

Working Group on Reforming Academic Career Assessment

Case study “YUFE4Postdocs evaluation & selection procedure”

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Country	International The selection procedure followed two calls for positions in nine European universities (Belgium, Croatia, Cyprus, Finland, Germany, the Netherlands, Spain, Poland and the UK).
Name	Official name of the initiative YUFE4Postdocs evaluation & selection procedure
Institution	Name of the institution(s) responsible for the initiative University of Antwerp (Belgium)
Stakeholders	Names of other organisations involved <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>YUFE universities</u> University of Antwerp University of Bremen University of Cyprus University of Essex University of Eastern Finland Maastricht University Universidad Carlos III de Madrid University of Rijeka Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń <u>Associated Partners</u> Voka - Kamer van Koophandel Antwerpen-Waasland City of Antwerpen Free Hanseatic City of Bremen Colchester Borough Council

	<p>Essex County Council</p> <p>City of Kuopio</p> <p>North Karelia Chamber of Commerce</p> <p>Municipality of Maastricht</p> <p>Brightlands Maastricht Health Campus BV</p> <p>Nicosia Municipality</p> <p>Ayuntamiento de Getafe adg</p> <p>Getafe Iniciativas sa</p> <p>City of Rijeka</p> <p>Croatian Chamber of Economy</p> <p>City of Toruń</p> <p>Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Toruń</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Other parties</u> <p>Earthwatch (UK)</p> <p>The Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR)</p>
Year	<p>When the initiative was launched</p> <p>1st of January 2023 (start of the YUFE4Postdocs project)</p> <p>Applied in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Call 1 (7/1/2023 – 7/5/2023) - Call 2 (1/10/2023 – 20/12/2023)
Documentation	<p>Link to the main document describing the initiative</p> <p>YUFE4Postdocs call documents</p>
Website	<p>https://www.yufe.eu/early-career-researchers/yufe4postdocs/</p>
Summary	<p>Brief description of the initiative</p> <p>YUFE4Postdocs is an ambitious postdoctoral training program, initiated and led by the University of Antwerp, involving eight other universities of the Young Universities for the Future of Europe (YUFE) Alliance. It is co-funded by Horizon Europe in the Marie Skłodowska Curie program (GA 101081327). The program resulted in 55 researchers working under the overarching theme 'Urban opportunities & challenges, with projects in 4 focus areas of the YUFE alliance.</p> <p>The <u>selection process</u> piloted a novel approach by assessing applicants on a broader and qualitative set of selection criteria both in</p>

	the peer review assessments (step 2), and in the consecutive final evaluation (step 3) by two interdisciplinary & transdisciplinary selection committees involving external stakeholders. Appointed postdocs are offered a 3-pillar training program featuring interactive stakeholder engagement seminars (Pillar 1) joint transferable skills trainings (Pillar 2) and complementary partner courses (Pillar 3). Each postdoc is supported by a supervisors team, involving a societal stakeholders to follow up on the execution of their research training project, with a Career Development Plan as their individual roadmap.
Target audience	<p>Description of the main target audience of the initiative</p> <p>The evaluation & selection procedure served the following audiences:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the participating universities experiencing a novel selection procedure for young researchers • the stakeholder organisations co-deciding in the selection procedure, gaining insights in academic practises and selection of candidates • the stakeholder organisations with subsequent involvement in the supervising team of the appointed postdocs, gaining insights in research with societal impact in medium or longer term • the appointed postdocs (to be) trained in stakeholder interaction
Geographical Scope	<p>Description of the primary geographical scope of application</p> <p>Institutes of higher education in Europe, wanting to attract postdoctoral researchers with research projects with societal impact potential and knowledge transfer potential</p>
International potential:	<p>Description of the international potential for adaptation</p> <p>Institutes of higher education outside Europe, wanting to attract postdoctoral researchers with research projects with societal impact potential and knowledge transfer potential.</p>
Goal	<p>Description of the intended change</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a novel approach in assessing applications for postdoctoral researchers positions in academia, with a structural impact in the YUFE universities as first receptors of change • Develop a practise of societal stakeholders involvement in selection procedures for young researchers in academia

<p>Relevance</p>	<p>Description of the key elements that are relevant for reforming career assessment</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Structured CV 2. Involvement of non-academic stakeholders in the final selection <p>The application files consisted of a research training project (RTP) template and a structured CV template in which applicants describe their main achievement in (a) research, (b) teamwork & leadership, (c) community engagement and societal outreach (via dissemination and engagement with stakeholders or broader public). This is complemented by an indication of further merits including (max. 5) publications, projects and conferences participation and knowledge valorization. The Structured CV used is based on a narrative CV template developed within the YUFERING project (Horizon2020 Grant agreement ID: 101016967), under the lead of the University of Eastern Finland and the University of Bremen.</p> <p>The selection procedure comprises a thorough peer-review (step 2) followed by a final selection by two interdisciplinary Selection Committees set up for each call: one SC per focus area. These comprise 11 members, eight academics and three or four representatives of municipalities/business organizations or civil society organizations. These co-decide on the final selection by assessing the potential contribution of the project to societal and/or economic impact; the identification of stakeholders and the proposed stakeholder interaction during the project.</p>
<p>Qualitative</p>	<p>Description of recommendations regarding qualitative assessment</p> <p>The evaluation procedure is based on primarily on qualitative judgement of the applicant and their RTP.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Structured CV invites applicants to draw a narrative on wider skills and competences, including their previous ability and track records on societal interaction and possible contribution to societal impact. This generates substantial information, moreover presented in a structured template providing comfort and clarity to evaluators. An ex-post survey

	<p>on the usefulness and clarity of the Structured CV by the members of the Selection Committees revealed an overall very positive response.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The involvement of non-academic stakeholders in the (final) selection provides a fresh and non-conventional input. The impact is tangible and meaningful: stakeholders can either maintain, increase or lower the proposed academic consensus score with half a point. We found the societal stakeholders involvement to be relevant and exemplary in this program calling for projects touching upon urban challenges and opportunities, and inviting applicants to define potential societal impact of their research. Additionally the interaction between the academic and the societal members in the SC fostered mutual learning and comprehension, for what traditionally is an academic procedure.
Quantitative	<p>Description of recommendations regarding quantitative assessment</p> <p>Not applicable: the selection process does not rely on quantitative metrics and is therefore fully dependent on peer review.</p>
Diversity	<p>Description of how initiative recognizes and supports consideration of diversity contributions, outputs and impacts</p> <p>Again, the Structured CV template describes main achievements in (a) research, (b) teamwork & leadership, (c) community engagement and societal outreach (via dissemination and engagement with stakeholders or broader public). This is complemented by an indication of further merits including (max. 5) publications, projects and conferences participation and knowledge valorisation.</p>
Intersectoral	<p>Description of how initiative recognizes and supports consideration of intersectorality</p> <p>YUFE4Postdocs intends to facilitate stakeholder interaction:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. On the level of the project applications: candidates were required to identify societal stakeholders that could benefit of the research in a short, medium or longer term. They are expected to conduct research that contributes to societal challenges framed in an urban context linked to any of the four Focus Areas of the alliance.

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Involvement of a stakeholder in the execution of the research training projects: throughout the execution of the RTPs postdocs are expected to engage with societal stakeholders. They identify at least one stakeholder to be part of their supervising team to follow-up their research (without it being steered by the societal actor). 3. Stakeholder engagement training (Pillar 1) including two physical trainings on-site, providing interaction with societal stakeholders 4. Recruited postdocs may undertake (optionally) an intersectoral secondment.
Career-stage	<p>Description of how initiative recognizes and supports consideration of career-stage</p> <p>The program targets early career postdoctoral researchers: having obtained their PhD max. 6 years before the call deadline, in line with the YUFE policy of limiting the duration of temporary appointments within universities, and to stimulate temporary staff to seek a more stable position within or outside academia.</p>
Career-path	<p>Description of how initiative recognizes and supports consideration of career-paths</p> <p>By the end of their appointments the postdocs will have acquired a valuable skills set and network preparing them for:</p> <p>✓ Academic career paths: The programme enables researchers to refine (domain specific) research skills (hands-on training in research group and courses) and connect with the (academic) network of their supervisors. The transferable skill trainings will also offer valuable tools to acquire funding for continued research and/or pursue advanced teaching opportunities.</p> <p>✓ Non-academic career paths: The involvement of societal stakeholders throughout the program will endow the postdocs with skills and experiences that are inspirational and aligned with employer's needs. The variety of stakeholders involved will create concrete opportunities for careers in industry, public institutions, civil society and (local) governments. Furthermore, the fostered entrepreneurial mindset and support will allow researchers to explore</p>

	spin-off- or other kinds of valorization opportunities.
Toolbox	Description of related practical guides and toolkits -
Implementation	Description of implementation process The first cohort of YUFE4 postdocs started between 1st of January and 1st of June 2024. The second cohort will start between 1st of September and 1st of December 2024.
Uptake	Description of implementation uptake N/A
Challenges	Description of identified implementation challenges/obstacles. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The selection process does not rely on quantitative metrics and is therefore fully dependent on peer review. Finding sufficient peer reviewers is challenging as those are in high demand for peer review exercises. • A large selection procedure (as for YUFE4Postdocs) with the involvement of a great number of host universities required to outsource the peer review (step 2) to a professional organisation, to safeguard uniformity and a harmonized evaluation process in a strict timeframe. This is a costly operation. • Involving societal actors in the selection procedure required an intense bilateral outreach operation: to provide adequate background information and to prevent and resolve misunderstandings about their assignment.
Benefits	Description of identified implementation benefits. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fifty-five attracted postdocs with societal relevant projects; • Acquired experience in the participating YUFE universities with a qualitative selection procedure for young researchers, which can be valorised in further joint initiatives on institutional level, e.g. in the context of the YUFE alliance, the Young European Research Universities Network (YERUN) or beyond; • New or revived contacts, and potential for longer term collaboration with societal stakeholders, most of them situated in the ecosystems of the participating universities.

