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PROJECT: TRANSFORMING R&I THROUGH EUROPE-WIDE KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER
(YUFERING) <https://yufe.eu/yufering>

SCOPE OF THE POLICY BRIEF

In this second policy brief, the European Universities pilot I alliances are asked to report on the progress made through cooperation in selected R&I areas and provide a last set of recommendations to the European Commission for further policy development.

Policy background:

In order to strengthen strategic partnerships across the EU amongst higher education institutions, the European Commission targets the emergence of “European Universities” by 2024 by funding alliances from across Europe. The ambitious mandate aims to trigger systemic, structural and sustainable institutionalized cooperation between higher education institutions. As a complement to the Erasmus+ action geared towards supporting higher education cooperation models, Horizon 2020 supported the research and innovation dimension of the alliances between European universities, in line with their shared, integrated, long-term joint strategy and in synergy with their education dimension.

This initiative is one of the flagships of the [European strategy for universities](#) that aimed at supporting and enabling universities to adapt to changing conditions, to thrive and to take a leading role in the recovery of Europe, and in making our society greener, more inclusive and more digital.

In parallel, the [European Research Area Policy Agenda](#) sets out 20 voluntary actions for the period 2022-2024, including several of which are relevant for universities. The feedback from the alliances helped co-shape the ERA Policy Agenda 2022 – 2024, such as ERA actions 1 (sharing of data), 3 (reform of research management), 4 (strengthening careers), 5 (gender equality), 7 (knowledge valorisation), 8 (research infrastructures), 13 (empowering universities), 14 (engaging citizens), 17 (research management).

List of Acronyms and Abbreviations:

ASTP – Association of European Science and Technology Transfer Professionals	HE – Horizon Europe
AUTM – Association of University Technology Managers	HEI – Higher Education Institution
CERI – Community Engaged Research and Innovation	H2020 – Horizon 2020
CoARA – Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment	MS – Member States
EC – European Commission	OPUS – Open and Universal Science
ECRs - Early Career Researchers	OS – Open Science
EU – European Union	POC – Proof of Concept
EEI – European Excellence Initiative	R&I – Research and Innovation
ERA – European Research Area	RI – Research Infrastructures
ERIC – European Research Infrastructure Consortium	RTTP – Registered Technology Transfer Professionals
EUA – European University Alliance	SBA – Societal Business Actor
EUI – European University Initiative	SECURE – Sustainable Careers for Researcher Empowerment
DG – Directorate General	SOA – Science Outreach Activities
FKT – Flipped Knowledge Transfer	SwafS – Science with and for Society
FP 10 – 10 th EU R&I Framework Programme	TTO – Technology Transfer Office
KV – Knowledge Valorisation	YUFE – Young Universities for the Future of Europe
KT – Knowledge Transfer	WP – Work Package

FEEDBACK ON PROGRESS (MAX 2 P)

Please build on the feedback provided in the Feedback to Policy Report PR1

1. Developing a common Research and Innovation (R&I) agenda faces challenges in defining strategic areas, securing investment, addressing maturity differences in support services, and fostering collaboration without a joint task force. Addressing challenges in integrating YUFERING concepts with local frameworks involves navigating issues. Partner universities in the [YUFE Alliance recognise challenges](#) in analysing legal and regulatory barriers to research collaboration within and outside the network. Complexities arise from diverse practices within faculties and research groups, coupled with limited experiences in personnel exchange. Social security and tax-related challenges in academic exchange, compounded by telework from home countries, contribute to difficulties. National restrictions, [such as in Belgium](#), hinder secondments from other universities. Challenges in joint work include uneven engagement, with regulatory obstacles not hindering cooperation but imbalances in partner university involvement. The YUFE Competence Framework for Researchers, built upon local frameworks, faces challenges in alignment with existing institutional concepts due to ties with national regulations. The YUFE Academic Assessment Portfolio introduces qualitative criteria for academic selection, creating difficulty in integrating these tools into local selection processes governed by regulations. Differences in legal frameworks and autonomy among YUFE members necessitate a common legal framework for European University Alliances (EUAs), as proposed by the European Commission (EC). Income disparities among researchers across European Union (EU) member states pose a hurdle to harmonisation measures. Challenges in Early Career Researchers' (ECRs) career development arise from factors like the crucial implementation of Open Science (OS), job precarity, and diverse prerequisites for intersectoral mobility. Limited research management resources and variations in Technology Transfer Office (TTO) size hinder EUA-level R&I efforts. To drive a purpose-driven Knowledge Valorisation (KV) approach, YUFERING emphasises investing in complementary team and talent development for KV and research managers. Identifying a suitable model for Community-Engaged Research and Innovation (CERI) across YUFERING proves challenging due to diverse approaches, institutional priorities, levels of investment, and external drivers among partner universities. Limited workshop participation and effective dissemination challenges hinder broad engagement and communication within the YUFE collaboration. Mapping Science Outreach Activities (SOA) and establishing a framework for best practices encounter challenges due to the absence of consensus on the definition and scope of science outreach activities at the YUFE level.
2. The YUFE Alliance addresses diverse challenges by aligning YUFERING initiatives with member-state regulations, emphasising collaborative efforts and advocating for a common legal framework. To tackle income inequalities and bolster research management, significant investment in resources is recognised as essential. YUFE Alliance underscores the importance of research career development, transferable skills promotion, and collaboration within quadruple and penta-helix innovation frameworks. Strategic navigation and collaborative solutions are emphasised to bridge the gap between YUFERING concepts and local realities. Noteworthy progress is observed across various areas within the YUFE Alliance, with outcomes seamlessly integrated into partner institutions. Initiatives such as the Competence Framework for Researchers and the Academic Assessment Portfolio complement existing frameworks, fostering discussions, and influencing updates. The [YUFE4Postdocs](#) initiative addresses income inequalities among researchers, contingent upon suitable overarching frameworks by member states and the EC. The [YUFE 2030](#) newly-funded project pioneers an initial legal framework, and joint project employment contracts ensure compliance with national rules. Recognition of foreign qualifications is managed through flexible agreements for research collaboration, while ethical considerations are addressed through Codes of Conduct linked to the [European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity](#). The YUFERING initiative defines CERI, employing a conceptual framework mapping best practices at YUFE universities. Despite challenges, YUFERING focuses on enhancing demand-driven Knowledge Transfer (KT) processes, including SWOT analyses, use-cases, and Flipped Knowledge Transfer (FKT) pilots. The following definition of KV was introduced which encompasses both CERI and FKT: ***“KV is a bi-directional process in which researchers and societal business actors (SBAs) bring together their knowledge and expertise to address challenges, aiming to co-create social and economic value. This is achieved by connecting various areas, expertise, and sectors, transforming data, know-how, and research results into sustainable products, services, solutions, and knowledge-based policies that benefit society.”*** Challenges related to R&I strengths are addressed through qualitative analysis, variable geometry, and a pilot R&I node in life sciences within the [Bio-YUFE](#) initiative.

In summary, the YUFERING project is actively engaged on multiple fronts, contributing to positive changes in R&I practices. The adaptability of the frameworks and collaborative endeavours between institutions and the YUFE Alliance emerge as key strengths in addressing challenges and fostering advancements in European higher education and research areas.

3. The YUFERING project achieved significant progress. Key achievements include:

Researcher Competence Framework and Assessment:

- YUFE contributed to researcher competence discussions, formulating frameworks.
- The [YUFE/YUFERING Competence Framework for Researchers](#) is publicly available.
- The University of Eastern Finland disseminated the [YUFE Academic Assessment Portfolio](#).
- The [Strategy for a European Career Track System](#) formulated recommendations to mitigate the identified obstacles.

YUFE Training Programme for Academic Supervisors:

- Established a YUFE Training Programme for PhD Supervisors.
- Additional training offers available on time management for academics with caring responsibilities, and academic writing.

Participation in ERA-related projects:

- Active involvement of partner Universities (i.e., UCY, UNIRI, UC3M, UANT, UM) in [OPUS](#), [SECURE](#), [TWIN4MERIT](#), and [INNO2MARE](#) Horizon Europe (HE) projects.

YUFE/YUFERING/DIOSI Developed Trainings

- Developed trainings in Open Science, Knowledge Transfer and Open Innovations.
- Institutionalised training sessions at YUFE partners on an annual basis.

Establishment of Centres and Networks

- [YUFERING's KT Expert Network](#) expanding to a YUFE-wide KV Network which will be structurally embedded within the YUFE Alliance.
- Pilot R&I node in Bio-YUFE created a platform for joint research.
- The University of Rijeka has established a [Science Outreach Centre](#) and initiated a YUFE Section.

Mapping and Action Plan for CERI

- Partners mapped [CERI practices](#) at their institutions which is available online.
- Presented CERI conceptual framework and definition.
- Designed [CERI workshops for ECRs](#) within the YUFE Alliance.
- The University of Rijeka created an action plan for 2024-2026 on CERI.

Mapping and Action Plan for Research Infrastructures

- A mapping of Research Infrastructures (RIs) at the YUFERING partners was completed.
- An analysis of all RIs, funding, openness and CERI orientation was completed.
- An [Action Plan for RIs](#) with proposed next steps for their joint utilisation was prepared.

Open Science

- YUFERING conducted a Full OS pilot implemented almost all YUFE partners.
- Formulated [YUFE OS model](#) and guidelines for researcher evaluation.
- YUFERING defined "[Open Science Commons](#)" for all YUFE partners. An [OS Syllabus](#) has developed for up-skilling researchers (including ECR) in Open Science.

Knowledge Valorisation

- [Profile and Career Development Path of KT Managers](#) outlines the essential skillset needed for KV professionals to efficiently interact with SBAs and is recognised widely by from peer network organisations like the Association of European Science and Technology Transfer Professionals (ASTP) and the Association of University Technology Managers (AUTM).
- [YUFE Training on FKT](#) with three modules developed.

YUFE4Postdocs Collaboration

- YUFE4Postdocs programme facilitates exchange of harmonised good practices related to the selection, recruitment, mentoring and support of postdoctoral researchers and their training.
- YUFE4Postdocs programme follows a competitive joint selection process of postdocs with expert evaluations, ensuring the quality of the selection based on the merits of research in full alignment with the Coalition for Advancing Research (CoARA) principles and commitments.

Science Outreach Initiatives

- Involvement in Erasmus+ projects connecting science and art.
- Engagements in Science Festivals, [European Researchers' nights](#), and Science Shops.
- Workshops on Science Communication.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS (MAX 2 P)

1. The YUFERING project and YUFE Alliance exhibit an inclusive cooperation fostering institutional change, particularly in less R&I-intensive universities. Noteworthy aspects include:

Sustainability and Long-Term Funding

- Beyond ad hoc project funding, securing long-term European funding is crucial for sustained collaboration.
- Progress in HE WIDERA projects demonstrates success and exceeded expectations.

Adaptability to Legal Requirements

- YUFE acknowledges legal diversity, adopting an adaptable approach tailored to partner universities' needs.
- Legal flexibility reduces administrative burdens, simplifying collaboration for less research-intensive universities.

Competence and Career Development

- YUFERING achievements enhance understanding of diversity in researcher competences, aiding recruitment strategies.
- Promotion of OS and academic supervisor training fosters an attractive working environment.
- The University of Cyprus incorporated and adopted its “[Free University](#)” lectures as CERI activities.
- All YUFE members and engaged in OS Training for Early Career Researchers, building up career development atmosphere.

YUFE4Postdocs Training Programme

- The programme features a competitive selection process aligned with CoARA commitments.
- Requires each researcher to have a cross-university co-supervisor, promoting international collaboration.

Strategic Cooperation and Collaboration

- YUFE partners submit common HE projects proposals, actively engaging in strategic cooperation in various areas.
- Collaborative efforts include career assessment, open science, marine research, meta-research, life sciences, and law.

Spillover Effects and Comprehensive Approach

- Erasmus+ funding for YUFE creates spillover effects, expanding activities into R&I.
- Holistic education approach equips learners with essential skills for the R&I cycle.

Community-Engaged Research and Innovation

- Inclusive CERI gains consensus, benefiting less research-intensive universities.
- Mapping diverse research practices allows sharing best practices among partners.
- YUFE envisions a CERI-FKT model for KV, a mutual process where researchers co-create value by combining their expertise to address challenges.
- Virtual Science Outreach Centre @UNIRi was set up as a framework for the exchange of best YUFE science outreach activities/practices.

In summary, YUFERING's collaborative and inclusive approach, coupled with diverse initiatives and strategic partnerships, creates a favourable ecosystem for R&I, especially benefiting less R&I-intensive universities. The emphasis on skills development, international collaboration, and adaptability to legal requirements contributes to the YUFE Alliance's added value compared to traditional cross-border cooperation.

2. The YUFERING project addresses challenges in administrative burden and suggests solutions for a comprehensive support system. Key points and examples include:

Unified Alliance Funding

- Challenge: Multiple funding sources causing administrative burden.
- Solution: Establish unified funding, streamline application.
- Example: Unify ERASMUS+ and H2020-Science with and for Society (Swafs) funding under one call.

Equalisation of National Support

- Challenge: Unequal national support for EUA partners.
- Solution: National support equality, specific funds.
- Example: Croatian Act on Higher Education and Scientific Activity.

Research Infrastructure Sharing

- Challenge: Legal and regulatory barriers in RI joint use.
- Solution: Simplify frameworks, reduce legal and regulatory barriers, create matching tool for collaboration and leverage European Research Infrastructure Consortia (ERICs).

- Example: Facilitate joint RI utilisation through low-threshold approaches.

Joint Professorial Appointments

- Challenge: Legal conditions and funding for joint appointments.
- Solution: Establish EU level conditions and funding.
- Example: Joint appointments with attractive resources.

Transparency in Academic Careers

- Challenge: Lack of clarity in academic career paths.
- Solution: Ensure transparency via [EURAXESS](#).
- Example: [Spanish Research Career Path](#) as a model.

Research Project Management Personnel

- Challenge: Need for skilled project support personnel.
- Solution: Ensure EU funding for management personnel.
- Example: EU funding lines for project coordination personnel.

Guidelines on Research Collaboration Rights

- Challenge: Legal issues in copyright, patents.
- Solution: EU guidelines, standardised agreements.
- Example: Overcoming EU law limitations through clear guidelines.

Mainstreaming Open Science

- Challenge: OS normalisation in YUFERING partners. Aligning OS with Research Assessment processes (CoARA).
- Solution: Underline EU OS requirements, establish university OS regulations and practices, foster OS training at any researcher career level.
- Example: OS culture established through pilots, trainings, and guidelines.

3. *The YUFE Alliance demonstrates a comprehensive strategy to integrate SwafS and Erasmus+ initiatives, aligning various projects and initiatives for a synergistic and impactful approach across different missions. The YUFE Alliance outlines how it plans to integrate the work on transformation modules developed under the YUFERING H2020-SwafS support with Erasmus+ support to the Alliance projects. Here are the current state-of-affairs and integration plans:*

YUFE Competence Framework for Researchers

- Current State: Developed in YUFERING for YUFE staff training offers for researchers.
- Integration Plans: Integrate into a Doctoral Education Pilot within YUFE 2030 WP6¹.

YUFE Academic Assessment Portfolio

- Current State: Developed in YUFERING for YUFE4Postdocs programme.
- Integration Plans: Contribute to YUFE 2030 WP5².

Balanced Brain Circulation

- Current State: YUFE exploring legal situations for researcher exchange.
- Integration Plans: Establish common legal entity for smoother collaboration.

Community Engaged Research and Innovation

- Current State: Alliance consensus on CERI concept.
- Integration Plans: Implement CERI horizontally in YUFE 2030 WP5 and WP7³.

Joint University Structures and Best Practices

- Current State: Mapping best practices in CERI.
- Integration Plans: Disseminate best practices related to CERI among Alliance members.

YUFE KT Professionals Competence Profile

- Current State: Developed in YUFERING, based on the Registered Technology Transfer Professionals (RTTP) framework.
- Integration Plans: Integrate into YUFE staff training offer for KT professionals.

Knowledge Valorisation Network

- Current State: Identifying key competencies and showcasing collaboration.
- Integration Plans: Integrate into YUFE 2030 WP7.

YUFE Recognition and Reward System for Academic and Professional Service Staff

- Current State: YUFERING work expanded to cover service staff.

¹ YUFE 2030 WP6 YUFE Approach to Doctoral and Postdoctoral Training

² YUFE 2030 WP5 YUFE Responsible, Interdisciplinary and Inclusive Research

³ YUFE 2030 WP7 Entrepreneurship and Innovation

- Integration Plans: Contribute to YUFE 2030 WP5.

YUFE Open Science Model

- Current State: Developed in YUFERING, to be used in the Alliance for institutional policy development and implementation of measures in OS.
- Integration Plans: Implement as the basis for OS institutional policy in YUFE 2030, applying to all research-related WPs (i.e., WP5, WP6, WP7).

Integration of Open Science Practices into Doctoral Training

- Current State: YUFERING OS practices integrated into doctoral programmes.
- Integration Plans: OS criteria incorporated into YUFE doctoral training.

Utilisation of Research Infrastructures for collaboration amongst YUFE members

- Current State: Mapping RIs for collaboration.
- Integration Plans: Upscale in YUFE 2030 WP5 for large-scale projects. Explore common use of OS Metadata infrastructures to implement Research/ers assessment (CoARA commitment 10).

4. The recommendations provided via the YUFERING project at the YUFE Alliance level include:

- Allocate specific HE funds for R&I in the EUA initiative to ensure dedicated support.
- The overall progress assessment of the EUA initiative should focus on a greater qualitative approach rather than predominantly quantitative measures.
- Enlarge the Alliance, including institutions from EU candidate countries, especially Western Balkans, in EUA initiative with concrete support.
- Utilize existing fora, such as the Rectors' Forum of Southeast Europe and Western Balkans, as suitable vehicles to support the inclusion of institutions from candidate countries.
- Optimise strategies by referring to research managers as R&I Managers, investing in KV and liaison manager networks, and allocate stable budgets for university "innovation support" with less financially intensive grants like Proof of Concept (POC).

In accordance with EU values, these recommendations underscore the importance of targeted funding, a balanced approach to progress assessment, and strategic efforts to involve institutions from candidate countries, recognising the potential for broader societal impact. The rationale is rooted in the desire to create a more conducive environment for R&I, fostering collaboration and yielding impactful outcomes.



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This policy brief reflects only the author's view and the European Commission/REA is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information it contains.