

**Education and Research
Partnerships**

From Research to Impact

4-5 February 2026

From Research to Impact: Building Strategic Partnerships for Innovation and Societal Benefit

Introduction

The UK and the Netherlands share a rich history of collaboration in higher education and research. Both nations are global leaders in research excellence yet face common challenges in turning knowledge into real-world impact. This mission brings together senior leaders from universities, research councils, and innovation agencies to explore how we can deepen partnerships, accelerate valorisation, and drive social innovation.

Building on the success of the UUKi mission in 2024, this gathering will focus on From Research to Impact: Building Strategic Partnerships for Innovation and Societal Benefit. Through panels, showcases, and site visits, participants will exchange best practice, identify opportunities for joint projects, and shape the future of UK–Dutch collaboration.

UK and Netherlands

The UK's Science and Technology Network states that; the Netherlands represents a strong collaborative partner for the UK. The Netherlands is the 5th collaborative partner for the UK in Europe, after Germany, France, Italy, and Spain. The UK is the 2nd collaborative partner for the Netherlands in Europe, after Germany. Of the UK international collaborations, 8.9% took place with the Netherlands¹.

Research undertaken by the British Council in the Netherlands found that out of the 13 interviewees at Dutch HEIs, 12 works together with UK HEIs whether that is as part of a European/global network, a mobility/exchange contract, or an intensive institutional partnership. The research found that there is interest in more UK partners in the future however there remains some hesitancy in working with new partners especially in relation to EU networks.

The research found that HEIs in the Netherlands would find it useful to have a broker to support them in the process of finding new partners.

Context

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are uniquely positioned as engines of innovation, combining deep disciplinary expertise with the academic freedom that enables bold, long-term inquiry. Universities nurture environments where staff, students, and partners can explore complex questions, test emerging ideas, and collaborate across traditional boundaries. These conditions make HEIs essential spaces for *deep innovation*—the kind of rigorous, curiosity-driven thinking that underpins major scientific, educational, and societal breakthroughs.

Across the sector, the growing shift toward **mission-based universities** is transforming how research is conceived and organised. Rather than focusing solely on isolated academic outputs, mission-oriented approaches align institutional research efforts with major societal challenges, ensuring that knowledge creation is purposeful, collaborative, and outward-looking. This perspective positions universities as proactive, systemic actors capable of mobilising expertise, building partnerships, and translating research into meaningful impact.

This knowledge exchange offers an opportunity for colleagues to reflect on these developments, share practice, and explore how our institutions can continue to innovate with clarity, purpose, and collective ambition.

Objectives

- This event aims to spark lasting UK–Netherlands partnerships that strengthen knowledge exchange and accelerate mission-driven innovation across both higher education systems.
- We will bring together UK and Dutch universities to imagine new possibilities, build meaningful alliances, and shape a more connected, impactful future for higher education.

Programme - 4 February

13:00 – 14:00 | Lunch and registration

Arrival, registration and lunch at NEMO museum café.

14:00 – 14:30 | Welcome and objective setting

Session Description

This opening session will set the tone and strategic purpose for the two-day event, highlighting the shared ambitions of UK and Dutch higher education institutions. Speakers will introduce the conference theme, outline the importance of cross-border collaboration, and provide an overview of the intended outcomes around knowledge exchange, innovation, and partnership building.

Session Outcomes

- A shared understanding of the conference goals and structure
- Clarity on the opportunities for UK–Netherlands collaboration
- Alignment around the event's strategic focus on innovation, research impact, and mission-driven partnerships

Speakers:

- Jennifer Cosgrave, Country Director, British Council Netherlands
- Ella Andersson, Moderator

14:30 – 15:15 | Panel: Current State of Play

Session Description

This panel brings together sector experts to explore the current landscape of UK–Netherlands collaboration, including policy developments, funding environments, and emerging opportunities for universities. Panellists will reflect on strengths, challenges, and the systemic shifts that are shaping cross-border research and innovation.

Session Outcomes

- Insight into the latest trends affecting HE cooperation in both countries
- A clearer understanding of opportunities for future joint work
- Shared perspectives to inform networking and partnership discussions throughout the event

15:15 – 15:35 | Reflection

Session Description

This interactive session encourages participants to reflect on the panel discussion and begin identifying potential areas for collaboration. Through guided conversations, attendees will surface early partnership ideas and establish connections with colleagues across institutions.

Session Outcomes

- Participants pair up or form small groups for structured reflection
- Prompted discussion on potential partnership areas emerging from the panel
- Sharing of key takeaways with the wider group
- Moderator facilitates goal-setting and encourages identification of at least one concrete partnership idea or next step

15:35 – 16:15 | Refreshments & Speed Networking

A facilitated networking break giving participants time to meet new contacts, exchange institutional priorities, and explore areas of strategic alignment in short, structured conversations.

16:15 – 17:15 | In conversation: Research in the Real World – Impact & Commercialisation

Session Description

This session explores how universities can translate research into real-world impact through commercialisation, industry partnerships, policy engagement, and innovative knowledge-exchange models. The conversation will highlight approaches that enable research to contribute meaningfully to societal missions.

Session Outcomes

- *Fireside conversation exploring:*
 - Pathways from academic research to commercial and societal outcomes
 - Institutional models that support impact and entrepreneurship
 - Case studies from the speaker's experience
 - Barriers and enablers in both UK and Dutch contexts
- *Audience Q&A on opportunities to strengthen bilateral cooperation in impact and innovation*

17:15 – 17:30 | Closing Remarks & Actions

Session Description

A concise wrap-up session capturing the day's insights and converting them into meaningful next steps. Participants are encouraged to turn conversations into commitments and prepare for follow-up actions on Day 2 and beyond.

Session Outcomes

- Moderator summarises key themes and insights from the day
- Highlighting immediate next steps, follow-up opportunities, and available support
- Encouragement for participants to continue discussions during networking and after the event
- Nuffic to close with an MOU announcement

18:00 – 19:00 | Networking reception

19:00 – 21:00 | Formal dinner

Programme - 5 February

10:00 – 11:30 | Site Visit to Innovation Hub in Amsterdam

Session Description

Participants will visit one of Amsterdam's leading innovation hubs to gain firsthand insight into how universities, industry partners, and government organisations collaborate to drive applied research and entrepreneurial activity. The visit will showcase models of real-world knowledge exchange and highlight opportunities for UK–Netherlands cooperation in innovation ecosystems.

Session Outcomes

- Welcome and introduction from innovation hub leadership
- Guided tour of facilities, labs, and collaboration spaces
- Presentations on current innovation projects, start-ups, and university partnerships
- Discussion on how UK institutions can engage with Dutch innovation ecosystems
- Informal networking with hub staff, researchers, and entrepreneurs

11:30 – 12:30 | In Conversation: European Alliances – The Future of Collaboration

Session Description

This session explores the evolving landscape of European university alliances and their role in shaping the future of cross-border collaboration. Speakers will discuss strategic partnerships, shared infrastructure, mobility pathways, and how alliances can support mission-driven research and innovation across Europe.

Session Outcomes

- Fireside conversation on the purpose, value, and impact of European university alliances
- Exploration of alliance models: research clusters, joint degrees, shared services, talent pipelines
- Reflections on where UK and Dutch institutions can align, despite shifting geopolitical and funding contexts
- Interactive Q&A with participants to identify opportunities for deeper engagement

12:30 – 14:00 | Lunch & Roundtable on Cooperation in Horizon Europe

Session Description

This working lunch will provide a collaborative space to discuss practical pathways for UK and Dutch universities to strengthen cooperation within the Horizon Europe framework. Participants will explore funding opportunities, shared strengths, and mechanisms for building competitive consortia.

Session Outcomes

- Opening overview of Horizon Europe collaboration dynamics
- Thematic roundtable discussions on:
 - joint research priorities
 - partnership models that enhance competitiveness
 - lessons learned from past or ongoing projects
- Sharing of concrete partnership ideas for upcoming Horizon Europe calls
- Networking and informal discussion over lunch

14:00 | Closing Remarks

Session Description

The final session brings the two-day programme to a close by capturing key insights, celebrating emerging partnerships, and outlining next steps for ongoing UK–Netherlands cooperation. Participants will be encouraged to maintain momentum and formalise the connections built over the event.

Session Outcomes

- Summary of key messages and themes from Day Two
- Reflection on new partnerships formed and collaboration opportunities identified
- Outline of follow-up actions, support mechanisms, and future convenings
- Closing thanks to speakers, hosts, and participants

ⁱ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-science-and-innovation-network-country-snapshot-the-netherlands/uk-science-and-innovation-network-summary-the-netherlands>