

Erasmus School of
History, Culture and
Communication

Empowering Changemakers

ESHCC Societal Impact Strategy 2025-2030

Erasmus University Rotterdam
Making Minds Matter

The Erasmus University logo, featuring the word "Erasmus" in a stylized, cursive script.

About this Strategy

This Erasmus School of History, Culture & Communication (ESHCC) Societal Impact Strategy 2025-2030 crystallises what has been our long-standing commitment to making a positive contribution to society through our education, research, engagement and operations. Its purpose is to provide a clear shared vision and language as we move through increasingly challenging times.

In line with our interdisciplinary ethos, this strategy builds upon a bottom-up process of discovery and reflection within our community. Through participatory engagement with approximately 100 ESHCC staff, students, alumni, and partners, we have articulated our shared vision for societal impact. We present here a guiding framework for embedding impact into our education, research, and engagement activities that will be accompanied by implementation plans. By fostering an environment that enables and values diverse pathways to impact, we ensure that our collective efforts continue to contribute meaningfully to shaping a more inclusive and dynamic society.

Reading Guide

Our Dean and Impact team welcome you in the Foreword, followed by an Overview of the Strategy, which summarises the document and presents our societal ambition, goals and actions that are further explored throughout the document (page 6). We then contextualise what we mean by societal impact at Erasmus University Rotterdam (page 8) and what is our ESHCC approach to it, including examples of creating positive societal impact that we see at our School (pages 12 - 15). On page 16 we describe our societal impact ambition, followed by the goals and actions to achieve it (pages 20 -27). We conclude this Strategy with References and Resources (pages 28 - 29).

We recommend all readers who are interested in our impact definitions to read about Impact at EUR and Our ESHCC Approach (pages 8 -11). For readers interested in what we are working on to strengthen our impact (culture and capacity), we recommend Our goals and actions (pages 20 -27). Those interested in learning more about societal impact will benefit from exploring the list of References and Resources at the end (pages 28 - 29).

Contents

Foreword	5
Overview of the ESHCC Societal Impact Strategy	6
Impact at EUR	8
Our ESHCC approach	10
Impact at ESHCC	12
Our societal impact ambition	16
Our goals and actions	18
Education	20
Research	22
Engagement	24
Operations	26
References and Resources	28
EUR References and Resources	
(Inter)national References and Resources	
Read on	



Foreword

This societal impact strategy is published in a very opportune time as local and global transformations prompt us to reimagine the role of our education, research, culture, and societal engagement. With demands for inclusivity, social justice, and responsible innovation, and contests over the value of internationalisation and the role of expertise, there is an urgent call to bridge divides, foster diverse perspectives, and empower communities to shape a sustainable, equitable, and well-informed future. There is no better time, therefore, to reaffirm our long-standing commitment and responsibility towards society, our students, and staff.

For our students, we are dedicated to equipping them with the critical knowledge, insight, and skills that enable them to make a meaningful contribution to a society that embraces diversity and fosters a culture of inclusion. Our commitment to society is reflected in our role as a hub for capacity building, knowledge sharing, and community engagement. By fostering open relationships with societal partners, creating dynamic knowledge networks, and supporting collaborative initiatives, we contribute to the democratisation, availability, and application of scientific knowledge. Finally, we recognise the importance of supporting our own staff, especially in creating an environment that celebrates and recognises their impactful contributions. We acknowledge and build on our current strengths in driving critical understandings to navigate and address contemporary global changes and set goals that will support our community to continue to realise our impact potential.

With this strategy, we want to make visible our societal impact ambition and how we will keep evolving to further enable diverse impact pathways at ESHCC. This includes deepening our impact-driven education and engaged research practices, making engagement with society more structurally embedded in all aspects of our work.

Even though we make strategic choices based on our community ambition and needs, this impact strategy comes in a time of changes within and outside the university. With a new Board and Rector, the EUR is also developing its Strategy 2030. We are also facing budget constraints that make uncertain what the next years will look like. Therefore, this strategy serves as a high-level document and will be supported by yearly implementation and monitoring plans, particularly on our multi-annual budget plan. In them, the responsibility, timeframe and indicators associated with each action point will be made more explicit.

We would like to thank everyone that contributed to this strategic process. In collaboration with the Evaluating Societal Impact team, we engaged with approximately 100 ESHCC staff, students, and internal and external partners, including alumni and the Faculty Council, to discover existing impact practices, policies, structures, and activities and to develop ESHCC's impact ambition and strategy needs. We hope you recognise our ambition and join us in this journey.

**Prof. Martine van Selm, Prof. Jacco van Sterkenburg,
and Marieke Delhaas**

December 2024

Overview

At ESHCC, we increasingly understand societal impact as a central, guiding principle that informs our education, research, and engagement. Our approach reflects the School's unique position within the Humanities and Social Sciences, where interdisciplinary and intersectional perspectives drive our efforts to explore cultural understandings, promote social awareness, foster critical thinking, and inspire personal growth. We see impact as a dynamic and holistic process that weaves together personal, institutional, and societal change. Through this strategy, we reaffirm our commitment to addressing contemporary urgencies and opportunities by fostering a culture of inclusivity, collaboration, and innovation.

This ESHCC Societal Impact Strategy 2025-2030 builds on our strengths, including our Education Mission and Vision, Research Strategy, and Recognition & Rewards initiatives. Developed through a year-long participatory process involving staff, students, alumni, peers and partners, it reflects the ambition and needs of our community. Through desk research, interviews, workshops, and events, we gathered insights into current impact practices, expectations, and strategic needs and opportunities, forming the basis for the recommended action points. The findings were coded and analysed to align ESHCC's needs while considering broader developments at EUR and beyond.

Our efforts are anchored in a commitment to ensuring that impact is not an isolated endeavour but an integral part of how we operate as a School. By fostering open dialogue, supporting engaged practices, and recognising diverse contributions, we aim to maximise the relevance and authenticity of our societal impact. It aims to enable diverse pathways to impact by creating an environment where students and staff are supported in pursuing their individual and collective objectives. As a living document, this strategy provides a framework that aligns with ESHCC's core values while allowing flexibility to adapt to evolving societal and institutional contexts. This strategy is both a reflection of who we are and a roadmap for what we aspire to achieve, shaping our collective journey towards a more inclusive, equitable, and sustainable future.

Our Societal Impact Ambition

As ESHCC, we commit to contributing to sustainable and equitable societal transitions through shared knowledge and critical understandings in history, arts and culture, and media and communication. This page outlines our goals and accompanying strategic actions across education, research, engagement, and operations to achieve our societal ambition. They are presented in detail later in the document.

Education

Our education fosters awareness, builds capacity, and empowers students to drive meaningful societal changes.

- Establish a Professional Advisory Board (PAB) in all departments
- Uphold and communicate coordinated impact learning outcomes
- Map and share how we integrate societal issues in the curricula
- Establish support for advancing new assessment methods

Research

Our engaged research is facilitated and visible within and beyond the school.

- Further embrace and maintain involvement in transdisciplinary collaborations and co-creation practices
- Adopt a structured approach for internal communications about the impact of our research projects
- Provide science communication support for staff
- Provide guidance about adopting impact-related activities in research

Engagement

Our engagement fosters a collaborative and sustainable network that effectively addresses societal urgencies.

- Establish a Societal Engagement Board
- Adopt Code of conduct for partnerships
- Develop and strengthen a well-organised network of partners
- Create recurring events with diverse networks
- Establish and utilise physical spaces inside and outside of campus

Operations

Our culture encourages and recognises impact efforts and achievements.

- Establish role of Academic Lead Impact and Engagement within the School
- Adopt societal impact criteria for staff
- Adopt differentiated career paths
- Offer seed funding for research impact activities
- Establish an ESHCC societal impact virtual platform

Impact at EUR

'Creating positive societal impact' is central to the EUR Strategy 2024, which set our transition to becoming an impact-driven university in motion. In realising this, we developed a definition and common framework for our impact strategy, serving as a guide for how we approach our impact at EUR. The [EUR definition](#) of societal impact states that:

As EUR, we have positive societal impact if, through our teaching, research, or societal engagement, we make a (sustainable) contribution to a better understanding of societal issues, possible approaches to dealing with these issues or the collective ability to develop and apply these approaches.

This definition clarifies our collective approach to impact, the wider knowledge ecosystem to which we aim to contribute to, and that the impact we aim for is diverse, with no one form of impact that is more valuable than another. We also make clear that impact results from our three core activities as a leading knowledge institution: impact is not separate but stems from our teaching, research, and (societal) engagement.

Within the portfolio of education, we want to narrow the distance between the complexities of our world and the classrooms. Our understanding of impact-driven education is defined by our "students acquiring knowledge, competences and the attitudes/mindset and values to identify and address societal urgencies in our society by entering into a reciprocal relationship with actors involved with a specific societal urgency, becoming aware of the ethical dimension of their actions." [1] Some steps towards impact-driven education relate to a pedagogical or didactic perspective and are aimed at changing the student/teacher behaviours. Others relate more to the redesign of the classroom by, for example, broadening interaction by bringing in partners and redesigning a curriculum.

Our research is driven by the curiosity of our academic staff and the societal challenges we face today with a focus on quality and relevance. We are increasingly fostering and valuing the impacts coming from the full spectrum of fundamental, applied, and practice-based research at EUR, also by creating an environment for fruitful inter- and transdisciplinary work. The combination of an interdisciplinary and intersectoral approach through initiatives like the LDE University Alliance, the Erasmus Initiatives and the Convergence has also helped to gradually develop more impact around important societal urgencies [2].

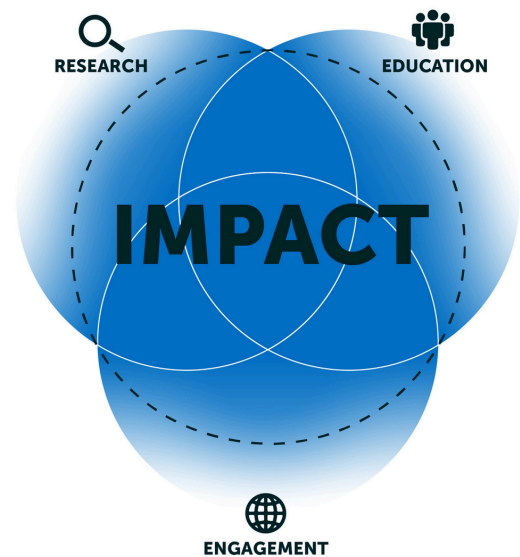
The third portfolio is currently understood as societal engagement in its fullest sense and is defined by the multiple ways we as EUR work with our partners and communities collaboratively, to advance mutually beneficial outcomes when advancing EUR's mission. This can include, for example, actively participating in public discourse, fostering mutually beneficial relationships with the community, and enabling informed decisions. As we advance and structure this third portfolio, we understand that engagement requires different skills, competencies, vocabularies, trajectories and ways of working than research and education, and reward and support structures should be created to reflect these variations.

1 Impact-driven education at Erasmus University Rotterdam: <https://www.eur.nl/en/impactatthecore/media/2023-08-impact-driven-education-eur>

2 Read more about these initiatives at the inaugural EUR Impact Report: "A university with a purpose Reflecting on our societal impact: 2024 Report" at [Impact-driven education at Erasmus University Rotterdam: https://www.eur.nl/en/impactatthecore/media/2023-08-impact-driven-education-eur](https://www.eur.nl/en/impactatthecore/media/2023-08-impact-driven-education-eur)

While societal impact is usually understood as resulting from education, research and engagement, the operational processes that enable and support the creation of societal impact are fundamental to maximise impact. Different areas and professionals contribute with their expertise to this mission. For example, in education, our learning innovators support the uptake of societal challenges from societal partners as part of courses, while in research our data stewards support open and responsible science. Our communications departments can celebrate our impacts with impact stories, while within our HR approaches, we can develop talents for interacting with societal actors. Our contracts and finance teams can be prepared for and facilitate new types of partnership and co-operation agreements that can give rise to new projects and their potential impacts.

By optimising operations and putting structures that enable the creation of ambitions, the university can maximise its societal impact. The strength of the portfolios comes from their interconnectedness, as they are not isolated but often overlap, complement, and reinforce each other. This approach makes societal impact a shared institutional responsibility.



Our ESHCC approach

ESHCC interprets and applies the EUR broad definition to societal impact through its unique context within the humanities and social sciences. With interdisciplinarity at its core, we interweave personal, institutional, and societal change in a holistic approach to impact. In our School, impact centres around exploring and addressing cultural understandings, promoting social awareness, fostering critical thinking, or inspiring personal change.

All Schools at EUR are invited to develop a school-wide impact ambition and associated strategy and to shape their own impact governance. We choose an approach that enables impact, in which we facilitate and coordinate the processes and conditions to creating positive societal impact, with the freedom for our staff and students to pursue their (teams') impact objectives. Therefore, our strategic goals are related to aspects of our organisational practice and environment, in which we invest in creating a healthy environment for impact.

A Bottom-Up Process Toward a Shared Strategy

The goals and related actions in this strategy build upon a transition already in place at ESHCC, keeping the momentum from our new Education Mission and Vision, our Research Strategy and the ongoing trajectory of Recognition & Rewards. Most of all, the strategy reflects the objectives and needs of our community, resulting from a year-long engagement with approximately 100 ESHCC staff, students, alumni, peers and partners. This bottom-up process, facilitated by the Evaluating Societal Impact team, used participatory methods to discover existing impact practices, policies, structures, and activities, and to develop ESHCC's impact ambition and strategy needs.

This process began with proposal development and initial scoping meetings, followed by a kick-off in March 2024, where the Management Team and departmental staff were introduced to the initiative and invited to participate. Desk research systematised insights from 14 key documents to map the current impact landscape, complemented by interviews with professional services, students, alumni, academic staff, societal partners, and the Faculty Council to contextualise findings and explore diverse perspectives. Peer-learning opportunities included participation in national impact-related events and exchanges with Utrecht University, ensuring ESHCC benefitted from external expertise. Three departmental workshops involving over 40 staff members provided insights into essential elements of the strategy. The process concluded with a co-creation session in November 2024, where the Management Team and Heads of Department finalised a strategy that reflected a shared vision.

Integrating Impact Across Portfolios

In the activities we conducted and in this document, we have organised our goals and actions under the four main portfolios of the university—education, research, engagement, and operations—to provide clarity and structure. However, these areas are interconnected and interdependent, with many initiatives spanning multiple portfolios. The implementation of this strategy is a shared responsibility across the School. However, the oversight of specific goals and actions will rest with the designated portfolio holders, supported by their respective teams. The Vice Dean of Education will oversee goals and actions related to Education, while the Vice Dean of Research will oversee those related to Research. The Academic Lead for Impact and Engagement will be responsible for the Engagement portfolio, and the Operations portfolio will be jointly overseen by the Director of Operations and the Dean.

We have provided an indication here of the timeline of the strategy implementation, and our multi-annual budget plan will further define roles and responsibilities within the different teams, specifying who is accountable and who is responsible for each action, and the associated budgets.

In our journey, impact is increasingly woven into the fabric of our identity and activities. It is not perceived as a separate initiative but rather a guiding principle that informs our education, research, and engagement. This commitment is already reflected in the school's mission and vision statements and strategic planning documents. We hope that with this impact strategy, conversations among staff and students can also consider and make visible our contributions to society.

A shared understanding of what impact means in our context can help to unify efforts and ensure that impact activities are authentic and meaningful to our community. We hope you will join us in this ongoing and iterative journey.

Impact at ESHCC

Within EUR, we distinguish between six types of impact we pursue, allowing for a diversity of impact pathways and trajectories to flourish. We exemplify below what these types can look like, and share some examples of projects and their pathways to impact at ESHCC.



What is conceptual impact?

When our actions contribute to greater insight and understanding of societal issues and help reduce uncertainties by considering them from multiple perspectives, questioning assumptions, and, if relevant, offer reconceptualization's.

What can conceptual impact look like?

Changes in behaviours by the targeted audience, including the extent to which a concept is adopted, or an attitude is changed; change in knowledge of the target audience (e.g. use of academic work in policy documents).

What does it look like at ESHCC?

- Through [re-enactment of historical events](#), we can better understand how target audiences perceive historical events and what they highlight depending on contemporary influences.
- Amid political shifts and ongoing discussions on internationalisation in the Netherlands, [recent research on the benefits of international education for Dutch students](#) advances knowledge that could influence perspectives and policymaking towards different directions.
- By examining how [fans react to the cancellation of their favourite celebrity](#), we gain insight on how individuals negotiate their personal beliefs and values amidst shifting social and cultural landscapes.



What is cultural impact?

When our actions help reflect on and understand societal issues, contribute to making people want to question the assumptions and values they hold about themselves and others, help to dialogue about them and develop alternative problem definitions.

What can cultural impact look like?

Characterised by its commitment to diversity, cross-cultural understanding, international collaboration, and community engagement, it results in increased levels of engagement of academic partners and corresponding levels of confidence in public-science dialogue; a more inclusive and culturally responsive approach to research, education, and practice, including delivering positive impacts from academic work abroad.

What does it look like at ESHCC?

- [Participating in international roundtable](#) to facilitate scholarly exchange and share latest advancements of both Chinese and Western historiography.
- The [24-episode 'Do we click' podcast](#) on digital relationships between journalists and their audiences and ['The Time Traveller's Almanac' podcast](#) that addresses societal issues with a historical perspective.
- In collaboration with the Erasmus Initiative Vital Cities and Citizens (VCC) and Community for Learning and Innovation (CLI), the [Learning for Equality](#) project showcases student and alumni knowledge via a website and a [yearly symposium](#) that contributes to community building between students, local partners and organisations and a space for solidarity on societal justice issues.



What is instrumental impact?

When our actions produce practically useful artefacts for dealing with societal issues or help others make choices (e.g., in policies, protocols, guidelines).

What can instrumental impact look like?

Changes in beneficiaries' experience, performance, and systems; developing new and improving existing technologies; revising educational curricula based on new knowledge; changes in strategy or structure by target audience.

What does it look like at ESHCC?

- The development of the [Erasmian Language Model \(ELM\)](#), a generative AI model that is open source, helps with privacy concerns, and raises awareness about the limitations and dangers of commercial language models.
- [Supporting cultural heritage institutions in diversifying their funding](#) through a replicable and sustainable participatory business model, developed using participatory management through cultural heritage Living Labs.
- [Promoting innovation of communication practices](#) through sharing tested and assessed tools and a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) for scientists, journalists and policy makers to learn how to best facilitate engaging, reliable and trustworthy science communication.



What is impact as (enhanced) connectivity?

When our actions contribute to the formation and strengthening of networks of people and organisations and the quality of relationships within these networks, resulting in improved social cohesion and capacity for solving societal problems.

What can impact as (enhanced) connectivity look like?

Change in beneficiaries' relationships; new (inter)national collaborations or strategic partnerships formed with other academics, community, or industry partners; increased levels of engagement of members of the public with academia.

What does it look like at ESHCC?

- ESHCC plays a leading role in the development of [Cultuur&Campus Putselaan](#), where science and art come together to create a sustainable meeting place for dialogue and collective learning, with the collaboration of a wide range of academic and non-academic partners.
- The 'Histories of Diversity' course offered by the [master in Applied History](#) enables engagement between students and local and marginalised communities to preserve public history and heritage.
- The alumni lustrum event on "[Storytelling in a Digital Era](#)" that happened earlier in 2024 connected alumni, students and colleagues for learning on digitalisation in cultural heritage, arts & creativity and brand storytelling.

IMPACT ON CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT



What is impact on capacity development?

When our actions enhance the capacity of (groups of) individuals to take effective action on societal issues.

What can impact on capacity development look like?

Increased availability of expertise in the work force; usage of academic expertise in skill development (i.e., students implementing their academic knowledge in tackling real-life problems).

What does it look like at ESHCC?

- Master's students following the Media & Business programme are offered a course called Consulting Challenge, where students align with a business organisation and apply research and evidence-based knowledge to confront business problems.
- Through the Rotterdam Arts and Sciences Lab (RASL) initiative, ESHCC aims to close the gap between academics and the professional working field by equipping students with both academic and creative education.
- Sharing online training materials and a communication tool for employers to adjust or reverse the stereotypical image of older employees, combating prejudices that affect 50+ employees' participation in the labour market.

TRANSFORMATIONAL CHANGE AS IMPACT



What is transformational change as impact?

When our actions contribute to the formation and strengthening of networks of people and organisations and the quality of relationships within these networks, resulting in improved social cohesion and capacity for solving societal problems.

What can transformational change as impact look like?

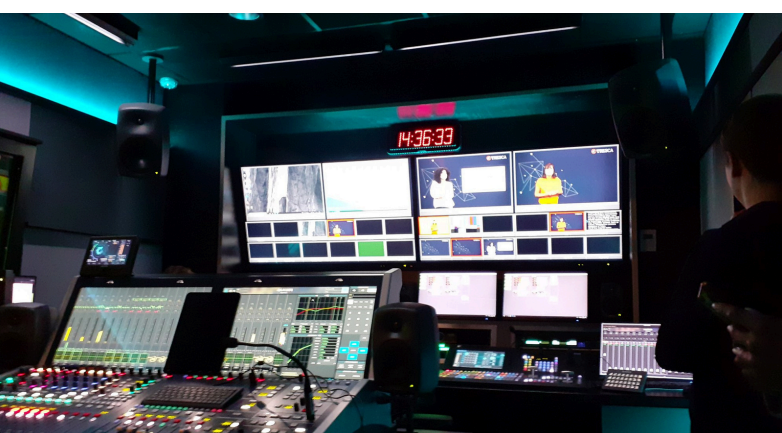
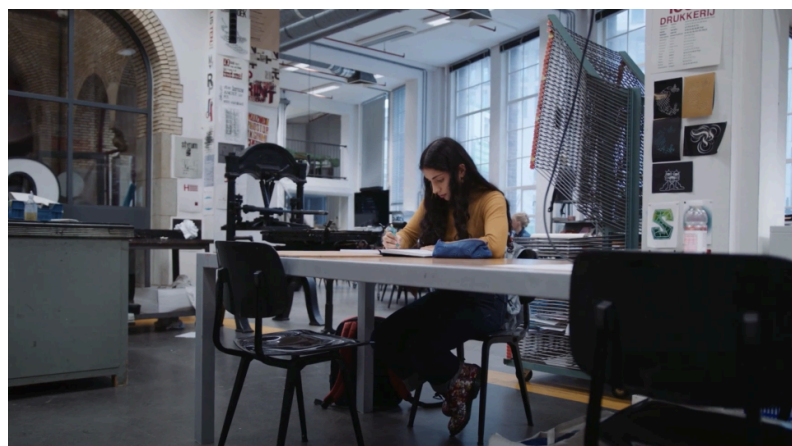
A radical reformulation of policy or practice; a redefinition of goals arising from a new understanding about the way things work and produce fundamental change in operating logics.

What does it look like at ESHCC?

- Engaging in public debates on diversity and inclusion in football, working together with major football organisations and educational institutes and attending regular meetings to influence the football industry and bring findings directly to the field, resulting in, for example, changing educational curricula and policy measures taken by football organisations or municipalities.
- Conducting research to apply social science to the technology behind Artificial Intelligence (AI), which could influence fundamental practices by governments, banks, healthcare systems and tech companies like Open AI, Meta and Google.
- Contributing to a "social turn" in cultural policies, through theoretical and methodological innovations that capture the multiple, often mutually contradictory, concepts of culture and understandings of societal values of culture, vital for the preservation and improvement of the New EU Agenda for Culture.



The Time Traveller's Almanac



1. Re-enactment of historical events
2. Cultuur&Campus Putselaan
3. 'The Time Traveller's Almanac' podcast
4. Learning for Equality in Rotterdam
5. Master specialisation Applied History
6. Erasmian Language Model (ELM)
7. Football and Race'
8. Dual Degree Rotterdam Arts & Sciences Lab (RASL)
9. Trustworthy, Reliable and Engaging Scientific Communication Approaches (TRESCA)

Our societal impact ambition

As ESHCC, we commit to sustainable and equitable societal transitions through shared knowledge on and critical understandings of history, arts and culture, and media and communication.

We pursue our impact ambition collaboratively within the school, the EUR, and with national and international partners, recognising our role as an integral part of society. We embrace our responsibility to our students, staff, and society, ensuring that our knowledge leads to tangible societal contributions. We strive to shape a sustainable and inclusive community that prioritises cultural accessibility and equal opportunity for different forms of expression, where people from different backgrounds feel represented and valued. Furthermore, we aim to sustainably develop approaches and insights that lay the groundwork for lasting positive impact.

We focus on key research themes such as globalisation of culture and society, responsible and inclusive digitisation and mediatisation, sustainability and innovation in cultural and creative industries, and diversity and inclusion, all of which are central to our impact efforts. To address complex scientific and societal urgencies, we use interdisciplinary approaches that integrate the social sciences and humanities at the intersections of history, arts, culture, media and communication. As the world undergoes rapid transformations, we embrace the responsibility of leading the way and addressing these changes for the better. Through co-creation, representation of diverse perspectives and the empowerment of students, communities and partners, ESHCC strives to shape a sustainable and inclusive future for all.

This inclusive approach is reflected in our international classroom and our research and engagement efforts with community members to address social issues that matter to them on global, national and local scales.

Central to our mission is fostering a more inclusive understanding of history—one that represents diverse perspectives from individuals worldwide, rather than relying on just a Eurocentric view. Our educational programmes emphasise global history and inclusivity, empowering students to critically engage with historical narratives and contribute to a more just society. Through historical knowledge and understandings, we contribute to society through new insights and address issues such as nationalism, stereotypes, polarisation, and more generally, changing views on history, society and identity. Our commitment to writing history with societal partners ensures we step out of the "ivory tower," engaging directly with communities to shape a more equitable future.



The field of arts and culture represent diverse communities and tackles key challenges, such as ensuring the accessibility and inclusivity of culture, promoting equal opportunities for diverse and alternative cultural expressions, and supporting a sustainable, resilient cultural sector that is more connected to the public. Through interdisciplinary approaches, themes such as cultural diversity and creative expression are explored. By engaging with societal partners and in our research and education, we aim to shape economic and cultural policies that help citizens navigate cultural complexities and encourage varied cultural expressions.

In media and communication, our focus centres on enabling citizens, communities, organisations and policymakers to navigate rapid technological shifts, such as AI, misinformation, issues revolving around social inclusion and exclusion, and sustainability. We dive deeper into media representation, digitisation, and freedom of expression, cultivating critical thinking to understand their impact better. Our research also explores the social and cultural significance of popular culture, particularly in relation to issues of diversity and digitisation within national and international (creative) media industries. We investigate how different groups use media and participate in cultural activities. Educational initiatives prepare students to contribute to society in times of transformation, ensuring they are equipped to address inequality, champion human-centric technology, and foster responsible innovation.



Our goals and actions



Education

Goal: Our education fosters awareness, builds capacity, and empowers students to drive meaningful societal changes.

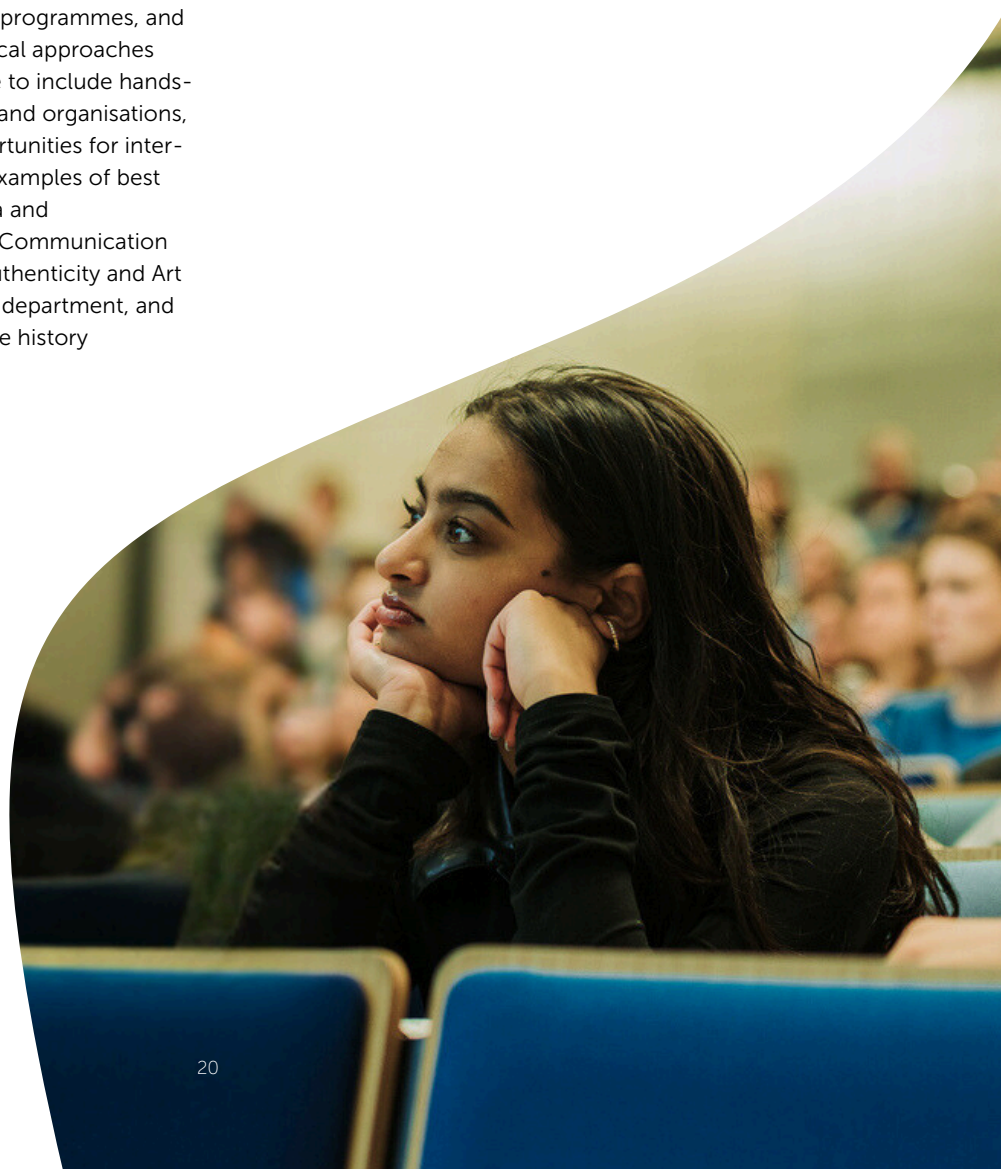
Through our education, ESHCC students are not only equipped with the skills necessary to thrive in the labour market, but also aware and proud of the knowledge, competencies, attitudes and mindset – their impact capacity – they develop to address complex societal challenges on a local, regional, national, and international scale. Our learning environment and community is set-up to allow for continuity and deepening of collaborations, creating a learning journey that stimulates societal impact during and beyond students' time at ESHCC. Through structured support, our teachers further integrate impact-driven approaches in their courses and assessments, enhancing the societal impact of our education.

Current strengths

Our programme provides various opportunities that connect students with the labour market through internships, career weeks and mentor programmes, and it also adopts didactical and pedagogical approaches that go beyond theoretical knowledge to include hands-on experiences with societal partners and organisations, real-world problem solving, and opportunities for inter- and transdisciplinary learning. Some examples of best practices include the 'Marketing Media and Entertainment' course of the Media & Communication department, the joint LDE minor in 'Authenticity and Art Crime' of the Arts and Culture Studies department, and the 'Histories of Diversity' course of the history department.

Strategic Actions

To further develop our societal impact in the education portfolio, we will undertake actions that further structure our network to make better use of relationships with societal partners, communicate the impact related skills and competencies that students develop through courses and assessment methods, and provide opportunities to our staff for knowledge sharing and support for advancing impact-driven education.



Goal: Our education fosters awareness, builds capacity, and empowers students to drive meaningful societal changes.

Actions	What success looks like	Timeline
<p>Establish a Professional Advisory Board (PAB) in all departments: Based on the previous Professional Advisory Committee (PAC) of the Media and Communication department, we will establish a PAB in all departments. We will further develop its composition and orientation of its goals, along with ensuring cross-departmental consistency in maintaining strong, lasting connections between ESHCC and the professional field.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The PAB functions as a formal channel of communication and collaboration with a diversified set of members of professional fields. • The members and role of the PAB is defined and shared, and the three bodies operate consistently and effectively. • Expert advice is given on curriculum development and Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs), while its members help raise visibility of ESHCC in the professional field. 	<p>Short-term (2025-2026)</p>
<p>Uphold and communicate coordinated impact learning outcomes: Adopt cross departmental learning outcomes on impact, balanced across bachelor and MA specialisations, and share them in our course descriptions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students and staff are aware of the impact-related knowledge, skills, and competencies they develop in their (bachelor and master) courses. • Bachelor and master course impact content is clearly articulated using a common language across course descriptions to reinforce the overarching framework of impact-driven education. • Student voices are shared, and their understanding of societal issues and their ability to make a difference are visible. 	<p>Short-term (2025-2026)</p>
<p>Map and share how we integrate societal issues in the curricula: Structure and organise the ways we integrate societal themes and real-life challenges in our courses and share these best practices via knowledge sharing events and platforms.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ESHCC has a transparent overview of its commitment to impact-driven education that is balanced across programmes, frequently updated and shared openly with its community. • Faculty exchange best practices, learn from each other’s experiences, and develop innovative teaching methods for engaging students with societal urgencies. • Students feel connected to their communities and empowered to make a difference. 	<p>Medium-term (2027-2028)</p>
<p>Establish support for advancing new assessment methods: Through workshops or peer-to-peer structured opportunities, support the introduction of different methods of evaluating students.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ESHCC has a revised assessment policy and updated plans in all Departments. • The overall assessment vision incorporates more diverse and engaging assessments that better measure students’ impact capacity. • Providing students with opportunities for reflection, self-assessment, and growth lead to deeper learning and increased student motivation. 	<p>Long-term (2029-2030)</p>

Research

Goal: Our engaged research is facilitated and visible within and beyond the school.

ESHCC conducts research that actively engages with societal partners and academics from other institutes and disciplines in the Netherlands and abroad, who seek research collaborations with us due to a proven track record of transparency, understanding their needs, suggestions of possible interventions or solutions, and implementing research outcomes to achieve positive contributions for society. We effectively communicate our impact and knowledge within and beyond ESHCC, with demonstrated outcomes, to maintain our visibility and reputation. To effectively plan, conduct, track and communicate impactful research, ESHCC provides the necessary resources and assistance to its researchers, ensuring that societal impact is a shared responsibility.

Current strengths

Situated at the interface of social sciences and humanities, and featuring the full spectrum of fundamental, applied, and practice-based research, our school is uniquely positioned to collaborate with societal partners, and other disciplines and practices that can help maximise the societal impact of our research. Our researchers are often already intrinsically motivated to pursue engaged research methods, actively involving partners from start to finish, ensuring their research remains relevant and impactful. We also collaborate with various initiatives, including the Creative Industries research and education at EUR, Erasmus Initiative Vital Cities and Citizens (VCC), Erasmus Migration and Diversity network (EMDI), Convergence, Cultuur&Campus, Community for Learning and Innovation (CLI), Leiden-Delft-Erasmus (LDE) centres and programmes, and the Rotterdam Arts and Sciences Lab (RASL). Collaborations with Dutch national research schools include the Research School for Media Studies and the local Erasmus Graduate School for Humanities and Social Sciences.

Strategic Actions

To maximise the societal impact of our research portfolio, ESHCC will capitalise on what we are already doing by further embracing inter- and transdisciplinary research. We will better structure our research communications and outreach practices, increasing our visibility and reputation for impact-oriented research, while also ensuring our researchers have access to the necessary support.



Goal: Our engaged research is facilitated and visible within and beyond the school.

Actions	What success looks like	Timeline
<p>Further embrace and maintain involvement in transdisciplinary collaborations and co-creation practices: Seize opportunities in existing transdisciplinary networks like LDE and Convergence and encourage co-creation in research with societal partners from the onset.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An extensive group of ESHCC researchers contribute their expertise in humanities and social sciences in transdisciplinary collaborations. • Co-created research projects with partners lead to mutual benefits and shared ownership. • ESHCC has access to funding opportunities that support collaborative and co-created research initiatives. • Interdisciplinary research opportunities are also made available for students, and existing collaborations allow for interdisciplinary internships. 	<p>Short-term (2025-2026)</p>
<p>Adopt a structured approach for internal communications about the impact of our research projects: Update list of ongoing research projects with a focus on who is involved (including societal partners) and the impact that is aimed for or created, and sharing this via the ERMeCHS website.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ESHCC community is aware and inspired by a sense of shared purpose and collective impact. • Potential areas for collaboration and synergy between and beyond departments are easily identified and seized by staff and students. • Clarity on partnerships builds stronger relationships based on ongoing dialogue and knowledge exchange. • Strategic planning is made based on areas of strength and areas for growth. 	<p>Short-term (2025-2026)</p>
<p>Provide science communication support for staff: Provide guidance and structure media opportunities that can empower staff to engage with medias in active and responsible ways and reach relevant societal actors and communities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The support is clearly visible and known by staff who would like to communicate about their impact activities. • Public awareness and understanding of ESHCC research activities and findings is evident. • Increased national and international visibility and reputation of ESHCC help attract talented researchers and students, and secure additional funding opportunities. • Science communication helps maintain knowledge networks for research and education and helps with the vibrancy of professional advisory boards and alumni networks. 	<p>Medium-term (2027-2028)</p>
<p>Provide guidance about adopting impact-related activities in research: Offer training and guidance opportunities that equip academics with practical skills for planning, monitoring, evidencing and communicating their impact.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Researchers feel capable and confident to plan and deliver more comprehensive and impactful research portfolios if they have that ambition. • Within and beyond EUR there is visibility and recognition of ESHCC's research and its contributions to society • Staff perceive that their research findings are more often translated into practical applications, policy changes, or community initiatives. 	<p>Medium-term (2027-2028)</p>

Engagement

Goal: Our engagement fosters a collaborative and sustainable network that effectively addresses societal urgencies.

By establishing partnerships based on trust and shared, evolving goals, we effectively address societal challenges and encourage the adoption of effective solutions. We are established as a trusted knowledge hub, with a physical presence outside the university, and an open-door policy that creates vast opportunities for engagement, mutual learning, and collaboration. Our structured network of partners is supported and maintained across departments.

Current strengths

All three departments at ESHCC have strong links to numerous partners on the local, national and international levels. Researchers and educators are working closely with a diverse array of societal partners, including policymakers, cultural institutions, journalists and media outlets, NGO's, private sector businesses, and civil society organisations and communities. Furthermore, there is sustained engagement between educators, students, and societal actors on an institutional level through the internship officers and an existing stakeholder inventory that includes partners that are involved in their courses, assessments and internships.

Strategic Actions

Our actions aim to strengthen ESHCC's connection with society by fostering ethical and transparent collaborations with diverse partners. By creating structures like a Societal Engagement Board, establishing long-term networks, and hosting recurring events, ESHCC seeks to make societal engagement more accessible, impactful, and mutually beneficial. These efforts also emphasise further reducing barriers between the campus and the community to enhance collaboration and inclusivity.



Goal: Our engagement fosters a collaborative and sustainable network that effectively addresses societal urgencies.

Actions	What success looks like	Timeline
<p>Establish a Societal Engagement Board: With advice of the Vice Deans, create a school-wide board composed of staff members, societal partners, and students to oversee and implement ESHCC's goals. The board will strategically ensure that initiatives remain relevant, sustainable, and align with ESHCC community needs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ESHCC makes societally informed strategic choices following transparent and open processes. • Evolving societal urgencies and community priorities from diverse groups are known and considered in our research and education. • Collaborations with community organisations, government agencies, and industry partners are strengthened and communicated. 	<p>Short-term (2025-2026)</p>
<p>Adopt Code of conduct for partnerships: To build trust and uphold transparency, create guidelines that outlines principles for ethical and effective partnerships with societal partners, ensuring collaboration and addressing compensation for partners and community members that contribute to project formulation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community engagement and resources are valued and compensated appropriately. • There is positive feedback from societal partners on the trust, fairness and respect in relation to their collaborations with ESHCC. • Expectations of collaborations are clear, and ethical and responsible engagement is perceived by all, especially by vulnerable communities. 	<p>Medium-term (2027-2028)</p>
<p>Develop and strengthen a well-organised network of partners: Develop a structured framework for engaging in reciprocal relationships with research and education beneficiaries and partners, ensuring that connections remain accessible, and mutually beneficial.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff, students and alumni – especially those new to Rotterdam – can know of and connect to ESHCC societal partners. • ESHCC partnerships are representative of and respond to the diverse interests and needs in the School and include minoritised groups. 	<p>Medium-term (2027-2028)</p>
<p>Create recurring events with diverse networks: Structure relationships and offer opportunities such as regular meetings or co-creation sessions where parties can collaboratively contribute to different research and educational processes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ESHCC is perceived as a research and education hub by relevant societal actors. • Staff, students, and community partners increasingly share their perspectives, identify common ground, and develop innovative collaborations. • Staff and students feel supported in their efforts to develop alliances, contacts or partnerships, and integrated open collaborations are common. 	<p>Medium-term (2027-2028)</p>
<p>Establish and utilise physical spaces inside and outside of campus: ESHCC will build on increasing its ties with diverse communities, by being more physically present outside the university and stimulating an open-door policy.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diverse communities feel connected to and share their knowledge and expertise with the ESHCC community. • (In)formal interactions between staff and students with community organisations and local and (inter)national businesses are common. • Physical spaces in campus allow for community engagement, strengthening connections and co-creation with societal partners. 	<p>Long-term (2029-2030)</p>

Operations

Goal: Our working culture encourages and recognises impact efforts and achievements.

ESHCC hosts a supportive environment where societal impact efforts are accessible and encouraged for those interested, and contributions for societal change are valued across all roles. Our governance sets clear structures and channels for accountability, ensuring that impact efforts at ESHCC are integrated across our teaching, research and engagement activities.

Current strengths

We have established several initiatives to fulfil our commitment to contribute to staff and students' safety and wellbeing, creating a supportive environment for professional and personal development. The Student Experience Officer, for example, guides students from their onboarding until their graduation at ESHCC, working on career guidance, skill development, and overall support. Through the "Mentor Me" programme, students benefit from an online platform where they share knowledge, ideas, and insights. We are also committed to celebrating and recognising the impactful work of our staff through the yearly Societal Engagement Award, which highlights and celebrates meaningful impact contributions. We also have an onboarding programme that welcomes and integrates new educational colleagues and lecturers.

Strategic Actions

To maximise the impact through the operations portfolio, ESHCC will take strategic steps to cultivating a culture where students and staff are enabled to create positive change, and their efforts and achievements are both celebrated and (financially and non-financially) supported. We will integrate impact-related activities into staff workload to ensure their recognition, establish clear impact governance roles to enhance accountability and responsibility at the school, and facilitate cross communication channels to enhance the visibility and synergy between our school, initiatives, and university.



Goal: Our working culture encourages and recognises impact efforts and achievements.

Actions	What success looks like	Timeline
<p>Establish role of Academic Lead Impact and Engagement within the School: Establish the governance for impact within the school to clarify roles and responsibilities, setting clear structures for transparency and responsibility.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impact initiatives are strategically aligned with ESHCC's overarching goals and contribute to the school's broader educational and research aspirations. Staff and students pursue their impact objectives while feeling connected to the School's profile and ambition. Relationships with key partners are facilitated and maintained, and ESHCC's enhanced reputation helps attract funding, partners, and students who share its values. 	<p>Short-term (2025-2026)</p>
<p>Adopt societal impact criteria for staff: Impact competences and activities can be more explicitly recognised in hiring, promotions, personal development, distribution and assessment of tasks.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ESHCC retains and attracts staff who are passionate about and possess the necessary skills and experience to contribute to the school's impact ambition. Staff who have the ambition to make an impact feel encouraged to prioritise and develop impact competencies and activities. Individuals' impact contributions, including those to collective efforts, are recognised and rewarded. 	<p>Medium-term (2027-2028)</p>
<p>Adopt differentiated career paths: Structure potential pathways that academics can develop in different areas and increase their talents in different domains, including impact.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff and students perceive a high level of impact expertise available at ESHCC. Individuals with more diverse academic and professional backgrounds enrich the School community. Teams with diverse yet complementary skillsets to tackle complex societal challenges effectively are common. 	<p>Long-term (2029-2030)</p>
<p>Offer seed funding for research impact activities: Provide financial support for students and staff, such as kickstarting networks, collaborations, and other impact activities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff and students experience a culture of experimentation and risk-taking, exploring new and creative approaches to impact. ESHCC staff and students access larger grants from external funders building on seed-funded initiatives and collaborations. Impact is perceived by staff and students as part of ESHCC's culture. 	<p>Long-term (2029-2030)</p>
<p>Establish an ESHCC societal impact virtual platform: To consolidate ongoing activities and foster synergies, we will streamline communication to make available support more visible and accessible, ensuring teams and individuals know where to go for resources and collaboration opportunities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The academic culture at ESHCC includes sharing best practices, lessons learned, and resources related to impact among colleagues. Academics can easily access and benefit from existing resources and collaborations. Staff benefits from transversal skills in other areas of their work, from grant writing to public presentations and community engagement. ESHCC can identify areas for improvement and adapt its support mechanisms to better meet the evolving impact needs of its research community. 	<p>Long-term (2029-2030)</p>

References and Resources

To further stimulate our thinking on impact, we list here some useful references and resources our community can explore and that informed the development of this strategy.

EUR References and Resources

Read the societal impact definition used at EUR at

<https://www.eur.nl/en/about-eur/strategy-2024/about-strategy-2024/defining-societal-impact-eur>

EUR defines impact-driven education at

<https://www.eur.nl/en/impactatthecore/media/2023-08-impact-driven-education-eur>

Find resources for planning, monitoring and communicating your impact in the Societal Impact Toolbox at

<https://www.eur.nl/en/research/research-services/societal-impact-evaluation/impact-toolbox>

Advance your impact-driven education practices at the Knowledge Platform for Impact-Driven Education at

<https://www.eur.nl/en/impactatthecore/knowledge-platform-impact-driven-education>

Find resources and support for your impactful research at the Research Support Portal at

<https://my.eur.nl/en/rsp-employee/engagement/impact>

(Inter)national References and Resources

Discover new resources in the ENLIGHT Repository of Good Practices on Research Impact:

<https://impact.enlight-eu.org/>

Connect to others and discover new approaches in the EU Knowledge Valorisation Platform:

https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/research-area/industrial-research-and-innovation/eu-valorisation-policy/knowledge-valorisation-platform_en

NWO workshops to help define the impact focus of your research proposal:

<https://impact.nwo.nl/en>

Explore engagement practices for your projects at:

<http://actioncatalogue.eu/>

Discover resources on how universities can improve their community engagement:

<https://community-engagement.eu/>

Read on

On understanding (research) impact:

Budtz Pedersen, D. & Hvidtfeldt, R. (2023). *The missing links of research impact*, *Research Evaluation* (Vol. 33, Article rvad011).

Derrick, G.E., Faria, R., Benneworth, P., Budtz-Petersen, D., & Sivertsen, G. (2018). *Towards characterising negative impact: Introducing Grimpect*. Article in monograph or in proceedings.

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Sivertsen, G. & Meijer, I. (2020). "Normal versus extraordinary societal impact: how to understand, evaluate, and improve research activities in their relations to society?", *Research Evaluation* (Vol. 29 No. 1, pp. 66-70).

Reed, M. S., Ferré, M., Martin-Ortega, J., Blanche, R., Lawford-Rolfe, R., Dallimer, M., & Holden, J. (2021). *Evaluating impact from research: A methodological framework*. In *Research Policy* (Vol. 50, Issue 4, p. 104-147). Elsevier BV.

Rickards, L., Steele, W., Kokshagina, O., & Morales, O. (2020). *Research Impact as Ethos*. RMIT University.

On institutional impact strategies:

Bayley, J. & Phipps, D. (2019). *Institutional Healthcheck Workbook*. Leeds: Emerald Group Publishing Limited.

de Jong, S. P. L., & Balaban, C. (2022). *How universities influence societal impact practices: Academics' sense-making of organizational impact strategies*. In *Science and Public Policy* (Vol. 49, Issue 4, pp. 609–620). Oxford University Press (OUP).

De Jong, S. P. L. (2019). 'From interactions to conditions: Toward evaluating university impact strategies'. Presented at the *Third Research Evaluation in the Social Sciences and Humanities Conference*, September 20, Valencia.

de Jong & Lima, G. (forthcoming). *Global intentions, local interventions: Analyzing the spatial dimension of societal impact in strategic plans of Dutch universities*. *Research Evaluation*.

Evaluating Societal Impact (2024). Impact Strategy Development Toolkit. Erasmus University Rotterdam (EUR). Online resource.

Evaluating Societal Impact (2024). Journey of Progress – Theory of Change card game. Erasmus University Rotterdam (EUR). Physical object.

Kuipers-Dirven, R., Janssen, M., & Hoekman, J. (2022). *Assessing university policies for enhancing societal impact of academic research: A multicriteria mapping approach*. In *Research Evaluation*. Oxford University Press (OUP).

Reed, MSR., Gent, S., Seballos, F., Glass, J., Hansda, R., & Fischer-Moller, MFFM. (2022). *How can impact strategies be developed that better support universities to address twenty-first-century challenges?* *Research for All*, 6(1).

Colophon

Empowering Changemakers

ESHCC Societal Impact Strategy 2025-2030

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