions relevant to young research universities as laid out in the YERUN strategy. I am referring to the raising need to reassess international collaboration in research and innovation with an approach to Europe's internal security; the increasing importance of artificial intelligence and how to embrace its benefits while protecting ourselves from unintended consequences; political trends jeopardising the power to collaborate across Europe, with relating risks for internationalisation of higher education; and, the increasing instabilities in Europe's neighbourhood, with relating difficulty to secure fund for research activities.

These, and many more, are the reasons why the next two years will be of strategic importance for YERUN members to contribute to co-shape Europe's future. The upcoming European elections, the nomination of a new European Commission, the ongoing negotiations for the next Framework Programme for Research & Innovation and the next ERA Policy Agenda will be some of the avenues in which we can play a significant role, together.

In achieving our shared goals at the lead of YERUN, I know I can count on a dedicated and ambitious Executive Board, whose members I warmly thank for their commitment and always insightful steering, and on strong and reliable YERUN Brussels Office as an extremely valuable support to fulfil the network's mission. I wish the whole YERUN community a wonderful 2024 year ahead, to populate with new goals, milestones and achievements.



**Prof. Snježana Prijić-Samaržija**  
 Rector of the University of Rijeka &  
 YERUN President (September 2019 - October 2023)

The world experiences a multiplicative effect, ‘a perfect storm’ of economic, political, and social challenges for citizens’ welfare. Universities, striving for future resilience and sustainability, should recognise its role as ‘rational centres’ and seriously and loudly address challenging pushes from the present and pulls from the future. Universities’ credibility, more than ever, increasingly depends on demonstrating responsibility and impact. All the YERUN universities recognise that our future lies in the transformation grounded on the overall understanding of these present and future societal challenges for Europe and on valorising the relevance of strengthening the European dimension for universities.

The conclusion of the year is a time to acknowledge our achievements. I take this opportunity to briefly summarise the outcomes and, for me, to officially conclude the two fulfilling years in which I chaired YERUN. Rector of the Arctic University of Norway, Dag Rune Olsen, who was chosen at the General Assembly in October at Nova University in Lisbon, is the new president of YERUN and will continue to work with renewed vigour to strengthen the voice of young European research universities.

During my term as President, our family has expanded to seven new, young institutions in the last two years: the University of Klagenfurt, the University of Potsdam, the University of South-Eastern Norway, the University of Stirling, UiT-The Arctic University of Norway, Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń, and Tallinn University. At the beginning of 2024 the voice of 24 young research universities is now reaching Central, Eastern, and South-Eastern Europe, making YERUN a truly representative network of young research-intensive academic communities in Europe that recognise their specific mission in regional transformation and impact. In order to improve the inter-connectedness between each individual researcher, we reached an essential decision regarding the co-creation of the YERUN Research Collaborative Platform, a unique virtual community for our researchers. South Denmark University's creativity is being expanded to serve as an innovative meeting place for all YERUN people.

# FORWARD

Our collaboration's most significant benefit is our mutual growth as a result of comprehensive discussions and thoughtful deliberation of the future of European universities. Aware that leadership development is a game changer for the transformation of universities, we organised numerous workshops and discussions on research assessment reform, innovative universities of the future, on the role of universities in achieving the UN SDGs and the EU Green Deal, on the European strategy for universities and the role of European alliances, on the ERA Policy Agenda, on knowledge valorisation, and numerous others. We have all witnessed how valuable it is for our universities to advance by exchanging thoughts and lessons learned with key players and policy makers from the European institutions.

We recognise that distinctive comprehension on European policies in the fields of higher education and research, as well as the harnessing of collective intercultural wisdom to the advantage of individual universities and the European university community, constitute the essential value of networks such as YERUN. For the second part of the strategy period, we developed a new action plan and made sure that working groups and other YERUN bodies helped us reach our goals. Our publications demonstrate our relentless commitment to the European vision and contribute to constructive dialogues on a wide range of topics, including the European Excellence Initiative, Horizon Europe and its future FP10, the European Innovation Council, and the European Framework for Sustainable and Attractive Careers in Higher Education. We are persistently committed to fostering open science and how we can innovate within our universities and research environment of the twenty-first century through sustainable education, microcredential, green and digital transformation, and many more.

I would like to express my profound thanks to all of the members of the General Assembly, institutional coordinators, and my Executive Board colleagues as I complete my two-year mandate. The commitment and immense creative potential of this leadership team were invaluable during these periods of joint growth. We owe a special debt of appreciation to the brilliant Silvia Gomez Recio, who served as the Secretary General of the devoted Brussels office, for her extraordinary commitment, professionalism, and work ethic. With the utmost confidence in our togetherness, wisdom and strength I wish the people of YERUN a prosperous and happy 2024.

# NEW YERUN MEMBERS IN 2023

YERUN started and closed 2023 welcoming two new members to its network: Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń and Tallinn University.

With this two new members, YERUN expanded its representation to other two countries on the European map: Poland and Estonia. The two new members, with their strong research and educational profile, are a perfect fit for our network and contribute to strengthening and increase diversity in YERUN's voice in European policies related to Research, Innovation and Education.



"We are very happy and honoured to join the Young European Research Universities Network. We believe that NCU can contribute to the fulfilment of YERUN's mission by representing the perspective of a Polish university, but also by strengthening cooperation in outstanding research and educational activities. The NCU Strategy, among main objectives, highlights the engagement in the community, both local and European. During the recent crisis, more than ever, it is important to be united within the European academic community."

Prof. Andrzej Sokala, Rector of Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń



"YERUN brings together young European universities focused on rapidly increasing their research capacity and developing research cooperation. Membership in the network expands opportunities for collaboration among our academic staff and allows us to learn from the best practices of universities facing similar administrative challenges. Until now, we have been part of large European university networks, whose membership is also important to us, but in the case of YERUN, we are engaging with universities in a similar situation to ours and dealing with similar challenges."

Prof. Tõnu Viik, Rector of Tallinn University

# NEW YERUN TEAM

At the heart of the YERUN Brussels Office there is a team of committed professionals, each contributing a unique blend of expertise and passion to drive the network's mission forward.

**Silvia Gómez Recio**, our Secretary General, has been a guiding force since the office's establishment in October 2016. Originally from Spain, Silvia brings a wealth of experience in policy advocacy in Brussels and management of networks that she combines with a driving force of energy and a fascination for innovation and creativity. Her responsibilities encompass strategic leadership, membership relations, networking initiatives, and ensuring the seamless implementation of YERUN's strategy and objectives.

**Chiara Colella**, our Senior Policy Officer, has been an integral part of YERUN since 2019. With a background in Languages and Literature, International Relations, and European Interdisciplinary Studies, she has found in YERUN a vibrant space to professionally grow and create meaningful impact. Chiara's journey includes diverse professional experiences in Puglia Region, the European Committee of the Regions, the Council of Europe, and the Academic Cooperation Association.

**Mariangela Boe**, who joined the network in August 2022 as Communications & Outreach Officer, brings her passion for the university sector and communications to YERUN. A Law graduate from the University of Bologna with a master's in International Human Rights and International Environmental Law from the University of Kent, Mariangela seamlessly blends her background with her communication skills to elevate YERUN's outreach efforts.

One month later, **Raquel Vega Rubio** joined as Project and Policy Officer, bringing in her enthusiasm and commitment. Raquel's journey includes previous academic experience as a researcher on European politics at KU Leuven, as well as other professional experiences inside and outside of Europe. Her commitment to advocating for key changes in academia aligns perfectly with YERUN's vision, fostering reflection on the enablers of excellent research!

Our most recent addition is **Sanja Terlević**, joining as a Policy Officer in 2023. Holding a dual Master's degree in Public Policy and Human Development, Sanja's diverse academic background spans economics, international development, and public leadership. Her past experiences, ranging from regional development to policy research in international think tanks, converge with her belief in the unique value of education, research, and innovation in enhancing human development and societal impact.

Together, this dedicated team embodies the spirit of YERUN, working collaboratively to advance collaboration, policy advocacy, and the impact of research and innovation in the higher education landscape. The YERUN team wants to thank Robin Gadbled for joining the office 7 months during 2023. A researcher on European Law, he drove the work of the network on academic careers, who had a splendid activity this year as you will read.





# 2023 AT A GLANCE



2940  
Followers



3315  
Followers



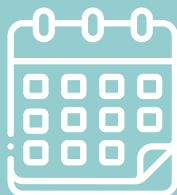
29  
External  
Newsletter



11  
Internal  
Newsletter



5  
YERUN Open  
Science Awards



7  
YERUN  
events



14  
YERUN  
Publications



17  
external events  
as speaker

# YERUN GENERAL ASSEMBLIES IN 2023

## Limerick, 14 - 16 March 2023

It was a privilege for the University of Limerick (UL) as a relatively new member of YERUN to host the network's General Assembly in March 2023. As we had all just emerged from the Covid pandemic and were wrestling with its longer-term impacts on our students and staff and how we could build on the new ways through which learning, research and work that were facilitated through blended and online modes of engagement. Our complex external operating environments had been affected too and required us to reconsider many of our practices, processes and procedures.



Therefore, my colleagues in UL and I saw this meeting as an opportunity to stimulate a multidimensional exchange with the YERUN members on the future of higher education and through the lens of our shared concerns for sustainability in its broadest sense.

Prof. Dr. Jamil Salmi, the Tertiary Education Coordinator at the World Bank shared his deep insights into the global higher education landscape and primed the discussions for the following two days. His points on education e-

-quity and research excellence, governance and internationalisation amidst the backdrop of radical and relentless changes to world of work and the existential challenges posed by climate change and declining planetary health, dominated the conversations over dinner that night and honed the thoughts for the Strategic Futures workshop the next day.

Led by the UL Centre for Sustainable Futures and Innovation and its Director Andrea Deverell, the hands-on exploration of the next 50 years for higher education aimed to familiarise participants with key concepts and concrete exercises to explore social and political, technological and cultural trends, signals, drivers. Supported by visual trend maps and hands-on exercises existing and emerging opportunities, challenges and uncertainties related for the future of higher education were identified and scrutinised.

Working in small groups, there was plenty of opportunity to share insights, to compare conditions, stablish commonalities and differences as well as to speculate on impact and to probe visions. The international dimension of the dialogic endeavour and the diversity of experiences stimulated a lot of listening and learning, which was enriching. Observing the room and the atmosphere of the workshop it was gratifying to see that everyone got involved and contributed and that discussions ensued over dinner that day. The day enabled participants to get to know each other better and the institutions they represent.



**Prof. Kerstin Mey (UL President) on the YERUN GA at University of Limerick.**

## Lisbon, 11-13 October

Between 11 and 13 October, the second General Assembly of the year took place in Portugal, hosted by NOVA University Lisbon. On the second day, YERUN Rectors held a workshop on Talent Development, and exchanged views on the role of universities in the development of the future FP10 with DG RTD Deputy Director, Ms Signe Ratso.



Hosting the YERUN General Assembly at NOVA during our 50th-anniversary celebration provided a unique opportunity to strengthen our position as a European young university with a strong emphasis on research. As we continue to expand our international presence beyond Europe, this positioning becomes increasingly significant, highlighted by initiatives such as the recent development of our campus in Cairo and the establishment of strategic partnerships in Latin America and Sub-Saharan Africa.

Bringing like-minded European partners to Lisbon for the YERUN General Assembly also served as an opportunity to reinforce this identity principle within various units of our university.

The choice of different meeting locations, including the schools of medicine, social sciences, the Rectorate, and the school of business and economics, allowed us to showcase the diversity of our university and demonstrate our active participation in YERUN across various departments.

Moreover, this event addressed a crucial aspect that will shape the future of higher education – defining a comprehensive talent policy within European terms for a young university focused on research and education. It provided a platform to share our Teaching and Learning Innovation Policies, engaging in discussions regarding the talent implications embedded therein.

In summary, hosting our YERUN partners was an extraordinary opportunity for NOVA to showcase our university and its ambitions while aligning with shared values.

**Prof. João Amaro de Matos, (NOVA Vice Rector) on the YERUN GA at NOVA University Lisbon.**





# FOCUS ON EU POLICY AND WORK OF YERUN

In 2023 YERUN has considerably advanced its policy advocacy activity, in line with the many initiatives that have characterised this intense year. We are proud to have contributed to important developments that will have a concrete impact on the activities and opportunities for our member universities. Many of these initiatives are connected to the ERA Policy Agenda and its current actions. In this endeavour we have been supported by the great expertise of our colleagues participating in the YERUN Policy Platform.

The team at the YERUN office continuously manages to gather the latest information on important research policy topics from Brussels, to invite high-rank and interesting speakers to our meetings and in this way lays the foundation for the lively discussions and rewarding exchange within the YERUN Policy Platform. In addition, the team represents the interests of the YERUN members in a targeted and well-placed manner at the various events and fora in Brussels. We would like to express our sincere thanks for this!

**Beate Griepernau, Research Manager at Ulm University, and member of the YERUN Policy Platform**

NOVA's participation in the Policy Platform has been highly beneficial, allowing to have a broad and insightful overview of relevant aspects regarding ERA Actions, besides having the unique opportunity to contribute to a variety of policy documents.

**Isabel Rocha, Vice-Rector for Education at NOVA, and member of the YERUN Policy Platform**

## Research Assessment

YERUN has continued contributing to the advancement of the reform of research assessment during 2023 by means of incorporating our member's vision into [CoARA](#) (Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment) through the various meetings and exchanges held in the context of the YERUN ad hoc Group on CoARA. So far, 13 out of 23 YERUN members have signed the CoARA agreement and are contributing to implement reforms within their institutions.

2023 has not only seen the consolidation of the Coalition's Steering Board and Secretariat (who held two General Assemblies, two CoARA Working Group (WG) calls and brokerage events), but also the preparations for the creation of an extended CoARA Secretariat. YERUN is an active part of the extended Secretariat, co-leading Work Package 4 of the [CoARA Boost Project](#), which started officially in October, and is key, since it provides operational support to the WGs. In 2023, the CoARA Steering Board selected 13 WGs, and 5 YERUN members are active members of several of them.

CoARA is aimed at catalysing a systemic change in the assessment of research institutions, research projects and processes and researchers themselves. As such, it can succeed only if an international coordinated effort, such as that fostered via the YERUN Ad Hoc Group on CoARA, helps in exchanging views and practices among settings and universities that have come a long way in this process (e.g., those in the Netherlands and Norway) and those in more inert systems that are highly prescribed via national legislation, as is the case in Croatia, where the process is at its beginning. All this helps our efforts in CoARA itself, as well as in the CoARA Working Groups that we have joined. We, at the University of Rijeka are thus really thankful to our colleagues from the YERUN partners for providing us the opportunity to learn from them and to the YERUN Brussels Office for coordinating this process.

**Saša Zelenika, Vice Rector for Strategic Projects at UNIRI, and member of the YERUN ad hoc group on CoARA**

## Research Careers

2023 was a big year for research careers. On 8 December the Competitiveness Council reached a political agreement on a Council Recommendation for a European framework to attract and retain research, innovation, and entrepreneurial talent in Europe, officially adopted on 18 December.

With the invaluable input from the highly dedicated members of its ad hoc group Development of Academic Careers (and continued support from the YERUN Policy Platform), YERUN played a key consultative role in developing the proposal presented by the Commission and the final text of the recommendation. Besides our continual engagement and advocacy directed towards the Council Presidency Working Party on Research, on 2 November YERUN teamed up with leading European university associations in issuing a [collective statement](#) calling for greater ambition for the Council Recommendation and for further steps and proactive commitments that individual Member States must in turn undertake.

In the past year, a lot has been happening in Europe in terms of Academic Careers. The YERUN Brussels Office has been instrumental in sharing new policy developments to the universities at an early stage of development, and simultaneously gathering input to further shape these policies. In addition, being able to connect with colleagues at other YERUN universities who are concerned with similar topics, has been particularly inspiring. The Research Careers lunchtime series at the start of the summer were also an excellent opportunity to showcase good practices and challenging thoughts in the wider policy arena around YERUN.

**Karen Valdevelde, HR Director at UAntwerp, and member of the YERUN ad hoc group on Development of Academic Careers**

Participation in the YERUN working group on Development of Academic Careers has been a very positive experience. It has helped us to build connections with other universities across Europe, share experiences on matters of common interest, and enable further dialogue between YERUN universities and European policy makers.

**Alison O'Regan, Head of Staff Learning and Development at UL, and member of the YERUN ad hoc group on Development of Academic Careers**

This strong advocacy was building on the important work earlier in the year where the YERUN organised a series of online events on early career researchers ([Lunchtime series on Early Career Researchers](#)) and with the publication of the YERUN Position Paper [Towards a European Framework for Sustainable and Attractive Careers in Higher Education](#) as a response to the European Commission consultation, calling for policy coherence as well as pointing to the need for specific enabling framework conditions and provisions targeting early career researchers. In alignment with these initiatives, the February newsletter focused on [promoting intersectoral mobility of researchers](#), adding another dimension that will contribute to fostering vibrant research careers.



Furthermore, during 2023 the EU-funded project Sustainable Careers for Researcher Empowerment (**SECURE**) has catalysed close collaboration of European stakeholders, including the YERUN Brussels Office and three YERUN member universities (Cyprus, NOVA and Rijeka), on enhancing the attractiveness of research careers by analysing the state of the art of research career frameworks and tenure track-like models, and consequently providing evidence-based recommendations and feedback to the European Commission. Looking ahead to 2024, enabled by the SECURE project, YERUN will continue to advance on research careers, especially within the academic sector, via a selected on-the-ground pilot implementation of some key features of the adopted research careers framework, contributing to better understand challenges at stake and provide further recommendations for improved career prospects of researchers.

## Open Science

Our work on Open Science has continued with the same passion that has accompanied us on this topic since YERUN's foundation. The YERUN ad hoc group on Open Science has worked regularly on a series of peer learning exchanges on topics such as Open Science Policies, Open Science and Intellectual Property Rights, Citizen Science and Open Educational Resources. Furthermore, on 14 February (as per tradition!) the award ceremony of the YERUN Open Science Awards took place, with five inspiring projects being awarded in 2023, which you can access [here](#). It was also great to see so many inspiring initiatives organised by the members on the occasion of the Open Access International Week, and that we have collected in the [October newsletter](#). In November, we launched the third call of the YERUN Open Science Awards and we finalised the year with our traditional [Open Science Advent Calendar](#).

All the research and teaching activities, all the strategies, all the policies of the universities will fail if we don't have highly motivated and skilled staff that will work on their implementation. The development of academic careers is, therefore, of utmost importance not because it is high on the European policy agenda, but because it is imperative for the further development and growth of our institutions. The exchange of information, views and best practices on these topics that is taking place in the YERUN Ad Hoc Group on the Development of Academic Careers is highly beneficial to the University of Rijeka in tuning its internal discussions and policies and aligning them with those of our YERUN partners, to the benefit of our researchers and teachers as well as that of our institution as a whole.

**Saša Zelenika, Vice Rector for Strategic Projects at UNIRI and member of the YERUN ad hoc group on Development of Academic Careers**



Active engagement in YERUN's Open Science Working Group sparked enriching discussions on various topics including Open Science Policies, intellectual property rights, Open Educational Resources, and Citizen Science, enhancing our collective knowledge and academic advancement. The knowledge exchange with the YERUN members proves that Open Science is not merely a buzzword but a tangible commitment to drive innovation, establish collaborations and increase the societal impact of our science through openness and transparency. And most importantly, it's not a race, but an endeavour we are all equally invested in. In the end, we all cross the finish line together.

**Michel Saive, Project Officer Open Educational Resources & Open Access at Maastricht University Library, and member of the YERUN ad hoc group on Open Science**

Being part of the YERUN Open Science group has been really beneficial again this year. In particular, getting to learn about and celebrate some of the fantastic work in open science that our colleagues have achieved through the Open Science Awards is very rewarding. I'm looking forward to reading more of these this year!

**Hannah Crago, Open Research Development Librarian at UniEssex, and member of the YERUN ad hoc group on Open Science**

The YERUN Open Science Award has been instrumental in shaping our project's (ARROR) trajectory and pushing the topic of registered reports in the behavioral sciences. The award not only provided widely acknowledged recognition for our efforts in open science but also nudged ourselves to an even deeper commitment to transparent and collaborative research practices in management and applied psychology. We were already able to publish an open-access how-to guide and give half a dozen workshops and presentations across Europe – with more to come in 2024! This award is a testament to the power of open science in making research more credible and broadening the impact of our work”

**Roman Briker, Maastricht University, winner of the 2022 Open Science Awards edition**

The application for the YERUN Open Science Awards allowed us to document the current Open Science (OS) approaches in our institution and explore areas for improvement. Beyond merely acknowledging our commitment to open science, the award served as a source of motivation to elevate our practices and foster a thriving OS culture.

In line with this commitment, we have recently established an annual Open Science Award at KIOS CoE. This initiative aims to recognise individuals who embrace OS practices, encouraging others to adopt their exemplary approach.

**Andreas Kasis, UCY, winner of the 2022 Open Science awards edition**

YERUN has also advanced in its commitment towards Open Science through the [OPUS](#) (Open Universal Science) project. OPUS helps reforming research assessment through a system that incentivises researchers to practice open science practices. During 2023, the project has taken big steps towards its goals! Having the Universities of Cyprus, Nova University Lisbon and the university of Rijeka as partners, YERUN has contributed to the creation of a Researcher Assessment Framework and has led the work on the action plans governing future pilots, which will start in January 2024.

In recent years, the Theodor Fontane Archive at the University of Potsdam has pursued a long-term digital strategy for open access to cultural data and cultural heritage. Our goal is to make literary archives as institutions more open, their collections and data more accessible and thus research in the archive more transparent. The YERUN Open Science Award greatly recognises, underlines and supports our efforts in this area. Being part of the Young European Research Universities Network YERUN also anchors us in a vibrant European research landscape.

**Anna Busch, UniPotsdam, winner of the 2022 Open Science Awards edition**

The Open Science Group has developed an intense activity this year. A variety of topics have been discussed, among which there are two that help YERUN reflect on new upcoming challenges: Open Educational Resources (OER), where some institutions are starting to design policies, and Citizen Science, increasingly important in strengthening the relationships between research and society. From a practical point of view, the engagements with Open Research Europe (ORE) were very useful to know this alternative approach to publishing in EU-funded projects, which may lead to a change of paradigm in publishing sooner than expected

**Raúl Aguilera Ortega, Head of Library at UC3M, and member of the YERUN ad hoc group on Open Science**

The YERUN Open Science Award contributed greatly to our ability to develop a graphical user interface for our open-source R package called {rock}, which offers qualitative researchers worldwide a non-proprietary option for Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software. Using the Reproducible Open Coding Kit (ROCK) standard and software allows researchers to be more transparent about their process, which increases confirmability and reproducibility in research.

**Szilvia Zörgő, Maastricht University, winner of the 2022 Open Science Awards edition**

YERUN ad hoc group on Open Science is a valuable cooperation forum for our university to hear about current topics regarding Open Science initiatives in the European Union as well as hear about and share good practices in Open Science at universities in different European countries.

**Katrine Rintamäki, Head of Services, Training and information services at UEF, and member of the YERUN ad hoc group on Open Science**

Open Science represents a dynamic and rapidly developing area. The YERUN ad hoc group on Open Science comprises a dedicated collective of individuals, interested in the dissemination of knowledge and experiences on the topic. Collaboration within this group is not only advantageous for the individual members but also for their institutions. Each participant contributes a unique perspective, sparking novel initiatives and facilitating mutual learning. As a Young University, UCY is supporting and working together with the other group members, effectively to succeed in the common goal.

**Sylvia Vasiliki Koukounidou, Coordinator of Digitisation and Archives Office at UCY, and member of the YERUN ad hoc group on Open Science**



## Empowering higher education institutions in Europe

Following our commitment to ERA Action 13, dedicated to empowering Higher Education Institutions, YERUN has been participating in four meetings of a European Commission subgroup on ERA for Universities. In 2023, the work of the group has led to the development of a toolbox of measures that will help universities increase their global competitiveness, among which a potential European Excellence Initiative has been discussed. More ambition is needed though if it would aim to see the light in the future. Check our [YERUN's position](#) on the topic!

## European Universities alliances

With 16 members involved in 8 European Universities Alliances (CIVIS, EDUC, EPICUR, EUGLOH, EUNIWELL, EUTOPIA, UNIVERSEH, YUFE), YERUN has a critical mass to take the pulse of ongoing and future developments relating to the initiative. 2023 was dedicated to the two topics that are driving the discussions on the alliances: the Investment Pathway, to secure the future financial sustainability of the initiative, and the Monitoring Framework, to measure the transformative potential of the initiative as a whole. In this context, YERUN has also participated in the [II Forum on the European Universities Initiative](#) organised in Barcelona by the Spanish Presidency of the Council of the EU, as well as in two workshops organised by DG EAC in June and November. Strong of the common understanding reached so far within its ad hoc group on Alliances as well as at the leadership level, YERUN will continue working on this topic throughout 2024.

Being part of the Ad hoc group on European Universities Initiative has been an enriching experience. The YERUN team has provided us with valuable updates on the agenda and have managed to create a safe environment for sharing knowledge.

**Ida Thøstesen, Project Manager at SDU, and member of the YERUN ad hoc group on European Universities Alliances**

For me this group is a place to discuss wider themes and hear out perspectives beyond our own Alliance

**Katinka Käyhkö, Head of International Planning and Development at UEF, and member of the YERUN ad hoc group on European Universities Alliances**

## ERA Forum

2023 has marked a very intense year for the ERA Forum and for stakeholders' involvement into its implementation. With many Actions up and running already, in May the ERA Forum made a gap analysis to assess the drawbacks of the current ERA Policy Agenda (see [YERUN position](#) on the topic). That exercise has led the basis for subsequent discussions within the ERA Forum on the structure and the objectives of the ERA Policy Agenda – discussions that are still ongoing. YERUN has been very vocal in stressing the need for a thorough reflection on the structure, for a supporting policy narrative, and for an agreement on what Actions should be about (see [October reflection](#)).





Overall, this process has been instrumental in making the participants to the ERA Forum more aware of their role in driving the Policy Agenda and take more ownership of the process from beginning to end. We are therefore looking forward to reaching this common understanding and to simplify the construction of the future policy agenda.

## Horizon Europe and Erasmus+

It is always gratifying to be able to meet colleagues from other partner universities, share opinions and experiences, and learn about our good practices so that we can implement them at our university. Thanks to YERUN, UC3M is more connected to Europe and Europe is strengthened with the presence of UC3M

**Pawel Krzysztof Grześków Jaszczyszyn, UC3M, YERUN Coordinator, and member of the YERUN Erasmus+ Offices**

This year has also been crucial in the assessment of the two key EU programmes that support universities in their collaborative activities: Horizon Europe and Erasmus+. The interim evaluation of Horizon Europe took place at the beginning of the year (including a final evaluation of Horizon 2020) and the interim evaluation of Erasmus+ took place in autumn. In the assessment of both programmes, YERUN has published two position papers, that can be accessed [here](#) (Horizon Europe) and [here](#) (Erasmus+), that will pave the way for our network's continued involvement in the co-creation of the successors of these two programmes. On this note, we are of course thrilled about the positive news on the UK's association to Horizon Europe. We are extremely grateful to the YERUN Policy Platform, the YERUN group of Research Support Offices and the YERUN group on Erasmus+ for their great insights that paved the basis for the YERUN positions on these topics.

YERUN's Erasmus+ group allows us as Higher Education Institutions in Europe to come together and not only exchange experiences and gain insights into the diverse approaches to tackling common goals and challenges, but also to form a joint, and thereby stronger voice to make an impact in the future development of the Erasmus+ programme.

**Pia Kettmann & Wiebke Giese, UniPotsdam, and members of the YERUN Erasmus+ Offices**



### YERUN POSITION ON THE INTERIM EVALUATION OF ERASMUS+

7 December 2023



### YERUN POSITION PAPER ON THE PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON HORIZON 2020, HORIZON EUROPE AND ITS STRATEGIC PLANNING

Key aspects to look at for a thriving future of Horizon Europe

February 2023



I very much appreciate the exchange of ideas and knowledge in the working groups and enjoy the spirit of teamwork within the network as a whole.

**Melanie Hochstätter, Erasmus+ Coordinator at UniKonstanz, and member of the YERUN Group on Erasmus+**

# OTHER YERUN GROUPS

## YERUN ad hoc group on Innovative Teaching and Learning

The YERUN ad hoc group on Innovative Teaching & Learning has initiated a series of peer learning activities on how they are supporting the teaching staff in innovating their methods. Topics discussed concerned the creation of communities of practice, the collection of students' feedback, the use of digital tools, centres of innovative teaching & learning, and the impact of the pandemic. Furthermore, the group contributed to the creation of YERUN's feedback to the Commission's survey on an attractive careers in higher education, whose results will feed into upcoming recommendations led by DG EAC.

YERUN's Innovative teaching and learning group provides a wonderful ecosystem to discuss our concerns and opportunities rising along with the generative artificial intelligence tools. Not only the assessment is necessary to be revisited in every learning and teaching area, but also our methodologies could be powered with the help of GenAI. The group will be a place where we can exchange learning experiences with AI in higher education, studying synergies and sharing advice and regulations, providing the right path to enhance our students' critical thinking.

Ricardo Vergaz Benito, Associate Professor at UC3M, and member of the YERUN ad hoc group on Innovative Teaching & Learning

## YERUN ad hoc group on Lifelong Learning

After a series of peer learning meetings held on topics relating to the governance of Lifelong Learning at universities, their relating strategies and financing mechanisms, the connections to the labour market and the attractiveness of their offer, group's members delved into the topic of Micro-credentials as a tool to foster Lifelong Learning. The YERUN ad hoc group on Lifelong Learning partnered-up with YERUN members involved in the [ProcToGo project](#), and a [great event dedicated to Micro-credentials](#) was organised in Brussels on 23 November. The event brought together around 60 on-site participants and a fantastic line-up of speakers, from the European Commission, the OECD, the European Confederation of Search and Selection Associations (ECSSA), the European Consortium of Innovative Universities (ECIU) and YERUN members involved in the project. As an outcome, the group is now co-drafting guidelines for universities on how to plan and implement Micro-credentials. Lifelong Learning has been a focal point also in the YERUN newsletter this year, with coverage on two significant themes. In July, we delved into [Skills and Lifelong Learning](#), aligning with the Commission's priorities for the year. Our November newsletter spotlighted [Micro-credentials and Lifelong Learning](#), providing valuable insights into emerging trends in education at YERUN member institutions.



23

November

Exploring the Potential  
of Micro-credentials

Speakers of the ProcToGo  
and YERUN event:  
"Exploring the potential of  
Micro-credentials"



As members of this group, we contributed to all the meetings by explaining our Lifelong learning activities done in our university, including several presentations of finance and overall picture of our main tasks inside University as a School

**Ester Martínez-Ros, Associate Professor at UC3M, and member of the YERUN ad hoc group on Lifelong Learning**



Speakers of the ProcToGo and YERUN even: "Exploring the potential of Micro-credentials"

The EU targets for Lifelong Learning require a co-ordinated approach and a commitment to sharing of best practice knowledge across YERUN partners. The value of being part of YERUN's Lifelong learning working group is the opportunity to learn through sharing of members' practices, challenges and success, to enhance capacity of Higher Education Institutions to deliver on the lifelong learning agenda. Through networking, dialogue and discussion UL has found the international perspective beneficial to embrace to changes needed to support lifelong and life-wide learning, particularly the introduction and implementation of micro-credentials.

**Dr. Sarah Brady, MicroCreds Project Lead at UL, and member of the YERUN ad hoc group on Lifelong Learning**

Through my modest involvement with YERUN, I have discovered transformative methods of crafting educational models that not only acknowledge the environment but embrace an evolving landscape of inclusive knowledge. For me, this experience has amplified the significance of nurturing networks that prioritise discourse and action over hierarchy - paving the way for more collaborative and forward-thinking approaches to shaping the education systems of tomorrow

**Dominik Havsteen-Franklin, Professor of Arts Therapies Practice at Brunel, and member of the YERUN ad hoc group on Lifelong Learning**

## YERUN ad hoc group on SDGs

The YERUN ad hoc group on SDGs has been focused the design and preparations of a YERUN Winter School on Sustainability for PhDs, which will kick off in 2025 supported by a BIP (Blended Intensive Programme, EU funded). Furthermore, the group has also started a peer learning process on sustainability relating to strategies and governance, which will be the object of next year's work as well. On the topic of sustainability, in September YERUN has co-organised an event linked to the EULAB project, an Erasmus+ project led by the University of Limerick that brings together blended mobility, innovative pedagogies and the green transition. In the June newsletter, we highlighted our members' outstanding work on sustainability. Finally, in October the YERUN Office has participated in the final panel of a BIP led by the University of South-Eastern Norway on Driving Sustainable Futures, dedicated to university staff.



Speakers and moderator of the EULab and YERUN even: "Blended Mobility, Innovative pedagogies and the Green Transition"





The YERUN network and their amazing team have been pivotal in building meaningful engagement and action associate with the UN SDGs across member organisations. From my experience networks don't work successfully by chance, they need carefully orchestration. The YERUN team have successfully facilitated a diverse network of member universities, and enabled meaningful action which has resulted in the deepening of relationships, a clear and consistent voice in Europe and specific actions to be successfully implemented across member universities.

**Andrea Deverell, Director Centre for Sustainable Futures and Innovation at UL, and member of the YERUN ad hoc group on SDGs**

Being part of the YERUN ad hoc group on SDGs is extremely valuable in my position as programme organiser of the Sustainable Development Academy, a summer school on SDGs at the University of Potsdam. Not only is it the perfect chance to exchange ideas and good practise examples with the members of the partner universities but also to be part of a joint BIP that gives valuable insights into the structure, benefits and challenges of organising a BIP.

**Adina Schröter, International Office of UniPotsdam, and members of the YERUN ad hoc group on SDGs**

## YERUN Group of Research Support Offices

2023 has been an exciting and dynamic year for the YERUN Group on Research Support Offices. As a peer learning experience, the members met every month during the Internal Coffee Chats. A series of topics, prioritised by the group and very much related to the daily work of research management, served as a knowledge sharing forum (exchanging best practices and how how!) and to develop strong connections among YERUN research support offices. At each meeting, presentations from two YERUN members would precede a group exchange and discussion on a topic. Topics included engaging researchers and motivating newcomers to applying to Horizon Europe, increasing researcher skills in proposal-writing, national funding instruments providing international collaborations or improving the formulation of impact in Horizon Europe, among others.

Furthermore, the group remained very active concerning other YERUN initiatives, such as the preparations for the YERUN Research Collaborative Platform and other relevant consultations, such as on European research and innovation programmes 2014-2027 or FP10.

Having the opportunity to share experiences and learn from best practices from other research offices across YERUN is both a source of inspiration and motivation. Connecting people, as we have been doing through our regular research office coffee chats during 2023, really brings the network to life and opens up many opportunities for collaboration within our network. It's so much easier to take contact when there is a smiling face and a name to put to an organisation.

**Mary Anderson-Glenna, Head of Research and Innovation Section at USN, and member of the YERUN group of Research Support Officers**

Good to have this connection channel to reach out to like-minded Research Support Offices, hopefully in the future with a Maserati-style YERUN Research Collaborative Platform to hook up our researchers as well!

**Anne Adams, Head of the Grants Office at UAntwerp, and member of the YERUN group of Research Support Officers**

I thoroughly enjoyed working this year in YERUN Group of Research Support Offices – many thanks for the organising! The main activity of the group, Internal Coffee Chats, gave us all opportunity to meet each other, to exchange best practices and to discuss challenges in research management. And of course it was an opportunity to start collaborating! For me it was particularly interesting to learn about national funding schemes in other countries and about best practices in engaging newcomers. Overall, very useful initiative – well done, YERUN!

**Yulia Matskevich, Research Development Manager at Brunel, and member of the YERUN group of Research Support Officers**

# YERUN RESEARCH MOBILITY AWARDS

## YERUN Research Mobility Awards

YERUN Research Mobility Awards aim to foster collaborative research among our member universities. We did not launch a call in 2023 because we are focusing on creating the YERUN Research Collaborative Platform which will be a game changer for enhancing the collaborations among our members. In the meantime, we have received the reports on the collaborations we granted in 2022, and whose visits and collaborative activities took place mainly during 2023.

I am very grateful to have received the YERUN Research Mobility Award in 2022. Thanks to this grant, I have been able to do a research stay at the USN (Norway) with two prestigious researchers. This collaboration has allowed me to grow as a researcher and get to know a new way of doing research, as well as allowing me to obtain new results that have been disseminated to the scientific community in the form of a scientific article.

**Beatriz Cabellos Elipe, UAM, winner of the 2022 YERUN Research Mobility Awards edition**



Adrián Santamaría and Jesús Pinto, from UAM, during the 'Environmental Justice and Time' workshop, organised within their collaboration with the University of Stirling for the YERUN Mobility Awards.



Kwok Ng, from UEF, during an IPARC meeting with stakeholders in the context of his collaboration for the YERUN Mobility Awards.

Collecting data on people with disabilities has several challenges. Through the #YRMA, I was able to challenge measures of data collection among children with special educational needs in national reports of physical activity in Ireland and in Finland.

**Kwok Ng, UEF, winner of the 2022 YERUN Research Mobility Awards edition**

Thanks to the YERUN Mobility Award, I (together with Jesús Pinto) have been able to collaborate with the Human Security, Conflict and Co-operation Research Group of the University of Stirling, under the supervision of Professor Andrea Schapper and Professor Holger Nehring. The project we have carried out has led to the celebration of the "Environmental Justice and Time" workshop (2-3 May 2023, hybrid format).

**Adrián Santamaría, UAM, winner of the 2022 YERUN Research Mobility Awards edition**

The YERUN Mobility Award has allowed me to take my current research in new directions and to establish collaborations with colleagues from different disciplines. I have already been able to reap the fruits of these collaborations in some of my recent publications and larger grant applications

**Tullio Viola, Maastricht University, winner of the 2022 YERUN Research Mobility Awards edition**

I was fortunate enough to be awarded a YERUN Research Mobility Award to visit the University of Konstanz in May 2023. I was able to visit the Centre for the Advanced Study of Collective Behaviour and tour their impressive facilities, as well as chat with many researchers working in the cluster. I was also delighted to be able to give a seminar in their seminar series, which was a really exciting experience. I am very hopeful that the visit will lead to further collaborations in the future, and I am extremely grateful for the YERUN award which has helped to start building these relationships.

**Anna Hughes, UniEssex, winner of the 2022 YERUN Research Mobility Awards edition**



Maria Meier (UniKonstanz) during an fNIRS hyperscanning session, when Maria and a colleague from the SoNeAt Lab (UniEssex) were piloting a synchrony experiment together.

I am delighted to have received the YERUN Research Mobility Award 2022. This recognition allowed me to develop sustainable biosensor devices at Maastricht University, collaborating with NOVA SST. Beyond overcoming language barriers, the experience enhanced my communication skills and fostered personal growth by engaging with diverse cultures. The award opened doors for international collaborations, not only in my PhD work but also across various research areas. I'm grateful for the opportunities and experiences it brought.

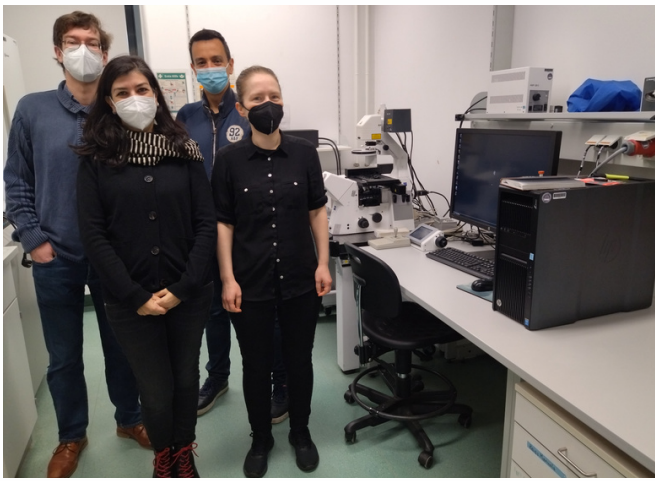
**Ana Furtado, Nova, winner of the 2022 YERUN Research Mobility Awards edition**

Thanks to the YERUN Research Mobility Award, I was able to establish a fantastic collaboration with Dr Lentz (The Arctic University of Norway). In few months, we have already generated valuable data that will shortly be communicated in scientific conferences and in a peer-reviewed article. Overall, it has been an amazing experience and a step forward in my career, and we are committed to maintain this fruitful collaboration in the future.”

**Ruben de Dios Barranco, Brunel, winner of the 2022 YERUN Research Mobility Awards edition**

The YERUN Research Mobility Awards were invaluable for my PhD thesis in Iberian early modern History. The opportunity allowed me to engage with experts at the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, sharing and discussing my project with professors like Laura Beck Varela and Julio Pardos. Their advice on archives and methodologies enhanced my work. The financial support provided by YERUN Awards facilitated cross-disciplinary collaboration, knowledge dissemination, and archival research at the National Library of Spain. These initiatives are vital for early-stage researchers, breaking financial barriers and fostering a vibrant, interconnected academic community. In summary, YERUN significantly contributed to enhancing and refining my research project.

**Mariana Meneses Muñoz, Nova, winner of the 2022 YERUN Research Mobility Awards edition**



Sara Bobone from Tor Vergata University of Rome collaborating with colleagues from the University of Potsdam in the laboratory in the context of her collaboration for the YERUN Mobility Awards.

The YERUN mobility award facilitated a collaborative project between Marion Sandner and me, reuniting us academically after years of shared work in human rights. Our research explores the relationship between Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ESCR) and the principle of solidarity. Presented at various events in the UK and Belgium, the paper, titled 'Solidarity as Foundation for Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights,' decodes the meaning and significance of solidarity in International Human Rights Law. It highlights the often-overlooked potential of solidarity as an interpretative guide for realising ESCR domestically, emphasising both international and internal dimensions. The collaboration allowed us to engage with colleagues and receive valuable feedback, contributing to the ongoing review of our paper.

**Dr Koldo Casla, UniEssex, winner of the 2022 YERUN Research Mobility Awards edition**



# YERUN COORDINATORS

The YERUN Coordinators, the network's 'golden circle', play a pivotal role as the bridge connecting YERUN activities with our members' initiatives. Their unique perspective sheds light on the value of collaboration between YERUN and its members. To highlight the importance of being part of YERUN we use directly the words of some of our Coordinators.



In **Jan Hupkens'** (Maastricht University) view, continues to benefit from an active participation in the YERUN network, contributing to activities in the field of Open Science, European Universities, the EU Policy Platform and the reform of academic assessment in 2023. Furthermore, the development of the YERUN Research Collaborative Platform in 2024, is a new tangible initiative to foster joint research among our universities.

For **Riikka Pellinen** (University of Eastern Finland) YERUN represents the European-wide peer network that enriches her ability to benchmark various issues quickly at her home university.

**Elena Avgoustidou-Kyriacou** (University of Cyprus) describes the role of the Coordinators as the crucial bridge connecting institutions with the YERUN network, fostering an environment of shared knowledge, experiences, and best practices. This collaboration not only strengthens individual institutions but also underscores the collective added value that emerges from joint efforts within the YERUN community.

In her second year as University of Potsdam's YERUN coordinator, **Marita Böhning**, values the professional enrichment gained from the GAs in Lisbon and Limerick. Engaging discussions on internationalisation priorities, shared challenges, and collaborative efforts within the network were particularly inspiring.



**Joëlle Pletinckx** (University of Antwerp) believes that engaging in YERUN working groups offers continuous and meaningful interaction, fostering the exchange of best practices. It provides an opportunity to seek innovative solutions for one's own institution by creatively applying the experiences gained within the YERUN working groups. The experience is consistently instructive, contributing to a continuous path of personal and professional growth within a dynamic and compelling environment.

For **Ida Thøstesen** (University of Southern Denmark) being part of the YERUN coordinators group is a valuable experience, providing a platform for knowledge sharing with like-minded institutions. The group serves as a networking tool and helps SDU stay updated on EU developments affecting universities.

In **Elena Buffa & Elisabeth Frei's** (University of Klagenfurt) view, as the link between YERUN and the members university, Coordinators engage in beneficial discussions with colleagues from other universities, enhancing international relationships and exchanging insights.

For **Petia Popova** (University Konstanz) being part of the YERUN network is incredibly enriching for her and for the University of Konstanz, in general. In her view the Brussels Office fosters collaboration, and at Konstanz they are grateful for the exceptional management. YERUN is a vibrant community of learning, empowerment, and innovation and the Brussels Office creates a trusting and engaging environment.



**Silvia Gómez Recio**  
**YERUN Secretary General**

It is becoming a tradition to include a selection of keywords in the concluding thoughts of the YERUN Annual Report. A selection of words that can summarise how we have lived the activities, achievements and challenges of the network during this year. We started 2023 joined by Nicolas Copernicus University and closed the year with the incorporation of Tallinn University. Two new universities joining our network and counting up to a total growth of 10 new members since 2021. While some other institutions have decided to walk other paths, the latest years and the culmination of 2023 reflects a steady **growth** for the representative of Young Research Universities in Europe.

But any growth cannot just be based on numbers: it reflects more qualitative aspects to the relations and impact that brings to the work we do. The growth we are living through is reflected in the content of our discussions, in the elaboration of our positions and reflections, and in the trust we are developing with our member institutions and with EU policy makers. Last but not least, 2023 has also brought the largest team ever in the YERUN Brussels Office, counting with 5 full time positions representing the interest of our institutions and facilitating their engagement in EU policies and activities.

This year we have also consolidated our **engagement** in Brussels, making our members actively involved in several EU initiatives, eagerly contributing to new EU policies, speaking up and showing their best practice and increasing their engagement and understanding of the opportunities in policy making within their institutions. The engagement with our leaders has also expanded with more interactions and in-depth discussions around key topics of Talent, Research Assessment, Foresight and Sustainability. YERUN events and meetings are now recognised as a testament of engagement, growth and transformation. Engagement in the interactions, growth in our learning and transformation in what we become after sharing what we know and learning from the others. That can only happen in a circle of trust.

Trust that is the result of the **endurance** that the network has demonstrated in the past years. Living through a pandemic, instability and war, and increasing geopolitical tensions, the voice of young research universities remains a constant that fulfils a more than deserved space in Brussels and has the ambition to become even more representative of the sector in the years to come.



# YERUN'S DNA





## - YERUN Members -



YERUN, Young European Research Universities Network, 2024

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