From Neuro-Innovation (H2020) to DP-FOBI (HE) - Carrying out MSCA COFUND DP projects - experiences from University of Eastern Finland

NAWA MSCA network - COFUND Doctoral Day 22.4.2026

Helena Jäntti, Research Funding Specialist, UEF Research Services (Central office)

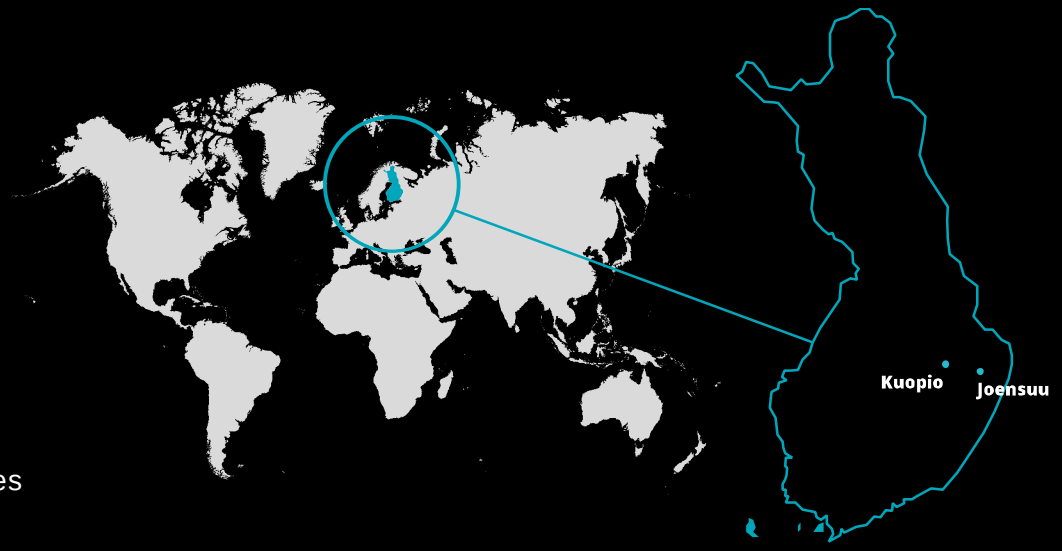
Paula Inkeroinen, Research Funding Specialist, UEF Research Services (Project management)

Helen Reijonen, University Lecturer, Business School, Faculty of Social Sciences and Business Studies

University of Eastern Finland

2 campuses

Joensuu | Kuopio



4 faculties

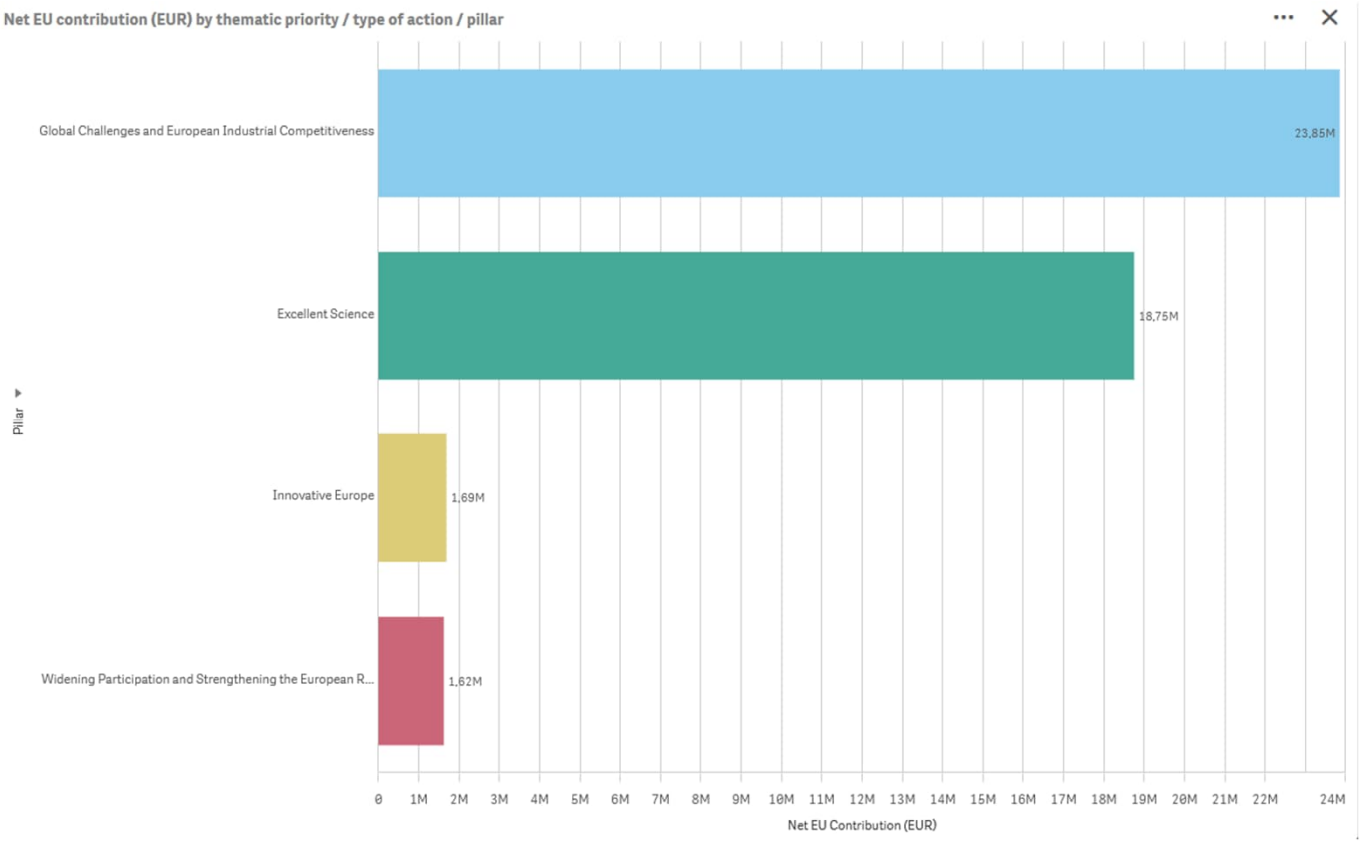
Philosophical Faculty
Faculty of Science, Forestry and Technology
Faculty of Health Sciences
Faculty of Social Sciences and Business Studies

118	3,500	17,600	1,450
Major subjects	Members of staff	Degree Students	International Degree Students

UEF's key figures

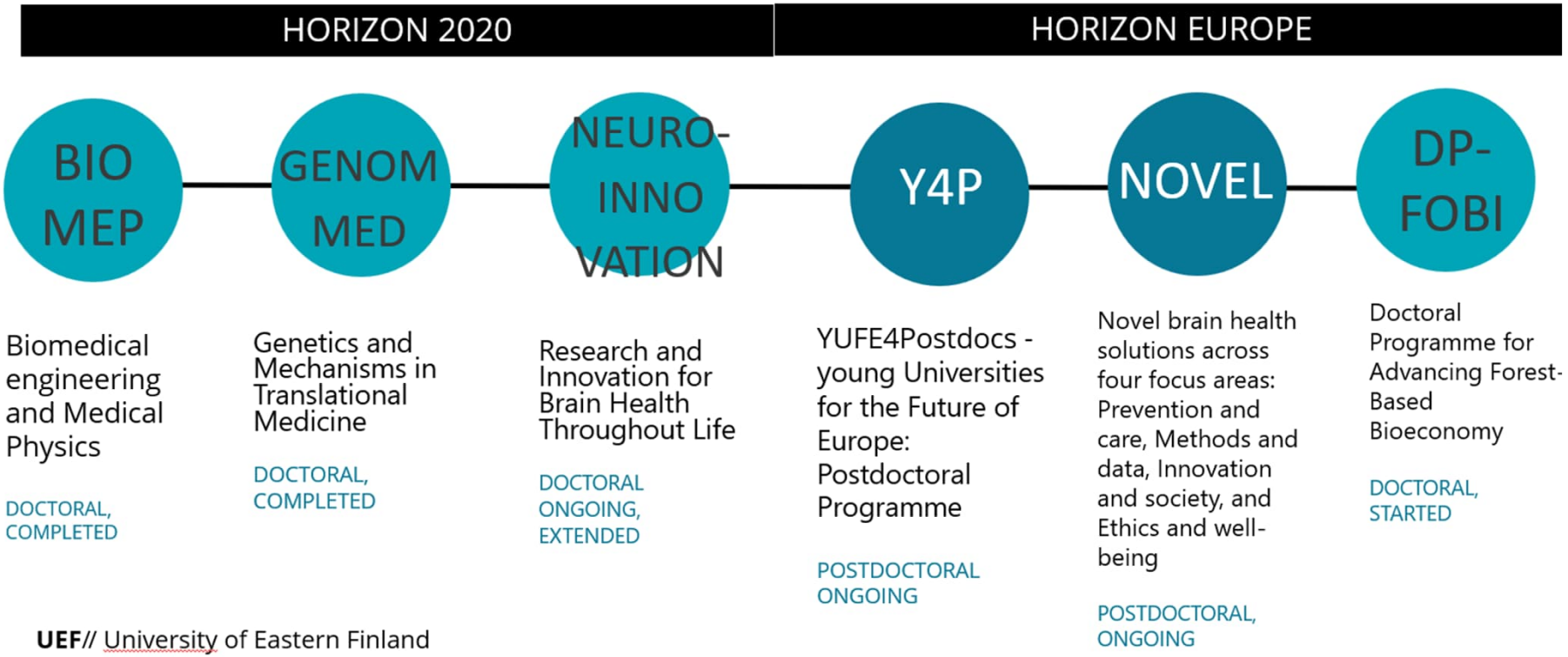
4 faculties	12 fields of study	118 major subjects
3,500 members of staff	17,600 degree students	14,500 adult education students
1,450 international degree students	3,743 degrees awarded in 2025	3,742 scientific publications in 2025

UEF and Horizon Europe



- UEF currently participates in 107 projects under the Horizon Europe programme
- 8 consortium projects are coordinated by UEF
- 7 ERC projects
- Participation in 31 MSCA projects

MSCA COFUND projects at UEF



Neuro-Innovation Doctoral programme in nutshell

Research and innovation for brain health throughout life

5/2021 – 4/2026 (9/2027)

14 Doctoral Candidates
21 Supervisors
30 Partners
6 Disciplines
3 Faculties
3 Research areas
6 Doctoral programmes



https://sites.uef.fi/neuro-innovation

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement No101034307.

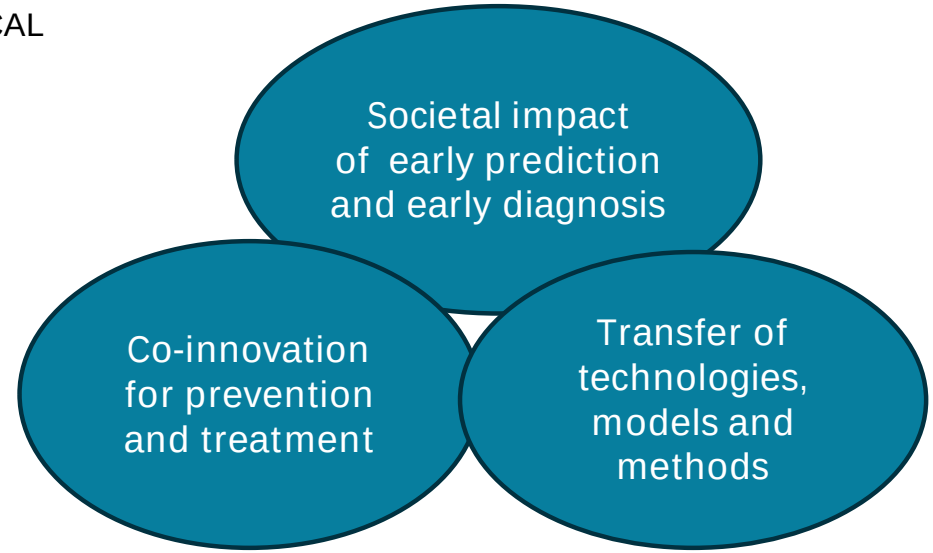
UEF// University of Eastern Finland

Inter-/multidisciplinary research areas & disciplines involved

INNOVATION AND MANAGEMENT: FROM DISCOVERY TO IMPACT INTO PRACTICAL HEALTHCARE SOLUTIONS
Bridging research and application
sustainable innovation development
collaborative industry partnerships
leadership and impact

SOCIAL SCIENCES AND LAW: ETHICS, SOCIETYAND RESPONSIBILITY
Ethical data management
legal and policy frameworks
societal impact and trust

THREE RESEACH AREAS:



COMPUTER SCIENCE AND APPLIED PHYSICS: ENABLING TECHNOLOGIES
Data-driven brain research
Advanced measurement technologies
Interdisciplinary collaboration for clinical applications
New tools for diagnosis and treatment.

NEUROSCIENCE: UNDERSTANDING BRAIN FUNCTION AND DISEASE
Brain function and neural networks
Neurological diseases and biomarkers
Interdisciplinary research approach

Neuro-Innovation DP - Aims

- Advance **brain health research and innovation.**
- Provide **PhD training** that combines neurosciences with innovation management, social sciences, law, computer science and applied physics.
- Train **future leaders** in brain health research and innovation and prepare graduates for **diverse career paths** beyond academia.
- Foster international and intersectoral **collaboration** via mobility periods and advance regional health innovation ecosystems.

Neuro-Innovation DP - Key elements

- **Multi/interdisciplinary** research topics and supervision
- **Intersectoral** exposure – interaction with various sectors
- Transnational mobilty – secondments and visits
- Well defined management structure
- Support & community
- Tailored training sessions on transferable skills
- Summer schools on on ethics, innovativeness and commercialisation paths

Neuro-Innovation DP - outputs so far

- 14 peer reviewed publications and more than 100 conference/ seminar presentations
- Prizes won in the Neurochallenge event and hackathon
- 44 Events: meetings, trainings, workshops and visits
- 4 secondments
- 9 press releases, 53 online media hits, 82 blog posts on the website
- 1200 followers on LinkedIn, 114 on Instagram, 378 on Facebook
- 900 social media posts from the programme!

Neuro-Innovation DP - impact of our researchers work

- Advancing early diagnosis and treatment
- Addressing gaps in **knowledge, understanding** disease mechanisms
- Improving social and health **care practices**
  - Contributing to educational materials, organizational guidelines; personalized medicine and commercial applications
- Advancing **research practices**
  - Creating platform, developing tools, improving patient recruitment
- Supporting (evidence-based) **policy discussions and legislation**
- Ultimately, improvement in the overall well-being

Lessons learned – Implementation phase

- The selection process takes time and occasionally requires multiple openings for the positions
- Evaluators must have international members and on top of scientific expertise also knowledge about what elements make a good PhD candidate – composition takes time
- There has to be a balance between training activities and research work

Doctoral Programme for Advancing Forest-Based Bioeconomy (DP-FOBI) in a nutshell

- MSCA Cofund Doctoral Programme
- Duration: 1.4.2026 - 31.3.2031
- Total budget 4 187 177,00 €
  - EU contribution: 2 376 000,00 €
  - Own resources: 1 811 177,00 €
- Recruitment of 15 doctoral candidates
  - All UEF faculties and seven departments involved

DP-FOBI
FORESTS AND BIOECONOMY DOCTORAL PROGRAMME

DP-FOBI programme

- interdisciplinary structure
- focus on **research-based solutions for a sustainable forest-based bioeconomy**
  1. understanding and advancing resource-efficient, climate-smart wood-based value chains
  2. promoting non-extractive forest use, including immaterial value creation and novel NTFP-based innovations
  3. understanding and facilitating commercialisation of novel solutions.

Recruitment

- UEF will recruit **15 doctoral candidates (DCs)**
- The **call opens in June, 2026, appointments by March 2027**
- Eligibility:
  - must not already hold a doctoral degree, and
  - must not have resided or carried out their main activity (work, studies, etc.) in Finland for more than 12 months in the 36 months immediately preceding the call deadline
- Applicants will select from **a broad range of interdisciplinary research topics specified by the supervisors and described in the DP-FOBI website**
- Supervisors will have **no role** in the recruitment or selection process
- Each selected DC is offered a **full-time employment contract** for a period of **48 months**, based on an annual workload of **1,612 hours**, and includes a **mandatory four-month trial period**

More info about DP-FOBI

- https://sites.uef.fi/dp-fobi/ (will open in May)
- LinkedIn

DP-FOBI

FORESTS AND BIOECONOMY DOCTORAL PROGRAMME

Co-funded by the European Union

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation programme under the Marie Sklodowska-Curie grant agreement No 101261719.

Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

Lessons learned – preparation phase

- The MSCA guides are very helpful when preparing the proposal (e.g. MSCA Cofund Handbook), as well as benchmarking existing programmes
- Make supervisors commit already at the preparation phase – makes implementation easier
- Candidate selection procedure and training components are very important - less focus on the description of the science.
- Think about the budget carefully - COFUNDing is required

UNIVERSITY OF
EASTERN FINLAND

Questions?

uef.fi

Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

