



Young Academy Leiden (YAL) is a group of early-career scholars at Leiden University. Founded in early 2019, it serves as a platform to bring enthusiastic and driven early-career (post-PhD) academics together. YAL members represent a variety of scientific and scholarly disciplines and come from all faculties of Leiden University. YAL's activities center around three pillars: science and education policy, interdisciplinarity, and outreach. Its mission is to work *with* early-career scholars and *for* early-career scholars at Leiden University. Since 2022, an umbrella working group was added that addresses *Community & Communication* at Leiden University specifically.

In 2023, YAL continued to work on formats that are established over the years and resonated with the early-career community. This includes the inter-faculty as well as faculty-lunches on a range of topics, such as mental health, social safety, or inclusive language. The *Seasons of Interdisciplinarity* were continued and enabled different formats for YAL to connect with the community at Leiden University as well as for early-career researchers to connect among each other, including blog posts, podcasts and an Interdisciplinarity Symposium. Beyond these more structural initiatives, YAL intensified connections with other groups within Leiden University, such as the University Council, the Leiden Teacher Academy, Jong Universiteit Leiden and the Open Science Community Leiden. In addition, based on input from YAL members and its community, we intensified our discussions on social safety. YAL members took part in working groups and discussions on relevant and import topics such as the new strategic plan of their respective faculties, the strategic conference of the university and the Academia in Motion team. After

summer, we embraced the topic of 'Engagement', which also led to more informal gatherings and brainstorming during coffee and lunch.

## **Membership and Organisation**

### *Leadership*

YAL has a simple governance structure with a chair and vice-chair. To foster institutional continuity, the chair and vice-chair retire in alternating years, where one person is replaced during summer and the other person continues. As of 1 September 2023, Julia Cramer took over from Sarah Giest as YAL chair and Rachel Plak became vice-chair. Cathelijn Waaijer switched to a job outside Leiden University in February 2023 and we found a new project manager and treasurer in Suzanne Brinkman from September 2023. Amber Rostamkhan assisted YAL as a student assistant to support administrative tasks until June 2023, Kamiel Klarenbeek took over from September 2023.

### *Inauguration of new members*

In 2023, YAL welcomed seven new members: Janet Connor, Julie Hall, Nienke de Graeff, Milena Schöнке, Anne Urai, Jochanan Veerbeek, and Sanne Willems. They began their roles on September 1st and celebrated their official inauguration at the Academy Building. This event's theme was 'engagement'. Julia Cramer, as the new Chair, emphasized enhancing interactions within YAL and the broader academic community by acknowledging overlap and diversity within broader community. Vice-Chair Rachel Plak also highlighted YAL's role in the faculties and institutes. Janet Connor spoke on behalf of the new members. Rector Hester Bijl welcomed the new members and celebrated YAL's commitment to diversity and inclusion by presenting a good model for our university through their selection process.

This event was not only about welcoming the new members but also about celebrating the transition of the founding members to YALumni, acknowledging their significant contributions and continued engagement with YAL. The inauguration symbolized a new chapter for YAL: reinforcing its commitment to an inclusive and dynamic academic landscape at Universiteit Leiden.



### *YAL brainstorm day*

In October, the annual Brainstorm day took place outside the university, where we reflected on the past year and made plans for the upcoming year. Before the start of the day, an informal meeting was held to welcome the new YAL members. This session offered the new members a platform to acquaint themselves with YAL's dynamics, discuss their workgroup preferences, and raise any questions or concerns. The leadership team wants to ensure a warm and inclusive environment for the new members and hopes to facilitate a smooth transition into their roles.



At the start of the day, a lecture on engagement in many forms by Frans Snik set the tone, followed by workgroup sessions focusing on Communication and Community, Interdisciplinarity, Policy, and Outreach. The Outreach group emphasized impactful initiatives amid declining trust in science, proposing blockchain technology and active participation to empower the community. Interdisciplinarity aimed at fostering collaboration through seasonal events and thematic focuses, envisioning a symposium or festival. The Policy group addressed challenges of immediate reactions versus proactive engagement and formal size versus participation levels, suggesting evaluation meetings and potential group adjustments. Community & Communication highlighted the importance of understanding the community, advocating for a revitalized website, and improved communication to bridge gaps and unify the organization. Priorities included outreach training, incentivizing researchers, and enhancing interdisciplinary teaching. Overall, Brainstormday provided a platform for critical reflection and strategic planning across diverse YAL workgroups.



### *Social activities and meetings*

The YAL held 3 general meetings in 2023, setting out the broader plans for longer timeframes. Most meetings are held in the working groups to lower the pressure on the calendars of our early-career researchers. We held a social event on the 6th of February to kick-off the year 2023. YAL managed to escape 4 escape rooms and we held drinks to celebrate.

Since the second half of the year, more informal interaction between YAL members is offered by monthly lunch gatherings at different locations within our university.

### Visibility and Communication

In the academic year 2023-2024, YAL moved from Twitter to LinkedIn (which grew to 274 followers), a platform more aligned with professional networking. This transition was driven by changes in the social media landscape



and the wish to enhance our visibility within the academic community. On LinkedIn, YAL it is easier to engage with colleagues, invite them to follow our page, and to tag individuals in posts to maintain visibility. This move has allowed us to effectively showcase our activities and events. YAL sends out a quarterly bulletin which is received by 243 people.

### ***Meetings with university administrators & committee membership:***

- Following the theme of ***Engagement***, YAL and the YAL leadership team has interacted with several other groups at Leiden University. We have organized joint activities with the **Leiden Teacher Academy** and the **Open Science Community** and held regular meetings with the **Institute Council**, **Joung Universiteit Leiden (JUL, our non-academic counterpart)** and **Strategic and Academic Affairs**.
- The ***social safety*** group (Annemarie Samuels, Julia Henrich, Rachel Plak, Martin Lipman, and Michiel Veldhuis) In collaboration with Bregje Speet from HR, designed the first Social Safety Dialogue, focusing on the crucial topic of trust in the social safety system. We invited Jasper Knoester to open this session, scheduled for March 2024. This new initiative is in line with our commitment to enhance social safety at the university, creating a platform for meaningful discussions on related issues. The Social Safety Dialogues serve as a platform to discuss and address issues related to social safety within the academic community. These sessions aim to bridge the gap between current social safety policies and the actual experiences of staff, fostering an open exchange of ideas and solutions.
- YAL was present at the Annual Strategic Conference of Leiden University and several YAL members were invited for strategic discussions and working groups at their faculties.
- Together with the Young Academies from Delft and Rotterdam, YAL gave input on the ***LDE center evaluation*** on the request of Wim van den Doel (LDE Dean). We have scheduled further collaborations with the LDE network in the future.



- YAL participated in the ***Academia in Motion*** Regiegroep. Sarah Giest (YAL Chair) is representing the early-career research community in the meetings. YAL was well-represented on the first Academia in Motion Festival in 2023 in a panel session on 'everyone professor and a stand on the market.
- In February 2023 YAL participated in the NWO Knowledge Platform for interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research. De Jonge Akademie jointly organized a round table meeting in Utrecht with the aim of mapping some opportunities and barriers with regard to initiating, designing and conducting interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research. YAL was invited to present our 'Seasons of Interdisciplinarity' at the event

### Activities

Most YAL activities are coordinated by our four workgroups: science and education policy, outreach, and interdisciplinarity. All workgroups have had regular meetings throughout the year. Since 2021, YAL is running the Seasons of Interdisciplinarity. Spearheaded by the workgroup Interdisciplinarity, the Seasons have become a regular series of activities that often include topics related to outreach and policy as well.

#### *2023 Winter of Artificial Intelligence*

The first season was a community-event called the AI Winterfestival. The event took place in March 2023. The YAL AI Winter Festival was a success, with more than 50 attendees spanning every faculty of Leiden University (Archaeology, Governance and Global Affairs, Humanities, Law, Leiden University Medical Center, Science, Social and Behavioural Sciences). Besides interest from many participants, also the SAILS program showed interest in this event by sponsoring the coffee break. The program kicked off with a short introduction to why this is an exciting time for AI research and by stressing that we need an interdisciplinary effort to successfully embrace the opportunities it offers for society. It included several talks, as well as a project match-making event, where people that are interested in presenting an interdisciplinary research idea are invited to give a short pitch. Speakers included Joost Batenburg ('The



future is AI', Leiden University), Seyran Khademi (TU Delft), and Hilde Weerts (TU Eindhoven).

### 2023 Spring of Science Communication

The Outreach and Interdisciplinarity workgroup organized the “Spring of Science Communication”, consisting out of the following activities:

- *OSCL meets YAL (online event)*: During this event, we discussed the challenges of working with an open science mindset in a business-driven world.
- *Citizen Science Workshop*: CS Lab Coordinator Margaret Gold introduced the participants to the principles and characteristics of Citizen Science, and provided them with a range of examples from a wide variety of research domains, and facilitated an interactive discussion of what types of participatory practices could be of value in your own domain. The workshop closed with a plenary discussion and time for Q&A.
- *Presenting Workshop*: We organized a theatrical presentation workshop led by Julie Schoor!! Julie works at the Science Communication & Society department as a teacher, but also teaches theater classes to high school students. It’s time to roll up your sleeves and rediscover yourself as a performer. Because there’s a lot more to it than a slide with bullet points, a clear voice and eye contact.



### 2023 Summer of Love

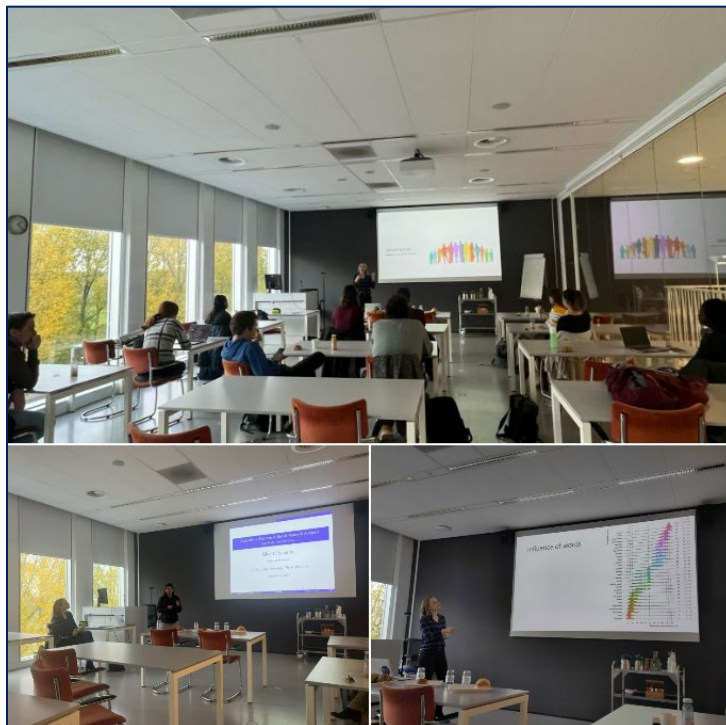
Hosting a pubquiz with multi-faculty teams was a perfect event to engage the young researcher community and creating an opportunity to form interdisciplinary bridges.

### 2023 Fall of Bias

The C&C and Interdisciplinary group organized the fall of Bias addressing the important topic of truth-finding and the inherent biases we have as humans and researchers. It consisted of two events:



- A co-hosted lunch workshop between YAL and the Open Science Community Leiden: Uncovering Biases - A Journey Towards Objective and Open Scholarship. This workshop addressed various cognitive biases, and explored the influence they can have on our work as scholars. It also offered insights on why awareness of these biases and active attempts for mitigation can be crucial to adopt a more objective and transparent scholarship.



- An interfaculty lunch meeting on Biases with speakers and participators from multiple faculties. Dr. Sanne Willems (FSW) and Dr. Akrati Saxena (Liacs) for generating an interesting discussion on statistical biases, data misinterpretation, and fairness in social networks.

## Pillars

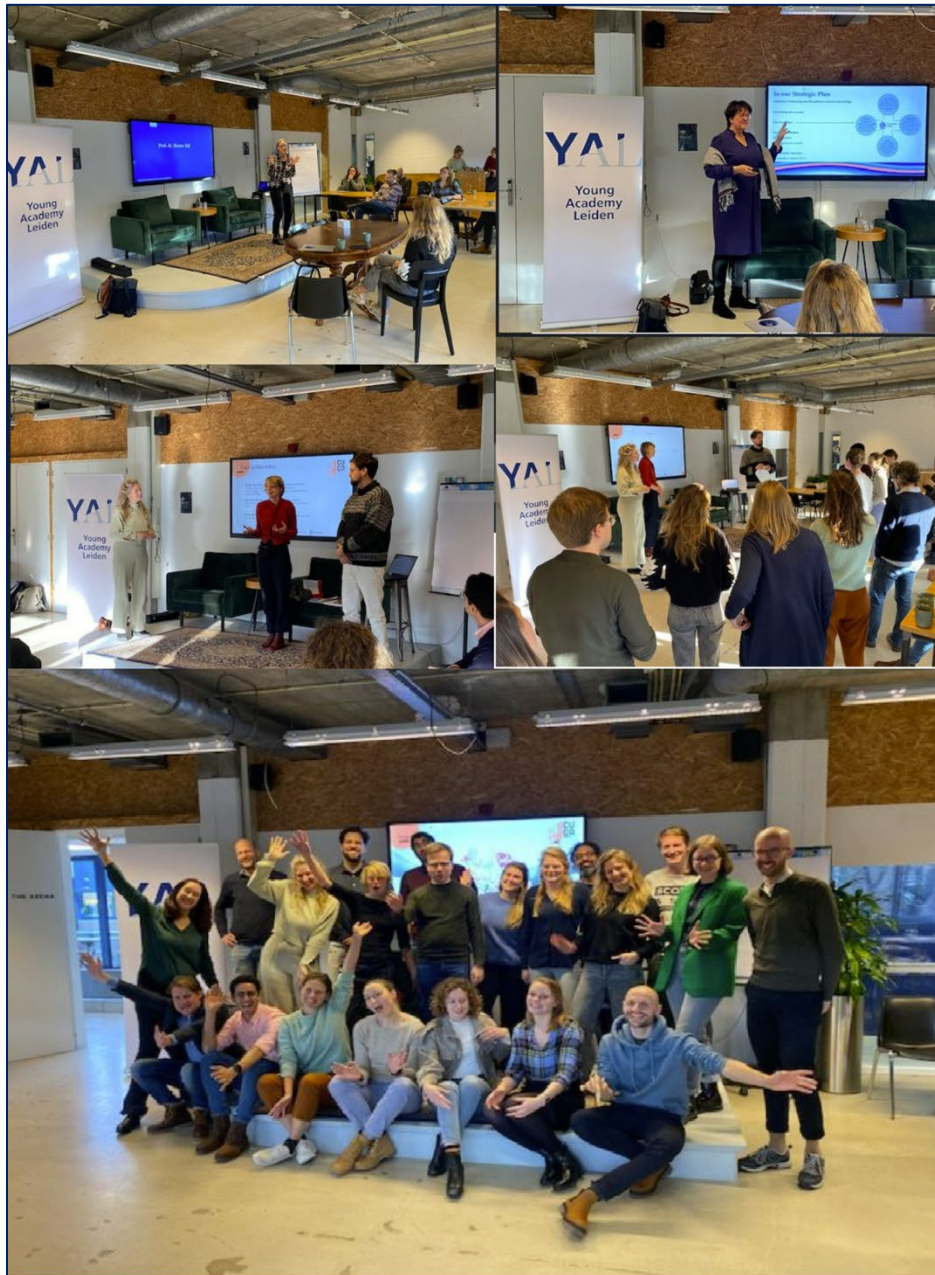
### ***Workgroup Interdisciplinarity***

The interdisciplinary group aspires to bridge the gaps between traditional branches of research and knowledge within and outside of Leiden University and facilitate interdisciplinary research, policy, and events. In 2023, the Interdisciplinarity work group was involved in all of the *Seasons of Interdisciplinarity*. The group also contributed and continued the conversation on interdisciplinary hubs. Members of the group were also involved in the organization of the inter-faculty lunches, sometimes in conjunction with a *Season and often in conjunction with the other workgroups of YAL*. For instance, together with the C&C group we hosted 3 interfaculty-lunches in 2023. One of the inter-faculty lunches included the Leiden Teacher Academy (March 2023). With a group of more than 20 early career scholars we discussed teaching quality and the future of (interdisciplinary) teaching.

Finally, the workgroup Interdisciplinarity hosts a yearly symposium. This year's ID symposium was themed 'Building interdisciplinary skills'. Interdisciplinary research is often positioned as the way to effectively address the pressing challenges of our time. But how do you work well in interdisciplinary teams? We



created a full-day program, including an ambitious speech of our rector Prof. dr. ir. Hester Bijl on the importance of interdisciplinary research, an overview of the strategic focus of Leiden University by Dr. ir. Karin Horsman, as well as a workshop on building skills to work in interdisciplinary teams by the creative and inspiring Centre for Unusual Collaborations (CUCo; an interdisciplinary institute from the TuE, UU, and Wageningen University)). This day was attended by over 35 young academics who also provided feedback that the workshop was an excellent addition to the day and new initiatives would be welcomed in the future.





## **Workgroup Outreach**

The Outreach workgroup focuses on enabling their community to perform outreach. We do this by participating in existing outreach events (such as the museum night or the night of discoveries), connecting our community to such opportunities, and by collaborating with the policy group on policy matters related to outreach. Because the outreach group is a relatively small group in terms of allocated time across members, and as such, we seek to collaborate with other workgroups where possible. Specifically, in 2023, we participated in the *Seasons: Spring of Science Communication*.

We collaborated with the YAL interdisciplinarity workgroup to co-organize the Spring of Science communication (see the item under the interdisciplinarity workgroup).



Like previous editions, also in this edition of the Night of Discoveries, Young Academy Leiden filled part of the program. Our goal was to share our stage with our community, and invited people from our community to suggest topics that they wanted to present. As such, the topic of our event was “Meet the researcher of tomorrow”, in which young academics had the ability to present their work to a layman

audience, followed by a panel discussion tailored towards the questions: How can your research help the citizens of Leiden, and how can the citizens of Leiden engage in your research.

In our selection of presenters, we prioritized people that were at the time of subscription not yet a YAL member, and aimed for diversity among faculties.

- *Scientific Artificial Intelligence for Astrophysics*, Speaker: Samira Rezaei (Science), moderator: Julia Cramer (Science), panelist: Thomas Moerland (Science)
- *Tax havens - what can we do to prevent them*, Speaker: Federica Casano (Law), moderator: Thomas Moerland (Science), panelist: Cristiana Strava (Humanities)
- *Mental health research in the next decade - new technologies*, Speaker: Eiko Fried (FSW), moderator: Hilde van Meegdenburg (FSW), panelist: Nienke de Graef (LUMC)
- *Fighting Climate Change in Coastal Cities: Harnessing Citizen Science*, Speaker: Cristiana Strava (Humanities), Moderator: Lauren Fonteyn (Humanities), panelist: Hilde van Meegdenburg (FSW)
- *Health and the right time to exercise*, Speaker: Milena Schönke (LUMC), moderator: Francesca Arici (Science), panelist: Thomas Moerland (Science)
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The speaker gave a 12-minute presentation, after which the remainder of the time was a panel discussion including the audience. Over the course of the evening and the various panel discussions, approximately 80 persons have visited the event.

### ***Workgroup Science and Education Policy***

The policy workgroup has been involved in gaining insights into and advising on – at faculty level – the allocation of the starter and incentive grants (starters- en stimuleringsbeurzen), which is continuing into 2024.

The group also published a set of blog posts on diversity and inclusion at the university, led by Zsuzsa Bakk, Martin Berger and Rachel Plak. In these, YAL asked students and employees of the universities to reflect on what an inclusive university looks like to them, and collected personal stories about inclusion and exclusion in the workplace. The posts can be found at <https://www.voicesyoungacademics.nl>.

In October, the policy group met with internationalisation advisors Wessel Meijer and Yun Tian to discuss upcoming university policy and provide input. Similar meetings are planned for 2024 as the internationalisation policy is being designed.

On behalf of the policy group, Marcel van Daalen worked together with Monique Oomes from HRM to organise a workshop at the Academia in Motion festival in November, titled "From words to action: how to truly recognize and reward teachers?". The workshop focussed on the recognition & rewards theme of Academia in Motion, specifically as applied to education, and also discussed how our teaching is currently being evaluated and what could be improved.

The group also wrote a position paper on Outreach in collaboration with the according workgroup. In this paper, the group defines outreach, discusses its importance, barriers for reaching out, and our view on how to break down these barriers. This paper will appear in Spring 2024. Finally, the policy group is working on a position paper on research funding in academia.

### ***Workgroup Communication and Community***

The workgroup on Communication and Community was newly formed in 2023, as an addition to the existing three YAL pillars. The initiative was created in response to the need felt within YAL to work towards creating a sense of community among Early Career Researchers in Leiden. In order to accomplish this, the CC group organizes social events centered around different themes that affect ECR life at Leiden University. In addition, the group aims to increase YAL's visibility within the university (the communication part of the group), to more firmly establish YAL as a conduit for ECR's to raise concerns/share experiences with the larger Leiden University community.

Because the work group was newly formed in 2023, only two events were organized, both after the summer break. In September, we organized an interfaculty lunch on Onboarding. Since many ECR's are new to Leiden University when they start, onboarding is a shared concern to me. The aim of the meeting was to collect experiences and points of improvement in both the hiring and onboarding process. The university's director of HR, Esther van Opstal, presented her department's view on onboarding. The meeting resulted in an onboarding policy paper, including suggestions for how to streamline and improve this process university-wide. This paper will be out in Spring of 2024.

The second event the group organized focused on Bias in Academia and research. This was related to the Interdisciplinarity group's Fall of Bias and included presentations from YAL's own Sanne Willems (FSW) and Akarti Saxena from LIACS. Both events brought together ECR's from multiple different faculties to discuss issues relevant to our community and our work.



## Appendices

### A. YAL membership changes

New member	Faculty	Field
Anne Urai	Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences	Cognitive Psychology
Janet Connor	Faculty of Humanities	International Studies
Jochanan Veerbeek	Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences	Education and Child Studies
Julie Hall	Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences	Health, Medical and Neuropsychology
Milena Schönke	LUMC	Endocrinology
Nienke de Graeff	LUMC	Ethics and Law
Sanne Willems	Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences	Methodology and Statistics

### B. Workgroups and committees

Science and Education Policy	Interdisciplinarity	Outreach	Community & Communication
Max van Lent (coordinator) (until sept 2023) / Marcel van Daalen (coordinator)	Michiel Veldhuis (coordinator until, september 2023) / Anna van Duijvenvoorde (coordinator)	Rachel Plak (until september 2023 / Jan van Rijn (coordinator)	Martin Berger (coordinator, started Nov 1st, 2022)
Anna van Duijvenvoorde	Cristiana Strava	Andrew Gawthorpe	Julia Cramer
Cristiana Strava	Julia Henrich	Francesca Arici	Julia Henrich
Eiko Fried	Julia Cramer	Martin Berger	Eiko Fried
Rachel Plak	Marcel van Daalen	Sara Petrollino	Sanne Willems (started September 2023)
Julia Henrich	Michiel Veldhuis	Noel de Miranda	Janet Connor (started September 2023)
Zsuzsa Bakk	Ahmed Mafouz	Janet Connor (started September 2023)	Jochanan Veerbeek (started September 2023)
Martin Lipman	Rachel Plak	Milena Schönke (started September 2023)	Julie Hall (started September 2023)
Katharina Natter	Zsuzsa Bakk	Jochanan Veerbeek (started September 2023)	Sarah Giest (until September 2023)
Michiel Veldhuis	Eiko Fried	Sanne Willems (started September 2023)	Helen Pluut (until September 2023)

Nienke de Graeff (started September 2023)	Francesca Arici	Lauren Fonteyn (until September 2023)	
Anne Urai (started September 2023)	Jan van Rijn	Katharina Natter (until September 2023)	
Milena Schönke (started September 2023)	Sara Petrollino	Yamila Miguel (until september 2023)	
Annemarie Samuels (until September 2023)	Jannet Connor (started September 2023)		
Joris Larik (until September 2023)	Annemarie Samuels (until September 2023)		
Tom Louwerse (until September 2023)	Helen Pluut (until September 2023)		
Helen Pluut (until September 2023)	Martin Lipman (until September 2023)		
Sarah Giest (until September 2023)	Noel de Miranda (until September 2023)		
Sarah Schrader (until September 2023)	Yamila Miguel (until September 2023)		
Maaïke van Putten (until September 2023)			

**Selection and recruitment committee:** Martin Berger, Julia Henrich Julia Cramer, and Sarah Giest.

### C. Financial Overview

YAL received an annual budget of €50,000. Suzanne Brinkman served as treasurer of YAL from september 2023. Again in 2023, we kept within budget very well. The largest part of our budget was spent on compensating the chair and vice-chair. The chair and vice-chair are compensated for 0.1 fte for their duties, of which 50% is paid from YAL's budget. In addition, the salary costs for our student assistant make up a significant part of our budget. With the remaining budget, the workgroups organized inspiring activities including the symposium during the Fall of Bias and the interfaculty lunches.