



Impact and  
Added Value

Collaboration between vocational education and  
the business community, 2024 – 2025

# Building lasting impact together

Public-private partnerships are alive and well. We see this and feel it in the countless collaborations that work every day to bring education and the labor market closer together. Together, they are working to bring about change: with courage, creativity, and the conviction that things can and must be done differently.

With this impact assessment, we show where the network of PPPs stands today. We show what happens when educational institutions, companies, and regions join forces: not only in numbers, but also in stories. About how collaboration leads to craftsmanship, better processes, and innovative power. And how all of this contributes to a future-proof labor market in which people continue to develop.

We have experimented and learned a great deal in recent years, both individually and collectively. Countless initiatives have been launched, many of which have failed, but an even greater number have grown into something valuable. And it is precisely on this strong foundation that we are now building further. By connecting and strengthening the good, and, for example, by bringing PPPs together in High Impact PPPs. This has yielded valuable lessons. We are becoming increasingly aware of what works and what does not. The challenge now is to translate that insight into smarter, more efficient, and more effective collaboration: that is both the task and the opportunity.

Technology is rapidly changing how we work, learn, and organize. This requires collaboration that moves with the times. Especially in a time of social challenges and increasing labor market shortages, it comes down to structural connections: between education, business, and regions, in which technology is fundamentally embedded. What we are seeing more and more clearly is that it is not just about more collaboration, but also about better, more effective collaboration.



*Pieter Moerman, Katapult*

This development directly touches on the theme of this measurement: labor productivity. In a time of shortages and rapid change, it is not just about more people, but also about better organized work, motivated professionals, and continuous innovation. This is exactly what PPPs are designed to achieve.

In this assessment, we take you through that development. You will find figures on the composition, ambitions, and reach of the network, among other things. You will read a number of great examples of PPPs and collaborations that contribute to labor productivity. And you will gain insight into the dynamics behind the network and what that means for the way forward.

We hope that this publication not only provides insight, but also offers inspiration. Because the movement has been set in motion. The next step is obvious: working together to build lasting impact. Because making an impact is no longer a choice. How we do it is.

# Labor productivity—from challenge to necessity

The issue of labor productivity requires more attention than ever. The working population is approaching its limit in terms of available capacity. It is no longer simply a matter of attracting more people, but rather shifting the focus to making smarter and more effective use of the scarce capacity we have. This requires a fundamentally different perspective.

However, labor productivity is as complex as it is urgent. Despite all the technological investments, flexibilization, and innovations, productivity growth since the turn of the century has been limited to 1% per year. We have managed to compensate for this in part through a growing working population and higher labor participation. But with the upcoming aging of the population, a shift from formal to informal work (including informal care), and the increasing vulnerability of production chains, we realize that labor productivity is not a simple issue.

Whereas in the past, with a very spacious labor market, the focus was on 'recruiting the best talent', the focus is now shifting to making optimal use of everyone's talent. Every person has potential, and the challenge is to focus people's available time on what they excel at and are motivated to do. The focus is on minimizing wasted effort on tasks that do not match people's talents and adding as much value as possible where they can.

This shift creates enormous opportunities and challenges for education and business. Recognizing talents and actively encouraging and investing in their growth is a prerequisite for a productive, future-proof labor market with room for innovation and development.

Productivity is not just about working harder or longer, but also requires smarter organization: flexible, task-oriented, and with an eye for skills. Work environments must be designed in such a way that people can use their talents where they are most valuable. That means removing barriers, breaking conventions, and not sticking to "that's just how we do it." Ask employees: "What do you need to use your talent?" and then provide the space and facilities to respond to that.

The prospects and positive developments are becoming increasingly visible. Task-oriented organization and a focus on skills ensure that talents are more easily recognized and effectively utilized. By working together, education and business are creating an infrastructure and network to take steps in this direction. Seizing opportunities means actively investing in personal growth, encouraging flexible deployment by breaking down barriers, and recognizing and developing talents.

This issue of Katapult delves further into the impact of labor productivity through inspiring examples and concrete insights. Everyone has talent. Untapped potential is there for the taking if we can break through traditional conventions.



Bart Götte, futurist and strategist



To explore the theme of labor productivity in greater depth, we have included a number of excellent examples of PPPs and programs that address labor productivity in various ways in this impact assessment. Each of these examples has been included in one of the four domains within labor productivity. Below is a brief explanation of each domain.<sup>1</sup>

1. **Knowledge and skills**

Well-trained employees remain productive because they can adapt to changing technologies. Read more about this domain on pages 8 and 10.

2. **Smart work organization**

Smart working methods and clear processes increase labor efficiency. See good examples of smart work organization on pages 13 and 18.

3. **Motivation and culture**

A positive work culture and good motivation lead to better performance and less absenteeism. Want to read more about motivation and work culture? See pages 6 and 17.

4. **Technology and innovation**

Technological innovations make work faster, more accurate, and less stressful. You can find great examples of this domain on pages 11, 15, and 20.



1. The four areas are taken from Katapult's white paper from May 2025, which you can view here:



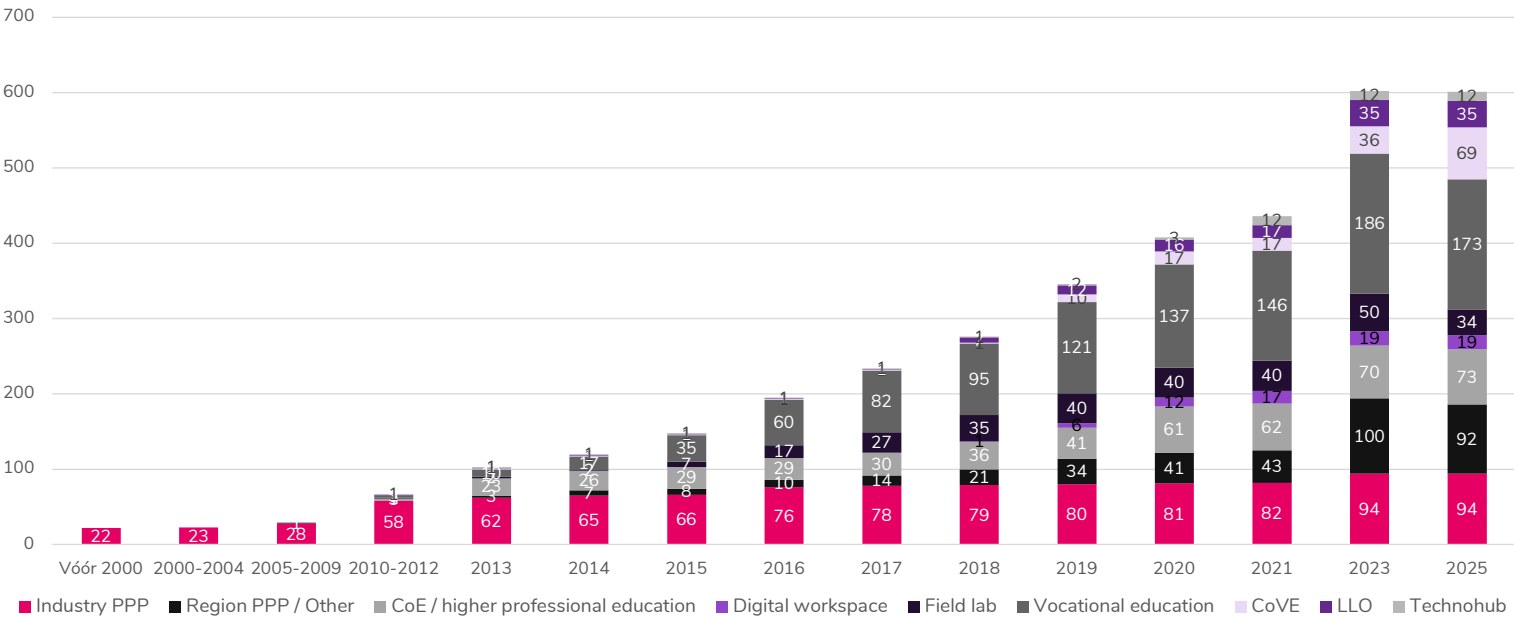
# A next-level network

There are now around 600 public-private partnerships, and it appears that the enormous growth in numbers is beginning to slow down. In recent years, many existing PPPs have joined forces in High Impact PPPs: consortia in which they collaborate intensively with each other. This is the next step in the maturation of PPP development. It is clear that collaboration with the outside world is becoming increasingly central.

This consolidation leads to more efficient working practices, better sharing of knowledge and expertise, and greater capacity to tackle regional and thematic challenges. As a result, the growth of new initiatives at the national level is leveling off somewhat, but at the same time, existing collaborations are becoming stronger and more effective. There is also plenty of movement internationally. This is reflected, for example, in the increase in the number of Centers of Vocational Excellence.<sup>2</sup>

Al met al onderstrepen de cijfers een duidelijke transitie: we zijn aanbeland in een fase waarin het niet meer alleen om méér samenwerkingen gaat, maar vooral om betere, professionelere en meer internationale netwerken.

This year, for the first time, a relatively new group has been included in this measurement: learning communities. A number of these are already active within the Katapult network. These communities focus on so-called wicked problems – tough, complex issues for which there is no simple solution. The approach of learning communities fits in well with the more mature form of public-private partnership. In these communities, everything revolves around the WIL triangle: working, learning, and innovating go hand in hand.



## Katapult network

2. Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVEs) are partnerships between educational institutions, companies, and other organizations from multiple countries. Their goal is to develop powerful learning environments that are well aligned with the needs of the labor market and contribute to strengthening the regional economy.

# From ditch digger to sewer engineer at Te Kloeze Riooltechniek

**There are no mistakes. Every error is an opportunity to make work smarter, safer, or more efficient. With this attitude, Te Kloeze actively encourages its employees to share both positive and negative experiences and learn from them. This makes Te Kloeze a perfect fit for the theme of “work motivation and work culture.”**

With the help of a learning culture coach, the company developed an approach that fits seamlessly with its practically trained colleagues. “We started training our own mechanics because there are no schools in the Netherlands that offer training in sewer technology,” says Vincent Nibbelink, service manager at Te Kloeze. Together with Torio Technisch Opleidingscentrum Nederland, they provide their staff with practical, tailor-made training. The result is greater ownership, less repair time, and a team that works with pleasure, confidence, and craftsmanship.

Bastiaan Mante, mechanic at Te Kloeze, explains: “In principle, you start with zero experience, but after a certain amount of time, you have gained so much experience that you think: I can handle any blockage! I come from a logistics background myself, so the change was huge for me. But I think they are still happy with me.”

This way, learning doesn’t become something extra, but a driver for labor productivity.

Te Kloeze Riooltechniek is a prime example of a company where informal, non-formal, and formal learning are naturally interwoven into the work. Both within the Learning Culture program and the SLIM support program, we see that SMEs that actively focus on learning in the workplace not only increase their agility, but also become more effective and productive. Learning is not an end in itself, but a means to achieve business goals, including labor productivity.

## MOTIVATION AND CULTURE



- 75% of SMEs say that their SLIM project has raised awareness of the importance of learning.
- 62% of SMEs are taking concrete action based on the business scan, such as coaching sessions, onboarding approaches, and learning ambassadors.
- 40% believe that this contributes to more efficient working and better utilization of talent.
- 78% of SLIM participants say that the results have become part of their regular policy.
- 40% launched a follow-up project based on previous results. The scheme therefore acts as a catalyst for structural change and is demonstrably more effective than schemes that focus on one-off training courses.

# Katapult network: growth in reach

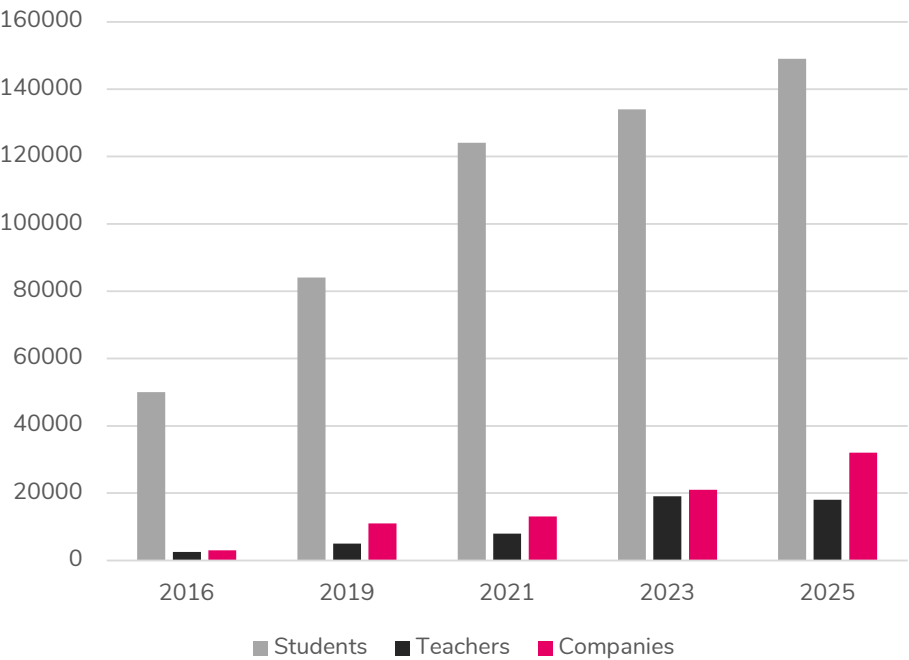
The reach of public-private partnerships has grown significantly in recent years, and this growth will continue in 2025. Since 2016, the number of students involved has almost tripled to around 149,000. The number of teachers peaked in 2023 and remains high at over 18,000. Nevertheless, it is a point of attention for us to further increase teacher and researcher involvement in the coming years. The above-mentioned figures also include the additional reach created by collaboration within the High Impact PPPs.

We see the greatest growth among companies. In 2023, more than 21,000 companies were involved, and by 2025, that number will exceed 32,000. This shows that PPPs have developed into strong networks in which education and business are working together ever more closely. Public-private partnerships have thus become an integral part of the vocational and higher professional education landscape, both for innovation and for training.

PPSs also indicate where they see the greatest impact for their various target groups: Students experience the greatest impact through internships, practical assignments, and participation in research and practical projects within hybrid learning environments. Teachers are particularly strengthened by participating in research groups, developing teaching programs in collaboration with companies, and building networks through learning communities. Companies notice the effect of collaborating with students in practical assignments, conducting joint research, and contributing ideas about the content of education.

Hybrid learning environments are a common thread in all these forms of impact; they are considered important by all groups. Research is also increasingly proving to be a connecting factor. Through research groups or regional projects, students, teachers, and companies work together on current issues, which strengthens collaboration on all fronts.

## Reach Katapult network



# Learning as a driver for growth: how the Noordoostpolder Innovation Cluster focuses on labor productivity

In the Noordoostpolder, 24 technical manufacturing companies are working together on innovation and strengthening the regional economy. Five years ago, they realized that shared learning and innovation lead to greater speed, agility, and resilience. That insight took shape in the Noordoostpolder Innovation Cluster (ICNOP).

One of their priorities is to strengthen the learning culture within companies, a great example in our category 'Employee knowledge and skills'. Because in an age where technology and market developments follow each other in rapid succession, it is not a luxury for employees to continuously develop themselves, but a dire necessity.

"The world and automation are changing so rapidly that we have to constantly adapt and change," says Cor van Vilsteren, director-owner of metal company MCM Marknesse, one of the participating companies.

## Van gezamenlijke behoefte naar gedeelde oplossing

To put the learning culture into practice, the cluster teamed up with Smart Makers Academy and OpleidingsBedrijf Metaal Oost to develop the so-called Implementation and Assurance of Learning Culture metro line. This line consists of four tracks, each aimed at a different target group. In short workshops, the 'stations', participants build up knowledge and skills that they can immediately apply in practice. Everything is tailor-made, tailored to the needs of the cluster.

What makes this metro line special is that it was developed by three companies. Executives, HR staff, production managers, and professionals identified their wishes and learning needs, which in turn created more support for the program.

## KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS



An important insight was that many existing learning programs are primarily supply-oriented. The metro line takes a different approach. Here, the questions and ambitions of companies and employees are central. This ensures greater impact and also significantly increases motivation in the workplace.

## Working together to create a learning region

The example of ICNOP clearly shows that innovation and productivity are not just about technology. It is mainly about people and the space they are given to continue to grow. <sup>3</sup> The metro line is a concrete example of a demand-driven ecosystem: companies jointly formulate their development needs, and training providers respond with appropriate offerings.

*"We hope that companies from outside the Noordoostpolder will soon say: they are doing something good there."*

Sjoerd Keijser,  
Program Manager Noordoostpolder Innovation Cluster

3. ICNOP was also part of a study into labor productivity in PPPs, conducted by Birch in the fall of 2024.



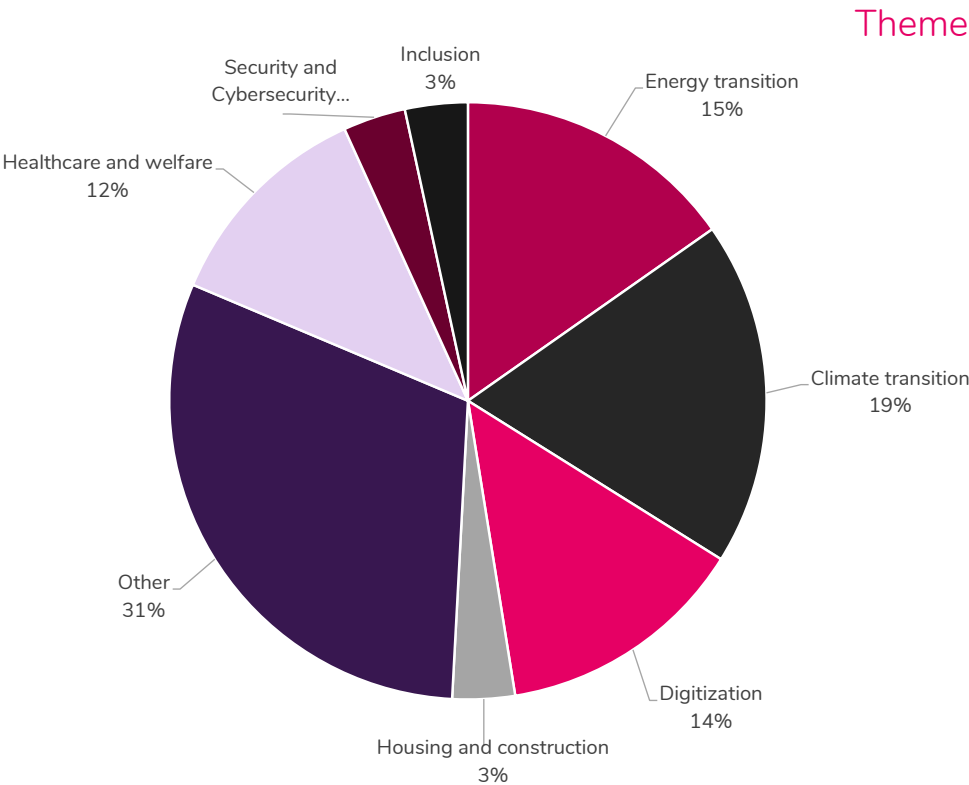
# Katapult network: substantive focus

In 2025, PPPs will focus on both major social challenges and regional issues. They most often work on themes such as climate transition (19%), energy transition (15%), digitization (14%), and healthcare and welfare (12%).. These are all themes that tie in well with national policy objectives, such as sustainability, the energy transition, a stronger digital infrastructure, and making healthcare future-proof. At the same time, the figures show that PPPs not only respond to government policy, but also actively shape regional innovation and inclusion themselves.

It is striking that 31% of the collaborations fall under the heading “Other.” In this category, PPPs work on economic transformation, key technologies such as automation, chemistry, and biotechnology, and new forms of entrepreneurship. And even though these topics do not fall within the standard themes, they do reflect how PPPs respond to technological changes and social developments.

The way PPPs are organized varies. Approximately 29% have an independent legal form, such as a foundation or cooperative. The majority (71%) work together on the basis of an agreement. This flexible form of collaboration makes it easier to start quickly, scale up, or bring in new partners when necessary.

PPPs therefore combine substantive clout with an agile organizational form. This enables them to respond effectively to current challenges and future-oriented developments.





## KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS



# Tech@doptie: technology as a lever for knowledge, skills, and labor productivity in healthcare and welfare

In the Green Metropolitan Region of Arnhem-Nijmegen, the public-private partnership Tech@doptie is working hard to bridge the gap between education and the labor market in the healthcare and welfare sector. Tech@doptie is a PPP that originated from the RIF scheme.<sup>4</sup>

Educational partners ROC Rijn IJssel and ROC Nijmegen are using technology to strengthen the knowledge and skills of (future) professionals.

*“Work together with the professional field as an equal partner, so that you can truly meet the needs of today and tomorrow!”*

Nico Blok, program manager Tech@doptie

Tech@doptie reaches hundreds of students, teachers, and healthcare professionals every year. Together with more than 30 partners, the PPP develops innovative learning products such as the X-Lab, thematic knowledge circles, and the “practoraat” as a recognized place for practice-oriented research in vocational education. Here, students and professionals not only learn to understand technology, but also to apply it in practice. The result is smarter working, greater job satisfaction, and higher effectiveness

*“Labor productivity in healthcare and welfare is crucial due to the increasing demand for care, labor market shortages, and technological developments.”*

Nico Blok, program manager Tech@doptie

An example: Tech@doptiespel 2.0, which raises awareness about the use of healthcare and welfare technology. It also supports teams in learning relevant skills. Both healthcare organizations and educational institutions use it, and its hybrid form makes the game flexible and scalable for use in a variety of learning and working environments. In this sector, labor productivity means more than just working more efficiently. “In addition to training more people, we also need to enable all professionals to work smarter—with more skills and better use of technology,” says Nico Blok. And that is a challenge, given the limited opportunities for further training and the gap between education and technological developments in the field. Tech@doptie is therefore strongly committed to the professionalization of all those involved, practice-oriented research, and hybrid learning methods that flexibly match practice.

Success lies in equal cooperation between education and the professional field. Because only together can they develop and deploy knowledge and skills in such a way that they strengthen labor productivity in healthcare and welfare.

4. RIF stands for Regional Investment Fund for Vocational Education. The RIF promotes cooperation between vocational schools, government institutions, and companies.

# SME portrait: Verdonk Broccoli

Hard work with a bent back? That's a thing of the past, says René Verdonk of Verdonk Broccoli in Wervershoof. "In the future, we will be working with process operators who want to work outdoors, but without the heavy labor." To this end, he is actively seeking cooperation with the education sector.

Broccoli is currently still harvested by hand. But in the future, the company wants to switch to an automatic harvesting machine. Packaging and preparing the broccoli for shipment is also still done by hand. "That's why we're developing a robotic arm that automatically places the broccoli on the conveyor belt," explains René. "It sounds simple, but the arm has to be able to recognize the difference between one bush and another. And that will require differently trained people."

## Collaborating in Greenchain NH

Verdonk Broccoli is collaborating with Jeroen Wildenbeest, associate lecturer in Smart Farming at Inholland University of Applied Sciences in Alkmaar, on developing the robotic arm. "We came into contact through the Vollegrondsgroente.net network, a partner in the Greenchain NH program." Within Greenchain NH, companies, educational institutions, and knowledge partners in North Holland work together to innovate the agri-food sector and align education with it.<sup>5</sup>

## A fresh perspective from students

For example, six students are investigating whether it matters to consumers if the leaves remain attached to the broccoli. They are also analyzing whether the sticker machine in the production line can work more efficiently. "We are used to doing things a certain way. Students look at things differently and bring a fresh perspective. That helps us move forward." Of course, it also requires commitment from the company. "You have to think carefully about the assignment you give students and explain why you do something. Only then does it really work."

## TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION



"We are making the transition from manual to technological work. To do this, we need people with different skills. Technical training programs often focus on large factories, but there are also opportunities in the agri-food sector, with real products and shapes that are constantly changing. That makes it extra challenging and interesting for students."

## Learning and innovation go hand in hand

René advises other entrepreneurs to do the same. "Where do you want your company to be in ten years? We know that continuing as we are now is not an option. That is why we are involving the education sector. This collaboration helps us to move forward."

5. Greenchain is one of the 15 High Impact PPPs (HIPs) in the Katapult network.

# Katapult network: ambitions and results

The ambitions of public-private partnerships continue to grow, and this is clearly noticeable. There is a lot of movement, especially on topics such as lifelong development, strengthening the innovative capacity of educational institutions, and building strong networks and ecosystems. Many PPPs indicate that they are “very ambitious” or even “extremely ambitious” in this regard.

Looking at where the most growth still lies, lifelong learning and strengthening the innovative capacity of education stand out. Stimulating research skills among students and teachers is also receiving increasing attention.

Most activity is currently taking place in the area of ecosystems and networks. This is where we see both the highest ambitions and the most results. A good example of this is the HIPs, to which many PPPs within the network are now connected.

These ambitions are in line with what we see in the rest of the impact measurement: PPPs are increasingly focusing on establishing new connections in their environment. They are increasingly thinking and working in ecosystems: together, agile, and with an eye to the future.

## Ambitions & results



6. The PPPs surveyed gave themselves a score of 1-7, with 1 representing “no ambition/ results” and 7 representing “a great deal of ambition/results.”



# Stronger together for agile craftsmanship at CIV Groen

CIV Groen is a Center for Innovative Craftsmanship, a network that brings together vocational education institutions and regional companies in so-called “Meeting Points.” At 29 locations throughout the country, education is jointly designed with a focus on innovation and craftsmanship. Companies share their latest techniques and expertise and together they develop new teaching methods to prepare students for social challenges. This innovative and research-oriented environment attracts not only practitioners (vocational education) but also higher professional education researchers.

Within CIV Groen, the CIV Food practice cluster focuses on the food industry. The collaboration works to improve the labor market for the food industry. This industry is also changing rapidly, both due to all kinds of new products and an increase in automation. Employees are expected to continuously contribute ideas about new issues. To encourage this, CIV Food and TNO launched the ‘agile craftsmanship’ project. In this project, employees take the lead in improving production processes. This is a good example of smart work organization.

For example, training courses have been developed that are used by FrieslandCampina, Avebe, Yellow Chips, Holiday Ice, and the Bakery Sweets Center. Managers learn how to give their staff more room to come up with solutions themselves. Wijnand Verschuur, lecturer at Aeres MBO: “If you keep instructing, your employees will not become independent.” Wijnand explains that one way to increase employee independence is by asking open questions. This often leads to the employee coming up with a solution in the production process themselves.

## SMART WORK ORGANIZATION

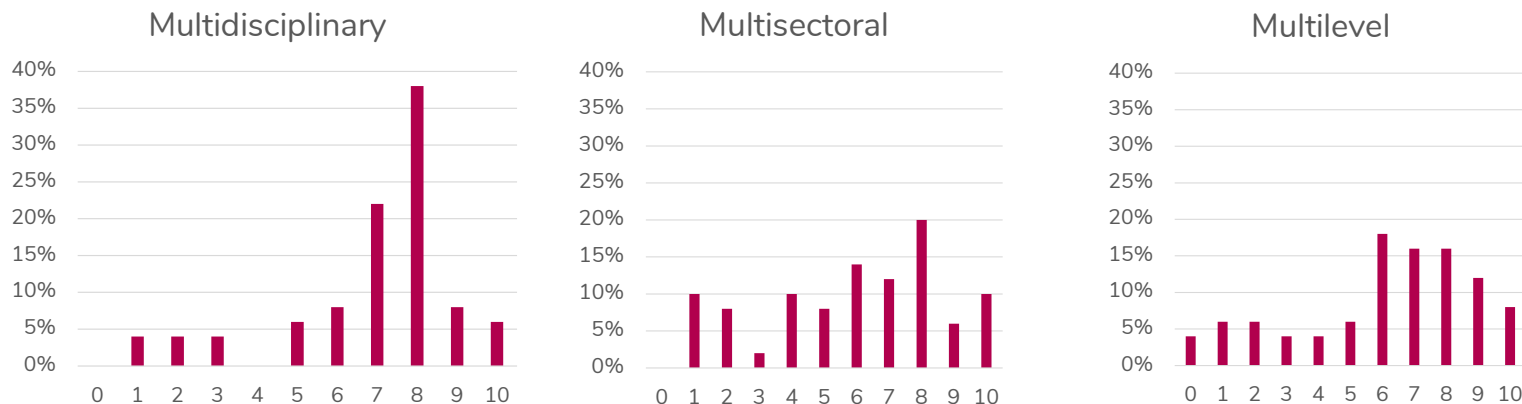


In the coming years, the project will continue as part of the Katapult NGF PPS Scaling Up ‘Green Transition in Water, Chemistry, and Food’. The approach to supporting companies in their development into learning organizations will be continued. The tools for companies will be expanded, and teachers will be given the tools to advise and guide them in this process.

**Want to hear more? Listen to the Groenpact podcast about the agile craftsmanship program.**



# Katapult network: strengthening the network



Tackling the major social issues (wicked problems) of our time requires people to work together across disciplines, sectors, and educational levels. We therefore also looked within the network to see to what extent collaborations are broadly based: do they work in networks and projects across disciplines (multidisciplinary), between different levels of education (multilevel), and across sector boundaries (multisectoral)?

What is striking is that collaboration between different disciplines is particularly common – in other words, multidisciplinary. Many PPPs give themselves a score of 8 out of 10 in this category (more than 35% of the PPPs surveyed)<sup>7</sup>. On average, the PPPs surveyed give themselves a score of 6.9 out of 10 in this category.

Next comes cooperation between different levels (multilevel), for example between secondary education, vocational education, and higher professional education, with an average score of 6.1. And thirdly, we see cooperation between sectors (multisectoral), such as technology and healthcare, with an average score of 5.9. The scores for multilevel and multisectoral cooperation are somewhat more spread out. Some PPPs have been running for years, while others have only just started. This broad cooperation often develops over time, with cooperation between disciplines within a domain (multidisciplinary) being ‘easier’ than between different levels of education and sectors. We see room for improvement in both forms of collaboration. This remains an important point of attention because there is an increasing demand for strong connections from the field.

Nevertheless, we see all three forms of collaboration reflected in the network – and that is a good sign. It shows that steps are being taken towards impactful collaborations that address the complex social challenges of today and tomorrow. Within the HIPs, this groundbreaking ‘multi’ approach is even a standard part of how they work.



**A good example of a multisectoral approach can be found here.**

7. The PPPs gave themselves a score between 0 and 10. A score of 0 means that there is no multidisciplinary collaboration whatsoever, while a score of 10 means that it is fully integrated into the PPP's working methods.

# Workplace innovation at WIN4SMEs

Workplace innovation—improving how we collaborate and learn in the workplace—helps to make employees more engaged, satisfied, and flexible. It stimulates an innovative corporate culture in which collaboration is central. WIN4SMEs strengthens workplace innovation in SMEs by focusing on a well-trained workforce, more entrepreneurship, and strong collaboration. The project contributes to knowledge sharing and sustainable innovation in a sector that is essential to our economy.

This is necessary because SMEs are facing major changes due to technological progress, globalization, and demographic shifts. To meet these challenges, they must continue to innovate. At the same time, there are all kinds of challenges:

- Shortage of skilled workers and young entrepreneurs;
- Low participation in vocational education and training;
- A gap between what education offers and the skills needed by SMEs;
- Little cooperation with universities and a lack of practice-oriented curricula;
- Little international cooperation within both SMEs and vocational education;

In WIN4SMEs, twenty partners from nine countries and seventy associated organizations are joining forces. The collaboration consists of institutions for secondary and higher vocational education, universities, and SME representatives from Germany, Denmark, Finland, Hungary, Lithuania, the Netherlands, and Poland.

Centers of Vocational Excellence (CoVEs) are being set up in these countries: regional networks in which education and business reinforce each other. One overarching CoVE coordinates the international whole.

## TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION



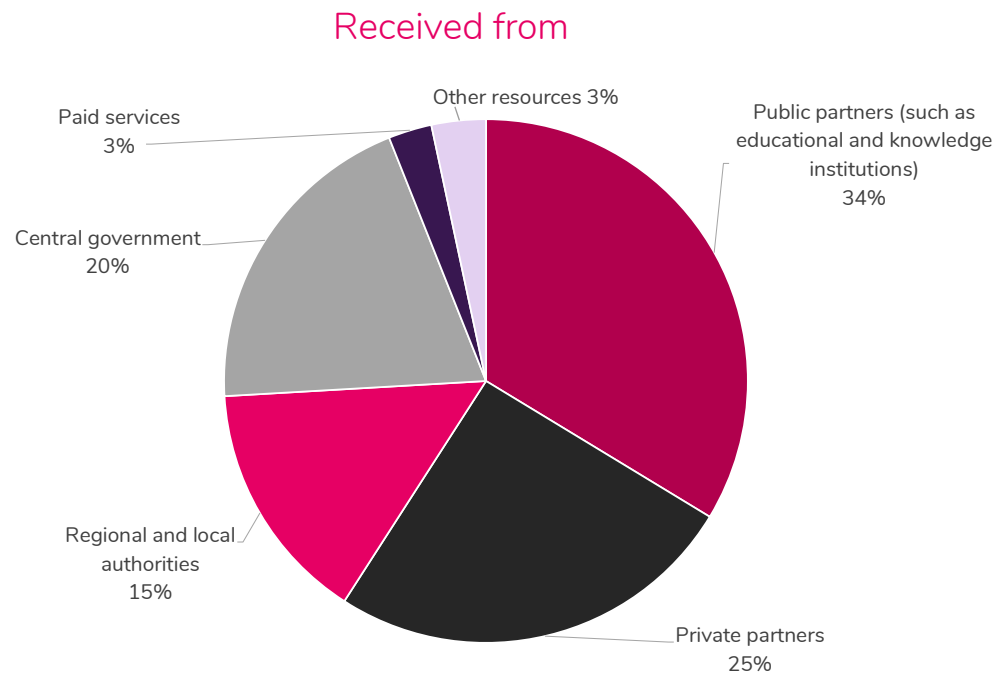
Within the seven CoVEs, practical tools and training programs are being developed, tested, and applied, focusing on workplace innovation and entrepreneurship. This is happening at three levels of education: initial vocational training, continuing education and training, and higher vocational education (EQF levels 3–6). The seventy partners share all results with each other, including recommendations for implementation. In addition, a Ukrainian partner applies these insights in promotional campaigns and training courses for young people and SMEs in Ukraine.

# Katapult Network: capital

The budgets of PPPs vary considerably: from smaller collaborations with around €180,000 to larger ones with a budget of €7 million per year or more. On average, the budget in 2025 will be almost €1.5 million per year, consisting of both financial (cash) and in-kind contributions. The largest PPPs, often part of HIPs, are not included in this impact assessment. What is striking is the wide variation in the relative contribution of private partners, ranging from 5% to as much as 77% per PPP. This shows that the involvement of the business community varies greatly from one partnership to another. Regional and local authorities also make a significant contribution, sometimes amounting to 65% of the total budget. In doing so, they underline the importance of collaboration in education and innovation. The national government provides support through targeted subsidies, such as the Regional Investment Fund (RIF), although the share of this varies per PPP.

Paid services are still limited at present, but they do offer opportunities in the longer term, particularly as a source of income in the phase in which PPPs want to become more sustainable.

The financing mix clearly shows how PPPs are developing into solid, hybrid partnerships in which public and private funds come together in joint social challenges. This diversification makes PPPs less dependent on individual subsidies and increases their resilience and future-proofing. The distribution between cash and in-kind contributions is approximately 53% versus 47%.





# The human factor – how CoE Broad Prosperity and New Entrepreneurship improves labor productivity

How does a Center of Expertise contribute to labor productivity in companies and organizations? By working with the field to develop solutions that are already making a difference. At Avans' CoE Broad Prosperity and New Entrepreneurship, there are striking examples of how this works in practice.

## Example 1: Greater control over productivity in SMEs

As part of the Smarter Working program, the CoE worked with SME manufacturing companies to develop a dashboard that gives entrepreneurs more insight into their productivity. But this insight covers the full spectrum: in addition to economic output, it also takes into account the ecological impact and the human aspect. Because productivity is not just about money; it is also largely about employee agility.

“Development opportunities and good working conditions are important,” says Sandra Doeze Jager, associate lecturer in Agile Employees at the Impactful Value Chains research group. “But it is also important to understand how employees deal with change—adaptive agility—and whether they can drive innovation themselves—proactive agility.”

Last year, 22 directors and production managers from the manufacturing industry discussed the human factor during a masterclass on the dashboard. This led to an exchange of ideas on training skilled workers, onboarding, sustainable employability, and generation management.

## MOTIVATION AND CULTURE





## SMART WORK ORGANIZATION



### Example 2: Healthcare simplifiers bring a fresh perspective to the hospital

Each semester, five students (Industrial Engineering and Management) enter Amphia Hospital with a clear mission: to help departments work smarter. They tackle current issues, simplify healthcare processes, and thus contribute to less work pressure, more job satisfaction, and satisfied patients. These testimonials radiate enthusiasm, both from the students and the people at Amphia Hospital.

Researcher Stephanie Monfils examined why this collaboration works so well. She used the model developed by Rybníček and Königsgruber (2019) and saw that all the success factors were in place:

- Strong relationship between education and hospital
- Relevant issues that directly contribute to improvement
- Clear goals and expectations
- Regular knowledge exchange to ensure impact

What tips does Sandra have for those who want to use a research group/CoE to launch projects and programs aimed at improving labor productivity in their field? Based on her own experience, these are her key insights:

- Research into labor productivity is best conducted in an action-oriented manner, i.e., for, by, and with practitioners. Set up the research iteratively.
- Work on a topic that is useful to companies right now. That way, it won't feel like extra work, but like direct added value.
- Involve the entire chain from the outset. This is the first step towards implementation.
- Don't forget the human factor. Change provokes resistance, so consider carefully who you involve in the project. Do they have the adaptive or even proactive agility that is needed?

The CoE Broad Prosperity and Education is now compiling all its ongoing and completed research projects on labor productivity with a view to identifying opportunities for further development or transfer to other sectors.

# Investing in growth: to the next level of PPP

## How we at Katapult invest in the further development and scaling up of PPPs and increasing the impact of the network.

In recent years, there has been a clear shift from stimulating new public-private partnerships to targeted investment in their upscaling and further development. Programs such as the Regional Investment Fund for Vocational Education (RIF) and the HIP program are giving shape to this development. This programmatic approach helps to further successful initiatives, deepen cooperation, and strengthen networks in the long term.

Since its inception in 2014, the RIF has facilitated 227 PPPs, 25 of which have grown with the help of a scaling-up subsidy. A total of more than €220 million in public funds has been invested, representing co-financing of at least €440 million from the business community, education, and regional governments. This has enabled the RIF to grow into a powerful flywheel for innovation in vocational education. Now that the scheme is being phased out gradually towards 2028, it is all the more urgent to embed successful collaborations in a sustainable manner. Despite the announced end of the RIF, the energy in the network remains high: 12 new subsidy applications are already ready for the next round.

The NGF program 'Opschaling PPS' (Scaling up PPP), which started in 2023 and will run until 2030, ties in seamlessly with this. With support from the National Growth Fund, a total of €506 million will be invested: €210 million from the NGF and €296 million from the field.

HIPs connect existing PPPs, strengthen sectoral and regional networks, and thereby increase their collective impact. These networks build on what already exists and make it possible to work on social challenges on a larger scale and with greater impact.

At Katapult, we believe that investing in growth is investing in the future of vocational education. This requires solid networks, shared ambitions, and the will to build on these together in the long term.

### Regional Investment Fund for Vocational Education (RIF)

- 227 PPPs launched since 2014
- Of which 25 are upscalers
- €220 million in subsidies invested
- At least €440 million in co-financing

### NGF Growth Fund Scale-up PPP

- 15 HIPs launched since 2023
- 4 HIPs to be added soon
- €210 million in subsidies invested
- At least €296 million in co-financing
- The HIPs bring together approximately 17% of the entire Katapult PPP network, comprising a total of around 100 PPPs.



Curious to know how the 15 HIPs are doing now? Read the impact assessment of the High Impact PPPs [here](#).

# SPARC: innovating together on the ICT of tomorrow

Nowadays, innovation is no longer a luxury, but a necessity for organizations to remain future-proof. Within the ICT domain, this innovation takes on a very concrete form in SPARC: a cooperative of independent companies that work together with Fontys University of Applied Sciences ICT in the Fontys ICT InnovationLab on practical research and smart, innovative ICT solutions on a daily basis.

At the heart of SPARC is a unique collaboration model. Companies – known as Partners in Innovation – submit their own innovation questions. Students and teacher-researchers then get to work together with the partner. No theoretical assignments in a classroom, but real challenges in an open learning and working environment, in inspiring locations such as Strijp T (Eindhoven) and Mindlabs (Tilburg).

Students from the HBO-ICT and Master of Applied IT programs work side by side with companies on new technologies and innovative ideas. “It’s actually a big playground,” says Eric Slaats, course director of Open Innovation. “There are no more classrooms—these are workplaces where students work on real challenges. That creates a different way of learning and more motivation. Fantastic!”

The collaboration is facilitated by the SPARC cooperative, partly through a joint innovation fund that is partly financed by the participating companies. This fund enables research projects, shared learning teams, and long-term research programs. Young entrepreneurs – often recent graduates – also find their place in this innovation ecosystem through SPARC.

## TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION



The impact is noticeable on several fronts. Companies are investing purposefully in the development of new products, services, and employees. Not only do they remain at the forefront of technology, but they also strengthen their own learning capacity. Employees actively participate in shared learning teams, learn from students and researchers, and develop in a way that directly responds to the changing market.

Education also benefits. This intensive collaboration ensures that the curriculum remains up to date and aligned with practice. The InnovationLab, via SPARC, now tackles more than 200 innovation questions per year, with the involvement of hundreds of students and dozens of partners. By bringing students, teachers, and professionals together to work on current issues, solutions are created that are not only developed more quickly but are also directly applicable. The result is an innovative working environment that truly enhances labor productivity.

SPARC is therefore not only a breeding ground for innovation, but also a concrete answer to a bigger question: how do we build a future-proof, agile labor market?



# Final reflection: continuing to build together - a development perspective for PPPs

The impact assessment demonstrates that public-private partnerships are thriving. Not necessarily in terms of the number of new networks, but in terms of scope, connectivity, and relevance. More people are being reached, partners are more actively involved, and the depth of content is increasing. The network is clearly moving into the next phase: less growth in numbers, but more depth, connectivity, and reach.

This shift is no coincidence. Social challenges and labor market shortages are increasing, while technology is rapidly changing work processes, job roles, and revenue models. This calls not only for more collaboration, but above all for more effective collaboration. Collaborations that are agile, but also long-term; focused on education that is future-proof, in line with changing work and adds value to people and society. The need to structurally embed technology in education, as recently strongly advocated in policy and practice analyses<sup>8</sup>, underlines that PPPs must further develop into structural links in the ecosystem of learning, working, and innovating.

We are already seeing this movement within the Katapult network. More and more multidisciplinary, multilevel, and multisectoral connections are emerging. It is precisely these High Impact PPPs that show where the network is growing: programmatic collaboration, with shared ownership, embedded in an agile, lightweight structure. This creates room for innovation, upscaling, and structural impact.

The HIPs reveal valuable lessons that are relevant to the entire network:

- Cooperation is strengthened by a shared goal and a programmatic approach.
- Sustainable cooperation requires everyone to take responsibility within the flexible network structure.
- Clear positioning of the PPP helps to maintain direction.
- Innovation leads to impact if adoption and implementation are considered from the outset.
- Focus on long-term effects by making agreements together on measurement and monitoring.
- PPPs should invest more in shared locations where students and employees can learn together.
- There needs to be more cooperation between different levels of education, such as vocational education, higher professional education, and university education.

The lessons learned from the HIPs are relevant for the entire network. They show that growth is not only possible, but also promising and realistic. There are currently 15 HIPs, but the ambition is to grow to 30 or more. The next four consortia are already in place. This movement requires structural support, because this type of cooperation not only delivers innovative power, but also contributes concretely to labor productivity – through skills, process innovation, and motivation. In recent years, PPPs have developed into engines of change. The next step is obvious: working together to build lasting impact. Because making an impact is no longer a choice. How we do that is.

8. Boots, B. & Moerman, P. (2025). Embed technology structurally in education. Platform Talent for Technology.

# Network map

The Katapult network aims to enable even more companies, organizations, and professionals to benefit from the advantages of public-private partnerships. Would you like to collaborate and exchange knowledge and expertise? Then join the Katapult network.

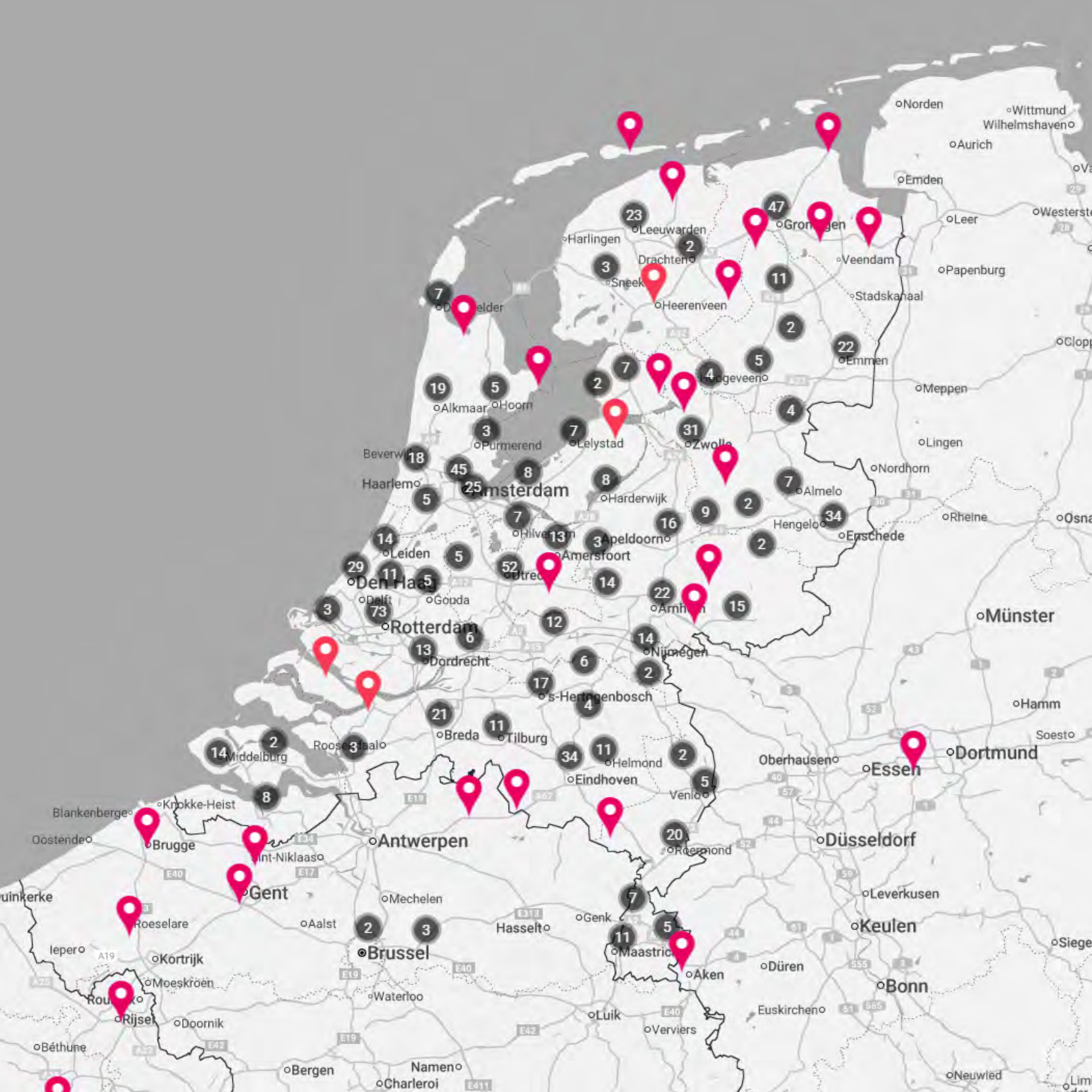
**Is your PPP not yet on the network map? Then create a profile.**

This publication provides a snapshot of the current situation. Every month, new partnerships are formed, existing partnerships are scaled up, or they continue together. The landscape of public-private partnerships is therefore constantly changing, as evidenced by the differences with previous reports. Because there is too much happening to capture everything in a single publication, we have made a selection of notable examples that we believe provide a representative, but by no means complete, picture.



## Accountability

Are you curious about the background, our working methods, or would you like to know more about the partnerships? Scan the QR code or contact us at [hello@wearekatapult.eu](mailto:hello@wearekatapult.eu).



## Colophon

Katapult is a network of around 600 partnerships between education and industry, and it is growing continuously. Its objective is to improve cooperation between education, industry, and society.

The impact report “*Impact and Added Value - from collaboration between vocational education and the business community, 2024-2025*” is a publication by Katapult, supported by PTvT. This is the fourth publication in the series. The figures in this publication are based on a survey conducted in the spring of 2025 among more than 250 public-private partnerships.

In addition, we used a number of analyses and instruments for this monitor: the HIP impact measurement from the spring of 2025, the follow-up analysis ‘Development of Campus/PPS in North Holland and Flevoland’ from the spring of 2025, and the network map with some 600 partnerships and their partners. All examples of initiatives in this publication come from the networks of the PTvT and Katapult programs.

September 2025

## With thanks to

This trend report ‘Impact and Added Value’ was made possible thanks to the cooperation and efforts of:

### Research and data analysis:

Juliette Meijer, Platform Talent for Technology

### Texts:

Juliette Meijer, Platform Talent for Technology

Sander van der Ham, Platform Talent for Technology

### Design:

Grafitek, Emiel van der Logt

### Photos:

Maarten Noordijk

### Editing:

Angélique Klifford, Platform Talent for Technology

### Printing:

Drukproef, Krimpen a/d IJssel

[www.wearekatapult.eu](http://www.wearekatapult.eu)

follow us on



@wearekatapult