Young Universities for the Future of Europe

Empowering early career researchers: the Young Universities for the Future of Europe (YUFE) approach to doctoral learning

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YUFE Partners

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Why focus on doctoral and postdoctoral training?

Early career researchers as the European talent pool

- Salzburg Recommendations on doctoral education (EUA, 2005, 2010, 2016)
- Transferable competences of researchers (ResearchComp, 2023)
- European Research Area (ERA, 2024)
- …

YUFE approach

- Integrate (post)doctoral training activities with the YUFE values
- Stimulate responsible research through designing, developing, implementing and/or piloting a comprehensive (post)doctoral training model and tracking framework

Added value early career researchers

Support with …

- training
- career development
- international community building
- institutionalised network broad support
- supervision and mentoring

-> Create and implement joint visions within YUFE

Added value institutions

- Piloting
- Meeting Europe's strategic needs
- Joint YUFE vision
- Learn from each other
- Sharing good practices
- Community building

Five principles of the YUFE DIOSI model on Doctoral Learning

Vision

1

Doctoral Candidate in the centre

Intellectual virtues: cognition, skills and personal resourcefulness

Over-arching doctoral programme framework

Skills

2

Research and transferrable skills training

Learning

3

Formal and informal learning

Reflection

4

Extended thesis reflection with an individualised development plan

Awareness of acquired competencies during the doctoral learning process

Supervision

5

Supervisory team

A non-academic mentor offering career guidance

Based on Kersschot, 2021 (DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.7300114)

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YUFE Pilot on Doctoral Learning

- May 2024 (or November 2024 for 2nd call) – December 2025

Why?

- To establish a joint vision and overarching framework for doctoral education

How?

- Overarching vision translated into concrete initiatives in pilot programme

What?

- YUFE trainings for doctoral candidates on research and transferable skills
  - Number of trainings/events May 2024 – May 2025: YUFE-wide: 23 - local: 14
- YUFE Apero-Doctoring Sessions – informal gatherings inspired by the French *apéritif* to foster peer discussions and expert insights
- Local focus on additional support and reflection (related to principles 4 & 5 of the YUFE DIOSI model)

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YUFE Pilot on Doctoral Learning

- May 2024 – December 2025

What else?

- YUFE trainings for doctoral candidates on research and transferable skills – YUFE-wide & local
- YUFE Apero-Doctoring Sessions – informal gatherings inspired by the French *apéritif* to foster peer discussions and expert insights
- Local focus on additional support and reflection
- Comprehensive evaluation at the end of the pilot to shape future implementations of the YUFE DIOSI Model for Doctoral Learning to help other institutions & impact survey
- Framework for joint supervision and mentoring
  - Agreement on terms of 'joint supervision' and 'mentoring' within a YUFE context
  - Resource and inspiration if a university sets up a new programme

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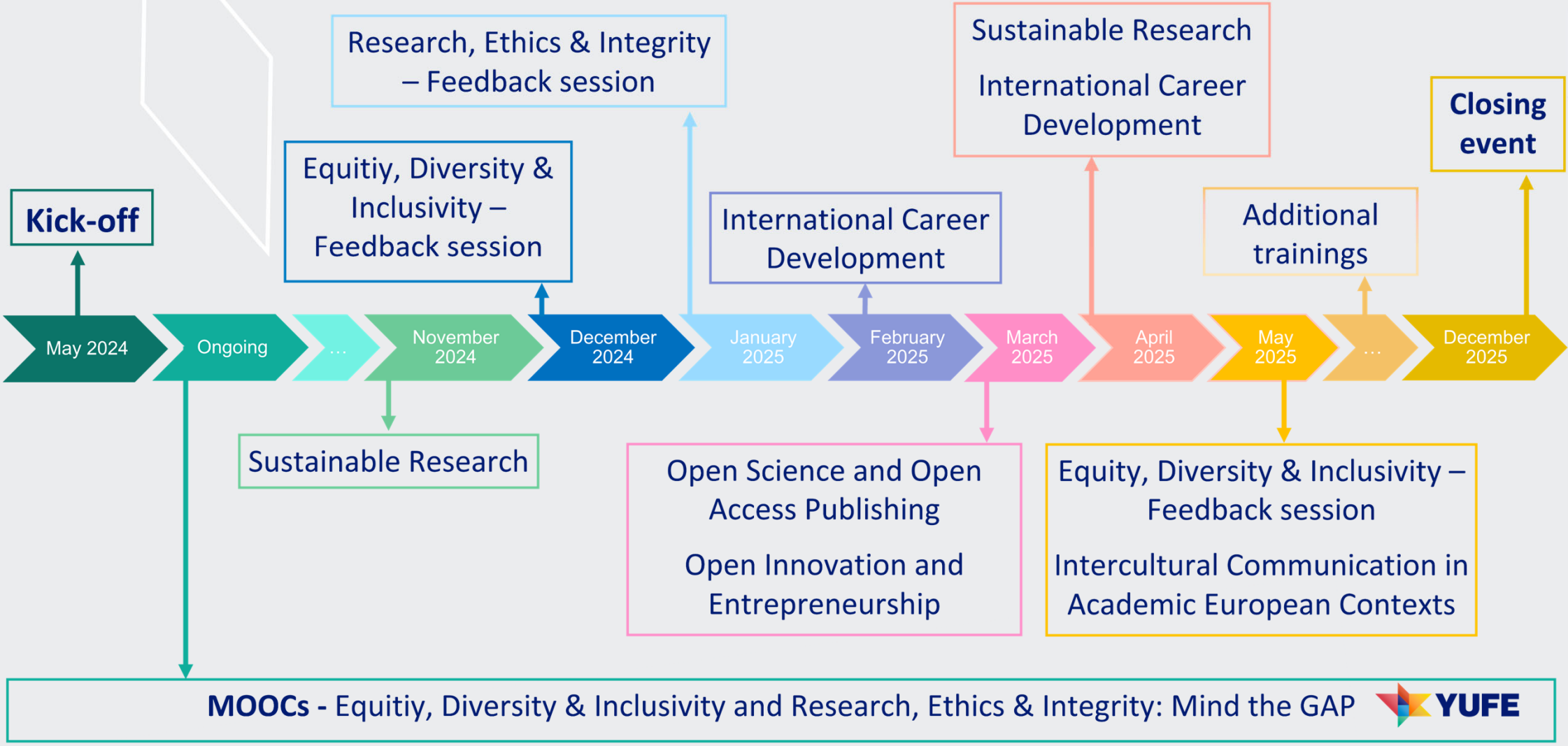
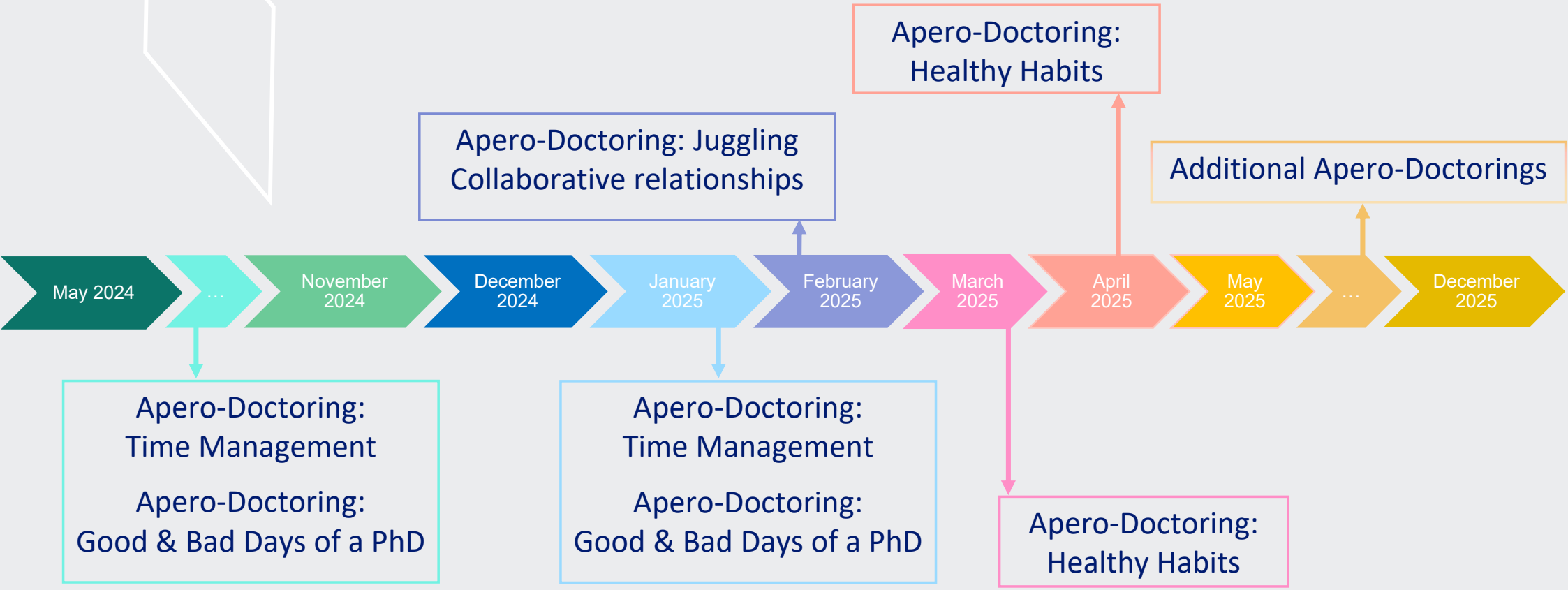
General Timeline YUFE Pilot on Doctoral Learning: trainings/workshops



General Timeline YUFE Pilot on Doctoral Learning: informal learning



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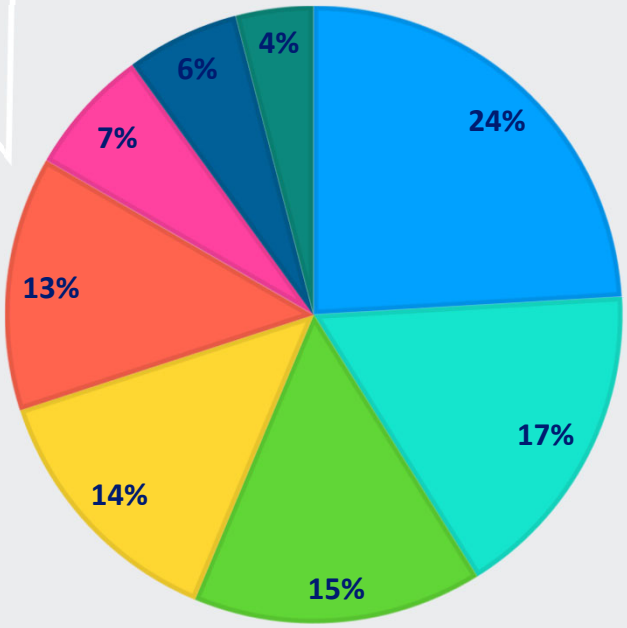
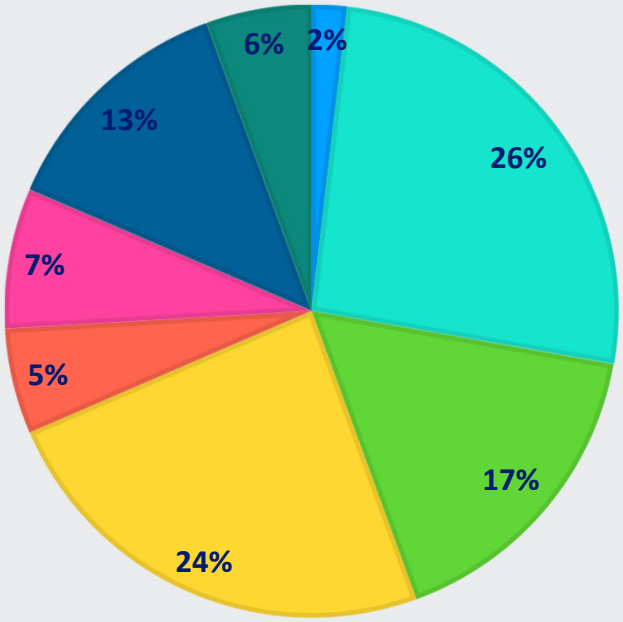
Initial interest versus actual participation

270 PARTICIPANTS



ATTENDEES (54 UNIQUE PARTICIPANTS) YUFE-WIDE ACTIVITIES



- University of Essex
- University of Antwerp
- UNIRI
- Sorbonne University
- University of Bremen
- University of Eastern Finland
- Maastricht University
- Nicolaus Copernicus University

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Data of 16 May 2025

Impact & Quality assurance

"It was a good opening to let us work some things out with the other participants. I really **enjoyed meeting** other PhD researchers from other universities and talk with them. We saw that we had the **same difficulties** and that it was fun to talk about it with others."
(Participant in Meet & Greet)

"It was helpful for me to hear different experiences, advices and solutions considering time management... and it was **motivating**."
"It is **fun** to talk to other people of other universities and see different opinions and time management tips & tricks."
(Participants in Apero-Doctoring - Time Management)

"It was a very fruitful experience and i'm so **glad I had this opportunity**."
(Participant in International career development)

"**Great** workshop and resources, time went by way too fast!"
(Participant in Apero-Doctoring - Focus, Motivation, Balance: Creating Your Own Healthy (Working) Habits during your PhD trajectory)

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Highlighted local initiatives

- 14 initiatives
- Kick-off sessions
- Non-academic mentoring
    - Info session + meet & greet
    - Facilitated by the universities
    - Guidelines & expectations for mentors and mentees
- Personal Development Plan template and workshop
- Monthly meetings with doctoral candidates
- Additional trainings for participants of the pilot programme

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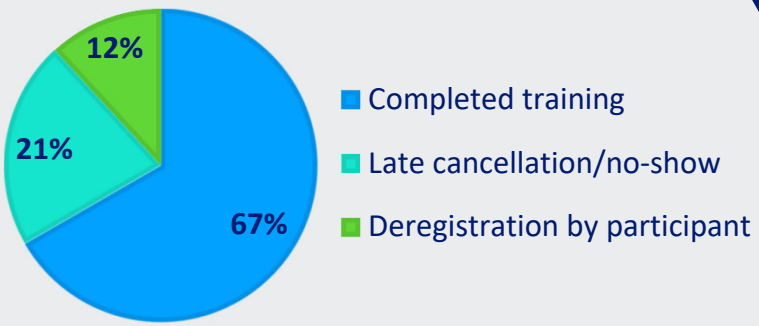
Data of 16 May 2025

Preliminary lessons learned – challenges & added value

- Challenges & observations
  - Legal and university context and regulations
  - Targeted communication and promotion needed
  - Low enrolment, cancellations & no-shows
- Positive outcomes & added value
  - For early career researchers
    - Training, career development & mentoring
    - Building an international community
  - For institutions
    - Piloting, learning from each other & sharing good practices
    - Meeting European strategic goals
    - Community building within a joint YUFE vision



The YUFE pilot on Doctoral Learning was a **transformative** experience that broadened my perspective on career paths and essential skills. Through guidance from experienced professionals, I developed greater agency over my **career direction** and the **confidence** to seek support when needed.

Testimonial participant

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Thank you!

Results of the evaluation of the pilot will be available next year

https://www.yufe.eu/yufe-approach-to-doctoral-and-postdoctoral-learning/

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