DELIVERABLE No. 4.4

Report on the 3-year Plan for the TESE Days

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1. PhD students' professional insertion: a Challenge on a European level

Context: The European landscape for PhD employment and skills gaps.

For decades PhD students' career choices have been strongly geared towards academic fields, teaching and continued research. Over time, the increase in the number of PhDs in Europe has impacted the development of research areas and fields. However, the perceptions outside of higher education of PhD students as being solely academia-oriented has not favoured their insertion onto the job market and into diverse professional sectors.

Studies[1] show that the European market for PhD students has evolved, especially with regards to industrial openings for research-related positions. According to OECD data, the number of European doctoral graduates had reached a total of 276,800 in 2019, with openings for continued research careers being limited. Over 40% of PhD graduates don't pursue careers in academia, and consequently, may struggle to have rapid integration into companies as their high-end profile and added value is not immediately identified by recruiters (even though the situation in this regard may differ from country to country, notably in the European Union). This can lead to questioning the value of obtaining a PhD in the 21st century, as well as identifying the skills doctoral students develop through their studies and how this can help favour their professional insertion and career.

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[1] Article : "Labour market perspectives for PhD students in Europe", European Journal of Education, Research, Development and Policy, July 2022, Eva Hnatkova, Iryna Degtyarova, Margaux Kersschot, Julia Boman

Preamble

This report explains how EDUC has addressed the latter point, of skills-centred activities and challenges, to nurture and favour rapid professional insertion. Albeit in the context of a European Alliance of 8 universities and 7 countries, facilitating insertion for PhD students extends much further afield within and beyond European job markets.

As there are different events in the EDUC Alliance, in different countries, each with its own context, the report takes a higher stance and a step back to give more focus on the key steps and roadmap. The specific implementation is presented in the appendices as demonstrators of good practice, showing that the method and process highlighted in the report can be a replicable process with positive results.

Objective: Cultivate an Entrepreneurial Mindset

Entrepreneurship and the scope of entrepreneurial activities immediately evoke creating or taking leadership of an existing company. There can be a strong correlation between high-end research conducted by PhD students and its transformation into operational and impactful solutions for society. EDUC I had developed an event format focused on entrepreneurship. While building on that experience, in EDUC II, we chose to take a different approach by focusing on fostering an entrepreneurial mindset among PhD students, with the objective of enhancing their career prospects.

EDUC has explored the entrepreneurial mindset, which is a reflection on the qualities, skills and aptitudes that help build capacities to become professionals. To continually adapt to a changing economic climate, companies and industries implement agile organisations and working practices to address their everyday needs, but also to envisage and prepare for the future. PhD students develop sought-after skills such as Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving, enabling the analysis of complex situations, identify patterns and develop appropriate solutions. Resilience and Perseverance reflects adaptability, the capacity to overcome obstacles and manage uncertainty. Communication and Persuasion are solid aptitudes of any PhD student, used when writing papers, presenting research, demonstrating the ability to articulate ideas and

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influence others. Having employees capable of *vision, management, leadership, initiative-taking[2]*, once reunited, express facets of an *entrepreneurial mindset.* This approach also considers social entrepreneurship: creating societal impact through entrepreneurial projects and activities. Such profiles can be deemed as being rarer on the job market, giving them additional attractivity, notably as some of the attributes cannot easily be 'taught' through traditional educational approaches or Life-Long Learning (having vision, intra or interpersonal skills, a sense of leadership...).

Through the activities developed and expressed in this report, our main objectives have been to:

- demonstrate to PhD students that they already possess several entrepreneurial competences, developed during their doctoral activities.
- nurture additional skills and entrepreneurial awareness that are sought after by recruiters, to stimulate rapid professional insertion.

EDUC has taken a two-tongued approach, with a virtual distant-learning component and a physical in-presence event on a European scale. The latter will be the focus of this report, as it reflects the collective transdisciplinary approach bringing multiple PhD profiles together and exposing them to different professional contexts.

2. The Entrepreneurial Mindset activities

An entrepreneurial mindset is a cross-disciplinary concept, applicable and useful to all PhD profiles. The nature and category of competencies can be viewed as 'healthy add-

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[2] *Article: "Entrepreneurial competences revised: developing a consolidated and categorized list of entrepreneurial competences"; Alexander Tittel, Orestis Terzidis, Entrepreneurship Education, published online 3rd February 2020*

ons' in any career path, enabling young professionals to further research activities or develop solutions in organisations or industrial sectors.

The additional educational challenge faced: how to reach out to PhD students simultaneously from eight different universities in seven countries?

A two directional approach, each with its focal points, has been explored:

- An online, self-paced course on developing general entrepreneurial skills and awareness on professional insertion from a PhD perspective: the International Entrepreneurial Mindset (IEM) course.

- A European event to stimulate international networking skills and awareness of professional opportunities among PhD students: Talents and Entrepreneurial Skills in Europe (TESE) Days.

Although the main focus of this report is the TESE Days, a short spotlight on the IEM course will demonstrate how the two activities complement each other in helping doctoral students to develop or discover appropriate skills.

International Entrepreneurial Mindset (IEM) Course

The purpose is to be able to reach out to as many PhD students as possible, in different educational ecosystems, each with their own academic rhythm. Having a virtual mobility training offer is an appropriate way to massify exposition of this learning opportunity. This enables many positive properties, such as rendering learning pathways more flexible, adapting to individual learning rhythms or giving sufficient time to digest information according to linguistic and cultural origins. This can particularly be the case when learners have a different starting point on the path of entrepreneurialism, based on previous experiences in their own country, in relation to local cultural approaches or codes in the workplace.

The key comparative referential used was that of EntreComp[3]. This scale was then readapted in the design phase of the IEM course framework.

The EntreComp skills served as a basis and common reference point. However, the model could not be deployed fully in the same form, as there needed to be a clear coherence with the overarching pedagogical concept and objectives of the IEM course and educational focal points.

The initial EntreComp themes were adapted to cater for the concept of the EDUC 2-part learning programme: 'Coming out of academia' and 'Entering the professional market', where the purpose of the IEM is to respond to the objectives outlined earlier: How to favour professional integration of PhD students onto the job market? The spirit of the 'mindset' is to put limelight on transversal skills that could be used within various job profiles in view of managing projects and ventures with an entrepreneurial approach inside companies, by reusing soft skills acquired by young doctors during their research work. Such profiles are sought after by companies and industries that run tailor-made projects for their customers.

EDUC envisages using this channel to generate a wide reach, entice students to think early on about their future career choices and give them the desire to participate in a physical mobility on the second Entrepreneurial Mindset activity: the TESE Days.

Talents and Entrepreneurial Skills in Europe (TESE) Days

While the IEM course takes an individual approach to learning, adapting to study patterns and rhythms, the TESE Days is an opportunity to be collective, to bring PhD students together from all the universities on one site. From surveys conducted and individual discussions, it transpires that PhD students feel they are in a disciplinary

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[3] *Bacigalupo, M., Kampylis, P., Punie, Y., Van den Brande, G. (2016). EntreComp: The Entrepreneurship Competence Framework. Luxembourg : European Union Publications Office; EUR 27939 FR ; doi:10.2791/593884.*

tunnel, that any activities they participate in or seminars they attend are related to their specific field. They express awareness that this is not imposed but part of the learning pathway, however, that it remains challenging to expand beyond this disciplinary horizon. The purpose of the TESE days is to transcend disciplinary 'boundaries', to offer an environment that opens PhD students to other processes and concepts that they can integrate as complementary to their research field and to help them develop their European professional network.

The following sections on the report detail how these events are set up and how they provide a positive channel in assisting PhD students in building bridges within or beyond academia by employing an entrepreneurial dimension.

An important factor to consider is that through reach out to eight European partner universities, the impact is much deeper as many PhD students are international, coming from all continents. This adds additional depth for all participants.

3. Conceptualising the TESE Days

Main objectives

The key goals are to bring PhD students together in a multicultural environment and enable them to develop entrepreneurial attributes sought after on the job market, whilst having the opportunity to demonstrate their capacities during the event, through direct contact with potential recruiters.

Its scope:

- Adopt a hands-on, practical approach.
- Offer training sessions and workshops on building awareness of what entrepreneurial skills are and what personal skills they can use in entrepreneurial contexts.
- Understand certain needs and expectations of the job market in the host country, but also in the European partner countries.
- Favour cross-disciplinary networking, on a European level, to encourage new ideas, share visions and give potential to new ventures.
- Nurture contacts between companies, associations or non-profit organisations and PhD students, in view of facilitating professional insertion.

All partners contribute to a collaborative project-mode, mobilising local experts and implicating key players to render each event European.

Target audiences

The initiative brings together:

- **PhD students** from diverse academic backgrounds.
- **Industry representatives** from fields that actively hire PhD holders, such as Computer science or Artificial Intelligence.
- **Recruitment firms and venture funds**
- **Academic institutions**, including universities and entrepreneurial departments, participate to showcase talents.
- **Funding bodies** offer insights on aligning academic skills with market needs, fostering a collaborative approach to bridge the gap between academia and industry.

To secure implication from local companies, focus is given to finding the balance between manageable numbers and thresholds that render the event attractive enough for external bodies to participate. European co-construction gives additional depth, by inviting international speakers through partner universities. A minimum of 40 students was targeted for the first TESE Days events. Ties with research units and decision-makers within research laboratories at an Alliance-level is crucial to reach out to PhD students and demonstrate the benefits of such an event. Using the right communication tools, having the right arguments and showcasing the added value, without giving the impression that the Alliance is pushing students away from research professions requires well-timed presentations to key internal academic and administrative staff.

Programme

The programme is a pivotal part of any event. In this case, catering for parameters such as:

- organising networking sessions with industry professionals.
- conducting skills development workshops (e.g., professional presentation, employability, leadership, communication, project management).
- promoting mobility and cross-border career opportunities within Europe.

One key aspect is how to ensure the sustainability of such new events, which may have a wider ambition or reach than other events run by universities. The approach favoured was to have the event coupled with an existing local initiative, run by either an entrepreneurial department or key faculties involved in entrepreneurial activities (business, management, economics faculties). The risk alleviated is that of establishing an event within the scope of an alliance yet detached from internal university activities. Connecting to existing local events and co-piloting with faculty members has proved fruitful in this endeavour.

The wealth of an Alliance is to foster collaboration and sparring between partners to render a programme truly European. Direct contribution from partners to the programme content is an asset that a stand-alone local initiative cannot harness.

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Budget and resource allocation

Conscientious budgeting and strategic allocation of resources are imperative to favour success. By endowing a detailed budget, the TESE Days organising committee can prioritise expenditures, optimise the use of funds, and allocate resources to areas with greater impact.

Costing has a direct correlation to the Programme, guiding the development of a provisional budget.

Essential expenses such as venue rental, catering, logistics and material can potentially generate heavy costs. Allocating resources effectively expands the event's reach and quality whilst also assisting in controlling unforeseen expenses, staying within the financial plan and guaranteeing a high-quality experience.

4. Organising the TESE Days

The TESE Days, organised successively by three leading universities; (**University of Cagliari**, **University of Rennes** and **University of South-Eastern Norway)** present comprehensive programmes designed to support PhD students in their career development. The event benefits from the active involvement of European partners, contributing to its framing, promotion, and participation, ensuring a collaborative and impactful initiative.

Key common principles

Common principles have been established among the three organising universities to ensure a cohesive and impactful experience.

The TESE Days are:

- In-person events, with a European contribution through Alliance partners
- Designed specifically for PhD students
- Conducted entirely in English
- Lasting three days
- Recommended minimum number of European participants: 40
- Creating an environment conducive to employment and professional integration
- Fostering an entrepreneurial mindset through contributions from key speakers, guest experts, and associated partners
- Favouring international networking among students and ecosystems
- Potentially linked to a local event.

Dates and organising universities

The calendar was set in relation to local beneficial periods; the purpose was not to generate Alliance-level constraints on matching identical periods, which would not concur to local specificities. The decentralised approach provided more flexibility.

- **University of Cagliari,** from May 27th to 29th, 2024
- **University of Rennes**, from June 10th to 12th, 2025
- **University of South-Eastern Norway**, during 2026

Event programme tracks

The programmes offer various tracks, though not all events will feature every track-type:

- **Keynote speakers and panels** explore career pathways, innovation trends, and interdisciplinary work, providing valuable insights from experts.

- **Workshops** focus on employability skills, offering practical sessions on CV writing, interview techniques, and crafting a professional pitch.

- **Feedback sessions with mentors** in which PhD students receive personalised guidance, discuss individual challenges and gain insights into enhancing their employability.

- **Career fair or professional interviews** where companies promote job opportunities and interact directly with PhD students.

- **Networking sessions** provide structured settings for PhD students to connect with potential employers and mentors.

- **Alumni success stories** inspirational talks from PhD graduates who have successfully transitioned into a variety of career fields, offering real-world examples of post-academic success.

Stakeholder roles and responsibilities

The establishment of a local organisation committee is imperative for the creation and implementation of a successful event. Composing a dedicated team with defined roles and responsibilities is crucial to bringing the TESE Days to fruition. Additionally, it is central to assign new roles during the event to guarantee smooth implementation and address any arising needs promptly.

The fundamental roles and responsibilities within the local organisation committee:

- **Event coordinator**
  Oversees the entire event, ensuring coherence and consistent coordination between team members. Manages priorities, the overall budget, and

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communication with European partners and external stakeholders. Assumes the role of primary point of contact for all strategic areas.

- **Finance and administration officer**
  Oversees the TESE Days budget, mobility grants and expenses. Ensures financial monitoring and transparency, also conformity with budgetary restraints. Operates payments and invoices.

- **Logistics officer**
  Coordinates all event logistics, such as booking venues, technical facilities, accommodation options and catering. Ensures that all material and services are ready and operational.

- **Corporate partnerships liaison officer**
  Establishes and cultivates relationships with event partner companies and associated partners. Supervises the partnership agreements and ensures the visibility of each partner in accordance with the arrangements.

- **Programme coordinator**
  Develops the detailed TESE Days programme. Ensures that the schedule is coherent and liaises with speakers and mentors to ensure harmony between topics.

- **Communication and dissemination officer**
  Produces and implements the event's communication and dissemination strategy. Creates organic content for the website and social media according to the targeted public. Manages mailing campaigns, visual materials, printed leaflets and press relations.

- **Registration coordinator**
  Manages the attendee registration process and ensures each participant receives the information they need before the event. At the start of the event, supervises the welcoming volunteers and assists with the participants' registration.

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- **Speaker relations liaison officer**
  Facilitates exchanges with participating speakers, moderators and mentors. Prepares stakeholders prior to the event and coordinates their welcome and technical needs.

- **Technical engineer**
  Takes over all technical aspects, including audiovisual equipment, internet connectivity, online broadcast tools in case of hybrid sessions and answers technical issues on site.

- **Event evaluator**
  Develops and applies an evaluation plan to collect feedback from participants and mentors, measure the event's impact and identify opportunities for improvement in future editions.

Certain roles may be shared or supported by multiple people or the same individuals, providing increased flexibility and assistance across tasks. Adequate human resources, as well as transparent and well-distributed responsibilities are key to an effective implementation of the event.

TESE Days Action Plan

Once the organising committee members and their respective responsibilities are identified, the next step is to formulate an extensive action plan, specifically tailored to the needs of the organising universities. This plan provides a structured approach to all activities and objectives, ensuring the successful implementation of the TESE Days. While this action plan is dedicated to the organising universities, the involvement of European partners remains crucial to reaching each milestone effectively.

Milestones within the timeline act as significant checkpoints, facilitating the monitoring of activities and ensuring the event's progress. By aligning action items with precise deadlines and milestones, the plan not only assists in prioritising efforts but also enables the early identification of potential obstacles, enabling timely modifications and ensuring the event progresses seamlessly.

The detailed action plan, including comprehensive tasks and success indicators can be found attached to this report, as a **Resource document**.

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Pre-event planning

1ˢᵗ milestone: 12 to 18 months before the event

- Clarify the objectives and focus of the event by reviewing the project description and key indicators, including the event duration, travel constraints, expected number of participants, and potential connections to other relevant events.
  Person in charge: Event coordinator

- Plan the budget by identifying funding sources, creating templates, researching grants and sponsorships and establishing an approval process.
  Person in charge: Finance and administration officer

- Engage initial research by determining event requirements, specifying the venue, technical needs, catering and accommodation needs.
  Person in charge: Logistics officer

- Identify local and international partnership synergies by assessing the event's objectives and strengths in terms of collaboration and promotion.
  Person in charge: Event coordinator

2ⁿᵈ milestone: 10 to 12 months before the event

- Confirm the budget, refine initial financial estimates, apply for funding opportunities and reconcile expenses with available funds. Assess budget risks and establish mitigation strategies. Consult with local and European stakeholders to finalise the comprehensive budget.
  Person in charge: Finance and administration officer

- Finalise the event dates by reviewing partner academic calendars, participant availability, city events and venue scheduling. Ensure commitment from stakeholders.
  Person in charge: Logistics officer

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- Book the venue after clarifying terms regarding payment timelines (if applicable), cancellation policies and other venue-related conditions.
Persons in charge: Event coordinator and Logistics officer

3rd milestone: 10 months before the event

- Establish a keynote presentations programme framework by outlining key topics. Identify appropriate keynote speakers. Develop engaging workshop sessions and plan social activities that encourage networking and team building.
Persons in charge: Event coordinator and Programme coordinator

- Create an initial participant list in line with the event's venue capacity. Use existing databases and professional networks to compile a list of potential participants from the represented universities.
Persons in charge: Event coordinator and Programme coordinator

4th milestone: 6 to 8 months before the event

- Compose an organising committee, providing them with clear roles and core responsibilities, expectations and timelines. Establish communication channels, set key deadlines and milestones.
Person in charge: Event coordinator

- Invite keynote speakers and workshop facilitators. Send personalised invitations with event details and expectations, confirm availability, formalise agreements, coordinate travel and accommodation and maintain ongoing communication.
Persons in charge: Programme coordinator, Speaker relations liaison officer, Communication and dissemination officer

- Develop and initiate the promotion strategy by selecting the most effective promotional channels, create an editorial calendar, share the content toolkit with

European partner universities to promote the 'Save the Date' in the Alliance. Monitor engagement to refine the strategy and plan post-event communication.
Person in charge: Communication and dissemination officer

5th milestone: 4 to 6 months before the event

- Finalise programme details by collaborating with each speaker and facilitator. Prepare a detailed daily agenda with session times, locations and activity descriptions. Share with relevant stakeholders.
Persons in charge: Event coordinator, Programme coordinator, Speaker relations liaison officer, Logistics officer

- Invite companies after collecting and mapping the size, sector and relevance. Develop a strong value proposition and a compelling invitation.
Persons in charge: Corporate partnerships liaison officer and Communication and dissemination officer

- Set participant registration by producing a registration form that includes all essential details for the organising committee's planning and coordination.
Person in charge: Registration coordinator

- Implement the promotion strategy in accordance with the approved editorial calendar.
Person in charge: Communication and dissemination officer

- Coordinate logistics by organising transportation, hotel reservations, catering, essential event equipment, conduct equipment tests and order gift items for the welcome packs.
Person in charge: Logistics officer

6th milestone: 2 to 4 months before the event

- Prepare material by designing the event programme booklet, registration checklists, name tags, and directional signs; develop welcome packs; confirm printing requirements and deadlines.
  Persons in charge: Communication and dissemination officer and Logistics officer

- Design an email template for invitations, prepare detailed emails with event details, and create a welcome guide. Initiate communication with participants.
  Persons in charge: Registration coordinator and Communication and dissemination officer

7th milestone: 1 month before the event

- Finalise numbers by analysing registration data to verify the confirmed participant count, adjust catering, seating and logistics accordingly.
  Persons in charge: Registration coordinator, Logistics officer, Finance and administration officer

- Organise a final committee meeting covering event logistics, updates, and duties. Review task progress and address any issues. Conclude by summarising action items and timelines.
  Person in charge: Event coordinator

8th milestone: before the event

- Place the directional signs and verify the availability and functionality of all required materials and equipment. Assign responsibilities to oversee clear signaling at the venue.
  Persons in charge: Logistics officer and Technical engineer

Event implementation

9th milestone: during the event

- Ensure that all participants are catered for, secure a solid event launch and oversee teething problems.
  Persons in charge: Event coordinator and Speaker relation liaison officer

- Conduct the registration process and ensure assistance throughout the event.
  Persons in charge: Registration coordinator and Welcoming volunteers

- Run the event according to the schedule, ensuring all tasks are completed.
  Persons in charge: All stakeholders

- Cover the event by creating high-quality content and recording participants' testimonials.
  Person in charge: Communication and dissemination officer

Post-event activities

10th milestone: after the event

- Collect feedback by providing satisfaction surveys to the participants, speakers, facilitators and organising committee.
  Person in charge: Event evaluator

- Update the budget, conduct a financial analysis.
  Person in charge: Finance and administration officer

- Maintain relations through thank-you notes to speakers, facilitators, organising committee and participants.
  Persons in charge: Event coordinator and Communication and dissemination officer

- Evaluate and appreciate the event's performance.
  Person in charge: Event coordinator

- Disseminate after the event to maintain and cultivate the host's positive image.
  Person in charge: Communication and dissemination officer

- Deliver statistics and evaluation by sharing the event's outcomes with European partners.
  Person in charge: Event coordinator

5. Implementing the TESE Days

1st edition: University of Cagliari

Description of the event

The first edition of the TESE Days was held in Cagliari from May 27th to May 29th, 2024. It involved a total of 27 PhD students from 6 partners (except for Masaryk University) and 7 experts (one per partner, except for Masaryk University and the University of Potsdam).

During the first two days, workshops guided by the experts took place. The objective of these activities (organised both in pairs and groups/subgroups) was to help participants become more and more conscious of their strengths and weaknesses and of their professional interests, targets and calling. They also prepared a cover letter and a poster, besides simulating a job interview.

During the third and last day, real job interviews took place during a very important local event (UniCareerDay) organised every year by the Research and Territory Division of the University of Cagliari. The connection of the TESE Days with this event allowed us to adapt this edition to the unique local labour context. Approximately 30 local participating companies (among the 88 admitted) demonstrated interest in

meeting PhDs specialised in their business sector and a total of 80 job interviews were scheduled.

The detailed programme of the TESE Days at the University of Cagliari can be found in **Appendix 1.**

The communication materials used during the event's promotion can be found in **Appendix 2.**

Figure 1

Figure 2

Figure 3

Figure 4

![European Digital UniverCity logo]

Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

Figure 5

Figure 6

Figure 1: *Participants of the TESE Days at the University of Cagliari*

Figure 2: *Professional presentation workshop on the second day*

Figure 3: *Lecture on reflecting competencies and setting goals by Katharina Lübstorf*

Figure 4: *EDUC conference during the UniCareer Day with the intervention of the TESE Days experts and PhD students*

Figure 5: *TESE Days poster session in a dedicated area of the UNICareerDay*

Figure 6: *TESE Days PhD students during their interviews with companies' representatives*

Feedback and points for improvement

Organising the first edition of the TESE Days was quite challenging since the objective was to connect the local labour supply and international demand. The lead time to set up and run the event was 5 months, much shorter than the suggested time in the roadmap, due to local constraints. This enabled the Alliance to test and measure the impact of a shorter time span. However, the expertise and specialisation of participating PhDs was often higher than the profiles that local companies admitted to the event were searching for. The delay in some PhD attendance confirmations made the matchmaking more difficult at the very last moment. However, several job

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interviews turned out to be very interesting for both parties and this represents a great success.

Students defined the application process of their home university as easy and clear, even if some of them would have preferred to receive more information about the companies, the programme and the profiles of the other participants before the event. As to the workshops, some of the participants would have preferred faster and more original activities, but most of the group was satisfied with them. As to the UniCareerDay, participants generally valued the opportunity to practice interview skills and take advantage of the event to connect with peers.

For the next edition in Rennes, it would be advisable to select PhD candidates first and then start the company search using the specific candidate profiles: this would allow our colleagues from Rennes to find more successful matches. Other learning curves: starting all the selection procedures well in advance; involving international companies (not only local ones) in the job interviews process, as this would enrich this EDUC opportunity.

Impact assessment on the local ecosystem

Despite some companies expressing their satisfaction in planning a job interview with such specialised profiles, those that may have effectively developed a working relationship are probably few.

Nevertheless, the presence of highly specialised PhDs coming from several other European countries reinforced the image of the yearly local event organised by UniCa.

2nd edition: University of Rennes

Description of the event

The second edition of the TESE Days is scheduled to take place at the University of Rennes from June 10th to June 12th 2025. Spanning three days, the event will welcome a minimum of 40 PhD students from the EDUC Alliance. The organisers aim to

establish and sustain a European event over time at the University of Rennes by integrating the TESE Days within a local initiative.

This edition will centre on fostering an entrepreneurial mindset, enhancing soft skills, engaging in professional role-playing and exploring diverse career opportunities. The programme structure will mirror the model implemented by the University of Cagliari, featuring two days dedicated to workshops and one day focused on exploring professional opportunities.

The first two days will focus on building a bridge between the academic and professional worlds, featuring alumni success stories, lectures and workshops led by industry and academic experts.

On the third day, participants will engage in interview simulations and networking sessions with companies and recruiters.

The target audience includes:

Local PhD students and those from EDUC Alliance universities.

- **Final-year PhD students**, particularly for recruitment interviews tailored to those aspiring to careers in industry, organisations, or similar sectors.
- **PhD students at earlier stages of their studies**, to encourage early networking regardless of their intended career path.

Fostering early engagement among PhD Students

A team of PhD students has been formed in collaboration with the local organising committee, to apply the principles in a hands-on approach, adopting an entrepreneurial stance designed to enhance their skills and benefit their future careers.

Each team member has been assigned specific roles and responsibilities, with the expectation that everyone actively contributes. Additionally, a lead was designated for each mission to ensure clear direction and accountability.

Three primary tasks have been identified, each involving significant participation from the PhD students:

- **Corporate outreach:** Develop a list of partner companies for the event, create a corporate communication action plan, draft a value proposition tailored for companies, initiate contact with potential corporate partners.
- **Programme definition:** Conduct a benchmark analysis of events dedicated to PhD students, reflect on the schedule and pacing of sessions, propose workshops and potential speakers.
- **Communication strategy for PhD Students:** Identify the most effective communication channels to reach PhD students (in collaboration with the communication and dissemination officer), gather feedback on the communication timeline, including the frequency and timing of reminders.

The organisation of the TESE Days at the University of Rennes is an ongoing process, with all tasks being carefully coordinated to ensure the event's success. As the scheduling evolves, continuous collaboration among all stakeholders will be key to delivering a meaningful and impactful experience for all participants.

3rd edition: University of South-Eastern Norway

The University of South-Eastern Norway is currently in the process of gathering insights and feedback from the TESE Days held in the University of Cagliari and the University of Rennes, with the objective of leveraging these valuable experiences to create their own event in 2026.

A dedicated working group is being established to begin detailed planning for this third edition. The initial concept for the event is structured to span two to three days and will be organised into three core elements:

- building self-confidence
- initiating career planning
- preparing participants to pitch to potential employers.

By combining these components, the University of South-Eastern Norway aims to offer a comprehensive and meaningful experience for PhD students, equipping them with

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the essential resources to navigate their career paths with confidence and engage effectively with industry professionals.

6. Continuous improvement loops

Sustaining the event over time

To capitalise on the creation of an event, even if it's based on an existing local initiative, there is a need to foresee, as early as the conception phase, how the event will manage the 'test of time'. Setting up measurable criteria can enable a clear evaluation at different levels, each with their own perspective and goal:

- **Overall project:** appreciate the method and processes deployed to set up and run the event; measure the efficiency levels and replicability. Identify key strengths and improvement areas. This concerns all active organisers.
- **Keynote participants:** consider the feedback from speakers to ascertain their needs, what had to be troubleshot, what could be better anticipated, what worked well. This concerns speakers, people with a chairing or facilitator role.
- **Participants:** through satisfaction surveys. Collecting data from this group is a thermometer to determine levels of success. This can be taken with some indulgence as participants can have individual motivations and an event will rarely fit everyone's full expectations.

Cross-referencing and mapping the 3 levels of evaluation enable a more holistic vision and more secure project. It is key to think this process with care, to ensure the use of clear measurable criteria. Two factors are sought after:

What energy and time can be saved for further iterations, to streamline and generate return-on-investment?

How to pursue with local events and faculties, to accept deep changes to their own event, which was a result of another conception and implementation protocol?

The latter is notably important to have solid human resource levels, provide notoriety and contribute to the transformation of practices through the Alliance initiative. The two factors contribute to event versioning.

7. Conclusion

The challenges faced by PhD students, in terms of finding employment within or outside of academia, can be seen as shared challenges within the scope of the European Alliance. Addressing these, by capitalising on the PhD students' own capacities and strengths, reinforces their commitment to their research activities, whilst bringing to the forefront the skills and aptitudes they develop. The double-edged approach of distance learning and on-site European events generates a value-proposition that PhD students can transform into sellable skills on the job market.

The high interest and notoriety that is expressed around the TESE Days demonstrates that, albeit with small numbers in these first editions, it's a solid path to pursue for our universities in their endeavour to provide continued support to all their students. The key notions evoked in this report, such as mixing the publics, having a hands-on practical event, providing a wide European perspective and networking opportunities, coupled with local events and initiatives; these notions provide new foundations for our universities towards developing ambitious outreaching activities and fostering stronger ties with local ecosystems. The TESE Days events should provide new avenues to build bridges between academia and the professional marketplace.

8. APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Programme schedule - TESE Days at the University of Cagliari

Appendix 2: Communication materials – TESE Days at the University of Cagliari

Appendix 1: Programme schedule - TESE Days at the University of Cagliari

27/05/24		
WHEN AND WHERE	**DESCRIPTION: AIMS AND ACTIVITIES**	**INSTRUCTORS**
08:45	Arrival and registration of participants	
09:00 – 10:00 **Plenary session** "Baffi" lecture hall	**Phase 1 – Opening and preparing phase** **Presentation of the workshop objectives and structuring. Inputs and food of thoughts from Educ Alliance experts**	
	- Institutional welcome by UNICA	Vice rector – UNICA
	- Presentation of the program	Michela Loi – UNICA
	- Reflecting competencies & setting goals: defining students' expectations	Katharina Lübstorf – University of Potsdam
	- PhD students: unaware entrepreneurs. Giving comparison elements between PhD's Competences and the ones developed by entrepreneurs, precising what "the entrepreneurship mindset"	Ingrid Vinot – UR or Cécile Bauer – UR (?)
10:00 – 11:00 **Sub-group session Individual work**	**Phase 2 – First draft on interests and strengths - Ikigaï tool** **Participants will be divided into two subgroups of 20 students each. Once settled in different classrooms, participants will fill an individual report on their work goals, strengths and interests. They will therefore make their skills assessment.**	**Can Cécile share the tool?** The role of the instructors in in each subgroup is to present the tool and guide students' identification of their goals, strengths and interests.
ROOM 5	Group 1 (20 students)	Michela Loi, Katharina Lübstorf, Yannick Gnanou and Núria Sánchez-Pantoja acting as mentors of the session
ROOM 7	Group 2 (20 students)	Cécile Bauer, Thomas Brekke, Bence Volgyi as mentors of the session

Time / Room	Phase	Notes
14:00-15:00 Sub-group session Individual work	**Phase 4 – Definition of a cover letter on personal career aims, interests and strengths** Within each subgroup, students will work individually to write down a cover letter reporting their career goals, strengths and interests. In this session, students have the possibility to reflect on the previous workshop activities to update the content of the first draft elaborated in phase 2 of the workshop.	The role of the instructors in each subgroup is to assist students to write down a cover letter in which they present themselves, based on the previous reflection and presentation.
ROOM 5	Group 1 (20 students)	Michela Loi, Katharina Lübstorf, Yannick Gnanou and Núria Sánchez-Pantoja acting as mentors of the session
ROOM 7	Group 2 (20 students)	Cécile Bauer, Thomas Brekke, Bence Volgyi as mentors of the session
15:00-17:00 Sub-group session Simulation in pair (members coming from different groups)	**Phase 5 – Simulation of a job interview** Participants will simulate a job interview with a colleague from the other subgroup using a canvas that will be provided to them and which is aimed at convincing them that they possess the identified strengths and that they have full awareness of what they would like to become from a professional point of view.	A canvas on the job interview will be shared by UNICA. The role of the instructors in each subgroup is to assist students to run the simulation. In this phase, pairs are formed by students coming from different groups.
ROOM 5	New Group 1 (20 students)	Michela Loi, Katharina Lübstorf, Yannick Gnanou and Núria Sánchez-Pantoja acting as mentors of the session
ROOM 7	New Group 2 (20 students)	Cécile Bauer, Thomas Brekke, Bence Volgyi as mentors of the session
**17:00-17:30 Coffee Break**	
17:30 – 18:00 Plenary session "Baffi" lecture hall	**Phase 6 – Feedback by students** Feedback from students regarding the simulation done in Phase 5 and the the experience made during the workshop	Michela Loi with the intervention of all the experts to share their thoughts about the day

11:00-11:30 Coffee Break		
11:30-13:00 Sub-group session Work in pairs	**Phase 3 – Diadic presentation** Work session in pairs within each subgroup. Within each subgroup, students will work in pairs to present their skill assessment report to a colleague. At the end of this activity, participants will share with their subgroup what emerged during the work in pairs.	The role of the instructors in each subgroup is to assist pairs of students to clarify their skill assessment.
ROOM 5	Group 1 (20 students)	Michela Loi, Katharina Lübstorf, Yannick Gnanou and Núria Sánchez-Pantoja acting as mentors of the session
ROOM 7	Group 2 (20 students)	Cécile Bauer, Thomas Brekke, Bence Volgyi as mentors of the session

13:00-14:00 Light Lunch		

28/05/24		
WHEN AND WHERE	**DESCRIPTION: AIMS AND ACTIVITIES**	**INSTRUCTORS**
09:00 – 11:00 Plenary session "Baffi" lecture hall	**Phase 1 – Opening and food for thought** **Presentation of the workshop objectives and structuring. Inputs and food of thoughts from Educ Alliance experts**	
	- Presentation of the program	Michela Loi – UNICA
	- TIPS on promoting and managing collaboration between companies and PhD candidates	Thomas Brekke – USN

11:00-11:30 Coffee Break		
11:30 – 13:00 Sub-groups Individual work	**Phase 2 – Creation of a poster to present themselves** **Creation of a final document in which student presents themselves: how they see themselves in the future and what they need to achieve it**	The role of the instructors in in each subgroup is to assist students to create their poster.
ROOM 5	Group 1 (20 students)	Michela Loi, Katharina Lübstorf, Yannick Gnanou and Núria Sánchez-Pantoja acting as mentors of the session
ROOM 7	Group 2 (20 students)	Cécile Bauer, Thomas Brekke, Bence Volgyi as mentors of the session

13:00-14:00 Light Lunch		
14:00-16:00 Sub-group session	**Phase 3 – Presentation of the posters** **There will be 4 poster presentations with subgroup composed each by 10 students**	The role of the instructors in each subgroup is to assist students to present themselves and support the interaction with the audience composed by the subgroup of students, and giving their feedback
ROOM 5	Group 1 (10 students)	Michela Loi
ROOM 5	Group 2 (10 students)	Katharina Lübstorf -Núria Sánchez-Pantoja
ROOM 7	Group 3 (10 students)	Cécile Bauer - Bence Volgyi
ROOM 7	Group 4 (10 students)	Thomas Brekke - Yannick Gnanou
16:00-16:30 Coffee Break		
16:30-18:00 Plenary session "Baffi" lecture hall	**Phase 4 – Food for thought and final feedback** **The final reflection on the activities will be in plenary form, with feedback and interventions from the experts from the EDUC Alliance and the students.**	The role of the instructors is to provide final feedback and adding advice for the job interviews.
	- The right to make mistakes: How mistakes and failures help us to know ourselves better, as a "personal revolution" to go through that leads you to identify your values and strengths ?	Cécile Bauer
	- Phd Students: between social passion and social impact	Matteo Opizzi - Research fellow – UNICA
	- Conclusion	Michela Loi

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Appendix 2: Communication materials – TESE Days at the University of Cagliari

PhD Students opportunity

EDUC
Talents and Entrepreneurial Skills in Europe Days

University of Cagliari
27-29 May 2024

Discover and enhance your talents to prepare yourself for your working life!

Take advantage of this enriching experience that will help you lay the foundation of your professional presentation and future career.

What

The TESE Days are a **3-day event** that aims at helping participants **identify, develop and present their talents** to be able to use them as their strength and succeed in entering the job market according to their interests and abilities.

During the **first two days**, 40 PhD students from the 8 Partners of the EDUC Alliance will take part in individual and group activities guided by a team of experts, and they will finally present their professional profile in front of the whole audience.

During the **last day**, they will use the instruments previously developped to carry out several job interviews with Sardinian, Italian and international companies on the occasion of the UniCareer Day (https://careerday.unica.it/). On the same day, the 40 participating PhD students will also display a poster describing their research, have the chance to attend one or more thematic workshops, and take advantage of this large event for networking.

Where and when

This first edition of the TESE Days will take place in **Cagliari** (Sardinia, Italy) since the organizing partner is the University of Cagliari.
The activities planned for May 27th and 28th will be held in the premises of one of the faculties of the city while the job interviews, planned for May 29th, will be carried out at the Sardinian Exhibition Center, where participants will also display a poster describing their research.

Who

This event is **open to a maximum of 40 PhD students** from the 8 Partners of the EDUC Alliance. To participate in the selection process, PhDs shall:
- be regularly registered at the last year of their doctorate.
- have at least a B2 English level.
- be carrying out their PhD research in one or more of the thematic areas listed in Annex A.
- be willing to participate in the whole 3-day event (2 training days + career day with companies).
- be willing to print and bring with them a poster describing their doctorate research.

For more information on this opportunity and details on the application procedure, please contact your home University at the e-mail address: ....

Deadline for applications: ....

EDUC Talents and Entrepreneurial Skills Days

27/05/2024 - 29/05/2024   📍 University of Cagliari

[See the TESE Days event highlight](#)

EDUC TESE Days in Cagliari: A Success for Education and Entrepreneurship

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EDUC Talents and Entrepreneurial Skills Days
Your World Just Got Bigger.   @ EducUniverCity

03/06/2024   #UnivCa #Innovation

[Read the TESE Days' dissemination article](#)