ROADMAP 2024 – 2027

CENTRE FOR UNUSUAL COLLABORATIONS

TU/e EINDHOVEN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

WAGENINGEN UNIVERSITY & RESEARCH

Utrecht University

UMC Utrecht

POSSIBILITIES
COLOR OUTSIDE THE LINES
NOVEL PERSPECTIVES[1]

CONTENT

[1]These haikus are written by the CUCo community, during a series of events aimed at writing a 'CUCo manifesto'. Please have a look at the CUCo manifesto.

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CUCo IN 2030

We close our eyes and imagine CUCo in 2030, seven years from now

HOW ABOUT SHIFTING THE STRUCTURES BLOCKING DREAMS? BOUNDARY CROSSING

When we envision CUCo in 2030, we see it as an established name, an expertise and training centre on unexpected collaborations in research and education. The CUCo community is thriving - it is composed of early and mid-career academics from across The Netherlands and beyond. Those that seek it, know how to find CUCo for funding, expertise, support and our recognised training programs on inter- and transdisciplinary research and education. By working with CUCo, academics liberate themselves from institutional constraints and the fixation on productivity and competition. An increasing number of talented researchers are enabled to enter a career pathway that centers collaborations across boundaries, leading them to choose to stay in academia, rather than leaving it.

CUCo's funding schemes are renowned for their innovative, trust-based approaches that are characterised by a limited amount of requirements

and high-quality support in the funded teams' collaboration processes. Numerous teams have been able to explore their wild, crazy ideas, some of them leading to no result, while others lead to spin-off grants, platforms, and centres of expertise. Unusual research teams meet substantially less institutional barriers and have found their way into follow-on funding schemes at NWO, ERC and other funders in response to CUCo's demonstrated contributions.[2]

IN 2030...

Thanks to joint efforts with its network partners, CUCo has helped researchers better address societal matters, by reshaping Recognition and Rewards schemes, in order to give room to everyone's talent. Inter - and transdisciplinary research and education is no longer considered as 'outreach' and done on top of all the other work; it is an integral part of one's job. Staff members can indicate the criteria on

[2] Freely based on the 'CUCo in 2030 vision document that was drawn by Sylvia Brugman, CUCo Board member early 2022.

which they want to be judged on in order to move up the academic ladder and are trusted and supported in their personal and academic development.
The groups of academics that started to collaborate within CUCo or one of the other initiatives of the EWUU alliance have built the required capacities to collaborate in meaningful and effective ways. They have been enabled to pass on to others that knowledge and skills. The 'CUCo method for collaboration' has as such spread and rippled out. This has enabled some of those groups to make a lasting impact on matters like chronic pain, porous materials, more circular societies and an increase in preventive health.
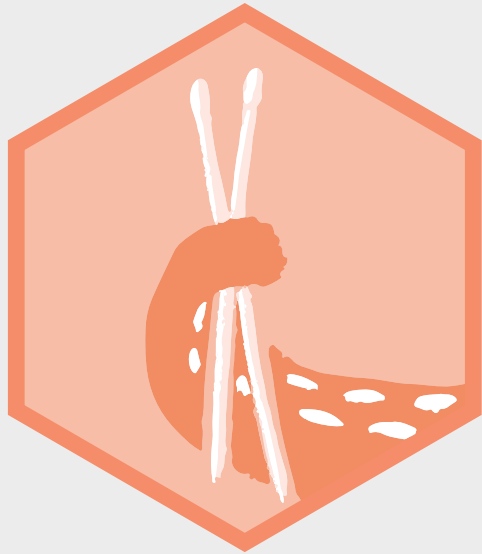
IN 2030...

CUCo offers training programs and a pool of trainers that support the development of competencies and attitudes conducive to inter- and transdisciplinary research and education. CUCo has proudly teamed up with other initiatives across the alliance, including Education and Circular Societies, with whom we developed training for students and professionals incorporating the central thematic pillars of inter- and transdisciplinarity and leadership.

CUCo's Nest is a physical hub that offers a creative space for continuous training programmes for early-

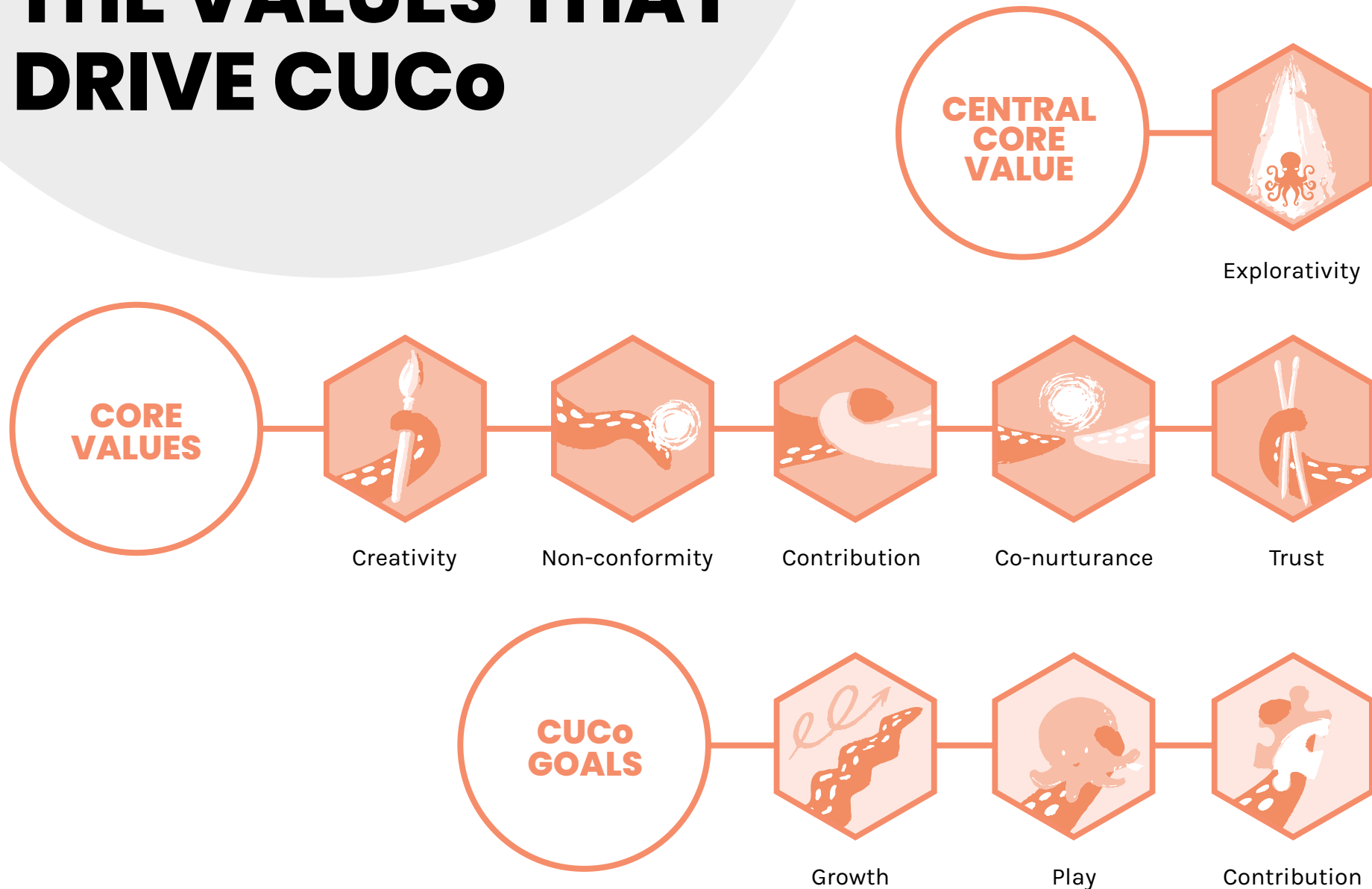# CELEBRATE THE JOY OF PLAYING, CREATING, MAKING SCIENCE IS FUN, YOU KNOW?

and mid-career academics, as well as inspiring workshops, public lectures, games, and network meetings. The Nest offers writing retreats and a sabbatical programme.

IN 2030...

A range of CUCo-inspired hubs have been adopted across the Dutch research landscape, through a more intense collaboration with Young Academies of other Dutch universities, keen on amplifying CUCo's approaches within their own institutions. In addition, CUCo is embedded in an international network of like-minded initiatives that have adopted CUCo's funding schemes and training programmes and by which CUCo's efforts on transforming academia towards a more humane, caring, and creative space are inspired vice-versa.

CUCo is now financed by the Ministry of Science and Education directly. Due to its demonstrated contribution to an increased ability of research to address pressing challenges, government agencies, civic actors, NGOs and companies know the way to CUCo's Nest and use the expertise of its fellows and its infrastructure to embark on research collaborations with societal relevance.

BRIGHT EYES, DARK TIMES
HUMAN CAPITAL IN NEED
OCTOPUS SAYS NO

THE VALUES THAT DRIVE CUCo

CENTRAL CORE VALUE

Explorativity

CORE VALUES

Creativity Non-conformity Contribution Co-nurturance Trust

CUCo GOALS

Growth Play Contribution

UNEXPECTEDLY
WE CAN ALL COLLABORATE
THE STRANGE FINDS A HOME

MISSION AND OBJECTIVES

MISSION

Our mission is to support a diverse group of early- and mid-career academics to come together and be well equipped with resources and capacities for working in unusual transdisciplinary collaborations to address the most pressing challenges of the age.

Please see the Theory of Change for CUCo, including our proposed pathway to impact in Annex A. This Theory of Change (ToC) will guide our activities in the next phase of the alliance, and we will revisit it annually. All efforts that we take will need to fit within the approach as outlined in the ToC. Please find guidance on how to read it below the ToC.

AIM

Our aim is to bring together and support early- and mid-career academics in unusual inter- and transdisciplinary collaborations, serving as a breeding ground for breakthrough research that addresses pressing challenges of the age. To achieve our aim we pursue the following objectives:
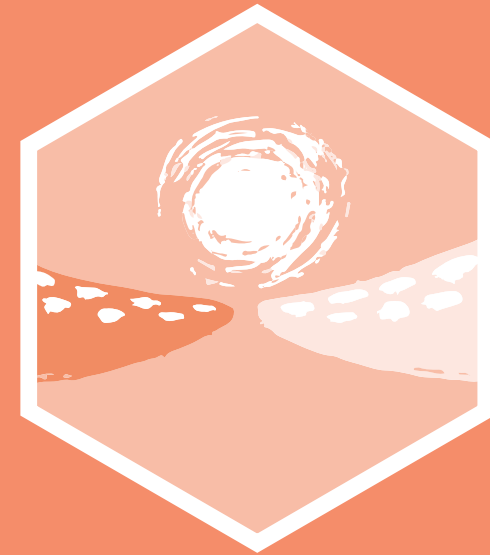
**PLAYING AT THE NEST,
GO BACK TO INSPIRE THE REST.
IDEAS PLUS ACTION.**

**PERSPECTIVE. YOURS. MINE.
LET US JOURNEY TOGETHER
TO FIND OUR BLIND SPOTS.**

OVERALL OBJECTIVE

We steer and promote a **centre of expertise** that supports early- and mid-career academics throughout and beyond the alliance in unusual inter- and transdisciplinary research and education.

POWERFUL OCTO, BREAK DOWN THE WALLS OF PRISON. EMPOWER THE PLAYGROUND.

SUB-OBJECTIVES

1. **We design, innovate and implement** **funding schemes** that value and support fairness, transparency, personal growth and inclusivity as primary characteristics to support early- and mid-career researchers to pursue new inter- and transdisciplinary research and education endeavors.

2. **We collect, evaluate, and provide** **learnings and knowledge on processes of inter- and transdisciplinary collaboration** to advance the body of knowledge and the accessibility of that knowledge to current and future research teams.

3. **We support and stimulate** inter- and transdisciplinary research by early and mid-career academics by a) **strengthening competence development** through training

and education, b) **coaching and facilitating collaborative processes**, c) providing **tools, methods, and approaches** that help *organise and facilitate the process* of collaboration, d) **organising events** to *bring together* academics from different fields and institutions and *stir debate* about academic culture, and e) providing retreat space from daily work distractions.

4. **We influence** directly or indirectly the formulation and implementation of **academic policy and decision-making processes** with the aim to

transform institutional structures to support early- and mid-career academics in inter- and transdisciplinary research and education.

5. **We collaborate** with other initiatives within and beyond the alliance **as part of an (inter)national network of like minded allies** that aim to achieve increased collaboration in research and education

CUCo PARTNERS

Within the alliance we will collaborate with the other initiatives in the following way

CIRCULAR SOCIETY, PREVENTIVE HEALTH, LIVING TECHNOLOGIES, AI

Support on applying the 'CUCo method for collaboration' for the inter- and transdisciplinary teams that are funded through each of the research initiatives

Thematic cross-linkages between teams/projects funded by these initiatives and CUCo will be made, to strengthen the overall EWUU portfolio

IMPACT

Collaboration on tools methods and approaches for collaborations in research that strengthen the potential for societal impact

ALLIANCE SUPPORT TEAM

Strategic planning of CUCo efforts across the alliance

A 'future leadership programme' based on the Inner Development Goals, together with Education and Circular Societies

EDUCATION

The development and implementation of an 'Unusual Masters programme' (working title), that strengthens students' competences for the process of collaboration

A 'future leadership programme' based on the Inner Development Goals, together with the alliance support team and Circular Societies

Strengthening involvement of students in Challenges Based Learning approaches in CUCo-supported research

Extension of a curriculum for teaching and learning on and in unusual collaborations

Collaboration on the infrastructure for offering CUCo training programmes to external parties

CUCo PARTNERS

Initiatives within the alliance institutes that we collaborate with:
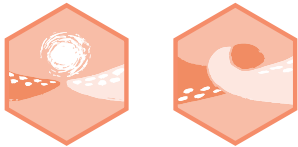
Initiatives within the alliance institutes that we collaborate with:

Centre for Space, Place, Society brings together researchers from four chair groups within Wageningen University & Research and beyond to advance critical-constructive scholarship within the social sciences.

Institute for Complex Molecular Systems is the interdisciplinary TU/e institute for research and education in the area of molecular complexity.

Transformative Learning Hub (WUR) seeks to blur the boundaries conventionally drawn between research and teaching.

Wageningen Dialogues is the umbrella under which we encourage the dialogue between researchers and with our stakeholders and society.

CUCo PARTNERS

Highlighting some likeminded initiatives that we collaborate with[1]

A number of exciting initiatives function as inspiration for collaboration and higher-level learning, some highlights, please find a more substantive list in Annex B.

Casa Firjan, part of the Federation of Industries of Rio de Janeiro, Casa Firjan is a programme, fulfilling the role of an open center and think tank and as matchmaking platform linking universities and businesses in Rio de Janeiro.

De Jonge Akademie is a dynamic and innovative group of top young scientists and scholars with outspoken views about science and scholarship and the related policy. The Young Academy organises inspiring activities for various target groups focusing on interdisciplinarity, science policy, and the interface between science and society.

Eureka institute for Translational Medicine an innovative educational initiative to train mid-level career professionals to address critical gaps in the TM field.

Santa Fe Institute Founded in 1984, the Santa Fe Institute was the first research institute dedicated to the study of complex adaptive systems. They are operated as an independent, nonprofit research and education center.

SCOOP a research and training centre dedicated to the interdisciplinary study of sustainable cooperation as a key feature of resilient societies.

NIAS The Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study in the Humanities and Social Sciences provides temporary fellowships for talented scholars – renowned and up-and-coming researchers alike.

Lorentz Center is a national center for international workshops in all scientific disciplines.

The Institute of Making - The Institute of Making is a multidisciplinary research club for those interested in the made world: from makers of molecules to makers of buildings, synthetic skin to spacecraft, soup to diamonds, socks to cities.

[1] Please see Annex B for a full list of collaboration partners.

AGENDA 2024 – 2027

In the second phase of the alliance, our efforts will focus on working towards achieving our objectives and continuing along the path towards the vision of 'CUCo in 2030'. The milestones and deliverables along the timeline associated with these are offered in the chart on the following pages

Objective

FUNDING SCHEMES

We design, innovate and implement funding schemes that value and support fairness, transparency, personal growth and inclusivity as primary characteristics to support early- and mid-career researchers to pursue new inter- and transdisciplinary research and education endeavors

Milestone	Design and launch calls for proposals in which the CUCo support for training and learning, per team and across teams, is embedded						
Deliverables	**A. Spark Meetings**	**B. UCo Meetings**	**C. Spark teams**	**D. Ideas**	**E. UCo Call**	**F. UCo Teams**	**G. Platforms**
	1 call for proposals Spark grants p/y	Completed Spark training programme (2x p/y)	Up to 10 innovative Spark teams funded p/y, consisting of early and mid-career academics that find joy and energy in working together	New ideas for research projects submitted to CUCo or other funding schemes after the Spark phase	1 Call for proposals UCo grants p/y	7 - 10 Unusual Collaborations teams funded p/y, addressing new research themes around pressing challenges	New platforms, centres of excellence or follow-up funding around new research themes resulting from UCo projects

		A	B	C	D	E	F	G
2024	Q1 - 2	░	▬	▬	▬	░	░	▬
	Q3 - 4	▬	▬	▬	▬	▬	▬	▬
2025	Q1 - 2	░	▬	▬	▬	░	▬	▬
	Q3 - 4	▬	▬	▬	▬	▬	▬	▬
2026	Q1 - 2	░	▬	▬	▬	░	▬	▬
	Q3 - 4	▬	▬	▬	▬	▬	▬	▬
2027	Q1 - 2	░	▬	▬	▬	░	░	▬
	Q3 - 4	▬	▬	▬	▬	▬	▬	▬

Objective

FUNDING SCHEMES

We design, innovate and implement funding schemes that value and support fairness, transparency, personal growth and inclusivity as

primary characteristics to support early- and mid-career researchers to pursue new inter- and transdisciplinary research and education endeavors

Milestone	Support for funded Spark and Uco teams			Communication around funded teams, their progress and results			
Deliverables	A. Spark kick off	B. UCo kick off	C. Co-learning	A. Media	B. Articles EWUU	C. Articles newspapers	D. Panels
	Kick-off, midterm, endterm meetings with Spark teams	Kick-off, midterm, endterm meetings with UCo teams	1 cross-project group coordinated for co-learning on the process of collaborations	CUCo website, newsletters, social media channels	Articles in EWUU communication channels	Articles in national newspapers	Panels in conferences
2024 Q1 - 2							
Q3 - 4							
2025 Q1 - 2							
Q3 - 4							
2026 Q1 - 2							
Q3 - 4							
2027 Q1 - 2							
Q3 - 4							

Objective

LEARNINGS AND KNOWLEDGE

We collect, evaluate, and provide learnings and knowledge on processes of inter- and transdisciplinary collaboration to advance the body of knowledge and the accessibility of that knowledge to current and future research teams.

Milestone

| Academic studies conducted on CUCo's efforts, by a pool of CUCo PhDs | A methodology to capture and document lessons from ongoing Spark and UCo teams is co-created with those teams |

Deliverables

A. Marie Curie Grants	B. Pool of PhDs	C. Data from PhDs	D. Publications	A. Scoping study	B. Tool set	C. Tested methodology
Application to Marie Curie grants for 15 PhDs co-created with EWUU initiatives	Pool of 3 - 5 PhDs, co-supervised from CUCo, doing action research on CUCo's approach to funding and support	Data from PhDs available for CUCo method (see below)	5 Peer-reviewed publications on CUCo's work	A group of student assistants conducts a scoping study on available literature and data	A set of tools and approaches is chosen, designed and tested as pilot	A tested methodology to capture lessons and insights from ongoing research is implemented and mainstreamed in CUCo funding

		A. Marie Curie Grants	B. Pool of PhDs	C. Data from PhDs	D. Publications	A. Scoping study	B. Tool set	C. Tested methodology
2024	Q1 - 2	■				■		
	Q3 - 4						■	
2025	Q1 - 2		■				■	
	Q3 - 4		■					■
2026	Q1 - 2		■	■				■
	Q3 - 4		■	■				■
2027	Q1 - 2		■	■	■			■
	Q3 - 4		■	■	■			■

Objective

LEARNINGS AND KNOWLEDGE

We collect, evaluate, and provide learnings and knowledge on processes of inter- and transdisciplinary collaboration to advance the body of knowledge and the accessibility of that knowledge to current and future research teams.

Milestone

A 'CUCo method' to optimize the process of inter- and transdisciplinary collaboration is available within and beyond the alliance

Deliverables

	A. Documented lessons	B. Published lessons	C. Lessons online	D. CUCo method
	Lessons learned from Spark and UCo teams (see milestone above) are documented	Lessons learned through studies co-conducted with CUCo community members (and possibbly CUCo PhDs) are published in peer-reviewed journals	Documented lessons made available online (in toolkit, blogs, videos, podcasts, etc)	A CUCo method is defined and published in a book and online
2024 Q1 - 2	●	●	●	○
Q3 - 4	●	○	●	○
2025 Q1 - 2	●	○	●	●
Q3 - 4	●	●	●	●
2026 Q1 - 2	●	○	●	○
Q3 - 4	●	○	●	○
2027 Q1 - 2	●	●	●	○
Q3 - 4	●	○	●	○

Objective

INTER- AND TRANS-DISCIPLINARY RESEARCH

We support and stimulate inter- and transdisciplinary research by early and mid-career academics by:

Sub-objective A

STRENGTHENING COMPETENCE DEVELOPMENT THROUGH TRAINING AND EDUCATION

Milestone

Training in competences for interdiscplinary competences available as a 'product' within and beyond the alliance

Curriculum of training and education programmes to strengthen competences and leadership for unusual inter- and transdisciplinary research

Deliverables

	A. Training package	B. Pool of trainers	C. Trainings online	D. Sales		A. Master's programme	B. Leadership	C. Training programme
	Training available as a package for different target groups	A pool of trainers is trained and available against market-conform fees	The training offer available online	Income for CUCo generated through the offer of training		Unusual Master's programme developed with Education and Circular Society	Training programme on leadership based on Inner Development Goals developed	New training programmes, to be defined

		A. Training package	B. Pool of trainers	C. Trainings online	D. Sales	A. Master's programme	B. Leadership	C. Training programme
2024	Q1 - 2		■	■	■			■
	Q3 - 4	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
2025	Q1 - 2		■	■	■			■
	Q3 - 4	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
2026	Q1 - 2		■	■	■			■
	Q3 - 4	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
2027	Q1 - 2		■	■	■			■
	Q3 - 4	■	■	■	■	■	■	■

Sub-objective B

COACHING AND FACILITATING COLLABORATIVE PROCESSES

Milestone

A CUCo offer for support on coaching and facilitating the process of collaborations, based on research insights and lessons from CUCo teams, is composed and available

Deliverables

A. Pool of process coaches	B. Offer beyond the alliance	C. Toolkit and e-learning
A pool of process coaches and facilitators available for CUCo-supported teams	A pool of process coaches and facilitators trained and offered beyond the alliance	A toolkit and e-learning available for coaching and facilitating the process of collaboration

		A. Pool of process coaches	B. Offer beyond the alliance	C. Toolkit and e-learning
2024	Q1 - 2	�		
	Q3 - 4	▮		
2025	Q1 - 2	▮	▮	
	Q3 - 4	▮	▮	
2026	Q1 - 2		▮	▮
	Q3 - 4		▮	▮
2027	Q1 - 2		▮	▮
	Q3 - 4		▮	▮

Sub-objective C

INTEGRATION OF TOOLS, METHODS AND APPROACHES

Milestone

Tools, methods and approaches for collaboration are integrated in training programmes and CUCo funding schemes

Deliverables

A. Revised training	B. Revised funding schemes	C. Online tools
Training programmes continuously updated based on lessons learned (see milestones above)	CUCo funding schemes revised each time to include ongoing learning	Offer of tools, methods and approaches available online and in tangible froms (a book, objects, instruction videos, etc)

		A. Revised training	B. Revised funding schemes	C. Online tools
2024	Q1 - 2	▮		▮
	Q3 - 4		▮	▮
2025	Q1 - 2	▮		▮
	Q3 - 4	▮	▮	▮
2026	Q1 - 2	▮	▮	
	Q3 - 4	▮	▮	▮
2027	Q1 - 2	▮		
	Q3 - 4		▮	▮

Sub-objective D

ORGANISING EVENTS TO BRING TOGETHER ACADEMICS FROM DIFFERENT FIELDS AND INSTITUTIONS AND STIR DEBATE ABOUT ACADEMIC CULTURE

Sub-objective E

PROVIDING TOOLS, METHODS AND APPROACHES THAT HELP ORGANISE AND FACILITATE THE PROCESS OF COLLABORATION

Milestone	Events to break taboos in academic culture		Knowledge sharing and networking events		A retreat space and programme	
Deliverables	**A. Event themes**	**B. Event**	**C. Event themes**	**D. Income**	**A. Sabbatical programme**	**B. Writing retreats**
	Themes for annual CUCo event co-selected with CUCo community	Annual event	Themes for annual CUCo event co-selected with CUCo community	Income for CUCo generated through the offer of training	Sabbatical programme Q1 each year	Writing retreats organised by demand of CUCo community
2024 Q1 - 2	□	■	□	■	■	■
Q3 - 4	■	□	■	□	□	■
2025 Q1 - 2	□	■	□	■	■	■
Q3 - 4	■	□	■	□	□	■
2026 Q1 - 2	□	■	□	■	■	■
Q3 - 4	■	□	■	□	□	■
2027 Q1 - 2	□	■	□	■	■	■
Q3 - 4	■	□	■	□	□	■

Objective

ACADEMIC POLICY AND PROCESSES

We influence directly or indirectly the formulation and implementation of academic policy and decision-making processes with the aim to transform institutional structures to support early- and mid-career academics in inter- and transdisciplinary research and education.

Milestone

CUCo-inspired hubs are adopted across academic knowledge insitutes in The Netherlands	Revised Recognition and Reward schemes in Dutch academic institutes that reflect the specifics for inter- and transdisciplinary research

Deliverables

A. YAs meetings	B. Memorandum	C. CUCo hubs	D. Joint lobby and advocacy	A. Assessment criteria	B. Meetings R&R teams	C. Peer-reviewed paper
Meetings with YAs across The Netherlands	Memorandum of Understanding with YAs	Launch of CUCo-inspired hubs in other institutes	Joint strategy for lobby and advocacy to shift the academic culture and its system	Proposal for assessment with/ without criteria, developed in collaboration with YAs across The Netherlands as well as De Jonge Akademie	Meetings with R&R teams in Dutch institutes to advise on implementation	Peer-reviewed paper on CUCo alternative for R&R model

		A. YAs meetings	B. Memorandum	C. CUCo hubs	D. Joint lobby and advocacy	A. Assessment criteria	B. Meetings R&R teams	C. Peer-reviewed paper
2024	Q1 - 2	�ढ				▰		
	Q3 - 4	▰					▰	
2025	Q1 - 2	▰					▰	
	Q3 - 4	▰						
2026	Q1 - 2		▰					▰
	Q3 - 4			▰				▰
2027	Q1 - 2			▰	▰			
	Q3 - 4			▰	▰			

`Objective`

TRANSFORMING INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURES

We influence directly or indirectly the formulation and implementation of academic policy and decision-making processes with the aim to transform institutional structures to support early- and mid-career academics in inter- and transdisciplinary research and education.

Milestone	Funding schemes at NWO, ERC and other funders offer follow-on opportunities for teams initiated through CUCo		
Deliverables	**A. Meeting funders**	**B. Proposal to funders**	**C. Training laureates**
	Meetings with NWO, ERC and other funders to present CUCo achievements	Proposal to NWO, ERC and other funders on how to revise funding schemes and integrate support for inter-and trandisciplinary teams	CUCo trainings conducted for NWO-laureates (NWA, KIC, etc) to assist on transdisciplinary collaborations
2024 Q1 - 2	███		
Q3 - 4			
2025 Q1 - 2		███	
Q3 - 4			███
2026 Q1 - 2			███
Q3 - 4			███
2027 Q1 - 2			███
Q3 - 4			███

Objective

(INTER)NATIONAL NETWORK

We collaborate with other initiatives within and beyond the alliance as part of an (inter)national network of like minded allies that aim to achieve increased collaboration in research and education

Milestone

An (inter)national network of likeminded initiatives supporting early and mid-career academics to work in inter-and transdisciplinary research

Deliverables

	A. Meeting other initiatives	B. CUCo contributions	C. Joint publishing
	Meetings with likeminded iniatiatives within The Netherlands and internationally	CUCo contributions to events and activities of likeminded initatives	Joint publishing of data, results and tools
2024 Q1 - 2	▬	▬	▬
Q3 - 4	▬	▬	▬
2025 Q1 - 2	▬	▬	▬
Q3 - 4	▬	▬	▬
2026 Q1 - 2	▬	▬	▬
Q3 - 4	▬	▬	▬
2027 Q1 - 2	▬	▬	▬
Q3 - 4	▬	▬	▬

CUCo IN THE NEAR FUTURE

A centre of expertise and training on the process of unusual collaborations
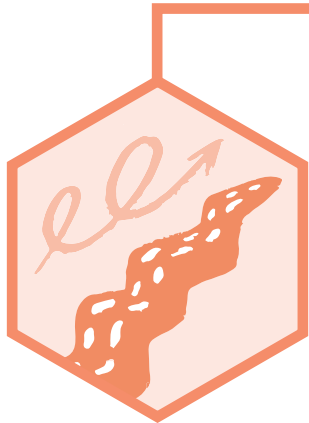
A **space** to find support for unusual inter- and transdisciplinary research

A **hub** for training and education on competences for collaborations across boundaries
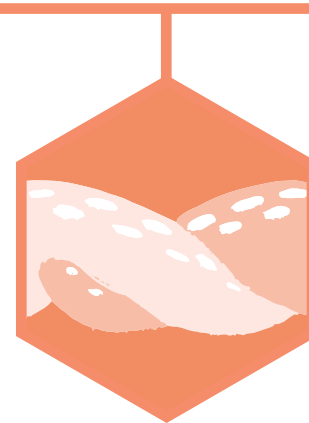
A **lab** to understand and learn about the process of collaboration
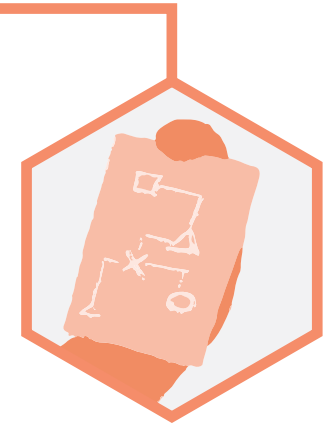
A **source** of shifts in academic culture and its system

GOVERNANCE CUCo

SUPERVISORY BOARD

The role of the Supervisory Board is:
    to approve the agenda
    to monitor progress on the roadmap
    to ensure commitment from the relevant faculties/science groups/ divisions at TUe, WUR, UU and UMCU

The Supervisory Board is composed of General Assembly members and meets at least twice a year.

CUCo BOARD

The **Board of Trustees** (henceforth the Board) is the body in charge of the governance of the Centre and related activities. The Board is accountable for:

Informing the Supervisory Board adequately, clearly and in a timely fashion of progress made and barriers that are encountered
Representing the Centre
Leading in the strategic positioning of the Centre
Mobilising early- and mid-career researchers in their respective institutions
Advising on management towards achieving the aim of the Centre
Diligently controlling the finances

The Board is composed of one member of each of the four Young Academies (YA) of the alliance institutions and meets at least ten times per year.

alliance TU/e, WUR, UU, UMC Utrecht

AI for Health
Living Technologies
Preventive Health
Circular Society

Supervisory board

Education

CUCO

Support

Collaboration

CUCo Community

Coaching / guidance

Early and midcareer researchers
TU/e, UU, WUR, UMC Utrecht
+
Young Academies
TU/e, UU, WUR, UMC Utrecht

CUCo Board

CUCo team

SPARK teams
UCo teams

Support / training
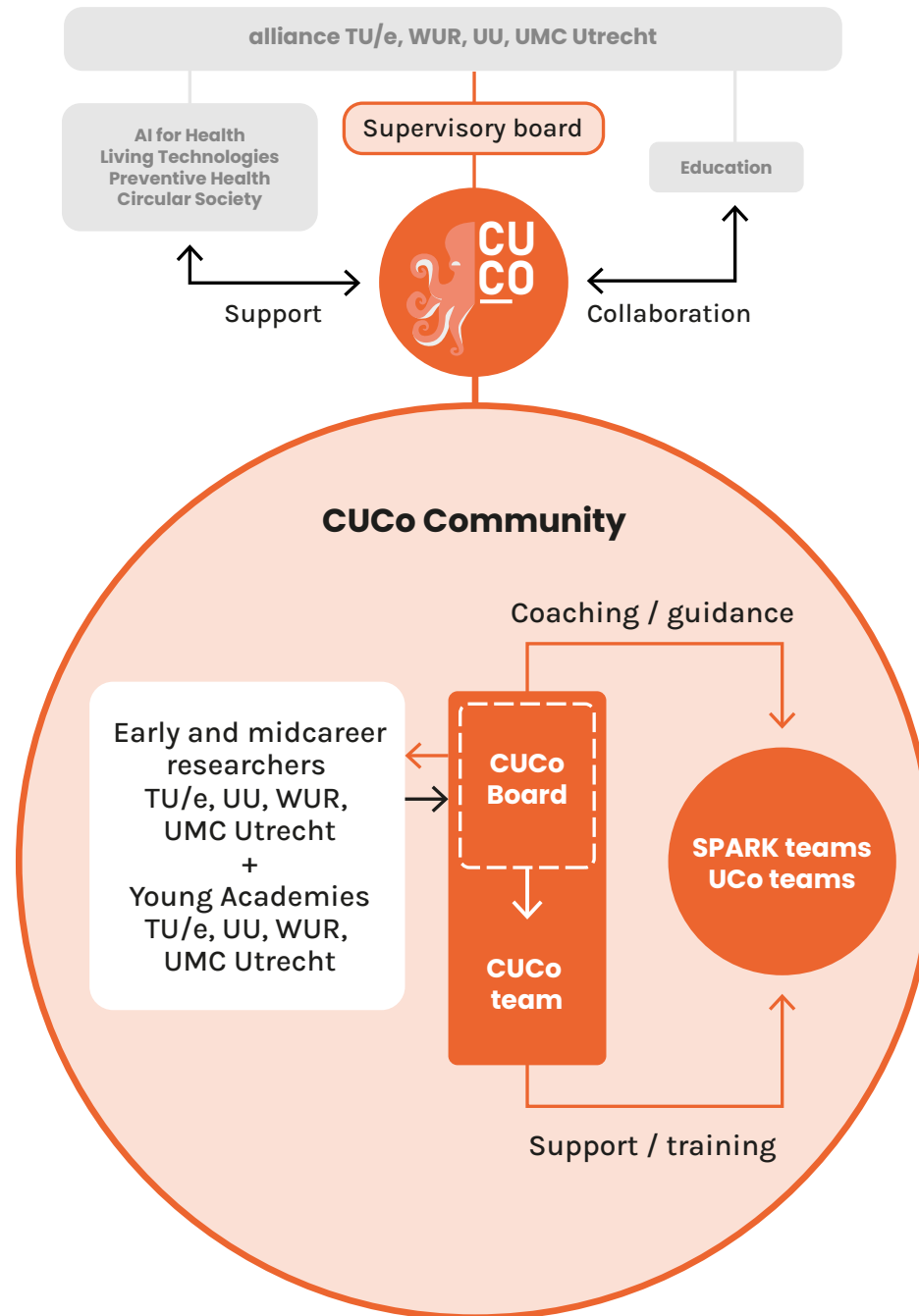
MANAGEMENT AND SUPPORT TEAM

The management of the Centre of Unusual Collaborations consists of a Director (0.8 fte) and a compact, dedicated support team of the Knowledge & Learning Advisor (0.6 fte), a tentacular junior policy officer (0.8 fte) and an event manager (0.2fte). Through the alliance, CUCo is supported by a financial controller for 0.4 fte.

The **Director** supervises the daily management and administration, exercising the powers delegated to them by the Board.

The **Knowledge & Learning Officer** coordinates procedures to systematize and operationalize learning about the process of collaboration/collaborative dynamics

The **Junior Policy Officer** supports the daily management and administration as executed by the CUCo team

The **Event Manager** coordinates logistical affairs in relation to the management of online and in-person event

For specialised activities, like coaching, advice, creative and art-based approaches, speakers, etc. external expertise will be hired. Budget is reserved for this.
All communication within the alliance is done according to the central communication strategy and the established branding strategy, in consultation with the alliance communication adviser.
All communication staff within the alliance are part of and participate in the alliance communication network.

FINANCE

Please find the proposed CUCo budget for 2024 - 2027 in Annex C; it does not deviate substantially from the budget of the first phase of the alliance. This is because we do not want to make substantial changes after having only relatively recently started our activities. We want to be reliable to our community. Naturally we will experiment and explore within our given actionlines.

PLEASE NOTE: LIMITATION OF THE CURRENT SUBMITTED BUDGET

A major limitation that we run into is that we cannot support the Unusual Collaborations teams for the longer term, due to the limitations to our budget. This is because we want to be able to continue supporting newly formed teams as well. We do know, however, that inter- and transdisciplinary collaboration takes substantial time to build trust. If our budget was more substantial, for example double the amount, we would be able to split the budget and support the ongoing teams throughout a longer period with half of the funds and stimulate the formation of new teams with the other half. This would demonstrate that we take the process of collaboration also seriously in terms of its need for space and time.

We were tasked with providing the budget only within the amount of the previous term, this is why the budget is offered as it is. But our ideal scenario would offer double the amount, in order to really be able to showcase that unusual collaborations contribute to addressing pressing challenges. Lastly, we would much appreciate it if the funding cycles were extended beyond the year, so that we can fund for longer periods.

ACCOUNTABILITY

CUCo is accountable to its community, whose interests and needs are guiding its agenda and activities. The CUCo community, in turn, is accountable to society, by which it is funded and the problems of which it puts central to its research efforts to increase understanding and potentially help to address them.

CUCo's Board and management team meet each month and report to their Supervisory Board on progress and finances at least twice a year as well as to the Board of the alliance at the end of each (calendar) year.

CUCo'S PLEDGE[3]

We put the interests of the CUCo community and of society ahead of our individual interests;
We will be there for the talented and enthusiastic researchers who are willing to put their research in a global context but don't know how;
We consider CUCo a 'way of life': the attitude of all CUCo fellows is inherently inter- and transdisciplinary;
We adhere to the ambition of CUCo to change academia from an isolated prison to an inclusive playground;
We agree to share all we have: resources, knowledge, our minds and hearts.

[3] Freely inspired by the pledge made by Sanli Faez (UU) in one of the CUCo Manifesto sessions

ANNEX A

Theory of Change
Centre for Unusual Collaborations

Please note the following guidance on reading the Theory of Change, to be found on the next page:

The scheme is a circular diagram, starting at the problem statement in the upper left corner

The Theory of Change is not a static story, rather it is a framework that sets out the imagined pathway to change. It will be revised regularly, based on assumptions that are tested and that call for an adjusted strategy

The boxes labeled 'Assumptions' represent assumptions that guide the intervention logic of the Theory f Change. Making assumptions explicit is a key contributing factor of the Theory of Change, as it allows for those assumptions to be tested along the way. If they are found ivalid this will require a revisiting of the steps that are described in the Theory of Change.

'Knowledge-related causes' refers to matters that form a knowledge gap to which the efforts described in the Impact Pathway (right side) are a response

'Output' here refers to 'insights in', not to output as commonly used in academia (publications, etc). Those insights are key to achieving the outcomes

'Outcome' lists 'who does what differently' in CUCo's context: which actors show which behavior in order for the impact to be possible

Impact describes the vision of success, that in itself may lead to new problems

THEORY OF CHANGE – CENTRE FOR UNUSUAL COLLABORATIONS

Problem Analysis

Impact Pathway

Pressing challenges are not adequately addressed by academia and education due to a lack of (competences for) collaborations across boundaries

PROBLEM

IMPACT

Dutch academia is of high quality and contributes substantially to pressing challenges, due to emphasis and stimulation of ID and TD* collaborations. Academics find space to choose from a broad set of options for advancing their career, including unexpected inter- and transdisciplinary research. Academia is centred around exploration through creativity, care and humane collaborations.

Assumptions
- It is desirable that Dutch academia is of the highest quality
- It is desirable that Dutch science contributes to addressing pressing challenges

Assumptions
- There is substantial mass to legitimise the additional costs for support
- It is possible to shift academic culture through a bottom-up approach combined with lobby at governance levels
- There is sufficient understanding of ID and TD research processes to support effectively

- Academic careers are based on research performances that assert specialised work and competitive behavior, rather than collaboration.
- Qualified researchers and teachers that wish to collaborate leave academia for lack of support
- Academic training and education does not support the process of collaboration

CAUSES

OUTCOME

- Universities and funders offer training and support to young academics (on competences) for ID and TD collaboration
- Research funders allow time and budget for exploration and team formation, prior to leading to output
- Institutional structures (including R&R schemes) that value ID and TD research are adopted by managers across universities

Assumptions
- Inter- and transdisciplinary research is needed for addressing pressing challenges
- Assessments have a defining role in academic careers
- Competition hinders working in teams.
- Early and mid-career academics wish to work in unusual collaborations

Assumptions
- Managers in universities are interested in adopting changes that contribute to opening space for young academics to work in ID and TD* research
- Funders and universities are willing to support research processes that are emergent and of which the output is not defined a priori

There is a lack of:
- Alternatives for an institutional context that stimulates inter- and transdisciplinary research and education
- Training programmes on competences that nurture fruitful collaboration
- The criteria for and skills to assess collaborative qualitie

KNOWLEDGE-RELATED CAUSES

OUTPUT

Insights in:
- The best setup of funding schemes and support so as to stimulate successful collaborations in research and education
- Training programmes that strengthen competences for ID and TD research and education
- Requirements for institutional structures that open up space for early and mid-career academics to choose ID and TD* research and education

CUCO'S AIM AND ACTIVITIES

CENTRE FOR UNUSUAL COLLABORATIONS

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TU/e EINDHOVEN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

WAGENINGEN UNIVERSITY & RESEARCH

Utrecht University

UMC Utrecht