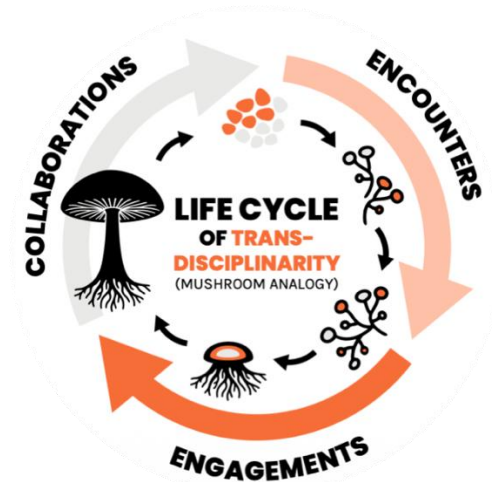


## CUCo Fellowship Programme 2026-2027: Collaborative Leadership in Transdisciplinary Research



### Introduction

The Centre for Unusual Collaborations (CUCo) is thrilled to present its Fellowship Programme, a one-year learning journey into collaborative leadership in transdisciplinary research. With the Fellowship Programme, CUCo equips early- and mid-career researchers with the virtues, sensibilities and skills to lead unexpected and innovative transdisciplinary collaborations across and beyond the four EWUU institutes.

At CUCo, we use the analogy of the mushroom cycle to discuss what makes transdisciplinary collaborations successful. This entails stepping outside your comfort zone, asking different kinds of questions, embracing creativity, and remaining open to serendipitous encounters. Often, this takes time—much like the mycelium, the underground network of germinated spores that needs a nurturing environment before a mushroom can emerge. The same is true for transdisciplinary work: the real groundwork—finding the right partners, building trust, and developing relationships—usually happens quietly, long before a formal project begins.

In the Fellowship Programme, we focus on actively “growing the mycelium”. However, as a participant you will also learn and practice methods and techniques to lead and monitor collaborations throughout all phases of a project. We will address practical strategies for coordination, facilitation, and decision-making, as well as ways to reflect on and adjust the collaboration as it develops.

## Position in the EWUU alliance

Within the [EWUU alliance](#), CUCo plays a connecting role across research, education, and societal engagement. CUCo works closely with [EWUU Education](#) to support innovative and transdisciplinary teaching formats and practices and also collaborates with the [EWUU institute 4 a Circular Society](#) and the [EWUU institute 4 Preventive Health](#). CUCo shares their view that the interconnected challenges of our age require new ways of thinking, collaborating, and acting across disciplines and sectors. By offering training, facilitation, and methodological support, CUCo helps create the conditions in which these initiatives can connect people, ideas, and practices in meaningful and unusual ways.

Throughout the Fellowship Programme, we will actively work together with the other initiatives of the EWUU alliance. You will have the opportunity to learn more about their strategic programmes, thematic research areas, and ongoing collaborations, as well as possible funding instruments and project opportunities linked to these initiatives. By engaging with Education, Circular Society, and Preventive Health across different moments in the Fellowship Programme, you will gain insight into how transdisciplinary collaborations are embedded within the EWUU alliance and how you can position your own ideas, projects, and partnerships within this broader ecosystem.

## Admission and application

A maximum of 20 participants can be admitted to the Fellowship Programme. Five spots are reserved for each of the EWUU alliance partners: Eindhoven University of Technology, Wageningen University & Research, Utrecht University, and Utrecht University Medical Centre.

Participants can apply on an individual basis using the application form. A letter of recommendation from a department head is required to ensure that participation is supported by the host institute.

## Timeline

21 May 2026	Call for applications opens
1 July 2026	Application deadline
Mid-July 2026	Decision on participation
11 September 2026	Online kick-off meeting
9 October 2026	First full-day session

## **Time investment**

The Fellowship Programme consists of an online kick-off meeting, nine in-person sessions throughout the year and a wrap-up event. Each session lasts a full day, with the exception of the online kick-off meeting (two hours) and the second session in November (which will start at 16:00 on Thursday and run until 16:00 on Friday).

The average time investment on a monthly basis is 12 hours (0.083 fte), and approximately 120 hours in total.

## **Commitment and compensation**

CUCo does not charge a participation fee for the Fellowship Programme.

Participants are expected to attend all sessions and prioritize their participation in the Fellowship Programme. In order to help make this possible, CUCo covers participants' hours, to be compensated through their department.

## **Thematic content**

The CUCo Fellowship Programme focuses on the acquisition and enrichment of transdisciplinary virtues, sensibilities, and skills.

### *Virtues: the foundation for transdisciplinary collaboration*

Transdisciplinary collaboration does not begin with methods or structures; rather, it starts with creating a mindset that allows collaborations across disciplines and beyond academia to flourish. In the Fellowship Programme, you will explore and discuss shared foundational virtues that we consider essential for meaningful transdisciplinary collaboration, such as epistemic humility, reflexive care and mental resilience.

### *Sensibilities: becoming attuned to practice*

Naming virtues is one thing. Recognizing them in the practice of everyday work is another. What does epistemic humility look like when your disciplinary expertise is called into question? When do you notice that different forms of knowledge are not being treated as equal—and when do you (unwittingly) contribute to such inequality? What do you need to let go of, and what do you need to learn?

Sensibilities are about developing this attunement: cultivating a feeling for how virtues play out in practice. This is not a one-time insight, but an ongoing process of noticing, questioning and adjusting.

*Skills: capable in the doing*

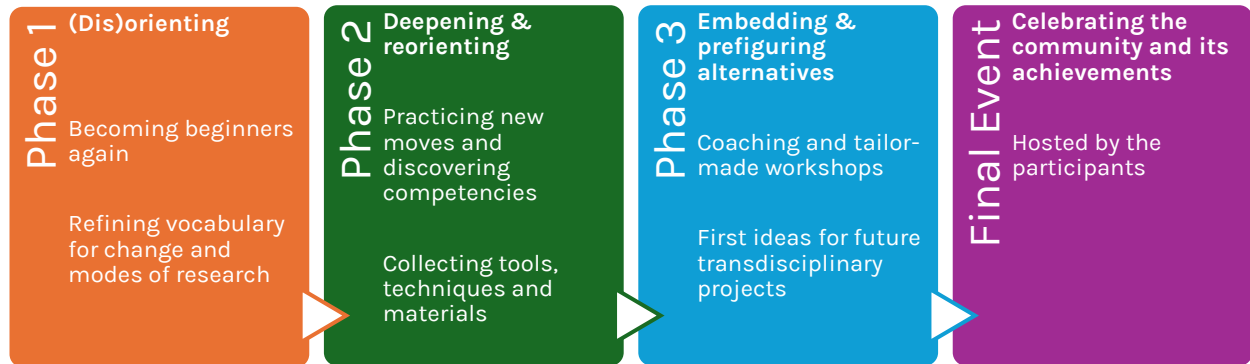
Insight and attunement must ultimately translate into concrete action. How do you design a transdisciplinary collaboration process from initial exploration to lasting embeddedness? How do you navigate conflicts and competing interests? How do you work with different timelines and expectations? And how do you do all of this within an academic context that calls for transdisciplinary collaboration, yet only partially provides the conditions that make it possible and rarely rewards it?

Upon completion of the Fellowship Programme, we hope that participants have become more humble experts, curious beginners, generative listeners, skillful improvisers, relational leaders, embodied researchers and transdisciplinary collaborators.

<i>Virtues</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Epistemic humility (related to disciplinary biases and assumptions)</li> <li>- Openness to emergent outcomes</li> <li>- Beginner's mindset</li> <li>- Playing with the trouble</li> <li>- Reflexive care</li> <li>- Mental resilience</li> </ul>
<i>Sensibilities</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Positionality in relation to power and disciplines</li> <li>- Embracing uncertainty</li> <li>- Appreciative inquiry</li> <li>- Terminology in/around multi-, inter- and transdisciplinarity</li> <li>- Instrumental vs critical transdisciplinary</li> <li>- Complexity thinking</li> <li>- Philosophy of science and critical theory</li> </ul>
<i>Skills</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Generative listening</li> <li>- Perspective-taking flexibility</li> <li>- Creative self-reflection</li> <li>- Stakeholder management</li> <li>- Transformative monitoring and evaluation</li> <li>- Practical strategies for dealing with conflict</li> </ul>

*Table 1. Virtues, sensibilities and skills addressed in the Fellowship Programme*

## Thematic structure



### *Phase 1*

The first phase of the Fellowship Programme focuses on ‘tasting’, or learning-by-doing experiences, in the form of three visits to different transdisciplinary practitioners and their societal partners. The transdisciplinary context of the practitioner provides a context for reflecting on your own (emerging) inter- and transdisciplinary practices. The aim of the first phase is to sensitize an attitude of epistemic humility and an openness to emerging outcomes, in order to see your ways of working in a new light.

### *Phase 2*

The second phase focuses on transdisciplinary virtues, sensibilities and skills through ‘cooking’. In this phase, you will practice new ways of being and doing research. This phase will be shaped by participants’ needs and wishes; you will depart from your own context and develop prototypes for implementation in your own context. During this phase you will also form peer support groups to strengthen and deepen your learning process.

### *Phase 3*

The final phase of the Programme focuses on ‘serving’. You will further develop a plan, practice or product to implement in your own context. The support in this phase is tailor-made and revolves around coaching. You will also be introduced to opportunities at the other initiatives of the EWUU alliance, in particular the institute 4 Preventive Health and the institute 4 a Circular Society.

## Programme dates

Friday, September 11, 2026	<i>Kick-off session (two hours)</i>	Online / Teams
Friday, October 9, 2026	<i>Session #1</i>	Utrecht
Thursday November 6 (from 16:00) - Friday, November 6, 2026	<i>Session #2</i>	Wageningen
Friday, December 4, 2026	<i>Session #3</i>	Eindhoven
Friday, January 8, 2027	<i>Session #4</i>	Utrecht
Friday, February 5, 2027	<i>Session #5</i>	Wageningen
Friday, March 5, 2027	<i>Session #6</i>	Eindhoven
Friday, April 9, 2027	<i>Session #7</i>	TBD
Friday, May 14, 2027	<i>Session #8</i>	TBD
Friday, June 18, 2027	<i>Session #9</i>	TBD
Friday, September 17, 2027	<i>Final event</i>	TBD

## Locations

The location of the sessions will rotate between the institutes of the EWUU alliance; in other words, sessions will alternately take place in Eindhoven, Wageningen, and Utrecht. The precise location of the sessions will be communicated to participants at the start of the Fellowship Programme.

## Programme facilitators

The Fellowship Programme is facilitated by the CUCo team, along with a select group of transdisciplinarity experts. The CUCo team consists of:

- Megan Milota (CUCo Coordinator & Associate Professor, [m.m.milota@uu.nl](mailto:m.m.milota@uu.nl))
- Anke de Vrieze (Knowledge & Learning Adviser, [anke.devrieze@wur.nl](mailto:anke.devrieze@wur.nl))
- Tom Bouwmeester (Knowledge & Learning Adviser, [t.r.bouwmeester@uu.nl](mailto:t.r.bouwmeester@uu.nl))