

YAL annual report 2021



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 and the Leiden University Medical Center. 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.

In 2021, YAL has increased its constructive interaction with the Leiden University Executive Board through regular meetings and specific contributions to the development of the university's new strategic plan. YAL increased its visibility within the university by establishing a digital bulletin and increasing activity on social media (see below). Lessons about online interaction and events learned during the first pandemic year (2020) were carried to 2021 – a year in which YAL managed to switch between meetings and events online when necessary and offline when possible.

The themes of Recognition and Rewards, Excellence and Career Policy have been central throughout YAL activities – with a summer blogpost [critiquing competitive sports metaphors in academia](#) gaining particular traction. The often precarious work conditions of early-career

scholars, coupled with high work pressure and increasing difficulty to create a healthy work-life balance keep being central foci of YAL as we move into 2022.

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 2021, Annemarie Samuels took over from Helen Pluut as YAL chair and Sarah Giest became [vice-chair](#). Cathelijnn Waaijer remains project manager and treasurer. Ivo Kostons assisted YAL as student assistant to support with administrative tasks until 1 September 2021, when his tasks were taken over by Amber Rostamkhan.

Inauguration of new members

In 2021, YAL welcomed six new members from four different faculties (see appendix A).

New members 2021

-  **Zsuzsa Bakk**
Assistant professor
-  **Martin Berger**
Assistant Professor
-  **Julia Henrich**
Researcher
-  **Max van Lent**
Assistant Professor
-  **Rachel Plak**
Assistant Professor
-  **Michiel Veldhuis**
Assistant professor

The new members started their position per 1 September 2021 and [were officially inaugurated](#) on the 20th of September together with the six members who started in 2020 during a **double-inauguration ceremony** in the Telders Auditorium of the Academy building. During the ceremony, which could be followed through livestream and was attended by most YAL members and several guests, Rector Magnificus Hester Bijl welcomed the new members. Reflecting on the theme of the ceremony – “Building the Future of Leiden University” – she underscored the importance of learning from early-career scholars’ experiences. Recently appointed members Rachel Plak (2021) and Lauren Fonteyn (2020) shared their experiences of becoming a YAL member and their expectations of the coming years of YAL-

membership. Outgoing chair Helen Pluut was thanked for her crucial and inspiring leadership role in YAL since 2019.

A particularly creative component of the ceremony was the viewing of short movies in which the new members presented their research with Lego. All YAL members made such a 1-minute movie as an innovative form of science communication and getting to know each other. The compilation-video can still be accessed through the [website](#). New members' [profiles](#) have moreover been added to the YAL website.

YAL away day



On the 29th of October, YAL had its annual 'away day', which fortunately could take place in person in De Tuin van de Smid in Leiden this year. The brainstorm day was productively used to discuss future YAL position papers, to work on YAL's vision on policy-related topics, and to schedule new activities for YAL in the coming year. A further aim of the meeting was to integrate the new members in YAL.

Social activities

As of 1 September 2021, YAL has started a 'buddy system', in which each YAL member is coupled to another YAL member. Buddies can meet informally and, if desired, develop YAL activities together. The system aims for a better integration of new members into YAL. To further support integration of the new members, YAL had an online kick-off meeting soon after the start of the new year, and the 2020-cohort organized a separate meeting with the new members of 2021 in October.

YAL members continued to organize informal online coffee meetings in the Spring and Fall semesters when meeting in person was restricted due to corona regulations. In July, YAL organized an in-person social activity in the form of a treasure hunt and drinks.

Visibility and Communication



In 2021, YAL has become increasingly visible within and beyond the university. In March, YAL launched the Early-Career Bulletin, a digital update which is regularly sent to a growing mailing list of early-career scholars at Leiden University. The bulletin contains announcements of upcoming events, reports on recent events and spotlight items on outreach activities and other public appearances of YAL members and has appeared five times in 2021. YAL is also active on Twitter, with currently 672 followers. The website is kept up to date as the main site of information on YAL activities and organization.

Weblog: Voices of Young Academics

The blog *Voices of Young Academics* has continued to be a platform on which early-career scholars can voice topics of common interest. Next to the blogpost arguing against the competitive sports metaphor in science mentioned above, in September YAL-members [reflected on sustainability](#) in a blogpost linked to the Summer of Sustainability (see below), and in the fall YAL published two blogposts on [leaving academia](#).

Meetings with university administrators and input strategic plan

YAL has met several times with university administrators to discuss policy-related matters. In March, several YAL members met online with Rector Magnificus Hester Bijl to discuss YAL's recently published position papers on Interdisciplinary research and on Rethinking Academic Excellence. During the Young Interfaculty Lunch meeting in May, Director of Strategic Affairs Karin Horsman discussed ideas about the future of research with the early-career community.

In November, YAL members had another meeting with the rector to discuss the position paper on work pressure.

Meanwhile, YAL members were actively involved in the conversations that led to the drafting of the new Strategic Plan of the university. Sarah Giest joined the workgroup on ‘Research’, while Helen Pluut participated in the workgroup strategizing for an ‘agile university’. In October, all YAL members were invited to an online meeting with the university’s Executive Board to discuss the draft Strategic Plan.

Committee membership

Other university-wide policy committees that YAL participated in included the Committee on Monitoring Wetenschappelijke Excellentie en Talentbeleid (Olaf van Vliet and Annemarie Samuels), the committee on Recognition and Rewards (Helen Pluut), and the implementation team of the Leadership Development model (Tom Louwerse). Sarah Giest chaired the thematafel ‘Talentbeleid’ at the Leiden Forward event in June of 2021. Helen Pluut chaired the thematafel ‘Van werkdruk naar werkgeluk’ at the same event and a session with the same title at the Strategische Conferentie (1 July). Annemarie Samuels represented YAL during a [working visit](#) of the Standing Committee for Education, Culture and Science (OCW) to the Association of Universities in the Netherlands (VSNU) hosted by Leiden University, to talk about interdisciplinary research for early-career scholars.

Other networks and communication

In several faculties YAL members have met with their respective Deans and Faculty Boards or Faculty Bureau members. YAL has also increased communication with other partners within the university, such as Strategic Academic Affairs, and the University Council, as well as beyond our university through regular meetings with other local Young Academies. YAL member Noel de Miranda joined the Young Academy Europe and was selected for De Jonge Akademie. YAL member Cristiana Strava participates on behalf of YAL in the advisory panel of ALLEA’s [project on Climate Sustainability in the Academic System](#).

Activities

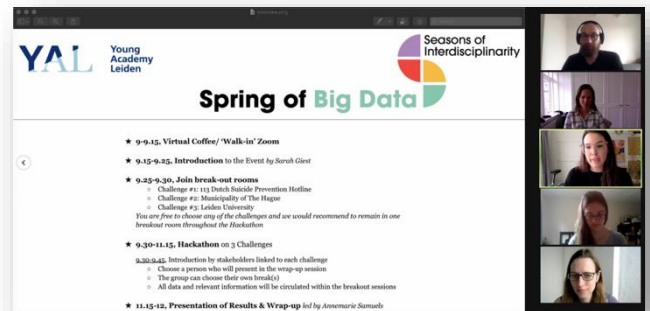
Most YAL activities are coordinated by our three workgroups: science and education policy, outreach, and interdisciplinarity. All workgroups have had regular meetings throughout the year. In 2021, YAL introduced the [Seasons of Interdisciplinarity](#). Spearheaded by the

workgroup Interdisciplinarity, the Seasons have become a regular series of activities that often include topics related to outreach and policy as well.



Spring of Big Data

In the [Spring of Big Data](#), YAL members organized a policy-hackathon to address real-world big data questions of societal partners. The participating partners were the 133-suicide-prevention hotline, the municipality of The Hague, and Leiden University. After focused work in breakout-groups, early-career scholars presented solutions to the stakeholders.



Summer of Sustainability

In the [Summer of Sustainability](#), YAL members organized the SDG Roadmap event in which early-career scholars of Leiden University brainstormed about advancing sustainability in the academic context, and YAL members published a [blogpost](#) on the topic (see above).



Fall of Misinformation

During the [Fall of Misinformation](#), YAL published three interviews with Leiden University scholars who study misinformation.

Workgroup Interdisciplinarity – further activities



Next to the Seasons of Interdisciplinarity, the Interdisciplinarity workgroup has organized a number of other activities. In 2021, the workgroup organized five **Young Interfaculty Lunches**. Several lunches were organized in collaboration with the other workgroups. Topics included Recognition and Rewards, the Future-Proof University, and Outreach. Four of the five lunches took place online. In September, an in-person interfaculty lunch was hosted in the Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences. YAL members have also organized several Young Faculty Lunches within their respective faculties.

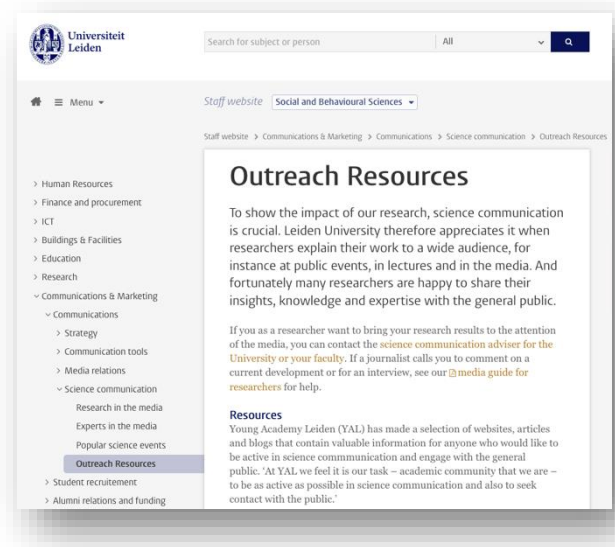


On 8 November 2021 YAL organized the [highly successful symposium](#) **Interdisciplinary Research: Challenges and Opportunities**. During the symposium, which took place in the Telders Auditorium and was online accessible through a livestream, ERC Vice-president Eveline Crone, NWO SSH board member Peter-Paul Verbeek and Leiden University Rector Magnificus Hester Bijl discussed their views on the importance and current challenges of designing, funding, executing and reporting on interdisciplinary research. In a lively concluding roundtable moderated by Leiden University Associate Professor Nadine Akkerman, the speakers addressed questions asked by early-career scholars in the audience.

Finally, together with the Honours College and Citizen Science Lab, YAL members have developed a still ongoing [Honours Impact Challenge](#) on Sustainability for Bachelor and Master students.

Outreach

In 2021, YAL launched an [Outreach Resources Platform](#) for early-career scholars, attached to



the website of Leiden University. The platform provides a range of resources that help academics find their way in doing outreach, including advice on social media presence, blogging, podcasts, writing for print media and presenting on broadcast media.

In December, the workgroup Outreach co-organized an Young Interfaculty Lunch on doing outreach to gather input for their upcoming position paper on doing outreach.

The collaboration between the YAL outreach group and Studium Generale is ongoing. On December 23, 2021, YAL-member Max van Lent gave a lecture in this series, which can still be accessed [here](#).

Science and Education Policy

Next to their participation in committees and policy-related discussions such as the discussion on the draft Strategic Plan (see above) the workgroup on science and education policy developed several activities in 2021.

The workgroup published three **position papers**, namely [Rethinking Academic Excellence](#), [Structural Changes to Tackle Work Pressure](#), and [Career Policy: Lifting the Fog of Professional Perspectives](#). The position papers were widely spread through YAL networks and social media, discussed with university administrations – including several faculty boards, and picked up by other local young academies.

Several members had a meeting with the university workgroup on digitalization of education to comment on their draft report on the ‘digitaliseringsstrategie onderwijs’. The workgroup also discussed a draft proposal of the Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences concerning their approach to the integration of research and teaching, and several members met with the Faculty’s vice-dean to give input on this proposal. In November, the workgroup met with HR interim director Heleen Cocu to discuss career policy. The workgroup has been preparing activities regarding the topic of diversity and inclusion that will take place in 2022.

Appendices

A. YAL membership changes

New member	Faculty	Field
Zsuzsa Bakk	Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences	Methodology and Statistics, Psychology
Martin Berger	Faculty of Archeology	Museums, Collections, and Society
Julia Henrich	Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences	Health-, Medical-, and Neuropsychology
Max van Lent	Faculty of Law	Economics
Rachel Plak	Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences	Child and Education Studies
Michiel Veldhuis	Faculty of Science	Environmental Sciences

B. Workgroups and committees

Science and Education Policy	Interdisciplinarity	Outreach
Tom Louwense <i>(Coordinator)</i>	Maaïke van Putten <i>(Coordinator as of September)</i>	Lauren Fonteyn <i>(Coordinator as of September)</i>
Zsuzsa Bakk	Sarah Schrader <i>(Coordinator until September)</i>	Yamila Miguel <i>(Co-coordinator until September)</i>
Martin Berger	Julia Cramer	Noel de Miranda <i>(Co-coordinator until September)</i>
Julia Henrich	Anna van Duijvenvoorde	Zsuzsa Bakk
Joris Larik	Eiko Fried	Julia Cramer
Max van Lent	Sarah Giest	Anna van Duijvenvoorde
Martin Lipman	Julia Henrich	Andrew Gawthorpe
Yamila Miguel	Martin Lipman	Max van Lent

Noel de Miranda	Helen Pluut	Tom Louwerse
Rachel Plak	Annemarie Samuels	Rachel Plak
Helen Pluut	Cristiana Strava	Olaf van Vliet
Annemarie Samuels	Michiel Veldhuis	
Cristiana Strava		
Michiel Veldhuis		

Selection and recruitment committee: Noel de Miranda, Maaïke van Putten, Annemarie Samuels and Cristiana Strava.

C. Financial Overview

YAL received an annual budget of €50,000. Cathelijn Waaijer served as treasurer of YAL. Again in 2021, we kept within budget very well. This is partly due to the fact we could not organize many in-person events and had to opt for online events. We hope to organize more in-person events in 2022.

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. Costs for the workgroups and events were low this year, due to the fact we could not organize many in-person events, as already indicated above.