



# The first eighteen months

December 2019 – May 2021

Maastricht University ↔ Nicolaus Copernicus University in Torun ↔ Universidad Carlos III de Madrid  
University of Antwerp ↔ University of Bremen ↔ University of Cyprus ↔ University of Eastern Finland  
University of Essex ↔ University of Rijeka ↔ Tor Vergata University of Rome ↔ ETS Global  
European Entrepreneurs CEA-PME ↔ Kiron Open Higher Education gGmbH ↔ The Adecco Group

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The YUFE Alliance is based on the joint vision of ten young research-intensive universities and four non-academic partners located all across Europe. We came together to build one of the very first European Universities, based on our shared dedication to the European spirit, their common aim to contribute to a more inclusive, innovative and united Europe and their ambition to help address today's challenges.



*The COVID-19 pandemic has been both a hindering factor and a catalyser for the Alliance: it has been harder to establish a truly quadruple-helix model; intra-alliance mobility has been developed faster thanks to major digital advancements.*



In 2019, we sketched a very ambitious vision, aiming to bring a radical change in higher education by becoming the leading model of a young, student-centred, non-elitist, open and inclusive European University. The Alliance's model is based on the structural cooperation between higher education institutions, public and private sector, and citizens. When we drafted our proposal in 2018-2019, it was not foreseeable that only few months later – in spring 2020 - a pandemic would have overtaken most of Europe making some activities more challenging than expected. Yet, the flexible, resilient and solid framework we had already built in the Alliance allowed us to

progress even faster than originally planned – and far beyond what could have been expected.

Participating in YUFE allows students to learn and staff to work at 10 academic institutions simultaneously, increasing quality, attractiveness and international visibility of all partners, which is likely to contribute to an increase of their international competitiveness in the future. The ability of the YUFE Alliance to provide virtual mobility has been particularly important during the first 18 months of the project period, when international exchange and opportunities have been limited by the COVID-19 pandemic.

**10** universities

**2** additional full partners

**11** countries

**3** additional projects

- H2020 SwafS DIOSI
- EIT-HEI Inno4YUFE
- H2020 SwafS YUFERING

non-academic partners

**4**

So far achieved

**60%**

of initial YUFE Erasmus+ 3-year work plan

**2/4** focus areas launched

**2019-2020**

**74** dissemination events

**360** staff mobility

**2020-2021**

**2** YUFE@Home offerings

**870** staff mobility through +50 training opportunities

**203** student mobility

**90** Star System

**74** dissemination events

**11** Help Desks

**21** volunteering programmes

**2** YUFE@Home offerings

**2** YUFE Challenges

**20** YUFE Academy lectures in 2020 with +1,500 registrations

**14** YUFE Academy lectures in 2021 (so far)

**4** YUFE D&I Lectures

**10** Entrepreneurial Talk Shows

**2** YUFE Townhalls

**1** YUFE Mayors Meeting



## Greater focus on YUFE Virtual Campus and Diversity & Inclusivity



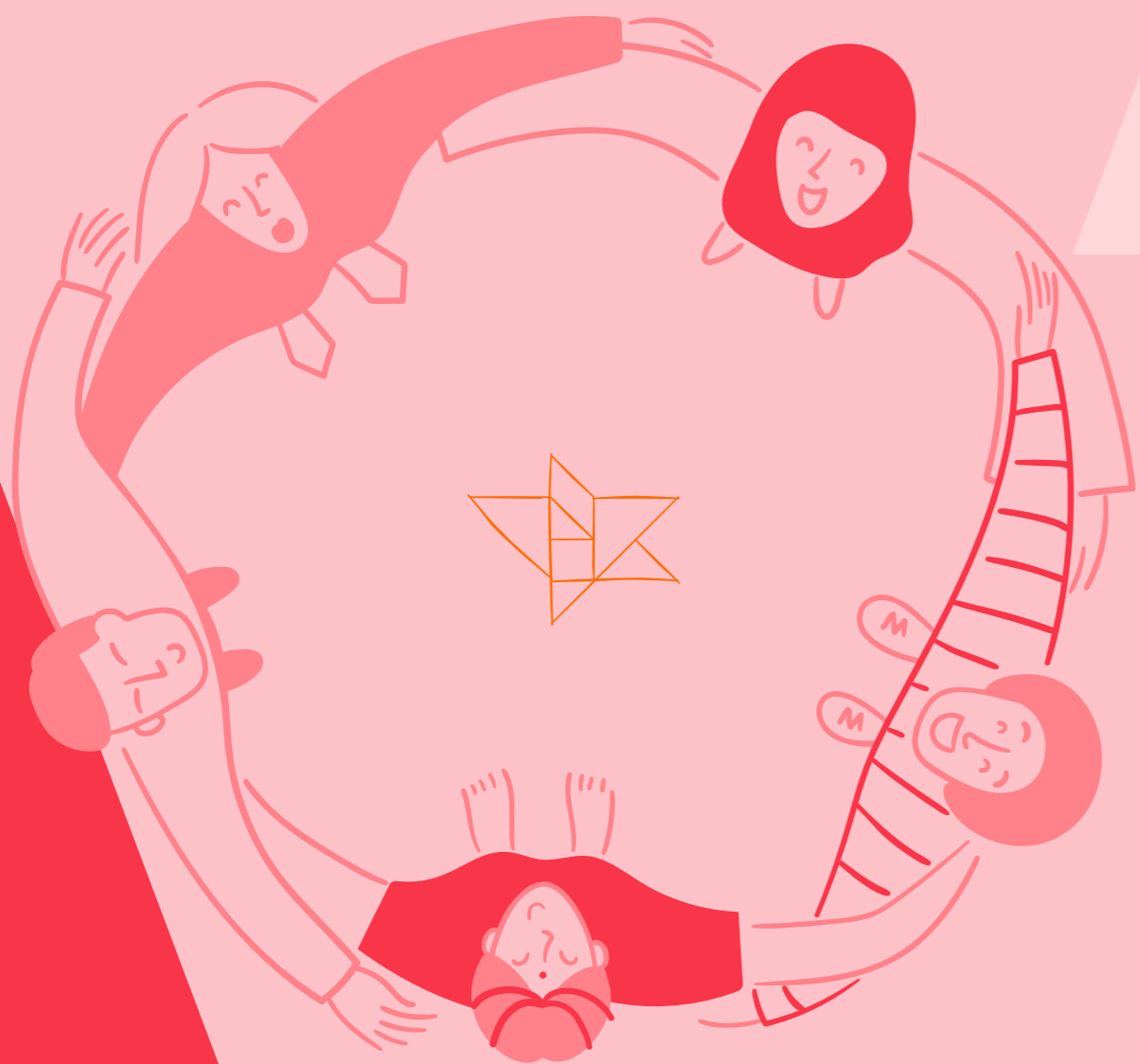
The YUFE Virtual Campus, a first building block of a unique and interactive virtual environment that contains information for all YUFE community members, was launched on 23 November 2020 with the YUFE Student Portal. The YUFE Virtual Campus functions as the interactive (digital) thread of our Alliance, bringing together all YUFE activities in a personalised digital environment, thus pursuing its goal of promoting accessible international education, mobility, multilingualism, and university-citizens communities.

Currently, work is being carried out to deliver portals for all of YUFE's stakeholder groups and according to a lean project management approach. The YUFE Staff Portal and the YUFE Innovation & Entrepreneurship Portal were launched on 3 June 2021. The YUFE Citizens' Portal will be launched later this year, though some of its activities such as the YUFE Help Desks and Volunteering Opportunities are already available through the Student Portal.



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Diversity & Inclusivity (D&I) runs at the heart of YUFE. In June 2020, a YUFE D&I Strategy was adopted by the Alliance with an accompanying action plan finalised in the spring of 2021.



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The YUFE D&I leadership developed and delivered D&I workshops to the students enrolled in the YUFE Student Journey, as well as train-the-trainer events to build knowledge and capacity and help to build communities of good practice. Conversations and training about inclusive leadership have also commenced within the highest governing bodies of the Alliance, to support its members in being D&I role models. Adopting the YUFE D&I Strategy within each institution represents a major step forward in terms of creating institutions that are open and inclusive. The impact differs per institution, depending on their starting point. The impact of the YUFE D&I effort has been substantial with two institutions inspired to start D&I offices and posts that they did not have prior to the start of the current project period. This shows a tangible transformation within individual institutions as a result of development and launch of YUFE deliverables and activities.



At YUFE we don't just think about D&I, but we also actively aim to be inclusive and student-led in all our governance bodies, taskforces and working groups. Thirty students, three per academic partner, are chosen each year to represent their institution through the YUFE Student Forum and help co-create the Alliance. The YUFE Student Forum also elects their own Student Forum Board, which represents the student voice in all of YUFE's governance bodies. The President of the YUFE Student Forum even co-chairs the YUFE Strategy Board, the highest decision-making body in the YUFE Alliance. The YUFE governance structure thus reflects the extent to which

the YUFE Student Forum representatives are important players in co-leading and co-creating the YUFE project and vision. The European Commission has acknowledged and praised the way we truly involve students in all our activities and decisions and mentioned that YUFE has a clear potential to become a role model when it comes to integrating students.

Likewise, impressive numbers of students, researchers and academic staff are very actively engaged in YUFE, and their commitment and work ethic are instrumental for the creation and development of the Alliance.

A satisfaction survey among first participants of the YUFE Student Journey (Introduction offer) was conducted in November 2020: over 83% of the respondents were happy with their YUFE experience so far. The students mentioned 'interesting classes' and/or 'courses that are not offered at the home university' and/or 'taking up a virtual class abroad even in times of COVID-19', and/or 'getting to know other students and making friends' as positive parts of YUFE.

YUFE also provides students, staff (and in the future citizens) the opportunity to complement their academic learning with skills training related to language-, professional- and civic engagement. Moreover, achievements in this domain are formally rewarded through the YUFE Stars and Diploma Supplement. The YUFE Star System consists of four stars for mobility, language, professional and civic engagement, and encourages students and learners to pursue personal and professional development, while experiencing the possibility to contribute to society and to activities with a Europe-wide impact. This formal reward system helps contribute to turning YUFE learners into globally competitive graduates that are ready to take on responsibilities in society and the labour market.

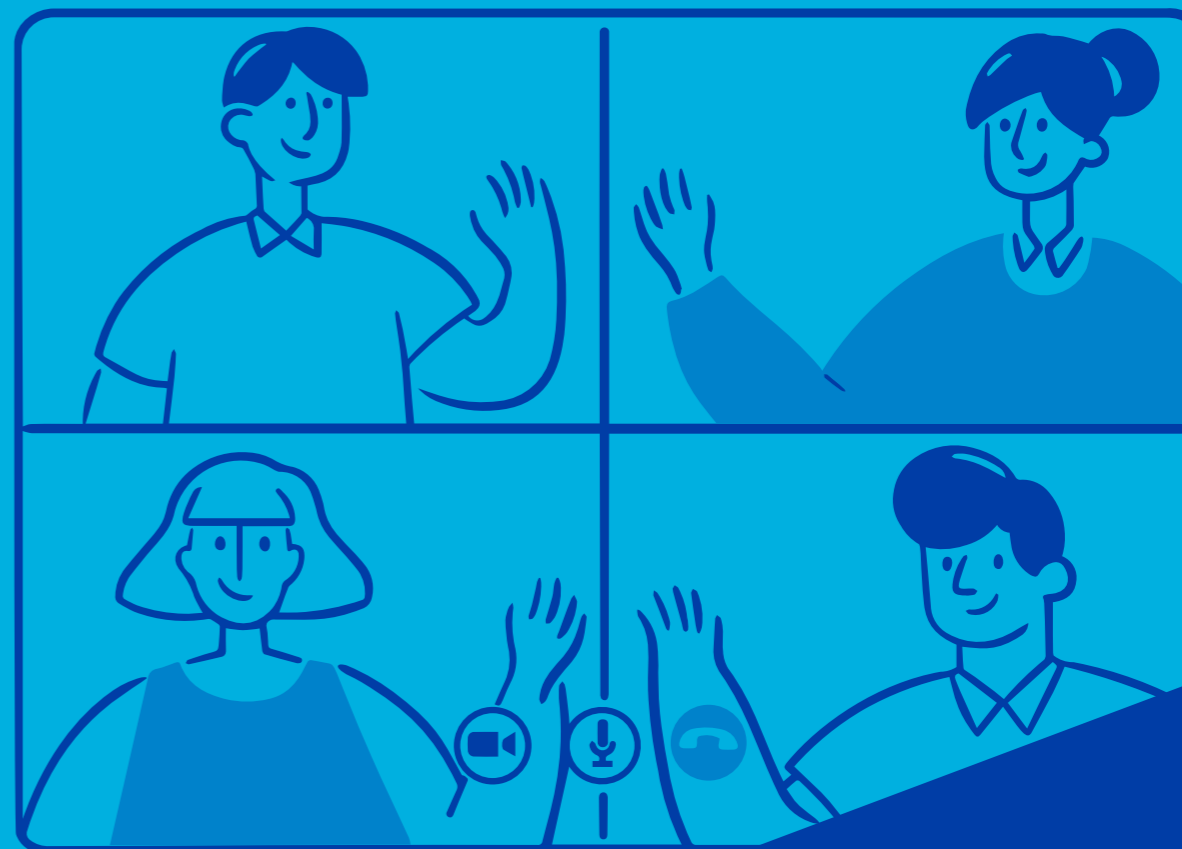
Especially in the first months of implementation, the (virtual) mobility opportunities implemented for YUFE staff and students despite the COVID-19 pandemic were one of the key elements in making the individual YUFE partners stand out. Through YUFE, we were still able to provide students with the possibility to study abroad. Combined with the innovative Open Programmes that allow students to co-create their own educational path, the YUFE academic partners became more reputable and attractive for our students, as demonstrated by the feedback received in the Introduction Offer satisfaction survey.



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The YUFE Staff Journey ensured that training sessions for academic and non-academic staff members could continue throughout the pandemic.



Besides this, the YUFE Staff Journey launched the first open call for the YUFE Postdoctoral Programme, which includes unique mentoring from within and outside of academia as well as a first scheme to test the joint appointment of researchers. Through the joint Postdoctoral Programme, YUFE's academic partners and their research institutions increased their visibility and attractiveness to both European and international applicants. In total there were 51 applications from 27 countries. The increased visibility of the individual universities was reflected by the majority of applications submitted from outside the Alliance partner institutions and by the majority of applicants not applying to their alma maters.





YUFE’s mission is to shape the future of European higher education by establishing a European University open to all. Thanks to the activities built and rolled-out in the first half of the project period, YUFE has made substantial progress towards realising this mission. With YUFE’s early activities in the Student and Staff Journey the reality of a European University is coming closer. With our civic engagement and entrepreneurial activities now being launched as well, and our European University expanding through other projects such as YUFERING, DIOSI and Inno4YUFE, we can truly empower future generations of Europeans to become socially responsible, globally oriented citizens and life-long learners equipped to effectively contribute to a more cohesive and inclusive European society. In the remaining project period and beyond, YUFE will remain committed and will continue working towards providing European students, staff and citizens from different backgrounds with life-changing European (educational) experiences and opportunities. Already during the first part of the pilot phase, our partner organisations started moving beyond a project-based collaboration towards true integration and institutional change. We seek to continue progressing on this path moving towards systemic, structural and sustainable cooperation and towards becoming a European University.

