Workshop Invitation

"SHAPE* – The Driver of European Competitiveness?!"

**SHAPE = social sciences, humanities and arts for people and the economy*

- **16 April 2026, 10:00–16:00**
  Humanities Venture Lab, University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands

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Purpose

This workshop equips participants with **practical tools, evidence, and approaches** they can use immediately with their stakeholders—university leadership, funders, policymakers, and partners—to secure resources for SHAPE knowledge valorisation.

Participants will leave with:

- **Evidence frameworks** demonstrating SHAPE's contribution to competitiveness and insights on how to assess the success of investments in SHAPE programmes
- **A practical toolkit** for building the case for SHAPE investment
- **Connections** to funders, investors, and practitioners who back SHAPE initiatives

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Context

Competitiveness sits at the heart of the European Commission's strategic agenda—not merely as economic performance, but as Europe's capacity to innovate, create quality jobs, foster social cohesion, and respond to global challenges. Achieving this requires more than technology alone. It demands understanding of human behaviour, societal change, cultural dynamics, and governance—domains where Social Sciences, Humanities, and the Arts (SHAPE) excel.

Yet universities face persistent challenges in mobilising SHAPE knowledge for impact. Structural disincentives, limited translation pathways, and inadequate support mechanisms hinder researchers from engaging with partners or transforming expertise into initiatives that matter.

This workshop addresses a simple question: How do you get the resources you need to make SHAPE valorisation happen?

Agenda

10:00–10:15 — Welcome & Workshop Goals

- What participants will take home today
- How the day is structured for practical outcomes

Speakers: Klaas Hernamdt (HVL) and Mark Mann from the SHAPE Impact Kollektiv.

10:15–10:45 — The EU Landscape: ”Competitiveness” as a frame for funding

How the European Commission frames competitiveness, what they're looking for from universities, and how to position valorisation initiatives in language that resonates with policymakers and funders.

- Areas of focus
- A discussion of competitiveness
- Where funding calls are likely to go in the future

Focus: Practical framing advice, not just policy overview

Speaker: Inga Benner, KoWi EU Liasion Office of the German Research Organisations, Office Brussels

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10:45–11:15 — SHAPE Contributions to European Competitiveness: Case Examples

Fireside chats with two academics highlighting concrete contributions of SHAPE research to industrial innovation, policy impact, or societal uptake of technology.

Speakers:

- ***Kevin Curran: <u>Competitiveness</u>: Kevin Curran is researching***
  - *how socially and regionally embedded companies build stronger / more resilient societies.*
- ***Em. Prof Ellen Rutte: <u>Resilience</u>***
  - *how art & literature (research) can build more resilience in society and even in defence*

11:15–11:35 — Coffee Break

11:35–12:05 — Case Study: The Catalyst Accelerator in Action

How the Catalyst—Europe's first SHAPE-tailored accelerator—supports researchers to develop impactful ventures and policy interventions.

- Discuss institutional barriers, incentive structures, research culture, and limited support for impact creation in SHAPE fields.
- Explain how the Catalyst solves these problems and supports SHAPE researchers, what it has achieved so far, and how it contributes to European competitiveness.
- Lessons learned from the German Catalyst

Speaker: Frida Koslowski, SHAPE Impact Kollektiv

12:05–12:25 — The Investor Perspective: What Makes SHAPE Fundable?

Impact investors are increasingly interested in ventures emerging from SHAPE research—but what makes a SHAPE initiative investable? What do investors look for, how do they measure their impact, and how should researchers and universities position their work?

Focus: Practical guidance on what investors need to see

Speaker: Impact investor – Martijn Blom, 100funds, Impact Europe

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12:25–12:55 — Proving SHAPE Works: "If You Can't Measure It, You Can't Fund It: Building Evidence into SHAPE from Day One"

Most SHAPE initiatives struggle to demonstrate impact because they don't build in measurement from the start. This session provides:

- Evidence that SHAPE contributes to competitiveness (and how it was generated)
- What you need to build into your initiatives NOW to generate compelling evidence later
- Frameworks for articulating SHAPE value in terms stakeholders understand

Practical output: Evidence framework template participants can adapt

Speaker: Arnab Dutt, Divine Ox Ltd

12:55–13:45 — Lunch & Networking

A buffet lunch will be provided for participants

13:45–15:15 — Impact Café: Building Your Stakeholder Pitch

This working session focuses on a single practical challenge:

"What is the one-page case you would make to your Vice-Chancellor / Rector / Funder to invest €500,000 in SHAPE valorisation at your institution?"

Format:

- **Round 1 (30 min):** In small groups, participants draft the core elements of their pitch using a provided template
- **Round 2 (20 min):** Groups rotate, stress-test each other's pitches, identify gaps and strengthen arguments
- **Round 3 (30 min):** Refinement and feedback from facilitators with experience in university leadership and funding decisions
- **Final 10 min:** Share strongest arguments and common challenges across the room

Output: Each participant leaves with a draft one-page investment case they can refine and use with their own stakeholders.

Template sections:

1. The opportunity (what SHAPE valorisation could deliver)
2. The evidence (why this works, drawing on morning sessions)
3. The ask (specific resources needed)
4. The return (what success looks like and how it will be measured)

Facilitators: SHAPE ImpactK team + Divine Ox

15:15–15:35 — Coffee Break

15:35–16:00 — Synthesis & Commitments

- Key insights from the Workshop
- Common barriers identified and how to address them
- Follow-up resources and network connections

Speakers: Workshop organisers:

- ***Christoph Köller***
- *Klaas Hernamdt*
- *Mark Mann*
- *Jessica Meijer*
- *Frida Koslowski*

For event and programme enquiries contact: Mark Mann mail@markmann.org.uk

For event registration contact: Klaas Hernamdt k.hernamdt@uva.nl

What Participants Take Home

1. **Evidence framework template** for demonstrating SHAPE impact
2. **Draft investment case** (one-pager) for their institution or funding bodies
3. **Connections** to investors, practitioners, and peer institutions
4. **Follow-up resources** including
    1. **Impact Briefing Paper** evidence of impact from existing SHAPE programmes and what you need to build into your programmes to show evidence that you are generating impact to sustain future funding.
    2. **A case study of the Catalyst** how it is structured and what it has achieved
    3. **Case studies**
    4. **Data sources**
    5. **Existing funding opportunities**

Who Should Attend?

- University knowledge exchange / impact officers working with SHAPE disciplines
- Research managers and TTO professionals seeking to expand SHAPE engagement
- SHAPE researchers interested in impact and valorisation pathways
- Policymakers and funders working on innovation and competitiveness
- Investors

Organisers

- Humanities Venture Lab, University of Amsterdam https://www.uva.nl/en/about-the-uva/organisation/faculties/faculty-of-humanities/humanities-in-the-city/humanities-venturelab/humanities-venturelab.html
- SHAPE Alliance NL https://shapealliance.nl/
- SHAPE Impact Kollektiv SHAPE Impact Kollektiv – Creating impact at scale
- ASTP https://astp4kt.eu/