



YERUN ACTIVITY REPORT

2024/2025

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Transparency Register:

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2024

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SPARKS of YERUN



77 External Newsletter



22 Internal Newsletter



14 Working Groups



57 Governance meetings



3 Taskforces



4 YERUN Open Science Awards



10 YERUN Mobility Awards



41 YERUN Publications



20 external events as speaker

AT A GLANCE

2025

Coordinators

- online meetings: 13
- in person: 4

Board

- online meetings: 18
- in person: 3

Policy Platform (YPP)

- online meetings: 18
- in person: 1

Research Collaboration

- Connect by YERUN
- YERUN Research Mobility Awards



General Assemblies

- Mar 2024: Paris, France
- Oct 2024: Konstanz, Germany
- Mar 2025: Rijeka, Croatia
- Oct 2025: Nicosia, Cyprus



- SDGs
- Open Science
- Open Science Awards
- Research Support Offices
- Research Collaborative Platform
- Research Mobility Awards Group
- Academic Careers

Groups

- CoARA
- Lifelong Learning
- Innovative Teaching and Learning
- Erasmus+
- European University Alliances
- Knowledge Valorisation
- Rankings and Impact

New members



Research Security webinar (Jan 2024)

Research Matters Campaign & Event (Brussels, Oct 2024)

SDG Winter school (Limerick, Jan 2025)

AI in Open Science webinar (Oct, 2025)

YERUN Hackathon, DigiEduHack (2024, 2025)



Conference on Research Security (Nov 2025)

Advent Calendar on Research Assessment (Dec 2025)

Research Careers in the context of the ERA Structural Policy (Dec 2025)

Working Methods (2026-2030)

Launch of new Strategy for 2026-2030

Policy-Advocacy

- FP10 & MFF
 - Position papers, joint statements, amendments
- ERA & ERA Act
 - Universities at the centre of Europe's future
- Careers & MSCA
 - Stronger careers, no directionality in MSCA
- Open Science
 - Barcelona Declaration, assessment reform, AI & openness

Projects

- SECURE (ended in Mar 2025)
 - final event Brussels, Mar 2025
- OPUS (ended in Sep 2025)
 - AGM & MLE Bucharest, Nov 2024
 - MLE Cyprus, Apr 2025
 - Final event, Paris, Jul 2025
- CoARA Boost
 - Co-Chairs forum (Helsinki, Sep 2024)
 - GA (Brussels, Jun 2025)
 - WGs forum (Graz, Nov 2025)
- ATLAS (started in Dec 2025)
 - Kick-off meeting (Rome, Dec 2025)

10th Anniversary

- Conference: Jun 2025
 - 40 speakers
 - ~250 attendees
- Communications coordination
 - pre-event and post-event videos
 - during-event social media communication
 - panels coordination
- Publication on Young Research Universities

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A YOUNG RESEARCH UNIVERSITY?

Reflections and stories from YERUN



Yerun Young European Research Universities



Yerun

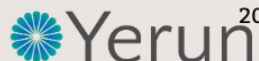


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INTRODUCTION TO A SPECIAL ACTIVITY REPORT

This Activity Report is special in many ways. For the first time, it presents a summary of the network's activities over a two-year period, a time that has been particularly rich in milestones for YERUN and its member universities.

The report brings together YERUN's achievements across 2024 and 2025, marking both the conclusion of the YERUN Strategy 2021–2025 and the exciting beginning of a new strategic cycle. As we step into the future, we do so with renewed energy, refreshed priorities, and a clear vision for the work ahead.

The years 2024 and 2025 have been remarkable for YERUN. The YERUN Brussels Office has grown to a team of six, an extraordinary milestone when we remember that, at the network's launch in 2015, there was no Office at all, and that from 2016 to 2019, the office operated only with its Secretary General. But most importantly, our network has expanded, welcoming new members who strengthen our collective voice and enrich our shared mission.

2025 has been particularly meaningful as YERUN celebrated its 10th Anniversary. This milestone offered a unique opportunity to highlight the impressive work carried out by the network and its members over a decade of collaboration and impact. The reflections on YERUN's journey accompanied us throughout the entire year, enriched by two memorable days in Brussels in June: one dedicated to celebration and reflection among members, and another spent celebrating together with YERUN's friends and partners from across the research, innovation and education community.

2025 also marked the year in which we addressed a topic we are often asked about: what does it mean to be a young research university? We explored this question through a collective reflection with our members that led to a publication sharing their perspectives and stories.

Over these two years, YERUN has continued to strengthen its voice in EU policy discussions, foster collaboration among its members, and invest in the development of initiatives that promote talent, openness, and societal impact.

We hope you enjoy reading about our journey and feel inspired by what we have accomplished together.

FOREWORD

By YERUN President & Rector of UiT - The Arctic University of Norway, Professor Dag Rune Olsen



In 2025, YERUN celebrated its 10th anniversary, marking a decade of young research universities across Europe being stronger together. YERUN has undoubtedly strengthened the collective voice of its members in European higher education and research policy. YERUN has, over the years, become a trusted voice in Brussel, a voice listened to. The anniversary reminded us of the commitment of member universities and the impact of their shared values.

2025 was also the year when the strategy YERUN strategy for 2021–2025 “Enable talents to grow” was completed. Looking at the goals and aims for this period, we can conclude that YERUN has succeeded. But rather than simply looking back at the achievements in open science, talent and career development, societal engagement and responsibility, the anniversary also represented an opportunity to look ahead.

Research and higher education in Europe will both be challenged and embraced in the coming years. Competitiveness and prosperity, resilient, democratic and secure societies, as well as a green, digital and innovative Europe depend on young talents and new ideas. Funding may become constrained and short-term goals may be prioritised over long-term achievements. YERUN is confident that young research universities are of crucial importance in the transitions ahead, and the YERUN board adopted a new strategy at the end of 2025 navigating in times of change.

As YERUN enters its next decade we are more than ready to shape future research and higher education in Europe.

YERUN EXECUTIVE BOARD

Being part of the YERUN Executive Board is both a responsibility and a commitment to advancing a shared vision for young research universities.

Below, our Board members reflect on their engagement with the network and on what working with YERUN represents to them.



Prof. Adam Kola
*YERUN Vice-President and Vice-Rector for Research
Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń*

"Serving on the Board of the Young European Research Universities Network allows me to contribute to a shared voice for young, ambitious research universities in Europe, ensuring that their distinct role – both regional and increasingly global – is clearly recognised. For me personally, it is also an important platform to bring forward the issue of research security, which in the current geopolitical context has become a necessity."

Prof. Sophie Vanhoonacker
*YERUN Treasurer and Professor at the Faculty of Arts
and Social Sciences at Maastricht University*



"In the rapidly changing European and international landscape, it is more important than ever that young European universities, as societal pillars of research and education, join forces and learn from each other."



Prof. Jens Ringsmose
*YERUN Board Member and Rector of the University of
Southern Denmark*

"YERUN is an important network, which we value and prioritise highly. As young universities, we are bound together through excellence in research and teaching, and extending our collaborations will provide us with a strong collective voice so that together we can have a true impact on the future of universities."

Prof. Barbara Höhle
*YERUN Board Member and Vice-President for Research
at University of Potsdam*



"As a member of the YERUN Board, I highly value the joint journey we are on together. The topics that concern me as Potsdam's Vice President for Research, Early Career Researchers and Equal Opportunities are closely aligned with YERUN's priorities – including our engagement in the Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment, the advancement of Open Science, and, of course, the support of early career researchers. I look forward to further strengthening collaboration across our network and to bringing even more researchers from our universities together via the Connect platform to jointly develop projects together."

THE YERUN BRUSSELS OFFICE

The YERUN Brussels Office supports the strategic and operational work of the network, ensuring the implementation of YERUN's mission and priorities. Working closely with member universities, the Board, and external partners, the office coordinates activities, facilitates collaboration, and represents the network in European policy discussions.

Since its foundation, the YERUN Brussels Office has steadily grown, expanding from a single staff member to a team of six. Today, it brings together a group of committed professionals dedicated to strengthening the research and innovation ecosystem for young research universities. Contributing to change that truly matters is what makes being part of the YERUN Brussels Office so meaningful.



From Left to Right: Brian Talty, Policy Officer, Silvia Gómez Recio, Secretary General, Myrto Kourouni, Policy & Legal Officer, Mariangela Boe, Communications Officer & Network Coordinator, Beatrice Rocco, Policy Officer, and Gabriela Sachetti, Junior Policy and Communications Officer.

YERUN AT A GLANCE

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6,753
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10 SPARKS of YERUN



77
External
Newsletter



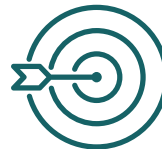
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YERUN Mobility
Awards



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YERUN Open
Science Awards



20
External events as
speaker

NEW YERUN MEMBERS

Since its foundation, YERUN has continued to grow, welcoming new members, which brings diversity and strengthens both its geographic reach and its collective expertise. 2024 and 2025, Welcoming Malmö University and the University of Bath, was no exception. The membership of Malmö University extended YERUN's presence to a European country not previously represented in the network, further enhancing its diversity and transnational dimension. In 2025, the University of Bath joined YERUN, reinforcing the network's representation in the United Kingdom and contributing strong interdisciplinary expertise and a shared commitment to research excellence, innovation and societal impact. Together, these two memberships reflect YERUN's continued development and its dedication to building a strong, collaborative community of young research universities across Europe.



Prof. Mia Rönnmar

Vice-Chancellor

Malmö University

"It is an honour to join YERUN, and we welcome this possibility to be a strong European voice for inclusive and societally engaged young research-intensive universities. We look forward to strengthening European collaboration at Malmö University and to future cooperation with new partners to promote research, education, and innovation of the highest quality."



Prof. Phil Taylor

Vice-Chancellor

University of Bath

"Becoming a member of YERUN, in our 60th anniversary year, will boost the strong international community we have built at the University of Bath, allied to our research impact, global alumni network and excellent graduate outcomes. I look forward to meeting with other YERUN universities in the coming months."

YERUN GENERAL ASSEMBLIES IN 2024

Paris, 19-21 March 2024

In March 2024, Université Paris Dauphine - PSL proudly hosted the YERUN General Assembly in Paris, an influential gathering of representatives from leading young European research universities. This event provided a valuable platform for meaningful dialogue, collaborative discussions, and the exchange of best practices on shared challenges in higher education.



YERUN Leaders, and YERUN Executive Board, during the General Assembly, March 2024 © Nicolas Fagot Paris

The Assembly's programme addressed key issues shaping the sector's future, with Artificial Intelligence (AI) emerging as a central theme. Tristan Cazenave, professor at Dauphine and renowned AI experts, delivered a compelling presentation on its applications in education, research, and university management. These discussions highlighted the transformative potential of AI while emphasising the need for its responsible integration to advance institutional missions and navigate associated challenges.



YERUN Coordinators and YERUN Secretariat at the YERUN General Assembly, March 2024 © Nicolas Fagot Paris

Equally significant were discussions on the evolving political dynamics within the European Union and their implications for the internationalisation of universities. These exchanges underlined the importance of agile strategies to safeguard global collaboration and academic mobility amidst a shifting geopolitical landscape.

Welcoming the General Assembly to Paris was an excellent opportunity for Université Paris Dauphine - PSL to contribute to high-level discussions on key topics in higher education, fostering valuable exchanges with peer institutions.

Reflections by Prof. Sophie Méritet, Vice-President for International Affairs at Université Paris Dauphine-PSL, on the YERUN General Assembly at Université Paris Dauphine-PSL.



YERUN Leaders, YERUN Executive Board, YERUN Coordinators, and YERUN Secretariat at the YERUN General Assembly, March 2024 © Nicolas Fagot Paris

Konstanz, 09-11 October 2024

As Rector of the University of Konstanz, it was a privilege to host the YERUN General Assembly on our campus from 9-11 October 2024—a moment that marked a significant milestone for both our university and the network. This gathering provided vital space for exchange, reflection, and forward-looking discussions. It was also a wonderful opportunity to reconnect with founding members – longstanding friends of the network since its earliest days – while also building and strengthening ties with our newer valued members and giving them the chance to get to know Konstanz and its vibrant academic environment.

Taking place during a dynamic and transitional moment, the event also carried a kind of symbolism, coinciding with a period of transition for Europe and YERUN itself. The Assembly’s return to Konstanz was especially meaningful to us, as it brought us back to YERUN’s roots—where one of the first Assemblies was held in 2016—while laying the groundwork for our network’s 10th anniversary as well as the next decade. For me, it was also key to introduce our new team of vice rectors, giving them the chance to engage closely with the network and its vibrant community.



YERUN Leaders, YERUN Executive Board, YERUN Coordinators, and YERUN Secretariat at the YERUN General Assembly, October 2024 © Milena Schilling

The Assembly provided us with a valuable opportunity to continue and deepen the conversations that began in Paris before the European elections, reflect on the developments since and explore critical aspects that will shape the future landscape of higher education and research.



Among the topics at the forefront were the EU’s new research security policy, the re-election of Ursula von der Leyen as European Commission President with her new policy priorities, and the influential Draghi report—all of which invited deep reflection on the central role of research-intensive universities in these evolving contexts.

A highlight of the Assembly was the workshop from 10 October on international collaboration in challenging political contexts. Featuring contributions from Nienke Buisman (European Commission, DG Research & Innovation, International Cooperation), Veronika Kupriyanova (Deputy Director at Academic Cooperation Association), and Dr Johannes Dingler (Director of the International Office, University of Konstanz), the session bro-

-ught together a rich diversity of perspectives, blending policy-making, international academic collaboration and university-level insights. Discussions highlighted the importance of international collaboration in academia, as well as research and innovation (R&I). Thriving international cooperation relies on an open, inclusive, non-discriminatory and safe academic environment, unfolding beyond the siloed approaches often seen today. Key themes included balancing security with openness, grounding efforts in strong values and the shared responsibility of all stakeholders in fostering trust, building capacity and enhancing resilience amidst rising geopolitical tensions.



YERUN Coordinators and YERUN Secretariat at the YERUN General Assembly, October 2024 © Milena Schilling



YERUN Leaders, YERUN Executive Board, YERUN Coordinators, and YERUN Secretariat at the YERUN General Assembly, October 2024 © Milena Schilling

YERUN's General Assemblies serve as vital connectors, reinforcing the network's collective identity while emphasizing the distinctive strengths of its individual members. The Assembly in Konstanz provided us with the unique opportunity to showcase our cutting-edge research and highlight our role in the German Excellence Strategy, underscoring the aspirations and competitive potential of young universities to stand alongside more established institutions in delivering impact and achieving excellence.

Reflections by Prof. Katharina Holzinger, Rector of the University of Konstanz, on the YERUN General Assembly at University of Konstanz.

University of Konstanz, October 2024 © Gabriela Sachetti



YERUN General Assembly, October 2024 © Gabriela Sachetti



YERUN GENERAL ASSEMBLIES IN 2025

Rijeka, 19-21 March 2025

As one of the members joining YERUN in the first enlargement process since its inception, it was a great privilege for the University of Rijeka to host its first-ever YERUN General Assembly. Meetings in Rijeka took place in the year marking YERUN's 10th anniversary, adding a note of excitement and anticipation of the celebratory conference held in June in Brussels.

Surrounded by stunning coastal views and dynamic cultural life, the University of Rijeka welcomed YERUN leaders and coordinators from 24 member universities, members of the Brussels Office, and special guests to discuss new initiatives that are helping to drive YERUN's continued development. After a warm welcome from Prof. Dr. Snježana Prijic-Samaržija, Former Rector of the University of Rijeka, participants had the opportunity to immerse themselves in the city. While literally walking through Rijeka's history with a guided tour of industrial heritage sites and stories of the rich, turbulent history, the participants enjoyed the Rijeka sun combined with our notorious wind, the bura.

The second day of the GA traditionally brought together YERUN Leaders and Coordinators, this time for a strategic workshop dedicated to shaping the YERUN Strategy 2026–2030. The YERUN Brussels Office provided updates on the latest EU-level policy developments, offering valuable context for the discussions. Thanks to our friend and trusted ally, visual strategist and facilitator Kristof Braekeleire, we proved that science and research don't have to be boring, but rather colourful, lively, and inspiring. The workshop fuelled the discussions and sparked fresh ideas. In a spirit of openness and collaboration, the participants reflected on the shared commitment to reinforcing YERUN's role as a key player in the European research and higher education landscape.



*YERUN Leaders,
YERUN Executive
Board, YERUN
Coordinators, and
YERUN Secretariat at
the YERUN General
Assembly, March
2025 © Tanja Kanazir*

The third and final day of the General Assembly featured the formal General Assembly meeting, thus concluding a meaningful dialogue, planning, and exchange. Leaders and coordinators reflected on recent developments of the CONNECT by YERUN platform, including the growing engagement of researchers and the initiative’s potential to foster impactful research collaborations across member institutions. In anticipation of YERUN’s big milestone, the meeting was also a stellar opportunity to reflect on the network’s 10th Anniversary celebrations, review progress to date, and look ahead to the upcoming activities. Further discussions addressed the network’s future enlargement and budget, updates on the Brussels Office’s work, and new initiatives aligned with the changes in the EU Research & Innovation sector.

The three-day event proved once more that the in-person General Assemblies are an excellent forum for networking, formal and informal discussions, exchange of ideas, good practices and know-how, as well as for strengthening the young and dynamic, yet reflective YERUN spirit of shared vision, with a strong orientation towards research excellence, innovation, and European values.

Reflections by Prof. Saša Zelenika, UNIRI Rector’s Advisor, and Nina Premuš, YERUN Coordinator at UNIRI, on the YERUN Gener Assembly at the University of Rijeka.



University of Rijeka, March 2025 © Tanja Kanazir



YERUN Coordinators at the YERUN General Assembly, March 2025 © Mariangela Boe



University of Rijeka, March 2025 © Tanja Kanazir

Nicosia, 7-9 October 2025

The University of Cyprus (UCY) had the privilege of hosting the YERUN General Assembly (GA) from 7 to 9 October 2025, in Nicosia. Bringing together leaders and representatives from Europe's most dynamic young research universities, the GA provided us with an opportunity to showcase the UCY's vision and ambitions and to engage the network in an open, forward-looking conversation on its long-term objectives.



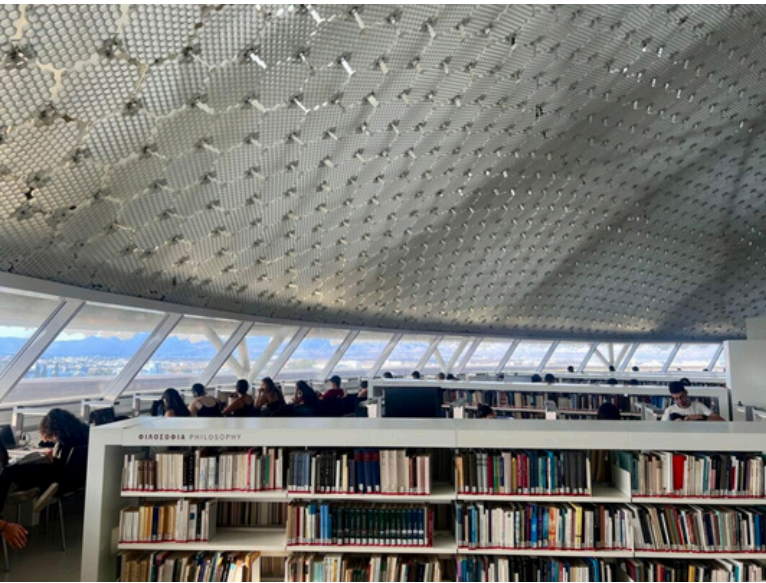
YERUN Leaders, YERUN Executive Board, YERUN Coordinators, and YERUN Secretariat at the YERUN General Assembly, October 2025 © University of Cyprus



Limassol, October 2025 © Gabriela Sachetti

As a relatively young university from one of Europe's smaller countries, UCY has managed to overcome significant challenges to become one of the leading universities in eastern Europe. By combining a strong research orientation with a people-centred approach we are committed to expand our international engagement within the European area and beyond. Hosting the GA allowed the UCY to put our commitment to pursue excellence in education, research and innovation on display and provided a platform to further strengthen UCY's contribution within the European community of young research universities. It also allowed us to demonstrate UCY's vibrant research environment and to show how young universities can lead in innovation and excellence.

The insightful presentations by representatives from the European Commission and the Deputy Ministry of Research, Innovation and Digital Policy of Cyprus and the lively discussions during the GA helped us to sharpen our understanding of the European Research Area (ERA) Act, the future FP10, institutional autonomy and academic freedom—core themes shaping the future direction of European higher education.



UCY Library, October 2025 © Gabriela Sachetti

UCY was honoured to facilitate these exchanges that reaffirmed our belief that our network of young, outward looking research universities can help shape the future of higher education and research in Europe.

A clear message emerged from the discussions: Europe must actively support academic and research excellence while safeguarding the institutional freedoms that make that excellence possible.



YERUN Secretariat and UCY International Office at the YERUN General Assembly, October 2025

Reflections by Prof. Eleni Tatiani Synodinou, UCY Vice-Rector for Academic Affairs on the YERUN GA at the University of Cyprus.



From Left to Rights: YERUN Vice President, Prof. Adam Kola, YERUN Secretary General, Silvia Gomez Recio, YERUN President, Dag Rune Olsen, UCY Rector Tasos Christofides, and UCY Vice Rector Eleni Tatiana Synodinou, October 2025 © University of Cyprus



YERUN Leaders, YERUN Executive Board, YERUN Coordinators, and YERUN Secretariat at CYENS Centre of Excellence, October 2025 © University of Cyprus

FOCUS ON YERUN WORK: POLICY ADVOCACY, GROUPS AND MUCH MORE

Policy Advocacy

2024 Overview

In 2024, YERUN's advocacy reached a new level of visibility and influence. As discussions around the next EU Framework Programme intensified, the network placed the topic at the centre of its efforts. FP10 became a defining priority, with YERUN combining its own [Position Papers](#) with a dedicated [video series](#) that brought together diverse voices from across the network. Through these initiatives, YERUN not only articulated its vision for the next Framework Programme but also strengthened its role in contributing to the broader debate on the future of European research, innovation, and education.



Throughout the year, YERUN joined forces with partners across the sector to amplify key messages. The network co-signed major advocacy initiatives such as [We Need Much More MSCA](#), [Prosperous and Competitive Europe: A Truly Interdisciplinary FP10](#), and a [joint letter with LERU addressed to Commission President Ursula von der Leyen](#) on budgetary priorities and the central role of research for Europe's competitiveness. At the same time, YERUN contributed to the [Horizon Europe interim evaluation expert group](#) led by Manuel Heitor, ensuring that collaborative, curiosity-driven and inclusive research remained at the heart of discussions on FP10. These actions reinforced YERUN's position as an advocate for bottom-up instruments such as the ERC and the MSCA, while also underlining the importance of an ambitious and balanced European research framework.





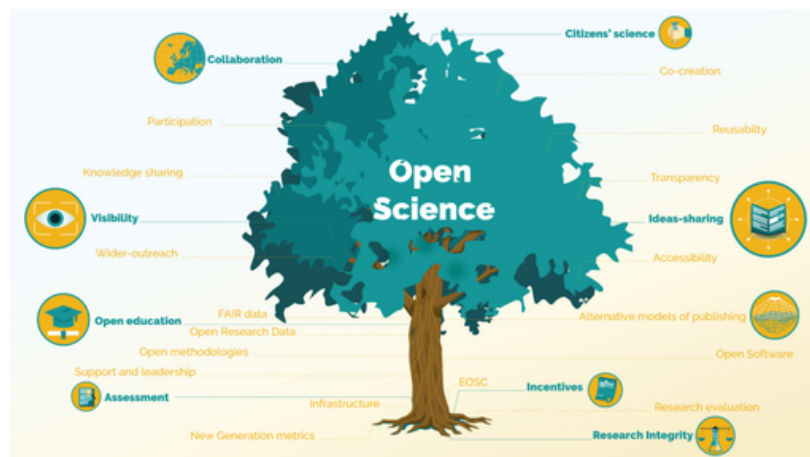
Through its contribution [Three steps to make careers in academia more attractive and sustainable](#), the network contributed to the discussions on academic careers and working conditions, influencing the [Council Recommendations](#) published later in the year.

The governance of the European Research Area (ERA) remained another central pillar of YERUN's advocacy. The network actively contributed to the development of the new ERA Policy Agenda 2025–2027, publishing the statement [A Stronger ERA with and for Universities](#) and responding to consultations on governance, coordination and inclusiveness. This advocacy efforts helped secure recognition that universities must remain central to the ERA's long-term vision and policy architecture.

As new policy questions emerged, YERUN also engaged in debates around research security and dual-use technologies. In response to the European Commission's consultation on its White Paper, the network issued the statement [More Dialogue Needed on Dual-Use](#), calling for proportionate, transparent and collaborative approaches that safeguard Europe's security while preserving the openness that underpins its research systems.

Alongside developments in research policy within DG RTD, YERUN also engaged closely with discussions emerging from the European Commission's education portfolio.

Open science and digital transformation were equally important areas of engagement. YERUN endorsed the [Barcelona Declaration](#) on Open Research Information, highlighting the connection between open science practices and societal trust in research. At the same time, the network contributed to the review of the [Digital Education Action Plan](#) and closely followed developments related to the European Degree, emphasising their potential implications for young research universities across Europe.





Throughout the year, YERUN also strengthened its voice on responsible research assessment and institutional impact. By [endorsing the More Than Our Rank initiative](#), the network joined a movement advocating for broader recognition of universities' contributions beyond traditional rankings. In parallel, YERUN's Knowledge Valorisation Group published [Fostering Societal Impact: The Role of Valorisation in European Research & Innovation](#), highlighting how engagement with society and knowledge valorisation are key drivers of both innovation and competitiveness.

By the end of 2024, the impact of these efforts had become increasingly visible. YERUN's recommendations were reflected in Council conclusions and ERA Forum outputs, while European institutions sought the network's expertise through consultations, Commissioners' hearings and structured policy dialogues. High-level participation in flagship initiatives such as [Research Matters Campaign](#), and [related event](#), featuring Enrico Letta, Maria Leptin, and Christian Ehler, further demonstrated that YERUN has become a forward-looking and respected voice in Europe's research and innovation policy landscape.



Gian Andri Casutt, Chief Communications and Public Affairs Officer at EUPRIO, YERUN Secretary General, Silvia Gómez Recio, and Enrico Letta at the Research Matters Campaign event, October 2024



Enrico Letta at the Research Matters Campaign event "Invest in the Future", October 2024

Pascal Metvier, Head of Research and Innovation at Syensqo, Maria Leptin, ERC President, and Enrico Letta at the Research Matters Campaign event "Invest in the Future", October 2024



RESEARCHMATTERS
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research-matters.eu

2025 Overview

Much of the year's advocacy revolved around several key themes: the future of FP10 and the Multiannual Financial Framework, the ERA Act, research careers, and the rapidly evolving policy agendas surrounding artificial intelligence and research security.

The year also demonstrated the value of sustained and consistent advocacy: after months of debate across the European policy landscape, the independence of European research and innovation was safeguarded with the confirmation of a standalone research framework programme.

At the same time, YERUN's voice helped shape the early stages of the debate on the [ERA Act](#), where we consistently argued for strengthening academic freedom, mobility and sustainable careers at the heart of the new framework. In parallel, the network contributed to discussions around the [Union of Skills](#) initiative, emphasising the role of universities not only as education providers but also as engines of knowledge creation, creativity and talent development across Europe.

As debates intensified around the potential integration of FP10 into a broader European Competitiveness Fund, YERUN closely followed developments and strongly supported the [Warsaw Declaration](#) in March, which defended FP10 as an independent research programme. Through internal workshops, expert contributions and coordinated advocacy, the network highlighted the importance of collaborative, interdisciplinary and early-stage research.

These priorities were further reinforced through targeted publications and policy interventions. YERUN's paper [Preserving the Foundation of Innovation: Call to strengthen early-stage collaborative R&I in FP10](#) and the network's *First Reaction to FP10 and the European Competitiveness Fund* provided clear, evidence-based arguments supporting a balanced and ambitious future framework programme.

Advocacy for the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions remained a cornerstone of YERUN's efforts throughout the year. The [Joint Statement on MSCA Directionality](#), co-signed by seventeen organisations, sent a strong signal in defence of the programme's excellence-based and bottom-up model, warning against the risks of top-down reallocation of funds. In parallel, YERUN continued to advance the broader research careers agenda through its engagement with initiatives such as CoARA, SECURE and consultations on the ERA Act. Through these contributions, the network emphasised the need for sustainable, attractive and transparent academic career paths across Europe.



The final quarter of 2025 became a particularly dynamic period for YERUN, combining policy engagement, member-driven initiatives and preparations for the next strategic cycle. During these months, the network demonstrated its ability to operate simultaneously on multiple levels: contributing to European research and innovation policy, strengthening project-based collaboration across its membership, and preparing the strategic direction for the years ahead.



YERUN Policy Officer Myrto Kourouni, during the roundtable "FP10 and the implications for the national landscape of the new Framework Programme", organised during NOVA Science & Innovation Day, December 2025



YERUN Secretary General and YERUN Vice-President with Commissioner Zaharieva, May 2025

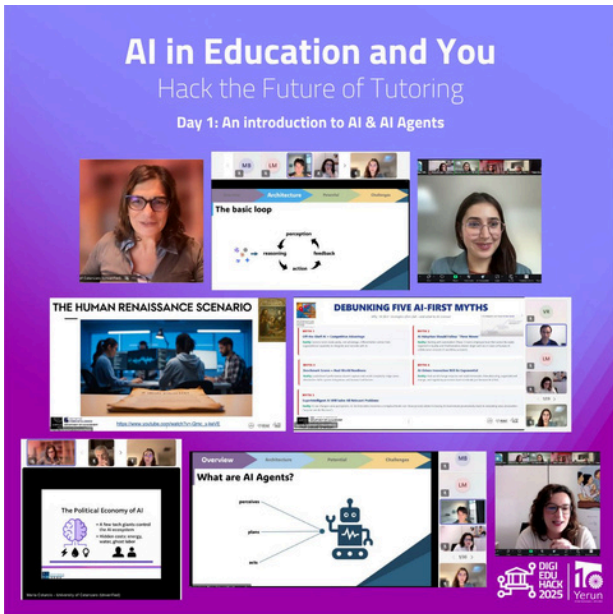


YERUN Board and Brussels Office, November 2025



YERUN Webinar "Artificial Intelligence in Open Science", October 2025

Artificial intelligence remained a key cross-cutting theme. In October, during International Open Access Week, the YERUN ad hoc group on Open Science organised a [webinar on Artificial Intelligence in Open Science](#), attracting more than one hundred participants from across the European research and higher education community. The discussion explored how AI can support open science practices, improve reproducibility and accelerate knowledge dissemination. Rather than framing AI as a challenge to research integrity, the event highlighted its potential as a tool for strengthening the openness and societal impact of research, contributing to a more balanced and evidence-informed debate within the European policy landscape.



Danish EU Presidency High Level Conference on Reforming Research Assessment, December 2025

This forward-looking approach was also reflected in the success of the [YERUN Hackathon](#) organised in November. The initiative brought together students from across the YERUN network and beyond, reinforcing YERUN's commitment to multilevel engagement and intergenerational dialogue. Student-led teams focused on one of today's most pressing questions—the role of artificial intelligence in tutoring and education—exploring how AI can support learning environments. The Hackathon demonstrated YERUN's capacity to bridge policy discussions with experimentation and practical innovation, highlighting universities as incubators for responsible AI deployment in learning environments.

YERUN continued to strengthen its role as a constructive partner to the European Commission in the topic of research security. Throughout the year, the network worked closely with the European Commission and co-organised the first [European Flagship Conference on Research Security](#). Held from 28 to 30 October, the event gathered around 500 policymakers, experts and practitioners from across Europe and international partner countries. YERUN's dedicated session, co-organised with CESAER, brought together experts from across the network and highlighted key perspectives on how universities approach research security from different institutional contexts.

As a recognised stakeholder within the ERA Action on “Enhancing Research Security”, YERUN maintained regular exchanges with the European Commission and other actors in the research ecosystem. These dialogues ensured that policy discussions remained informed by the practical realities faced by young research universities across Europe.



Research Security Conference, October 2025

Engagement with the European Commission’s proposal for FP10 remained a key advocacy priority in the final months of the year. YERUN collaborated closely with six other university organisations to ensure that the voice of young research universities was clearly reflected in the evolving negotiations. This cooperation resulted in a [coordinated set of joint amendments](#) reflecting YERUN’s priorities. By combining collaboration with targeted expert input from YERUN members and the YERUN Brussels Office, the network contributed to shaping key elements of the proposal at a critical stage of the legislative process.

**Shared Vision, Unified Voice:
Universities and Research Institutes
in Europe Propose Joint FP10 Amendments**



Universities networks during a meeting to present the joint amendments to the FP10 Proposal to MEP Christian Ehler

By the end of 2025, it was clear how far YERUN had come since the launch of the 2021–2025 Strategy. What began as a phase focused on building visibility in Brussels had evolved into a role in which YERUN increasingly contributes to shaping the policy agenda itself.

A special mention in acknowledging YERUN’s policy work goes to the YERUN Policy Platform, a group of dedicated professionals from YERUN member institutions who have supported YERUN’s policy and advocacy work since the very beginning of the network. Through their expertise and engagement, they contribute to bringing forward the perspectives of young research universities.



Presidents and Brussels office representatives of university networks exchange on the Union of Skills, January 2025



YERUN Vice-President and YERUN Secretary General with MEP Eszter Lakos

YERUN Groups

At the end of 2025, we not only concluded a particularly important year for YERUN, but also brought to a close the network's second Strategy, which ran from 2021 to 2025. The completion of this strategic cycle marked the beginning of a new phase for YERUN, with a renewed strategy that introduced new objectives, priorities, and ways of working. As a result, the ad hoc groups that had been active during the 2021–2025 strategy have now concluded their activities.

We are extremely proud of the accomplishments of these groups and deeply grateful for the invaluable contributions of each member who participated in them. Their commitment and expertise have been instrumental in defining YERUN's work and achievements over the past five years.

As this special edition of the Activity Report reflects not only two years of activity but also the conclusion of a full strategic cycle, we would like to highlight the important work carried out by these groups throughout the 2021–2025 strategy.

To showcase their remarkable contributions and achievements, we have prepared a series of infographics presenting the key outputs delivered during this period. We invite you to explore them at [this link](#) and at the end of this Activity Report.



From Top Left to Bottom Left:

- Participants in the "Engaged Research Design for Sustainability" Blended Intensive Programme, developed in the context of YERUN's Group on Sustainable Development Goals, and co-organised by YERUN and the University of Limerick.
- Members of the YERUN ad hoc Group on Lifelong Learning and Chiara Colella, former YERUN Policy Officer, during the event "Exploring the Potential of Micro-credentials", organised in Brussels in the context of the ProcToGo project;
- Dr. Dorina Papanastasiou, NOVA University Lisbon, and Dr. Muhammad Shafique, Brunel University of London, during their collaboration in the context of the YERUN Research Mobility Awards 2024-2025

Projects

Project-based engagement continued to underpin YERUN’s policy work. Two major European projects, OPUS and SECURE, were successfully concluded in 2025, consolidating the network’s contributions to open science practices, responsible research assessment and the implementation of the European framework on research careers.

OPUS - Open and Universal Science

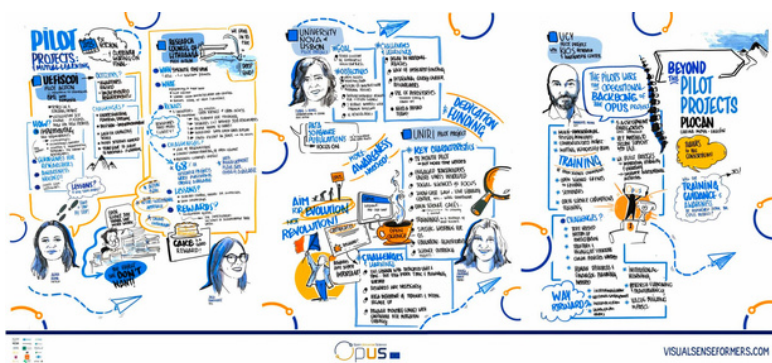
From September 2022 to August 2025, the [OPUS project](#) worked to rethink how researchers are assessed, aiming to align evaluation systems with the principles of open science. At a time when openness, transparency and collaboration were becoming central to the European research agenda, OPUS sought to ensure that these practices would also be recognised and rewarded in researcher assessment.

YERUN played a key role in the project by leading the piloting phase, coordinating the testing of new approaches in three research-performing organisations –the University of Cyprus, the University of Rijeka and NOVA University Lisbon—as well as in two research funding organisations. Together, these institutions experimented with ways to integrate open science practices into their assessment processes.

The project developed a new [Researcher Assessment Framework](#) that moves beyond traditional metrics such as publication counts and journal impact factors. Instead, it recognises practices including early and open sharing of research, open access to outputs, engagement in open peer review, reproducibility of results and collaboration with societal stakeholders. Through pilot action plans and mutual learning exercises, participating organisations tested and refined these approaches while sharing experiences and lessons learned.



Researcher Assessment Framework Structure



OPUS Final Conference, July 2025





OPUS Partners in Paris, July 2025

By the end of the project, these efforts led to the development of [OSCAM2](#), a comprehensive framework of indicators designed to recognise open science practices in researcher assessment. Through its leadership in coordinating the pilots and facilitating collaboration between institutions, YERUN helped translate the principles of open science into practical reforms that can support a more transparent, responsible and impactful research culture across Europe.

SECURE – Sustainable Careers for Researcher Empowerment

From January 2023 to March 2025, the [SECURE project](#) worked to translate European ambitions on research careers into practical measures for universities and research funders. Building on the Council Recommendation on attracting and retaining research talent in Europe, the project focused on improving career conditions for researchers across all stages, from early-career to senior positions.



Gareth O'Neill, Technopolis, during the SECURE Final Summit, March 2025



YERUN Secretary General, Silvia Gómez Recio, during the SECURE Final Summit, March 2025

At the centre of the project was the development of the [Researcher Career Framework \(RCF\)](#), a comprehensive set of 80 actions designed to help research-performing and research-funding organisations strengthen recruitment, career progression, mobility, skills development and working conditions. Rather than prescribing a single model, the framework allows institutions to select and prioritise actions according to their own strategies and contexts.

YERUN universities, including the University of Cyprus, the University of Rijeka and NOVA University Lisbon, tested the framework through pilot action plans. Over a twelve-month trial period, these institutions implemented selected measures, providing insights into both the opportunities and challenges of reforming research careers in practice.



SECURE Partners and Participants in the SECURE Final Summit, March 2025

SECURE also explored the development of [tenure track-like models](#) across Europe. Drawing on case studies from nine countries, the project analysed how such systems operate within different legal and institutional contexts and identified principles for fair, transparent and supportive career pathways. The project's final policy recommendations contribute to ongoing European discussions on how to make research careers more attractive, stable and sustainable.

CoARA Boost– Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment

Since October 2023, YERUN has continued to support the reform of research assessment through its participation in CoARA Boost, a three-year project designed to strengthen the operational capacity of the [Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment \(CoARA\)](#). The project supports the growing global movement to reform how research and researchers are evaluated, helping institutions move beyond traditional metrics and implement more responsible and inclusive assessment practices.

A key element of CoARA Boost is the redistribution of more than half of the project's budget through cascade funding, enabling universities and research organisations to implement concrete reforms. So far, two calls have funded 53 projects, supporting pilot initiatives, institutional change projects and collaborative "teaming" activities across Europe. Among them is the OSCAR project, led by the University of Rijeka in partnership with the University of Cyprus and the European Office of Cyprus, which focuses on integrating open science principles into research evaluation and fostering institutional change.

Beyond funding, the project also supports the broader work of the coalition by analysing members' action plans, strengthening knowledge sharing and awareness, and providing operational support to CoARA's working groups exploring new models of research assessment. Through its role in supporting these activities, YERUN contributes to building a stronger international community committed to transforming research assessment practices and advancing the principles set out in the CoARA agreement.



In December 2025, YERUN launched the [Research Assessment Advent Calendar](#), inviting the higher education community to explore common myths about research assessment and the evidence that challenges them. From 1 to 24 December, a digital “door” opened each day to reveal a short myth and truth pair designed to stimulate reflection and discussion.

The initiative was co-created with several CoARA Working Groups, bringing together expertise from different countries, disciplines and organisations. Their collective work transformed insights from discussions, pilots and policy work into clear messages highlighting why many assumptions about research assessment are misleading and how fairer, more meaningful practices can be implemented.

The calendar builds on YERUN’s previous [Open Science Advent Calendar](#) initiative and continues the network’s efforts to promote responsible and inclusive approaches to research evaluation.



ATLAS - Assisting Teaching and Learning with AI-based Tools

In December 2025, YERUN launched, together with eight of its members, NOVA University Lisbon, Maastricht University, Tallinn University, Universidad Carlos III de Madrid, University of Antwerp, University Konstanz, University of Rome - Tor Vergata, University of South-Eastern Norway, and one external partner, a new European project: [ATLAS](#).

ATLAS aims to design, test and promote Generative AI Use Cases in higher education to enhance teachers’ efficiency, teaching effectiveness and student engagement. It empowers professors to integrate GenAI tools into their activities in an ethically responsible, pedagogically sound and easily scalable way.



ATLAS Project Partners, December 2025

This continuity between concluded and newly initiated projects illustrates YERUN’s ability to translate policy priorities into structured action.

YERUN 10TH ANNIVERSARY

In 2015, a group of forward-thinking institutions came together with a shared vision: to strengthen the voice and impact of young research universities in Europe. From that ambition, the Young European Research Universities Network (YERUN) was born. Ten years later, YERUN has become a vibrant network championing collaboration and excellence in higher education, research, and innovation.

As anticipated, 2025 has been a truly special year for YERUN. We celebrated our first ten years as a network, marking an important milestone in our journey. Yet this anniversary was much more than a celebration. It became an opportunity for our community to come together, to reflect on the path we have travelled, and to recognise the collective impact of our work.

Sparks of YERUN

Looking back at what we have achieved over the past decade also sparked new inspiration. This reflection gave life to “[Sparks of YERUN](#),” the special 2025 edition of our newsletter. Over the course of ten months, it has explored the topics where YERUN’s work has made a distinctive contribution, enriched by reflections, interviews, and stories from across our community of members.



WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A YOUNG RESEARCH UNIVERSITY?

Reflections and stories from YERUN



 **Yerun**
Young European Research Universities

What does it mean to be a young research university?

At the same time, we took on a fundamental question: what does it mean to be a young research university? This reflection resulted in a publication “[What does it mean to be a young research university? Reflections and stories from YERUN](#)”, that captures the essence of who we are and what distinguishes us. And—spoiler alert—being young is not simply a matter of age. It is about openness, dynamism, impact, and courage. Through this publication, we also tell the stories of our members and highlight the remarkable impact they have on society, demonstrating how young research universities are not only centres of excellence, but also powerful drivers of innovation, collaboration, and positive change.

YERUN 10TH Anniversary Conference

At the heart of these celebrations were two exceptional days in Brussels on 4 and 5 June 2025, bringing together YERUN members, European policymakers, partners and friends to reflect on a decade of achievements and to look ahead to the future.

4 June – High Level Reception

The first day of the celebrations took place at the YERUN Brussels Office and was dedicated to a moment of reflection with YERUN members and Brussels-based policymakers. The gathering offered an intimate opportunity to look back at how far the network has come.



YERUN Community in Brussels for the YERUN 10th Anniversary Conference, June 2025

Participants were warmly welcomed by Prof. Dag Rune Olsen, YERUN President; and Prof. Adam Kola, YERUN Vice President. YERUN Secretary General Silvia Gómez Recio opened the session with a powerful reflection on YERUN's 10-year journey, highlighting the network's evolution from a young network to an influential and proactive voice in the European higher education and research landscape. Through insightful and personal member reflections, participants traced the story of how YERUN was born, how it has grown, and how it has responded to new challenges and opportunities.



Corrado Cerruti and Joëlle Peltincks, YERUN Coordinators, June 2025



YERUN President, Prof. Dag Rune Olsen, June 2025

YERUN Vice President, Prof. Adam Kola, June 2025



External perspectives from long-time partners offered further depth to the session. **Dario Capezzuto**, Policy Officer at DG RTD at the European Commission; **Sergej Možina**, Counsellor for Research at the Permanent Representation of Slovenia to the EU; and **Emmanuelle Gardan**, Director at the Coimbra Group, all shared valuable insights into the importance of collaboration with YERUN. Their remarks reaffirmed the network's relevance and its contribution to policy dialogue and strategic cooperation in Europe.

From Left to Right: Silvia Gómez Recio, Dario Capezzuto, Sergey Mozina, and Emmanuelle Gardan, June 2025



5 June – 10 Years of YERUN: Looking Ahead, Growing Together

The following day, the celebrations moved to SPARKS in Brussels with the YERUN 10th Anniversary Conference, under the inspiring theme “10 Years of YERUN: Looking Ahead, Growing Together”. The day opened with a short but powerful video showcasing the value and impact of the YERUN network and its members. This was followed by **welcoming speeches from YERUN President Prof. Dag Rune Olsen and Secretary General Silvia Gómez Recio**, who both emphasised the significance of the moment, not only as a celebration of the past but as a launchpad for the future.



YERUN President, Dag Rune Olsen, and YERUN Secretary General, Silvia Gómez Recio, June 2025



The Conference continued with a **keynote address by European Commission Vice-President Henna Virkkunen**, who recognised the critical role of universities in strengthening Europe’s competitiveness. She emphasised that universities are at the centre of Europe’s strategic vision, especially in deep tech, quantum technologies, and regional innovation, and reminded the audience that “**young universities are not just participants, they are leaders.**”



European Commission Vice-President Henna Virkkunen, June 2025



European Commission Executive Vice-President Roxana Minzatu, June 2025

The speech was followed by a **video message from European Commission Executive Vice-President Roxana Mînzatu**, recorded especially for the occasion. She offered a vision on the future of education, skills, and universities in Europe, stressing the role of universities as launchpads for lifelong learning and as crucial bridges between education and enterprise. “Let’s make Europe the destination of choice for brilliant students, innovative researchers, and bold creators,” she urged.

A key highlight of the morning was the **high-level panel** discussion on one of the most pressing questions for Europe's future: **"What Do We Need for a Competitive Europe?"**. Moderated by Charlotte Van Velthoven-Geerdink (Charly Speaks), the panel brought together **Andrzej Szeptycki**, Deputy Minister of Science and Higher Education of Poland; **Eszter Lakos**, Member of the European Parliament (European People's Party); **Maria Leptin**, President of the European Research Council; and **Pauline Rouch**, Director of the Common Policy Centre at DG RTD, European Commission. The panel explored what it will take for Europe to maintain and strengthen its competitiveness. The discussion addressed the need to accelerate innovation, close regional R&I gaps, strengthen the social role of universities, and ensure that knowledge creation and critical thinking remain central to Europe's strategy.



From Left to Right, Silvia Gómez Recio, Maria Leptin, Andrzej Szeptycki, Pauline Rouch, Dag Rune Olsen, Eszter Lakos, and Adam Kola, June 2025



High-Level Panel "What Do We Need for a Competitive Europe?", June 2025

Over the morning, the Conference then moved into three parallel panel sessions, each exploring a theme central to YERUN and the broader higher education, research, and innovation landscape.

The first session, **"How Can the R&I Sector Better Contribute to Europe's Future?"**, brought together an inspiring group of speakers to examine how research and innovation funding can be better aligned with Europe's ambitions. Moderated by Charlotte Van Velthoven-Geerdink, the panel featured Caroline Grewis Vandierendonck, Head of the STEP Taskforce, DG BUDG, European Commission; Pirta Lindholm Director of ERRIN; Colin Fitzpatrick, Vice President of Global and Community Engagement at University of Limerick; Malin Ideland, Pro Vice Chancellor for Research and Doctoral Education at Malmö University; and Geoff Rodgers, Pro Vice Chancellor for Enterprise and Employment at Brunel University London.



Panel "How Can the R&I Sector Better Contribute to Europe's Future?", June 2025

Together, they offered a rich and engaging discussion on ways to enhance Europe's global competitiveness, including the need to reduce regulatory burdens, foster a culture that embraces innovation and risk, improve coordination and flexibility in funding, and fully leverage universities to support talent development and start-up ecosystems.

The second session, **“Europe’s Competitiveness: What Are the Real Assets of Europe? Can Technology Alone Save Us?”**, moderated by Massimo Busuoli, Director at NTNU, featured Maria Cristina Russo, Director for Prosperity at DG RTD, European Commission; Lina Gálvez, Member of the European Parliament (Socialists and Democrats Group); Jonathan Deer, Treasurer of EASSH – European Alliance for Social Science and Humanities, and Director of Research and Innovation at City St George’s, University of London; and Rianne Letschert, President of Maastricht University. The discussion called for a broader, more holistic approach to competitiveness, one that goes beyond GDP and fully values curiosity-driven research.



“Europe’s Competitiveness: What Are the Real Assets of Europe? Can Technology Alone Save Us?”, June 2025

Speakers highlighted the urgency of interdisciplinary collaboration, the importance of universities as spaces for breakthrough thinking and societal engagement, and the need to rethink how excellence is defined and supported. Academic freedom, independent funding, and long-term impact were underlined as critical elements of Europe’s research future.



Panel “Who Leads the Leaders? Rethinking University Leadership in a Changing World”, June 2025

The third session, **“Who Leads the Leaders? Rethinking University Leadership in a Changing World”**, was facilitated by YERUN Secretary General Silvia Gómez Recio and featured Lana Par, Vice President of the European Students’ Union; Thomas Estermann, Director of Governance, Funding and Public Policy Development at European University Association; Ada Pellert, Rector of the University of Klagenfurt, and Jens Ringsmose, Rector of the University of Southern Denmark. Together, they reflected on the evolution of university leadership and the importance of inclusive, transparent, and adaptable governance models. The conversation underscored the value of student engagement, clear institutional vision, and communication as drivers of transformation in higher education.

This was followed by an inspiring keynote speech by Jamil Salmi, Global Tertiary Education Expert and long-time friend of YERUN. In his address, “The University of the Future”, Mr. Salmi challenged outdated models and offered a compelling vision for student-centred, interdisciplinary, and equity-driven education. He stressed the need to move beyond rigid systems and embrace more flexible, inclusive, and experiential learning environments. “Old ways won’t open new doors,” he concluded, a phrase that perfectly captured the spirit of the day.



Jamil Salmi, June 2025



Gideon Koekoek, June 2025



Gabriele Spilker, June 2025

One of the most memorable moments of the afternoon came with a **TED Talk session** featuring five outstanding researchers from YERUN member universities. Gideon Koekoek, Associate Professor of Physics at Maastricht University, explored how “big science” projects like the Einstein Telescope are boosting physics research and STEM talent retention. Gabriele Spilker, Professor of International Politics–Global Inequalities at University of Konstanz, examined how perceptions of inequality shape political behaviour and policy. Adam Izdebski, Researcher at Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń, shared lessons from historical epidemics and their implications for public health strategies. Tina Kold Jensen, Professor of Environmental Epidemiology at University of Southern Denmark discussed the public health impact of PFAS and the importance of independent academic research. Finally, Cyprien Verseux, Postdoctoral Fellow and Junior Research Group Leader at ZARM, University of Bremen, presented how Mars-focused research is yielding sustainable solutions for Earth. These powerful presentations illustrated how young universities are not only producing knowledge, they power change.



Adam Izdebski, June 2025



Tina Kold Jensen, June 2025



Cyprien Verseux, June 2025

The afternoon continued with a second round of parallel panel discussions that delved into timely and cross-cutting topics.

The panel “**Enabling Talent to Grow: Creating the Right Conditions for Careers**” brought together Claire Morel, Head of Unit in charge of the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions, DG EAC, European Commission; Emmanuelle Gardan, Director at COIMBRA Group; Clare Viney, Chief Executive Officer at CRAC/Vitae; Julia Sievers, Head of Academic Affairs at University of Bremen; and Saša Zelenika, Rector’s Advisor for European Policies and Internationalisation at University of Rijeka, in a thoughtful exchange moderated by Marta Agostinho, Executive Director at EU-LIFE. The session emphasised that talent is not only Europe’s greatest asset, but its most precious social resource. Speakers called for increased transparency, mentoring, and a better balance between stability and agility in research careers, or “stagility”. The future of excellence, they agreed, must be holistic, open, and socially relevant, with equity and retention as key pillars of long-term success.



Panel "Enabling Talent to Grow: Creating the Right Conditions for Careers", June 2025



Panel "Working Together for Impact: The Future of European University Collaboration", June 2025

In the panel **"Working Together for Impact: The Future of European University Collaboration"**, moderated by Charlotte Van Velthoven-Geerdink, speakers Charlotte Nilsen, USN Student representative in the EDUC Alliance; Susanne Conze, Head of Unit for Higher Education, DG EAC, European Commission; Veronika Kuprovanova, Deputy Director Academic Cooperation Association; Maria Valeries Schegk, Secretary General at YUFE Alliance, and FOREU4ALL Forum Board Representative; and João Amaro de Matos, Vice Rector for Education and International Development at NOVA University Lisbon; reflected on the evolution of university alliances.

They highlighted the importance of student co-creation, institutional agility, and long-term sustainability, while calling for better integration of research, more flexible and inclusive mobility models, and a shift in mindset, treating alliance funding as a starting point rather than a destination.

Another dedicated session focused on **"Connect by YERUN"**, an AI-powered matchmaking platform designed to link researchers and managers between them and with EU funding opportunities. Moderated by YERUN Secretary General Silvia Gómez Recio, the panel featured Dušan Misevic, Data Scientist at University of Southern Denmark, and Developer of CONNECT by YERUN; Maéva Vignes, Freelancer in Data Science & EU Research Funding, and Developer of CONNECT by YERUN; Wainer Lusoli, Deputy Head, Reforming European R&I and Research Infrastructures, REA; Anne Adams, Head of Grants Office at University of Antwerp; and Adam Kola, YERUN Vice President, and Vice Rector for Research at Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń.



Panel "Connect by YERUN: How Can Networks Maximise Research Collaborations", June 2025

They shared key achievements of the platform, including reaching 35,000 researchers and matching them with EU calls. Connect by YERUN is helping democratise access to funding, support open science, and strengthen collaborative capacity across institutions, reinforcing the network's long-standing commitment to openness and innovation.

The Conference concluded with a keynote speech by Christina Egelund, Minister of Higher Education and Science of Denmark. Just 26 days before Denmark assumed the Presidency of the Council of the European Union, she delivered a moving message calling for a “second European enlightenment” rooted in science and mutual understanding. She reminded participants that Europe is more than a geographical space, it is a community of values.



Christina Egelund, Minister of Higher Education and Science of Denmark June 2025

From high-level political insights to concrete discussions on research, education, and collaboration, the two-day event showcased the strength and relevance of the YERUN network in the European landscape. As it enters its second decade, YERUN remains committed to supporting its members, amplifying their voices, and contributing meaningfully to the future of European higher education and research.



Group Picture, YERUN 10TH Anniversary Conference, June 2025

We extend our sincere thanks to all the speakers, moderators and participants who joined us for the celebrations and contributed to making the YERUN 10th Anniversary Conference such a memorable and inspiring day.

Photocredit: © Jérôme Hubert

LOOKING FORWARD

By YERUN Secretary General, **Silvia Gómez Recio**



We are closing a very important chapter in YERUN: a decade. One that began with a simple yet powerful realisation: no single institution is a superpower capable of solving the complex challenges our world faces. The spirit of learning, collaboration and adaptability is deeply embedded in the culture of our universities, and it is this very spirit that we have consistently brought into our work in Brussels. Whether engaging with European institutions or working alongside fellow university associations and partners across the sector, this mindset has guided us from the very beginning and will remain our north star.

What started as a network for collaboration and shared activities has grown into a strong and recognised voice for policy advocacy in Brussels. This evolution has enriched discussions at EU level while also strengthening the engagement of our member institutions back home, supporting them in demonstrating their impact and upholding their values. This expanding dimension of YERUN's work has unfolded during a period of profound global change—one that has challenged assumptions and, at times, put our core values under pressure.

In the past two years, universities and research have gained significant visibility at EU level. Yet what began as a positive recognition of their value is gradually shifting towards a more instrumental view of our work: skills for employment, research for industry. While we undoubtedly contribute to both, we must remain firm in articulating the broader purpose of what we do. Our work is, by nature, long-term, often invisible at first, sometimes thankless, but always foundational. Research and education are not merely outputs to be measured; they are the quiet engines of progress, the roots from which innovation, critical thinking and societal resilience grow. Without them, nothing else stands for long.

During this period of consolidation, YERUN has firmly established itself as the representative of young research universities in Europe. These years have strengthened our identity and deepened our connection to what we mean by “young”. Being a young university is not about age alone—it is about agility, openness to innovation, and the courage to challenge the status quo. These qualities remain as relevant as ever and must continue to guide our work in the years ahead.

Driven by quality, excellence and innovation, our members will continue to demonstrate that, no matter how big or small, young or old, whether international or deeply rooted in their local context, universities have a profound and lasting impact. They are constantly evolving and adapting, while remaining anchored as central pillars of their communities, regions and societies.

Driven by quality, excellence and innovation, our members will continue to demonstrate that, international or local, all our universities are making a significant and lasting impact. They are in constant evolution, adapting to new realities while remaining firmly anchored as central pillars of their communities, localities and regions.

Today, we close this chapter, marked by our tenth anniversary celebrations throughout 2025 and culminating in an outstanding conference last June that will long be remembered. We also conclude our 2021-2025 Strategy, “Enabling Talent to Grow”, which has guided our work across talent development, an open culture of excellence, and responsible and engaged universities.

“Thrive Together” will now mark the next stage in YERUN’s journey, setting a renewed course for the decade ahead. Because more than ever, there is a need to represent the voices of young research universities in Europe. YERUN members stand ready to continue raising their voice - stronger, clearer and more united - to deliver an even greater and more enduring impact in Europe and beyond.

10 WISHES FROM YERUN

We would like to end this report with these 10 wishes, drafted for the “What does it mean to be a young research university? Reflections and stories from YERUN” publication and projected at the 10th Anniversary Conference.

They are not endpoints but aspirations, articulated from within YERUN’s diverse community, to guide and inspire young universities as they continue to flourish. Reflecting on our past 10 years but inspiring us for the next 10 to come.



BE BOLD, STAY CURIOUS
Take risks, ask new questions, and embrace experimentation as a path to innovation.






FOCUS ON IMPACT, LEGACY COMES NEXT
Lead with ideas: let quality, collaboration, and impact define success.





KEEP PEOPLE AT THE CENTRE
Co-create education with students, empower teachers and researchers, and lead together across the university.




CREATE SPACES WHERE EVERYONE BELONGS
Build inclusive, equitable, and supportive environments for all communities.








CONNECT ACROSS BOUNDARIES
Form partnerships across disciplines, sectors, and borders to solve complex challenges.






NURTURE TALENT WITH INTENTION
Invest in people: support careers with fairness, flexibility, and vision.



CHAMPION OPENNESS
Make knowledge transparent, accessible, and reusable through open science and innovation.





DRIVE CHANGE, DON'T JUST REFLECT IT
Use research, education, and engagement to shape a more just and equitable society.




TURN SUSTAINABILITY INTO ACTION
Integrate sustainability into decisions, operations, and curricula.






ADVANCE TOGETHER, AS ONE
Strengthen collective voice, solidarity, and purpose through collaboration and shared values.





YERUN, Young European Research Universities Network, 2026



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YERUN Ad Hoc Group on SDGs

July 2021 - April 2025



Education for a more sustainable world



WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM YOUNG EUROPEAN RESEARCH UNIVERSITIES?



Participants at the Winter School “Engaged Research Design for Sustainability Blended Intensive Programme”, January 2025

Focus & Opportunities



- Sustainable Development in YERUN institutions is in an **advanced state**.
- Sustainability needs to be **across education, research, and institutional strategies**.
- Ensure sustainability remains a **strategic priority** through ongoing leadership and staff engagement.
- Build a **shared evidence base** to set priorities and monitor progress.
- Strengthen YERUN’s collective voice in **EU policy** through joint **position papers** and **events**.
- Foster lasting **partnerships** and **skills** via **innovative training** and **collaborative programmes**.

Scope



- Providing a platform for members to exchange experiences, good practices, and innovative approaches to **integrate the SDGs into university strategies, teaching, and research**.
- Designing and implementing **training activities** to enhance awareness, skills, and engagement with the SDGs.

YERUN and UL colleagues at the Winter School “Engaged Research Design for Sustainability Blended Intensive Programme”, January 2025

Key facts



- 16 formal meetings held (2021–2024)
- 16 YERUN universities engaged
- 1 Publication
- 1 Winter School (BIP funded)
- 1 Leaders’ Workshop (General Assembly)
- Policy exchanges & Peer learning activities

Achievements



- November 2021, **Open Cycle of Best Practice**.
- February–March 2022, Survey across the YERUN membership assessing the state of Sustainable Development; results informed rectors’ discussions at the March 2022 General Assembly.
- March 2022: YERUN General Assembly on Sustainability.
- June 2022: Publication of the paper “[Education for a More Sustainable World](#)”; presented at EU Research & Innovation Days (sustainability panel)
- January-April 2025: Winter School “[Engaged Research Design for Sustainability Blended Intensive Programme](#)” coordinated by University of Limerick, developed within YERUN’s SDG Group

Global Challenges



Sustainable Future



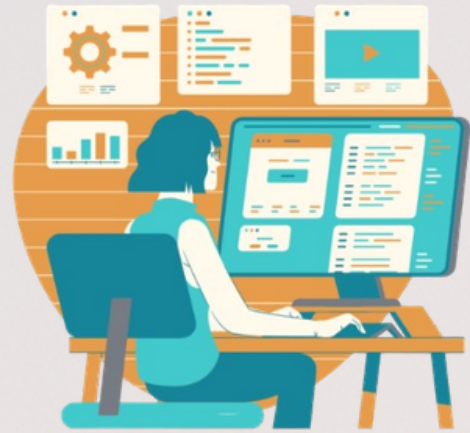
Yerun

10 Year Anniversary | 2015-2025



The YERUN Ad Hoc Group on Open Science

June 2021 – October 2025



Key facts

- Builds on previous YERUN Working Group on Open Science, 2016-2020.
- 16 formal meetings held (2021–2024).
- 15+ YERUN universities engaged.
- Public events, policy exchanges.
- Several collaborative outputs.

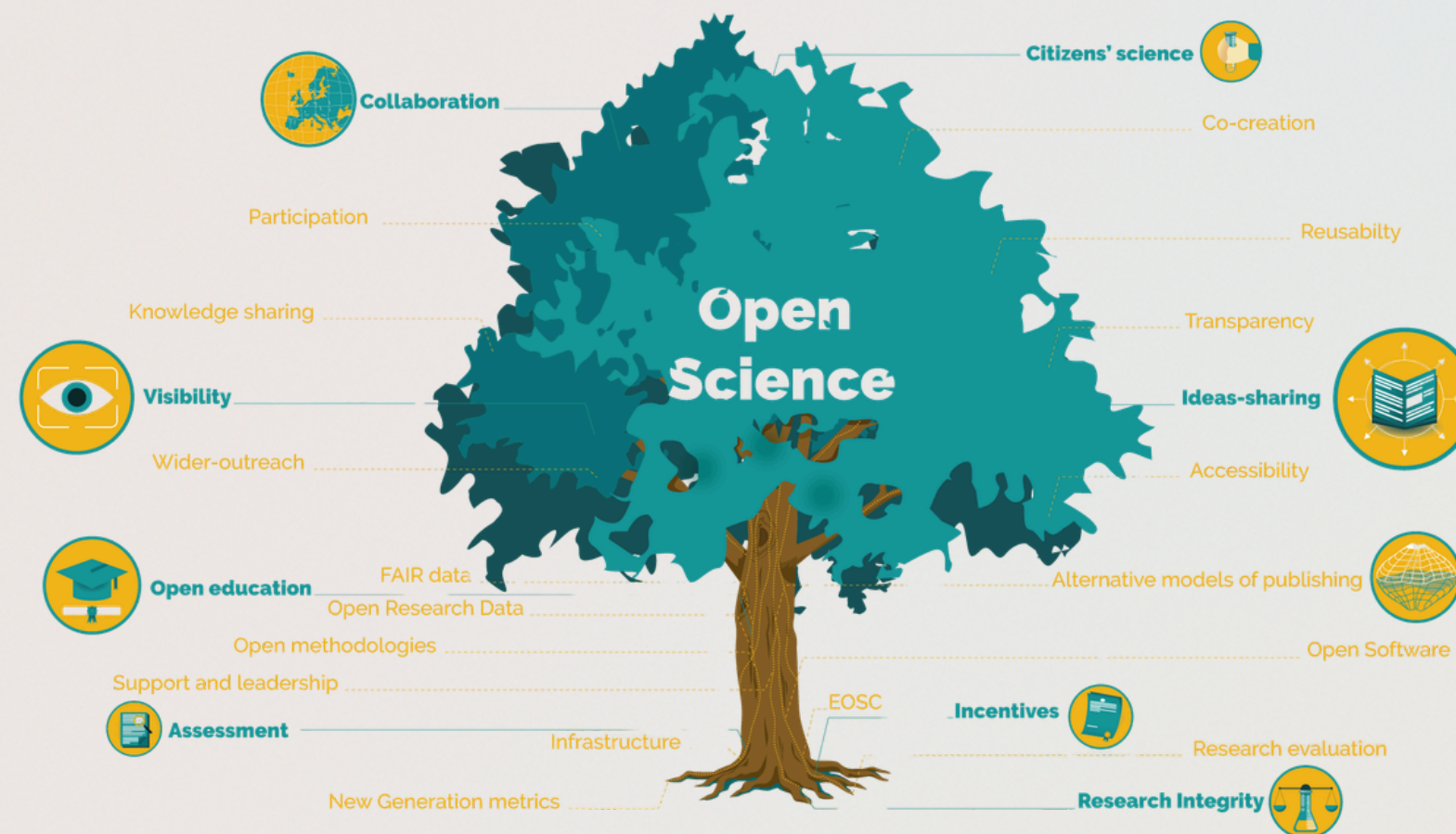


Focus & Opportunities

- **Cultural change** is as important as infrastructures. Senior staff are key to fostering OS. ECRs need more support.
- **Recognition and reward systems** are critical to motivate academics to adopt OS practices.
- **Balancing Open Science with IPR** is essential; need new frameworks to valorise knowledge without overprotecting patents.
- **Citizen Science and OERs** show the potential of OS to bridge universities and society.
- **AI & OS** raises challenges (copyright, fairness, reproducibility, sustainability) but also opportunities for FAIR data innovation.

Scope

- The overall objective was to **facilitate exchanges of views and practices** among YERUN members to bring forward OS in their institutions.



Achievements

- Incubator of the YERUN OS Awards.
- [YERUN Open Science Advent Calendar](#) (December 2021). Liked and replicated by many!
- [YERUN Diamond Open Access event](#) (June 2022) with 60 participants and six YERUN member institutions delivering brief “pitches” showcasing their DOA initiatives.
- [YERUN webpage of OS resources](#) (repositories, policies, training - December 2022).
- **Workshops & peer-learning exchanges** (March-July 2023) on OS Policies, Intellectual Property & OS, Citizen Science, and OERs.
- Current (October 2025), **webinar series** on:
 - Recognising & rewarding OS, AI in OS & FAIR data, and OS in education (OERs).

YERUN Ad Hoc Group on Open Science Awards

From policy to practice: recognising and rewarding Open Science across YERUN

June 2021 - February 2025

Scope

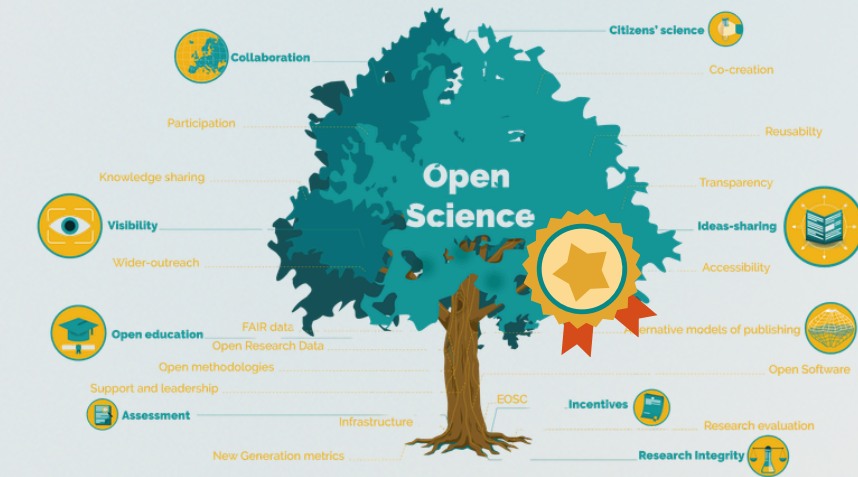
- Deliver the **YERUN Open Science Awards** scheme annually (call in autumn, awards in February)
- **Turn policies into action:** YOSA grew from the YERUN ad hoc group on Open Science to recognise and scale real practices across YERUN institutions
- **Coordinate the full cycle:** call → online platform → evaluation → ceremony
- **Spotlight & reward pioneers:** tackle the lack of recognition and rewards for Open Science by putting exemplary practices in the spotlight and funding support



Eva Méndez (UC3M), Open Science Awards Ceremony 2022

What the awards are for

- **Initiatives by individuals or teams** (researchers and/or professional services) that demonstrate strong Open Science and/or help the community adopt OS.
- Applications focus on **four sections:** description, outputs, reusability and follow-up.



How it works

- Online platform; cross-institution **matching** of applicants and evaluators.
- **Two evaluators** per application; scores 1-4 per section; average is the score.
- **Automatic third evaluator** if the first two differ by ≥ 1.5 .
- **Threshold shortlist** → final panel selects winners by consensus.
- Funding goes to **institutions** to scale the winning practices.

Key Facts

- 4 calls
- editions: 2021-2022, 2022-2023, 2023-2024, 2024-2025
- applications: 95
- awards granted: 16
- funding: 2 in 2022 for 5.000 each; 5 in 2022 and 2023 for 2.000 each; and 4 in 2024 for 2.000 each → €38,000 total

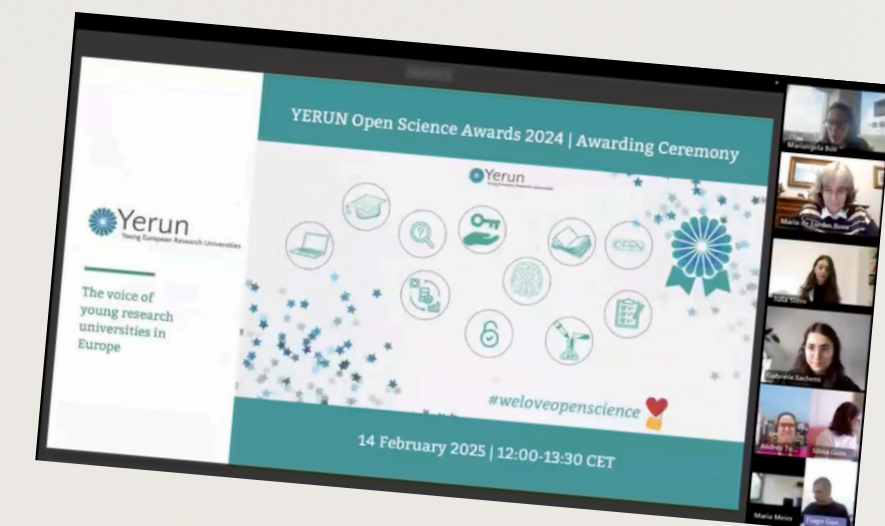
No plans for Valentine's yet?
Join us!

YERUN Open Science Awards

Awards Ceremony

14 February 2022
15:00-16:30 CET (online)

Registrations on www.yerun.eu
#weloveopscience
#YERUNOSAwards2021



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The YERUN Group on Research Support Offices

June 2021-2025

Scope

- The overall objective of the group was to increase practice sharing and the research collaboration opportunities for YERUN members.

Key Facts

- Group active since 2021, 16 meetings (incl. 7 internal coffee chats in 2023).
- 15+ YERUN universities engaged across YERUN.
- Key activities include surveys, focus groups, and peer-learning.
- Collaborative tools piloted (CONNECT by YERUN).

CONNECT
BY YERUN

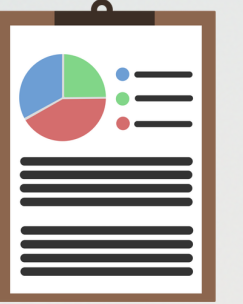
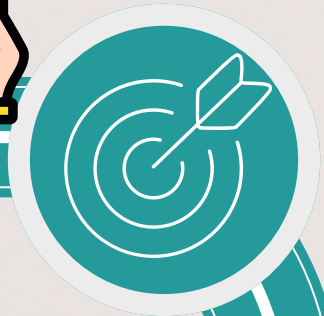
Achievements

- Survey & analysis of RSO structures across YERUN (2021-2022). One size does not fit all!
- Focus Group (Autumn 2021) identifying success factors applying to EU grants (Antwerp, Cyprus, UC3M).
- YERUN Staff Days (2021-2022): facilitated peer learning and networking.
- Mapping of national funding instruments (2023).
- 7 Internal Coffee Chats (2023-2024):
 - Motivating researchers in apply to EU funding.
 - Improving proposal-writing skills and peer-review.
 - Mapping national funding instruments.
 - Proposal evaluation and impact.
 - Collaborating with consultancies.
 - training opportunities for research managers.
 - organising post-award support without HEU funding.

Focus & Opportunities

- **Communication and culture change take years:** efficiency requires trust, cross-unit collaboration, and pre-award involvement.
- **Training and mentoring is critical:** for research managers, supervisors, and researchers (proposal writing, project management, impact planning).
- **Tools & standardisation:** platforms (like CONNECT) and project management methodologies (PM²) are key enablers.
- **Equity & inclusion in support:** personalised approaches work, but they create workload challenges.

TRUSTED



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LET'S BOOST OUR
COLLABORATION!
LIMERICK, 2023

YERUN Research Collaborative Platform



5 June 2023

1st Co-creation workshop with VRs and RSOs.



October 2023

GA Lisbon: prototype and official mandate for implementation across members.



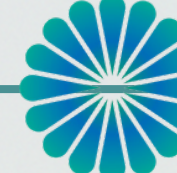
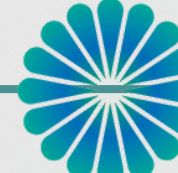
January - March 2024

Beta testing process: document for feedback created and circulated



October - November 2024

Finalisation of the RM Dashboard in October and instructional webinar for the RSO group in November.



CONNECT
BY YERUN

3 May 2023

1st informative meeting to introduce members to the YERUN Collaborative Research Platform.



26 June 2023

2nd co-creation workshop with RSO and researchers.



July - November 2023

Process and signature of legal documents between YERUN & SDU (updated in October 2024).



June/July 2024

- **Silver version:** Official launch of CONNECT's researchers dashboard
- Preparation of comms materials for promotion.
- SDU webinars on June and July to introduce the platform and address questions.



November 2024

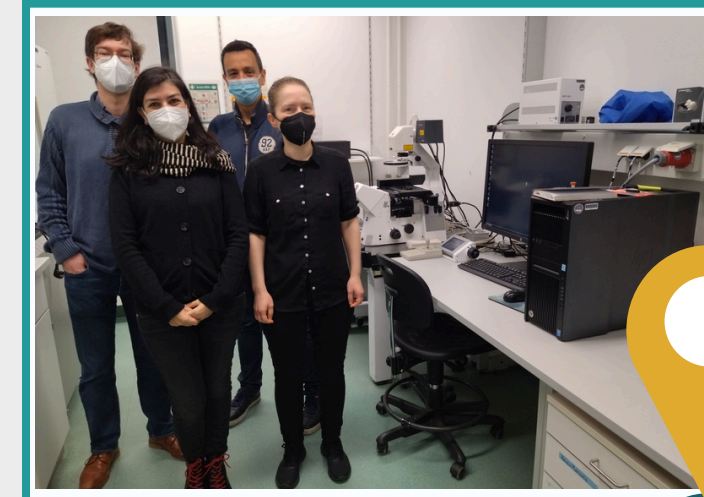
- **Launch** and deployment of Promotional Plan, including
 - four webinars on December, January, April & June,
 - tailored webinars at request from YERUN members,
 - instructional videos incorporated into the CONNECT website and the comms package.



YERUN Research Mobility Awards

April 2021 - December 2025

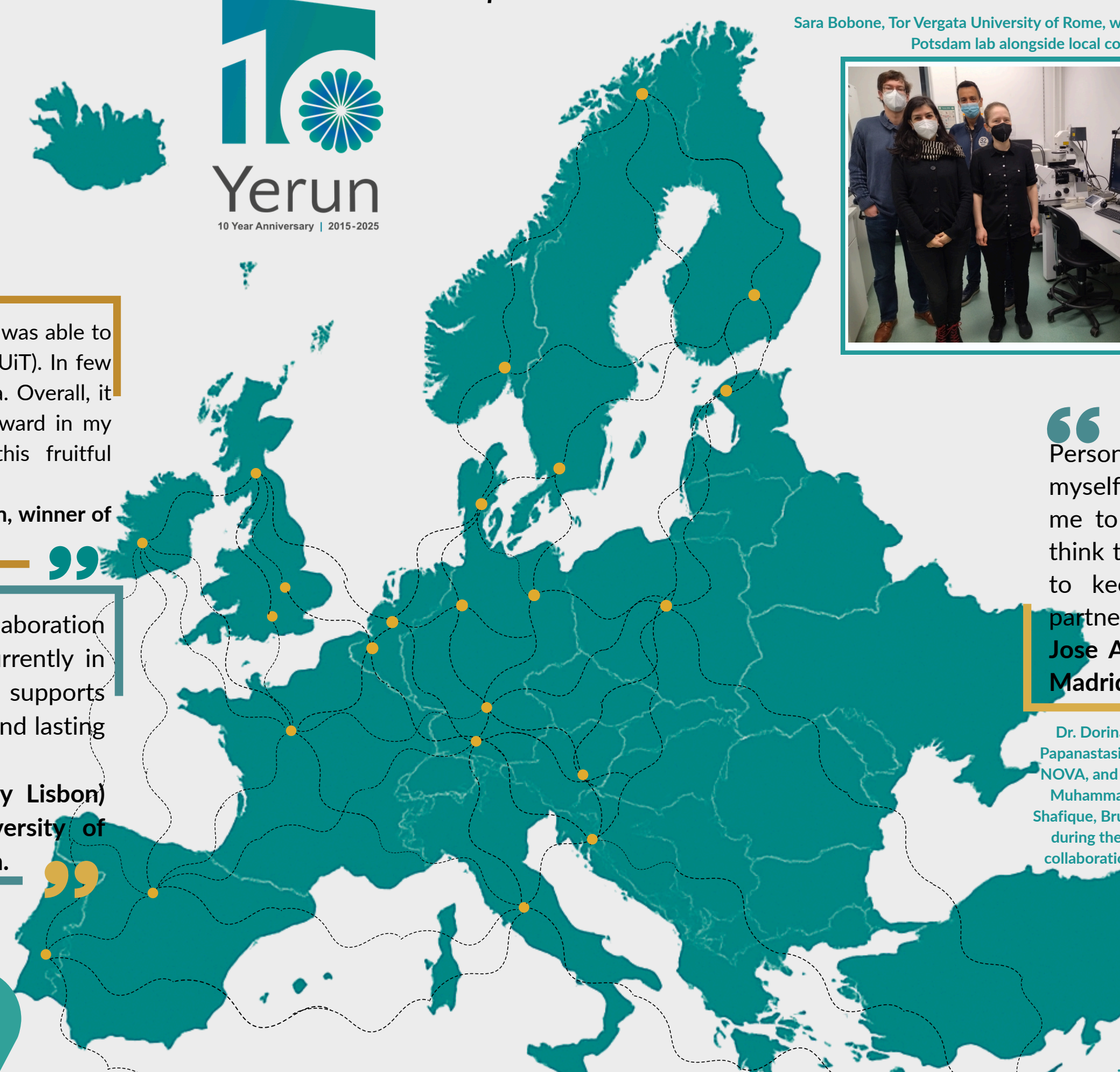
Sara Bobone, Tor Vergata University of Rome, working in the University of Potsdam lab alongside local colleagues.



Disciplines:

- 42 SSH
- 17 PE
- 9 LS

- 67 awards
- 83 researchers awarded
- 97.000 euros granted
- Early and Mid career researchers



“

Thanks to the YERUN Research Mobility Award, I was able to establish a fantastic collaboration with Dr Lentz (UiT). In few months, we have already generated valuable data. 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 University Lisbon, winner of the 2021 YRMA edition.

”

“

Thanks to the award, a new interdisciplinary collaboration was launched, and their first joint article is currently in preparation. A great example of how YERUN supports early-career researchers in building meaningful and lasting cross-border partnerships!

Dr. Dorina T. Papanastasiou (NOVA University Lisbon) and Dr. Muhammad Shafique (Brunel University of London), winners of the 2024/25 YRMAs edition.

”

“

Personally, this award opened doors for me to enrich myself from viewpoints I had not observed and allowed me to develop new skills as a researcher. I strongly think that the YERUN activity in this sense is essential to keep fostering and enlightening new research partnerships and synergies.

Jose Angel Miranda Calero, Universidad Carlos III de Madrid, winner of the 2021 YRMA edition.

”

Dr. Dorina Papanastasiou, NOVA, and Dr. Muhammad Shafique, Brunel during their collaboration.



Maria Meier, University of Konstanz, piloting an fNIRS hyperscanning synchrony study with a SoNeAt Lab colleague from the University of Essex.



Kwok Ng, UEF, during an IPARC meeting with stakeholders in the context of his collaboration for the YRMA.

YERUN Ad Hoc Group on Academic Careers

Attractive and sustainable academic careers
June 2021 - November 2025

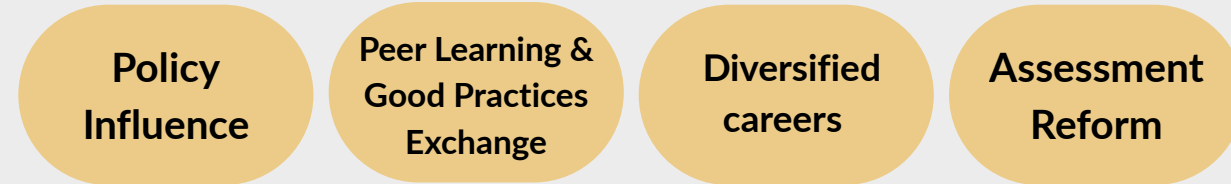
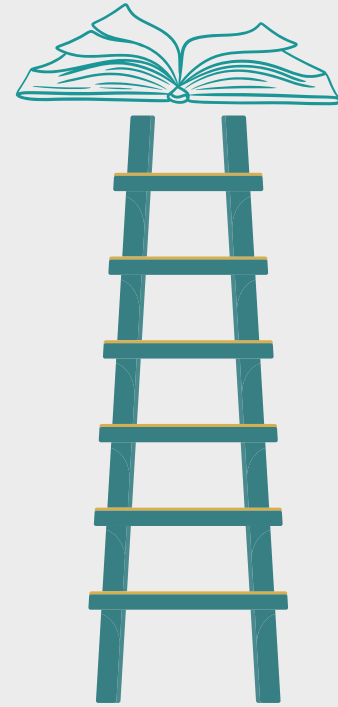
Achievements

Scope

- Advance Academic Careers' priority within Talent Development
- Influence EU policies on academic and research careers.
- Peer learning exchange supporting institutional capacity building on career development, career structures, mentoring and intersectoral mobility.

Key facts

- 21 formal meetings
- 13 institutions involved (during whole period)
- YERUN paper Rethinking Academic Careers
- 3 Position Papers & Joint Statement with the university sector
- Public webinar to launch YERUN paper (2021) and a 4-webinar series on Early Career Researchers (2023)



Focus & Opportunities

- Careers are affected by the lack of stable and predictable research funding at EU and national level, and an increasing over-reliance on short-term project funding, which leads to precarity.
- Limited recognition of teaching, mentoring and non-research activities in assessment.
- There is lack of mobility frameworks that ensure fairness and avoid brain drain.

- First university network paper on the topic of "[Rethinking Academic Careers: Making Academia a better place](#)", in 2021 officially launched in a public webinar.
- 4 [webinar series on Early Career Researchers](#) on the topics of mentoring, intersectoral mobility, funding schemes and career policies at institutions, delivering 4 policy snapshots on these issues.
- Direct input to **European Framework for Research Careers (ERA Action 4)** and **Council Recommendation (adopted Dec 2023)**
- Direct input to the **Higher Education Package (2024)** on attractive and sustainable careers.
- **Advocacy work on MSCA Programme and Young Researchers Initiative** (at European Parliament).
- Input for the creation of the Research and Innovation Careers Observatory (REICO), launched in Sept 2024, and Mutual Learning Exercise on Research Careers (2025).
- Positioned **YERUN as an early and influential actor** on research and academic careers, providing input to the first discussions on the **diversification of academic careers (2021)** and the **Agreement on the Reform of Research Assessment**, which led to CoARA.
 - Served for the creation of the CoARA YERUN Group and contributed to the CoARA ACA Working Group (on academic careers).
- A **committed group of experts** on academic careers, with direct access to EU policy makers on the topic.

What words come to your mind if we are to address intersectoral mobility for Early Career Researchers?
48 answers

In one word, what does mentoring mean for you?



Save the dates!

June 2023

Fridays at lunch time (12:30 - 14)

M	T	W	T	F	S	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	

YERUN lunchtime series on early career researchers:

- 9 June: Early career researchers & intersectoral mobility.
- 16 June: Mentoring early career researchers.
- 23 June: Funding schemes and their implications for early academic careers.
- 30 June: Virtual roundtable on the practical challenges of implementing policy for early academic careers.

Rethinking Academic careers

CULTURAL CHANGE AS A KEY BOTTLENECK TO BE ADDRESSED

The YERUN Group on CoARA

March 2023- 2025



Scope

- To support YERUN members in understanding, implementing, and shaping the reform of research assessment promoted by the Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment (CoARA).



Key Facts

- 5 formal meetings (1st: 5 Apr 2023 → 5th: 4 Dec 2024)
- 15 YERUN universities engaged
- Four members (Antwerp, NOVA, EUF, Rijeka) very active in CoARA Working Groups and National Chapters



Achievements

- Shared timely insights and fresh updates to keep all members ahead on CoARA!
- **Action-plan** exchange folder (Sep. 2024) to share institutional CoARA action plans across YERUN.
- **Peer learning & institutional showcases** (Dec. 2024):
 - Antwerp: review of Flemish assessment procedures, limits of classical metrics.
 - NOVA Lisbon: pilots on research impact narratives and narrative CVs; aligning researcher evaluation regulations with CoARA.
 - Konstanz: concerns about bureaucracy and costs; avoiding rankings; need for EU support.
 - UEF: qualitative assessment for recruitment and careers; tensions with national funding rules.
 - Klagenfurt: balancing ministry pressure for rankings with CoARA principles.



Focus & Lessons learnt

- **RA reform requires culture change:** need clear narratives and internal dialogue to move beyond traditional metrics.
- **Legal, structural, and resource barriers vary by country;** national regulations often still favour classical indicators.
- **Incremental, well-communicated pilots** (e.g. narrative CVs, small funding rewards) help build trust and engagement.
- **National chapters and alliances** are key levers to engage governments and share good practice.
- **Avoiding extra bureaucracy** is crucial to keep researcher workload manageable.





YERUN Ad Hoc Group on Lifelong Learning

Fostering innovation, collaboration, and excellence in LLL (Lifelong Learning) across Europe's young research universities

October 2022 - 2025

Scope

- Lifelong Learning priority within Talent Development area of YERUN Strategy 2021-2025.
- Bring together experts from YERUN universities to:
 - Map existing LLL practices and governance models across young universities.
 - Identify challenges and opportunities.
 - Promote peer learning and exchange of approaches.
 - Strengthen universities' role as LLL partners in skills and knowledge.

Focus & Opportunities

Universities are committed to strengthening their role as LLL providers. What have we learnt?

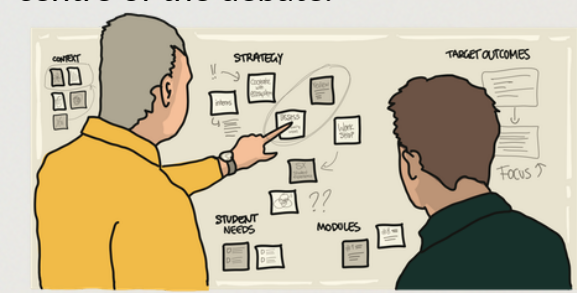
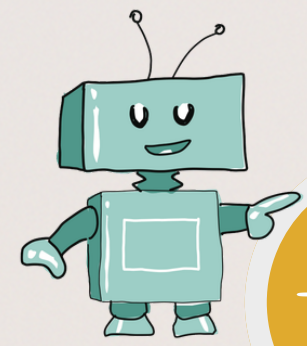
- Diverse national frameworks create barriers, but also offer opportunity to learn and create better policies.
- Reaching new learner groups beyond traditional students: many target groups need upskilling and reskilling.
- Universities' role in a competitive landscape, where companies and private actors also provide training, through credibility and research-driven teaching.
- Micro-credentials as a game-changer, prompting universities to rethink quality assurance, recognition, and flexibility.
- LLL shall be part of the core mission, not an optional activity, but a long-term opportunity to secure universities' role in society.
- Partnerships with the labour market to align education with skills needs while keeping universities at the centre of the debate.

Key Facts

- 9 online + 1 hybrid meeting
- 15+ member universities engaged
- 1 publication ([Guidelines on Micro-credentials](#))

Achievements

- Shared common knowledge base: mapped strategies and governance models through surveys and exchanges. Final report to be published soon.
- Peer learning: on governance, funding, and strategies, turning diverse experiences into shared lessons.
- Advanced the micro-credentials agenda: positioned micro-credentials as a cornerstone for flexible learning pathways; co-developed guidelines with ProToGo partners (EU project).
- Policy visibility: contributed to European Union of Skills by highlighting structural barriers, sharing member insights, and publishing policy-facing outputs.
- Partnerships: built collaborations with recruiters ECSSA (Confederation of Search and Selection Associations), and EU projects (ProToGo).

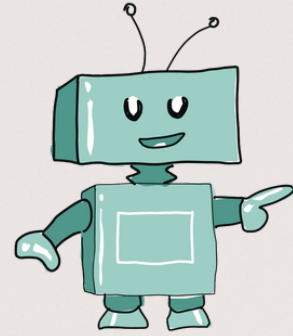
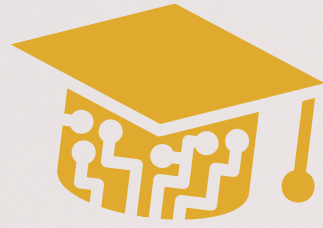


YERUN Ad Hoc Group on Innovative Teaching and Learning

Driving inclusive, evidence-informed innovation in teaching across Europe's young universities

Scope

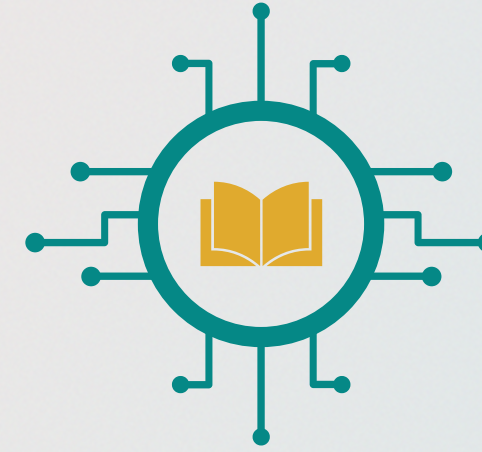
- *Innovative Teaching and Learning Pathways* priority within the Talent Development area of the **YERUN Strategy 2021–2025**.
- Map **innovative methods** that enable inclusive, holistic, high-quality learning.
- **Reflect** on needs, challenges and opportunities
- **Connect expertise** across YERUN: professors, EdTech experts, students, researchers.



September 2022 – 2025

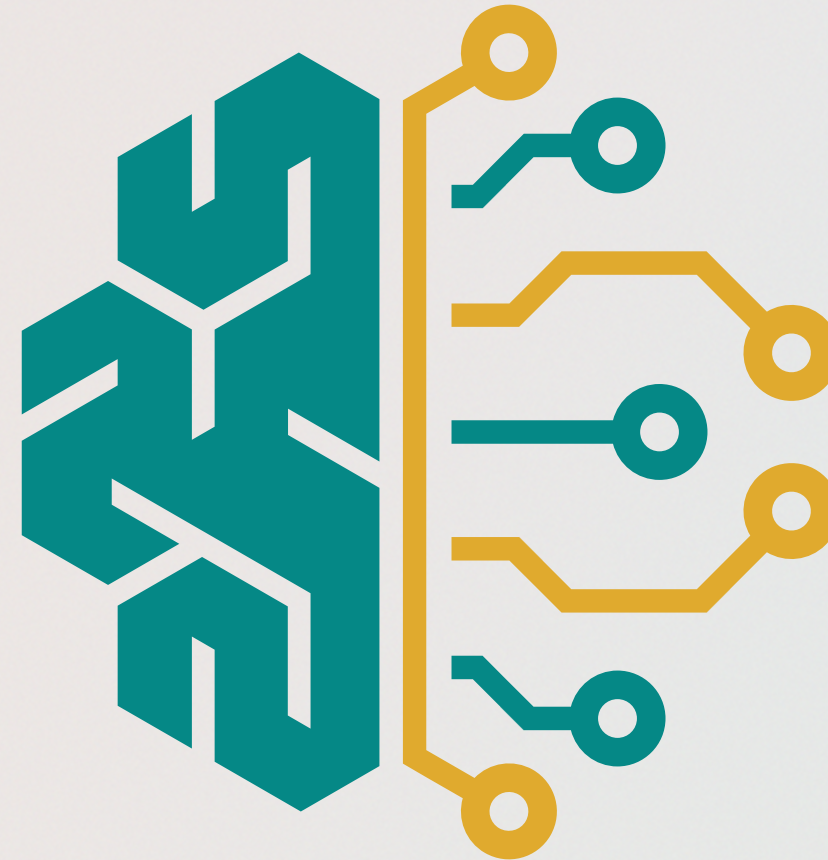
Achievements

- **Created a shared understanding of innovative teaching and learning:** defined what “innovation” means in practice, distinguishing it from digitalisation alone, and emphasising student co-creation, purposeful tech use, and quality teaching.
- **Collected evidence through a survey** on innovative teaching and learning, producing results informing discussions, communities, and student feedback.
- **Deepened peer learning on student feedback:** compared survey models, incentives, focus groups, and external reviews; discussed how to act on results and the potential of learning analytics within data-protection limits.
- **Shared institutional innovation:** presented models such as Maastricht University's EDLAB and UC3M Digital, showing how centres, staff development, and excellence programmes can support teaching innovation.
- **Contributed to EU policy consultations:** provided coordinated YERUN input to the European Commission's Digital Education Action Plan consultation and to the survey on Attractive Academic Careers.
- **Advanced student-focused initiatives:** developed plans for a YERUN digital hackathon and connected it to micro-credential initiatives.



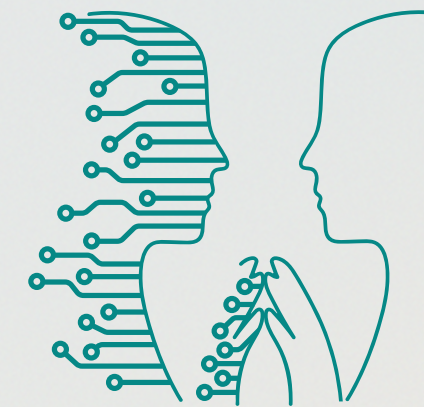
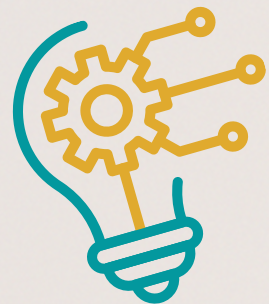
Key Facts

- 6 meetings
- 10+ member universities engaged



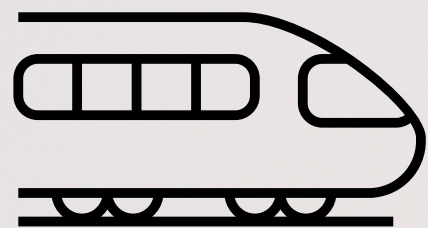
Focus & Opportunities

- **Mapping and sharing innovation across YERUN:** teaching methods, support structures, teacher networks (communities of practice), research-teaching links, and feedback systems.
- **Post-pandemic lessons:** decide what to keep from online teaching; address real barriers to hybrid delivery; note shifts in student behaviour and increased Master's enrolments.
- **AI and digital innovation:** examine the impact of large language models (e.g. ChatGPT), Virtual Reality in teaching, and digital competence frameworks (Jisc Digital Discovery Tool, DigCompEdu), stressing intentional adoption.
- **Communities & staff development:** how to build and sustain teacher communities and move good practice beyond early adopters.
- **Recognising teaching in academic careers:** define what “good” education looks like; rebalance recognition between teaching and research; contribute to the EU consultation on attractive academic careers.
- **Connecting innovation with policy and student impact:** lessons from universities into European initiatives (Digital Education Action Plan), while running initiatives (DigiEduHack 2024 and 2025) and micro-credentials that build student skills and employability.



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YERUN Group on Erasmus plus



Bringing together the challenges and opportunities of our Erasmus Offices

May 2021 - 2025



Scope

Key Actions for Erasmus+ Implementation:

- **Communicate unified messages** to the European Commission and stakeholders.
- Transform operational challenges into **policy solutions for leaders**.
- Share **data and practices** among universities to **advocate for equitable funding and inclusive mobility**.
- **Align YERUN positions** on the future of **Erasmus+** to ensure young research universities are represented.

Key Facts

- 11 meetings
- 17 member universities engaged



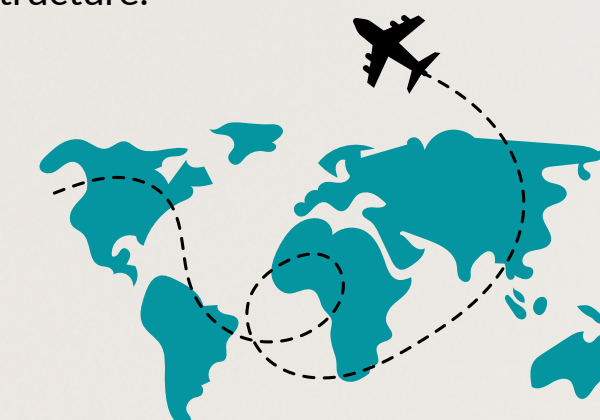
Achievements

- 9 meetings held (May 2023 → Jan 2025), incl. Commission briefings and deep-dives on **Erasmus Without Papers (EWP)**.
- Hosted EC policy officer talk on EWP & **European Student Card**; captured implementation issues + solutions.
- **Common positions** co-developed (surveys + draft papers), e.g on green mobility.
- **Grant-spans** mapping across NAs; launched a Miro workspace to structure the position.
- Follow-ups opened with the Commission and European University Foundation (EUF, provider of EWP) on EWP infrastructure.



Focus & Opportunities

- **Digital/EWP:** Issues like interoperability and glitches lead to rework and email overload, prompting calls for realistic timelines and true tool interoperability in the Digital Erasmus consultation.
- **Grants & Parity:** Significant variations in NA-set bands and top-ups exist, lacking an EU-wide overview; maintaining the cross-NA grant table and advocating for clearer spans is needed.
- **Students' Accommodation:** Systemic shortages and scams hinder mobility; solutions require broader partnerships and cross-policy fixes.
- **Green Mobility:** Realism is needed for peripheral regions, as funding and communications do not align with realities; promoting better infrastructure and feasible green mobility is essential.
- **BIPs** are flexible but lack clarity and create administrative burdens for short stays; sharper guidance is needed while maintaining flexibility.
- Tension exists between **Alliances** and **KA1**, with **KA2-funded Alliances** potentially impacting general mobility.
- Evaluation should focus on real **outcomes** rather than mere compliance;



YERUN Group on European University Alliances



Maximising members' engagement in alliances

May 2021 - 2025

Scope

- Share intelligence & build a common YERUN view on the roll-out of the **European Universities Initiative (EUI)**, to feed targeted EC consultations and brief members.
- Provide a small, trusted forum for frank exchange among young research universities and a channel to/through the YERUN Brussels Office for **policy advocacy**.
- Pool evidence on challenges (funding, monitoring, legal/statute, European Degree) and **relay coordinated feedback to EU actors**; debrief major events for members.
- Clarify **roles between alliances and networks** so both complement each other and non-alliance YERUN members still benefit.



Focus & Opportunities

- **Ambition vs. reality:** EUI's ambition meets structural/national barriers; the delivery pace strains staff.
 - Impact: argue for realistic timelines and enabling frameworks alongside the initiative.
- **Funding disparities & project logic:** uneven national top-ups and multi-source project funding create inequalities and admin burden.
 - Impact: map national support practices and advocate longer-term, more predictable investment pathways.
- **Monitoring & guidance need simplification:** reporting asks are heavy; European Degree/legal statute calls caused confusion; lump-sum created uncertainties.
 - Impact: press for clearer guidance and streamlined monitoring.
- **Student voice & mobility rules:** visibility of students was low at key fora; 12-month mobility caps constrain alliance activities.
 - Impact: recommend stronger student involvement and more flexible mobility frameworks.
- **Visibility & institutional buy-in:** alliances often lack broad departmental engagement and long-term strategies.
 - Impact: share key outputs and strengthen communication. Connect through the Community of Practice for best practice exchange.
- **Balance research & education:** research elements should complement—not overshadow—education; not all alliances must do R&I.
 - Impact: support differentiated, strength-based pathways and matching funding lines.
- **Networks vs. alliances complementarity:** networks are better positioned for advocacy and bottom-up research links; alliances are structural in institutions and are EU funding dependent.
 - Impact: continue communication with alliances and articulate strong policy vision for YERUN
- **No one-size-fits-all & national constraints:** EU-level aims must flex to differing national frameworks.
 - Impact: pair EU advocacy with guidance for navigating national rules.



Achievements

- Hosted **EC briefing** (DG EAC, Tine Delva) on EUI
- Debriefed the II Forum on European Universities (Sep 2023) and captured member reflections.
- Developed a reflection question set on **alliances-network complementarity** and gathered inputs
- Shared **timely intelligence** on EUI calls/consultations (European Degree, legal statute; digital education workshops).



Key Facts

- 7 meetings
- 17 member universities engaged



Yerun

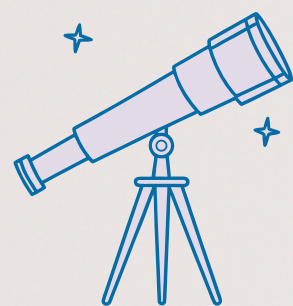
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YERUN Knowledge Valorisation Group



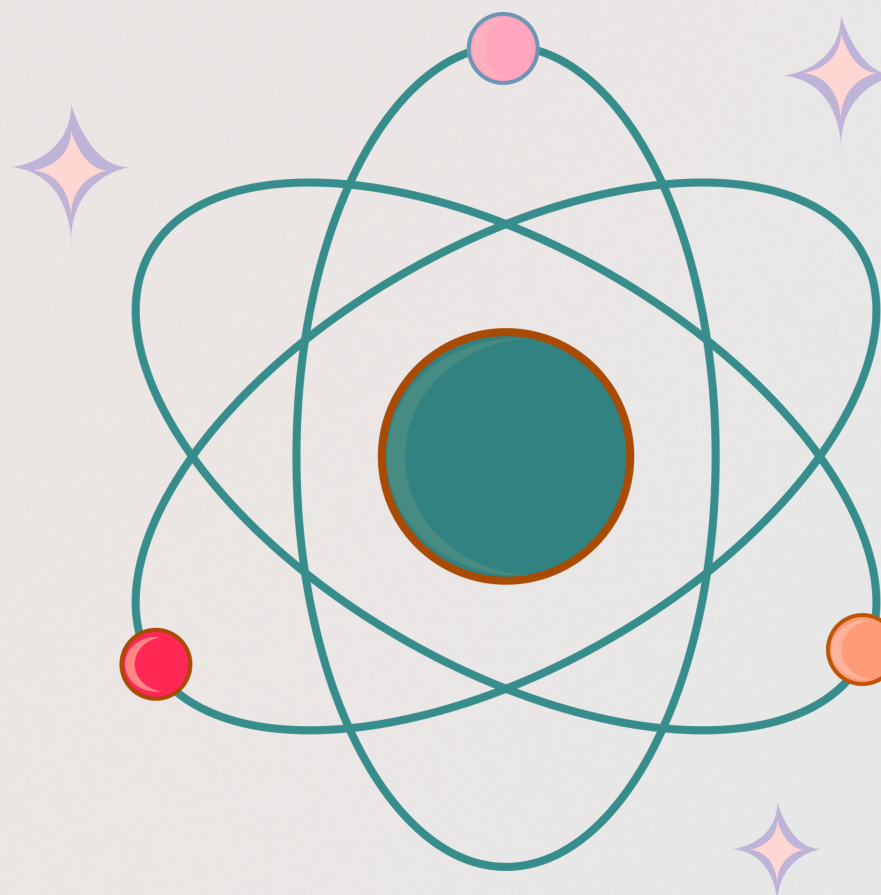
Key facts

- 3 Meetings (March 2023 - November 2024)
- More than 10 Universities engaged in the group



Scope

- **Foster dialogue** on key challenges and best practices in university knowledge valorisation.
- Identify and monitor **EU initiatives** shaping KV practices.



Focus & lessons learnt

- Europe lacks a **unified approach to knowledge valorisation**, particularly with regard to dedicated offices, structures, and contact points, often as a result of limited resources.
- **Universities should be better supported** in further developing skills for knowledge valorisation, notably through **targeted training and capacity-building measures**, with support from the European Commission to foster entrepreneurial talent and translate knowledge into societal impact.
- Greater emphasis should be placed on the **dissemination of research results** and on **improving access to existing funding and innovation instruments**, rather than creating new ones.
- There is a strong need to **better harmonise, leverage, and scale existing European instruments**.

Achievements

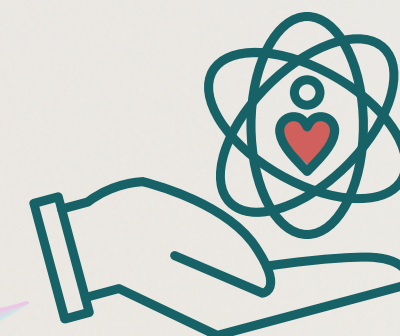
YERUN published a policy paper on **Fostering Societal Impact** as a key dimension of knowledge valorisation, drawing on inputs from the KV Group.

YERUN collected feedback from its members through a survey to gather **detailed insights and analyse university practices in knowledge valorisation**, supporting peer learning and dissemination (responses received from six members).

YERUN actively **advocated** for the key messages raised by the KV Group across relevant EU policies and initiatives.

YERUN has been an active partner in the implementation of **Action 7 of the ERA Policy Agenda on upgrade EU guidance for a better knowledge valorisation**, ensuring that the perspectives of YERUN member universities are brought to the attention of the European Commission.

YERUN initiated a **reflection paper on members' approaches to knowledge valorisation**, which will be finalised to provide a comprehensive overview of the topic and its links to the various policy initiatives currently in place at EU level. A draft version of this document can be found [here](#).





YERUN Rankings and Impact Group



Key facts

- 6 Meetings (May 2024 - November 2024)
- 9 Universities engaged - Potsdam, Limerick, UiT, Brunel, Antwerp, Maastricht Klagenfurt, UEF, Stirling

Scope

- Understand the **role rankings** play within YERUN universities.
- **Explore** if university rankings are a valid measure of institutional excellence and impact.



Focus & lessons learnt

- International rankings of universities are subject to criticism for methodological approaches that can unfairly affect universities. This is due to a bias in rankings towards reputation, too much focus on outputs, lack of consideration of other factors, as well as lack of transparency.
- There is a growing dissatisfaction with the current ranking systems, where some institutions are reconsidering their participation.
- Universities must contribute to **educate stakeholders** about rankings and to **explore alternatives that assess more holistically**.
- Universities must **ensure that rankings are not misused as funding criteria by EU or national governments**.

Achievements

- YERUN ensured continuation on **discussions** about rankings by participating in CoARA.
- YERUN joined the **policy and strategic advisory board for EHECO (the European Higher Education Sector Observatory)** that supports higher education institutions through benchmarking tools designed to facilitate strategic decision-making, which aims to be an alternative to traditional rankings and may focus on university competitiveness.
- YERUN endorsed the 'More Than Our Rank' Initiative emphasising the limitations of traditional rankings and underlining the need of reshaping the narrative around institutional success, prioritising meaningful and diverse contributions over one-dimensional rankings.
- YERUN members constructively engaged and exchanged on **best practices**.
- YERUN members prepared some **case-studies** on how the rankings affect the institutional strategies.

