



**STUDIO
EUROPA**
MAASTRICHT

 Maastricht University

Five Years of **Shaping European Research and Public Debate** at Maastricht University

Report
(2019-2024)

Foreword



Studio Europa Maastricht (SEM) was founded in 2018 as part of the Maastricht, Working on Europe partnership between Maastricht University (UM), the Province of Limburg, and the City of Maastricht. Since then, SEM has been working to position Maastricht as a hub for European expertise and dialogue. Over the past years, SEM has actively contributed to UM's profile as The European University of the Netherlands by bringing together Europe-focused academics across faculties and connecting research with a dynamic network of knowledge institutions, policymakers, media, societal actors, and citizens at local, national and European levels.

On behalf of the SEM Academic Board, we are pleased to present this report to the UM community, which reflects on SEM's journey from 2019 – 2024. Over the past five years, SEM has developed and implemented a range of initiatives to advance Europe-focused research, societal impact, and outreach at UM. As we celebrate this milestone, we not only look back on our achievements but also outline our vision for the future.

We begin this report with an overview of SEM's mission, structure, and research agenda. We then present our research initiatives and results, demonstrating our commitment to supporting UM researchers in advancing Europe-focused research and outreach. Next, we highlight SEM's societal engagement efforts, showcasing key partnerships, public debate initiatives, and media activities that translate academic research into real-world impact. In the final part, we present our key achievements from recent years and outline SEM's future ambitions.

We thank all UM colleagues who have contributed to our work over the years, especially those who have shared their experiences in this report. A special thanks goes to Mathieu Segers, our late academic research director and former holder of the Europe Chair. His vision and leadership were instrumental in the successful start-up and growth of SEM—his presence and guidance remain deeply missed.

We invite you to explore this report and discover the many ways SEM is driving research excellence, collaboration, and societal engagement at UM. As we look to the future, we also invite you to think along with us on how to ensure that UM continues to be a leading voice in European research and public debate.

Prof. Dr Sophie Vanhoonacker
*Chair in Administrative Governance
and Jean Monnet Professor,
Chair Academic Board Studio Europa Maastricht*

Dr Gonny Willems
*Founding Director of Studio Europa Maastricht
and current Director of Internationalisation at UM*



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Studio Europa Maastricht: An Introduction

Mission & Vision

SEM works towards positioning UM as a centre of excellence for research on European themes and challenges as well as a meeting place for critical debate and dialogue with citizens and policymakers.

We are #WorkingonEurope.

SEM's vision is built around three interconnected pillars:

- **Academic Research** – We position UM as a leading centre for multi-disciplinary Europe-focused research with societal impact.
- **Public Debate** – We stimulate active, critical debate with engagement at its core and capture and share the stories of Europe with policymakers and the broader European public.
- **European Heritage** – We honour the Maastricht Treaty, a European Heritage Label holder, by developing an academic archive of its history, impact, and eyewitness accounts, complemented by educational projects.

This report primarily highlights SEM's achievements in the Academic Research pillar, demonstrating its contributions to Europe-focused research and societal engagement at UM. At the same time, it explores how research enriches and benefits from the broader goals of the Public Debate pillar, underlining the deep synergy between research, societal dialogue, and policy at the heart of SEM's mission.



Structure & Organisation

SEM is a strategic initiative under the UM International Office / Maastricht University Office located at Onze Lieve Vrouweplein 22a. Situated in the city centre, SEM is well positioned to link the university's research community and local citizens.

SEM's core team is composed of experts in programme development, event planning, communication, policy, research, and research support.

To ensure strong connections with UM's faculties and guide its research activities, SEM is supported by an **Academic Board (AB)**. Each faculty has appointed a senior researcher to the Board to ensure alignment with faculty priorities and provide academic guidance.

Current members of the Academic Board



Prof. Dr Sophie Vanhoonacker

Chair Academic Board and Full Professor
in Administrative Governance
Faculty Arts and Social Sciences



Prof. Dr Ellen Vos

Full Professor of European Union Law
Faculty of Law



Dr Timo Clemens

Associate Professor of Public Health
Faculty of Health, Medicine and Life Sciences



Prof. Dr Mark Sanders

Full professor – Specialised remit, Macro,
International & Labour Economics
Maastricht University School of Business and Economics



Prof. Dr Kai Jonas

Full professor of Applied Social Psychology
Faculty of Psychology and Neuroscience



Dr Wolfgang Giernalczyk

Dean at University College Maastricht
Faculty of Science and Engineering

Former Members of the Academic Board:

Past members include **Prof Esther Versluis**, Professor of European Regulatory Governance at the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, **Prof Thomas Christiansen**, Professor in European Institutional Politics at the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, **Dr Peter Schröder-Bäck**, former Associate Professor at the Faculty of Health Medicine and Life Sciences, **Prof Kasia Czabanowska**, Professor in Public Health Leadership and Workforce Development at the Faculty of Health Medicine and Life Sciences, **Prof Mathieu Segers**, Europe Chair at SEM and the Faculty of Science and Engineering / Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, and **Prof Clemens Kool**, Professor of Macroeconomics and International Monetary Economics at the School of Business and Economics.

UM-wide Research Agenda on Europe

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A core mission of SEM is to stimulate interfaculty collaboration on European research and enhance the visibility and impact of Europe-focused work across all UM faculties towards regional, national, and European level stakeholders. To support this goal, SEM and the faculties have jointly developed a UM-wide interdisciplinary research agenda on European issues, which aligns with the [UM-wide research theme](#) on *Europe and a Globalising World*.

UM hosts a wide range of interdisciplinary research on Europe, the EU, and European themes, conducted by faculty institutes and interfaculty institutes such as e.g., the Centre for European Research in Maastricht (CERiM), the Institute for Transnational and Euregional cross border cooperation and mobility (ITEM), the Maastricht Centre for Arts and Culture, Conservation and Heritage (MACCH), the Maastricht Centre for Citizenship, Migration and Development (MACIMIDE), as well as various individual researchers and research groups within the faculties. The research agenda serves to better connect these efforts by providing a university-wide platform and dedicated support to advance UM's European research ambition. The research agenda was drafted in 2018 based on an advisory report by Prof André Knottnerus (Emeritus Professor) and an extensive consultation round at all UM faculties:

- Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (FASoS);
- Faculty of Health, Medicine and Life Sciences (FHML);
- Faculty of Law (LAW);
- Faculty of Psychology and Neuroscience (FPN);
- Faculty of Science and Engineering (FSE);
- School of Business and Economics (SBE).

It was updated by the SEM Academic Board in 2022 under the lead of the late Prof Mathieu Segers and will again be updated in 2025.

In the period 2022-25, the strategic research agenda was structured around four key areas:

- 1. Democracy, Politics, Security, and Rule of Law**
- 2. Identity, Heritage, and the Citizens' Perspective**
- 3. Prosperity, Welfare, and Inequality**
- 4. Knowledge, Technology, and Digitalisation**

For more insights, see the research agenda on the [SEM website](#).

Interdisciplinary Research Initiatives

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Today's societal challenges require European cooperation and interdisciplinary collaboration. Therefore, SEM, together with the faculties has chosen to put interdisciplinarity at the core of its mission. Within the context of the inter-faculty research agenda, we have provided **seed funding** for:

- **Interdisciplinary and inter-faculty research projects** aimed at producing peer-reviewed publications and working papers;
- **Inter-faculty grant applications or research consortia**, such as NWO applications or comparable (international) schemes.

Funded projects support teams of at least two scholars with demonstrated academic excellence and interdisciplinary ambitions from at least two UM faculties. The seed funding aims to relieve researchers of teaching or administrative duties for a set period, enabling dedicated research time.

Priorities:

Over the years, SEM has refined its priorities, with different calls encouraging specific aspects, such as e.g.:

- Projects led by **early career researchers**;
- Research addressing **(EU)regional and European transition challenges**;
- Projects involving **societal partners** from (regional) government, public and semi-public sectors, or industry;
- Initiatives with other creative approaches towards strong **societal impact**.

With exception of certain periods during the COVID-19 pandemic, seed funding applications have remained open on a rolling basis. SEM's team actively engages with potential applicants, distributing information through faculty visits and social media.

Criteria:

All projects are assessed by the AB based on the following criteria:

- Relevance to SEM's Europe-focused research agenda and one of its four core themes;
- Interdisciplinary and interfaculty composition of the applicant team;
- High academic quality and innovation;
- Societal relevance and / or societal impact;
- Potential for attracting external funding.

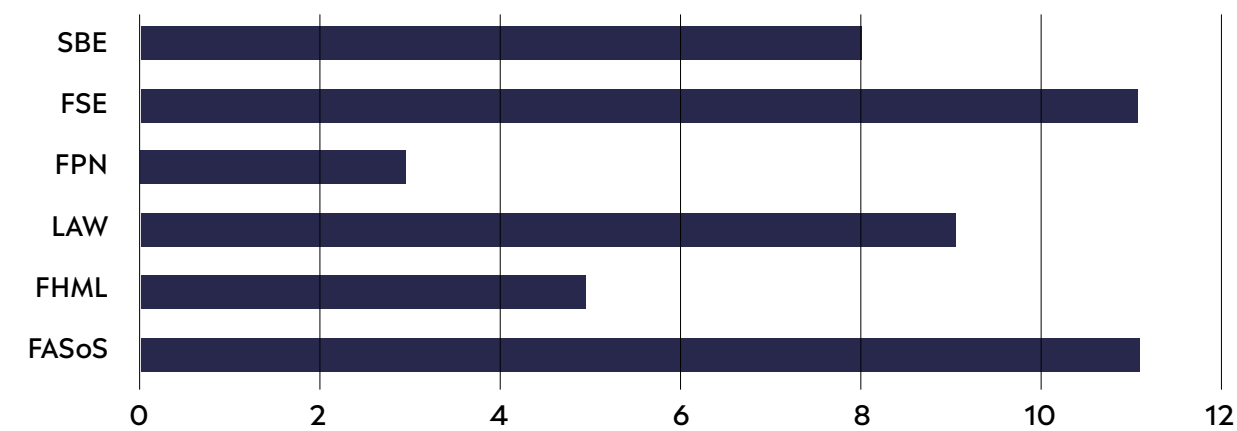
RESULTS OF INTERDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH PROJECTS

Participating Researchers and UM faculties:

Between 2019 and the end of 2024, **21 projects involving 47 UM researchers** have received support for interdisciplinary research initiatives. These researchers are appointed at the following faculties (figure 1):

Figure 1: Faculty affiliations of researchers that benefitted from SEM seed funding for interdisciplinary projects (2019 - 2024)

n total researchers = 47, some with double faculty affiliations



Studio Europa Maastricht project results:

Of the 21 projects funded in the reporting period, 18 projects have been completed, while three projects remain ongoing at the time of writing this report. Reported outcomes include:

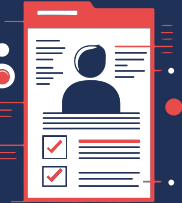
SEM working papers

published on the SEM website as part of the SEMxCERiM working paper series.

2

10 peer-reviewed publications

(journal papers or book chapters), with four additional publications in preparation.



Additional outcomes, including stakeholder / network events

organised at UM Brussels Hub and in Maastricht, presentations at various academic conferences, long-term collaborations and additional grant applications, as well as integration into teaching activities and student projects.



EU Horizon funding

A successful EU Horizon funding application of nine partners, including UM focusing on strengthening the EU's role in global governance through technological innovation.

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In 2025, the seed funding calls will be reviewed, building on these results and successes, and will be adjusted to align with the revised research agenda and current UM strategic priorities.

RESEARCHERS' EXPERIENCES WITH INTERDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH PROJECTS

In the context of this report, recipients of SEM funding emphasized its unique value within UM, particularly:

- The dedicated research time it provided, relieving them of teaching obligations;
- The new collaborations it enabled, both within UM and internationally;
- The opportunity to engage in interdisciplinary exchange across faculties.

Towards design of future seed funding opportunities, researchers suggested:

- More guidance on fostering effective interdisciplinary collaboration;
- Clearer grant rules within faculties and departments;
- Better alignment of funding calls with semester and teaching schedules.

Dr Clara Weinhardt, Assistant Professor in International Relations at the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, Dr Karsten Mau, Associate Professor in Macro, International & Labour Economics at the School of Business and Economics, and Dr Jens Pohl, formerly adjunct professor at the Faculty of Law, received SEM seed funding for their 2020 project on the EU as a geoeconomic actor. The funding facilitated the publication of a book chapter: *The EU as a geoeconomic actor? A review of recent European trade and investment policies (2022)*, in *The Political Economy of Geoeconomics: Europe in a Changing World*, edited by Babić, M., Dixon, A. D., & Liu, I. T. (pp. 107-136, open access). The project also led to further collaborations, including joint grant proposals and a forthcoming SBE-FASoS workshop on geoeconomics.

"I truly enjoyed the opportunity to engage in interdisciplinary exchange across three faculties. Bringing legal, economic and political science perspectives together on the topic of the EU's geo-economic turn helped to deepen our understanding and revealed new dimensions of the subject."

Clara Weinhardt.

"I am grateful for the opportunity provided by Studio Europa Maastricht to engage in interdisciplinary research with colleagues from different UM faculties. This experience has been enriching and insightful, allowing me to learn about the similarities and differences in our approaches to a shared research question that unites our interests."

Karsten Mau.

Policy Briefs & Thematic Collections

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Making academic research accessible to policymakers is crucial in formulating effective responses to today's complex challenges. To support research-to-policy impact at UM, SEM is inviting researchers to translate their research into evidence for policymakers, presented in the form of policy briefs. These policy briefs aim to foster dialogue between academia and policy-making in the Netherlands and in Europe.

In the reporting period, 16 individual policy briefs involving 25 UM researchers were published on the SEM website. Some briefs were also co-authored with external experts or published in other outlets. Just like interdisciplinary research projects, some policy briefs were supported by seed funding.

With the aim to create more 'critical mass' and impact, SEM launched thematic policy brief collections in 2022. This allowed for a more targeted approach, enabling enhanced dissemination and increased added value for UM, the involved researchers and relevant policymakers. These thematic collections focus on high-priority topics on the EU agenda, selected by the AB. Each collection is edited by a UM expert, supported by the SEM team, with contributions from researchers across UM faculties. The collections are published on the SEM website and, more recently, via UM Press. They are presented to policymakers through stakeholder events and accompanying activities, such as e.g. written or video expert interviews.

To test and experiment the collection format, SEM has decided on a series of three [thematic policy brief collections](#) between 2023 and 2026 on the following topics. Additional, future collections on focused topics are planned:

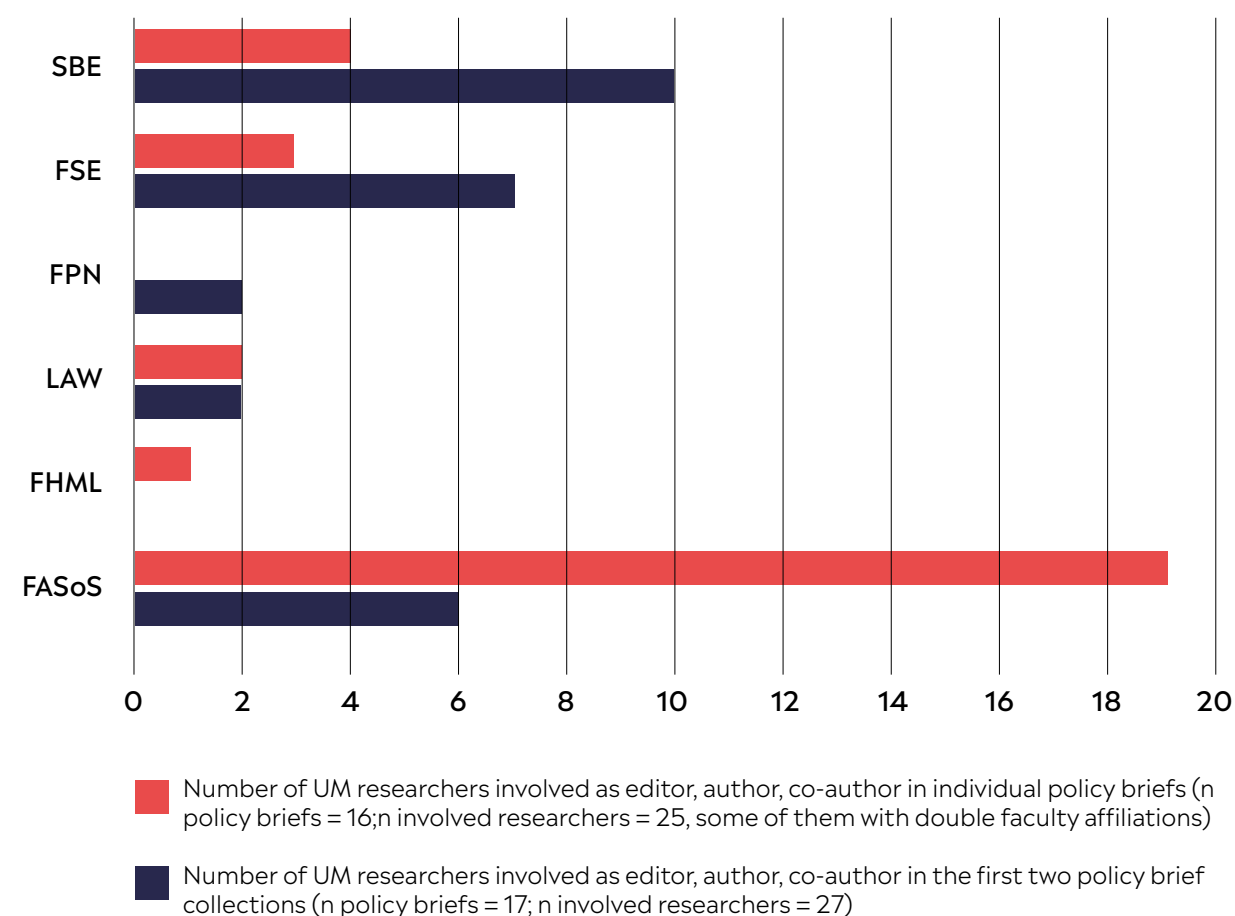
- **Circular Economy** – linking to the launch of the European Green Deal (2019).
Published in January 2024. Editor: Professor Nancy Bocken, Sustainable Business and Circular Economy, School of Business and Economics, Maastricht Sustainability Institute.
Includes eight policy briefs from 15 UM researchers involved as authors and co-authors.
- **Digitalisation** – responding to the implementation of the European Digital Services Act (2022).
Published in March 2025. Editor: Associate Professor Philippe Verduyn, Section Applied Social Psychology, Faculty of Psychology and Neuroscience.
Includes nine policy briefs from 12 UM researchers involved as authors and co-authors.
- **Migration** – reflecting on the contemporary migration flows and resulting challenges.
In preparation, publication planned for 2025/26. Editor: Professor Lilian Tsourdi, European Migration Law and Governance, Faculty of Law.

PARTICIPATING RESEARCHERS AND UM FACULTIES:

Honouring SEM's commitment to interdisciplinary collaboration, we aim to include authors from all faculties in each initiative. The transition from individual policy briefs to thematic collections has allowed us to broaden faculty involvement. By strategically selecting topics and inviting diverse contributors, we ensure more balanced and inclusive participation across UM faculties (see figure 2). Individual Policy Briefs will no longer be published.

Figure 2: Comparison of faculty involvement in individual SEM policy briefs versus SEM policy brief collections (2019 - 2024)

n total researchers = 47, some with double faculty affiliations



CAPTAINS OF CIRCULARITY: LAUNCH OF THE SEM POLICY BRIEF COLLECTION CIRCULAR ECONOMY

On 17 January 2024, SEM hosted the "Captains of Circularity" event, highlighting Limburg's ambition to lead the transition to a circular economy in the Netherlands and Europe. A circular economy envisions a sustainable future in which waste no longer exists while realizing that this promise is not easily fulfilled. The event, held at the Brightlands Chemelot Campus in collaboration with the Maastricht Sustainability Institute, brought together decision-makers, academics, and practitioners to share knowledge and experiences. Participants explored critical blind spots and dilemmas in current policies, business operations, and cross-sector collaboration.

A key highlight of the event was the handing over of SEM's first thematic policy brief collection by Prof. Nancy Bocken to Marieke Spijkerboer, Director of Sustainable Living Environment and Circular Economy at the Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management.

With more than 100 participants from industry, education, research and government, the event demonstrated the potential of UM to provide academic insights to inspire and support regional stakeholders in shaping policies on our future.



"Studio Europa Maastricht contributes meaningfully to the dialogue between science, policy, and society in Europe—an essential foundation for sustainable innovation. Their commitment to strengthening European democracy through public debate and the exchange of ideas aligns closely with our ambition to foster an open, knowledge-driven innovation ecosystem at Brightlands. Our recent collaboration during the Captains of Circularity event highlighted how SEM creates new avenues for connecting academic insights with businesses and decision-makers. We look forward to continuing our partnership to enhance the region's capacity for impactful, collaborative progress"

*Astrid Boeijen,
CEO Brightlands Chemelot Campus*

Researchers at Studio Europa Maastricht

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In addition to collaborating with researchers across UM faculties, we have a small team of researchers that is based at SEM. This includes the Europe Chair and postdoctoral researchers, who are central to SEM's work. These researchers track their output via PURE / CRIS. Between 2019 and December 2024, SEM-based researchers registered 50 academic publications (e.g., journal articles, books) and 126 popular research outputs (e.g., newspaper articles, opinion pieces, blogs, podcasts).

Europe Chair

The Europe Chair, established in 2016 to mark the 25th anniversary of the Maastricht Treaty, is integral to UM's European engagement and SEM's research activities. Closely linked to the Maastricht Treaty's recognition under the European Heritage Label (2018) and SEM's societal impact initiatives, the chair promotes interdisciplinary research and policy dialogue on European affairs at UM. The championing of a European public dialogue and valorisation is an integral part of the Chair's role.

The late Prof Mathieu Segers (FASoS) was first chairholder in the period 2019 – 2023. His work was indispensable to the establishment of SEM as a hub for European public debate in Maastricht, the Netherlands and beyond. Currently, SEM and UM are preparing for a new assignment in continuation of this role.

Postdoc Scheme

Every two years, SEM, through a competitive process, recruits early-career researchers to join UM's vibrant research community on European affairs. These postdoctoral positions are closely aligned with the four themes of the research agenda, combining academic rigour with societal impact and policy engagement to address key European challenges. The scheme promotes interdisciplinary collaboration across UM faculties, with each postdoc being appointed at SEM and affiliated with at least one faculty. SEM post-doctoral candidates have minimum two supervisors of different UM faculties and are affiliated to two - three faculties. Over the past years, SEM has employed **12 postdoctoral researchers** that were affiliated with the following faculties:

- Cohort 1, 2019 – 2021: 4 researchers, affiliations with FASoS, FHML, LAW, and FSE;
- Cohort 2, 2021 – 2023: 4 researchers, affiliations with FASoS, FHML, FSE, and SBE;
- Cohort 3, 2022 – 2024: 4 researchers, affiliations with FASoS, FHML, LAW, FPN, FSE, and SBE.

SEM's postdoc scheme is distinctive for its dual focus: 60% of the time is dedicated to research, while 40% is dedicated to creating societal impact through outreach and dissemination. Postdocs engage with SEM's public debate and policy initiatives, such as policy briefs, workshops, and public events as well as popular scientific publications in relevant media. As for the Europe Chair, SEM is currently preparing new assignments for early- and / or mid-career researchers.

Dr Alexandra Masciantonio, currently a postdoctoral researcher at Utrecht University, holds a PhD in Social Psychology from the University of Lorraine (France).

From October 2022 to October 2024, she was a postdoctoral researcher at Studio Europa Maastricht. Her research explores how citizens use social media and how this shapes mental health and political participation. She is also committed to public engagement and aims to foster dialogue between researchers and citizens.

"From October 2022 to October 2024, I had the opportunity to carry out a postdoctoral project at Studio Europa Maastricht on the theme "Knowledge, Technology and Digitization." As my first international experience after completing a PhD in France, SEM provided a unique and enriching environment.

One of the key attractions of the program was its 60-40% split between research and public engagement; an approach that deeply resonated with my belief that research should remain accessible, socially relevant, and rooted in real-world concerns. At SEM, I expanded my understanding of public engagement: from communicating with the general public to engaging directly with policymakers.

I also deeply appreciated the program's interdisciplinary nature, working with supervisors from FASoS, FPN, and FSE, as well as collaborating with the other postdoc fellows. These interactions helped me reframe my research in a broader societal context and shifted how I think about collaboration and impact."

Alexandra Masciantonio,
postdoctoral researcher at Utrecht University



Public Engagement, Societal Dialogue & Outreach



Beyond fostering interdisciplinary research, stimulating active, critical discussions on European issues is central to SEM's mission. We engage citizens, academics, policy and decision-makers, and industry, aligning with UM's broader role as a societally engaged university. To achieve this, SEM organises diverse activities all year round, including public debates, workshops, (academic) lectures, other educational activities, and stakeholder events. We adopt a semi-flexible approach to programming, balancing support for initiatives led by UM researchers and research institutes and recurring structural events and issue-specific initiatives. These initiatives respond to local, European, and global developments and are implemented by our programme makers.

Across all activities, we aim to:

- Initiate and foster societal dialogue by collaborating and co-organising **events with partners**, building a network that spans academia, society, politics, media, industry, and other educational institutions;
- Put **UM researchers and expertise in the spotlight** by facilitating and supporting our experts and faculties, strengthening their effectiveness when engaging with society, and increasing the visibility and societal and policy impact of UM research;
- Bring science and society closer together by promoting **inclusivity and accessibility** to European themes and debates, speaking to a wide range of audiences in their own language;
- Enhance the visibility, relevance and impact of UM by investing in **large-scale media outreach** and building sustainable relationships with established local, national, and European media outlets that cover our experts and events;
- **Be local, European, and global**; bridging different levels, perspectives, and realities to connect European debates with lived experiences in Maastricht, The Hague, Brussels, and beyond.

SEM maintains an active online presence via its [website](#), [LinkedIn](#), and [Instagram](#), alongside a frequent [newsletter](#), available in Dutch and English, with around 1.900 subscribers. All SEM events and collaborations are promoted through those channels. Key events are also shared via UM's communication channels, ensuring SEM's visibility as a recognisable UM brand benefitting faculties, researchers, and the university as a whole. As much as possible, we use interactive and engaging formats in our communication such as our [expert interviews](#) and the '[Sketch of Europe](#)'-initiative where we interview local citizens. Most of our events are covered by media, contributing to the visibility and impact of UM expertise.

INITIATIVES LED BY UM RESEARCHERS & RESEARCH INSTITUTES

SEM actively aligns its agenda with other UM research institutes and initiatives, fostering successful collaborations with UM partners such as CERiM, Green Office, Inkom, ITEM, MACIMIDE, MSI, Studium Generale, the D&I office, Brussels Hub, SUM 2030, UNU-Merit, YUFE, and various study associations. Our research agenda and seed funding serve as key connection points, identifying synergies and initiating interdisciplinary collaborations across faculties, institutes and European projects at UM. During the reporting period, SEM has financially supported **23 events, involving 68+ UM researchers** and additional external experts through seed funding initiatives. These included e.g., academic conferences, workshops, and lectures and always include UM researchers from a minimum of two faculties.

Examples of past interfaculty initiatives co-organised with support of SEM seed-funding include:

MACIMIDE Annual Conference 2024

The MACIMIDE Annual Conference organised in September 2024 and supported by SEM, addressed transnational migration and integration in both European and global contexts. Keynote speaker Tineke Strik, MEP, discussed the EU Migration Pact, while UM researchers explored migration's role in innovation and sustainable growth. The conference reinforced UM's position as a hub for migration studies, boosting its visibility in European research and policy circles.

Conference: "Between Narratives and Reality: The EU at the Gates of a New Mandate"

This conference, organised in June 2024 by the Maastricht Centre for European Law and FASoS, examined the EU's future following political shifts. Keynote speaker Emily O'Reilly, the European Ombudsman, discussed EU challenges such as migration, Brexit, and corruption scandals. The interdisciplinary conference examined the discrepancy between narratives and reality, across four different themes: institutional change, environmental protection, borders and membership and inequality and cohesion. The event strengthened UM's role in European policy discussions and highlighted how research at UM contributes to the EU's evolving governance.

Conference: "Euro at 20: Shifting Paradigms?"

In September 2022, Studio Europa Maastricht co-hosted a conference series to evaluate the European Economic and Monetary Union (EMU), 30 years after its foundation. The discussions explored the need for EMU reforms to align with the values of the Maastricht Treaty. Experts reflected on the EMU's evolution, addressing challenges such as financial crises, pandemics, and geopolitical tensions. Keynote speakers included Joachim Bitterlich, former foreign and security policy advisor to German Chancellor Helmut Kohl, President of the Dutch central bank Klaas Knot, and prominent economists Thomas Piketty and Paul de Grauwe.

SEM is also collaborating with UM internal partners in other frameworks, such as:

Collaboration with the Young Universities for the Future of Europe (YUFE) European Universities Alliance:

The YUFE Alliance, which brings together ten young, research-intensive universities, with UM as a founding member, focuses on fostering innovation, competitiveness, and unity. SEM and YUFE have collaborated on the YUFE X Working on Europe Academy (2021 and 2022), offering research-based lectures on key European challenges. Additionally, SEM and YUFE co-organized the Strategic Dialogue on European Universities in May 2023, bringing together policymakers, researchers, and higher education professionals to discuss the future of European universities.

Collaboration with Studium Generale:

In February 2024, SEM and Studium Generale co-organized a lecture series on the EU, exploring critical issues such as democracy in EU institutions, security policy, and the role of big tech. A next edition of the lecture series is planned for April 2025.

Collaboration with the Brightlands campuses:

In January 2024, SEM and the Maastricht Sustainability Institute MPCER co-organised the 'Captains of Circularity' event at the Brightlands Chemelot Campus. This event marked the launch of SEM's first policy brief collection and facilitated exchange of decision makers, thinkers and doers on the topic of circular economy. A similar event took place at the Brightlands Smart Services Campus in May 2025 to launch SEM's second policy brief collection, which focuses on digitalisation.

RESEARCHERS' INVOLVEMENT IN SEM'S ANNUAL PROGRAMME

In addition to researcher-led initiatives, SEM organises **20-30 own events annually** to stimulate public debate and position Maastricht and UM as a hub for European expertise in the region, the Netherlands and beyond. In pursuing this ambition, our close collaboration with the City of Maastricht and the Province of Limburg is particularly important. In addition, we regularly co-organise events with the European Commission Representation in the Netherlands and the European Parliament. Our events integrate and showcase UM academic expertise, with researchers actively contributing as expert speakers, moderators, panellists, and workshops leaders. While we did not systematically track researcher involvement in early years, 2024 data highlights the significant role UM academics play in our public debate activities.

Public events

In 2024, SEM organised 27 public events, including lectures, academic conferences, and flagship initiatives such as the Princess Beatrix Lecture, the Maastricht Debate, the European Cartoon Award, and Café Europa podcast recordings.

27



24 Expert interviews

Outside of events, SEM in 2024 conducted 24 expert interviews (written and video) featuring 29 experts, of whom 15 were UM researchers.

39 Involved researchers

39 UM researchers were involved in these 27 events as e.g., moderators, panellists, workshop leads, or expert speakers. spanning all academic levels —from PhD and postdoctoral candidates to assistant, associate, and full professors.



Beyond formal contributions, SEM thrives thanks to UM researchers serving as advisors and critical friends, offering insights that shape our annual programme and continue to develop SEM as an organisation facilitating researchers at UM.



2 Opinion series

In 2024, SEM together with *De Limburger* organised two opinion series - one on the EU elections and on the US elections. Thirteen UM researchers contributed, with eight writing on the EU elections and five on the US elections.

For more information on our past and upcoming events, consult our [website](#).

SEM FLAGSHIP EVENTS AND EXTERNAL VISIBILITY



SEM's flagship events — such as the Maastricht Debate, the Princess Beatrix Lecture, and the Europe Speeches — are central to our mission of promoting scientifically informed public debate on European issues. While these initiatives often feature fewer direct contributions from UM researchers, they are highly effective in strengthening the university's visibility at regional, national, and European levels and contribute to its positioning as a leading academic voice in the European debate.

The **Maastricht Debate**, organised in the context of the 2014, 2019, and 2024 European Parliament elections, brings Europe's *Spitzenkandidaten* to Maastricht for a live, televised debate in front of a pan-European audience. The 2024 edition, co-organised with the Province of Limburg and the City of Maastricht and in partnership with *POLITICO*, drew more than 260,000 live viewers, was broadcast on



major channels such as *ARD*, *RAI*, and *NOS*, and inspired over 95 watch parties across Europe and beyond. The event received widespread media coverage in outlets including e.g., *The Financial Times*, *Le Monde*, *El País*, *Der Spiegel*, and *NRC*.



The **Princess Beatrix Lecture**, launched in 2022 in the presence of Princess Beatrix, is designed to bring prominent European leaders and thinkers to Maastricht. The two lectures given so far featured Élisabeth Guigou (2022), former French Minister of Foreign Affairs, and Rob Bauer (2024), Chair of the NATO Military Committee and the alliance's highest-ranking military officer. A next edition is already planned for 2025/26. The lectures explore Europe's role in global affairs and underscore our ability to convene high-level public dialogue with wide appeal.



The **Europe Speeches** are a recurring series of keynote lectures delivered by prominent Dutch policy-makers and thought leaders. The series has developed into a recognised and widely acknowledged format that is especially well covered by regional and national media.



This series not only offers the public a direct channel to engage with decision-makers but also contributes to the national debate on European themes.

From 2019–2024, SEM organised a total of five Europe Speeches, featuring the following speakers: Frans Timmermans, then Executive Vice President of the European Commission for the European Green Deal; Wopke Hoekstra, then Dutch Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs; Sigrid Kaag, then Dutch Minister of Finance and Kajsa Ollongren, then Dutch Minister of Defence. A first Europe Speech in 2025 was delivered by Ruben Brekelmans, current Dutch Minister of Defence.



Media Outreach and External Visibility

Our flagship initiatives significantly contribute to public recognition of Maastricht University as a centre for European research and debate. The wide-reaching media coverage — from national outlets like NOS and NRC to international coverage of the Maastricht Debate — helps amplify the university's impact far beyond academia. Dutch media have consistently highlighted the Europe Speeches, while regional broadcasters and newspapers such as L1 and De Limburger frequently report live from our events.

We have built sustainable partnerships with media outlets, such as POLITICO for the Maastricht Debate, and with De Limburger on a series of opinion pieces published by UM researchers under the editorial curation of SEM.

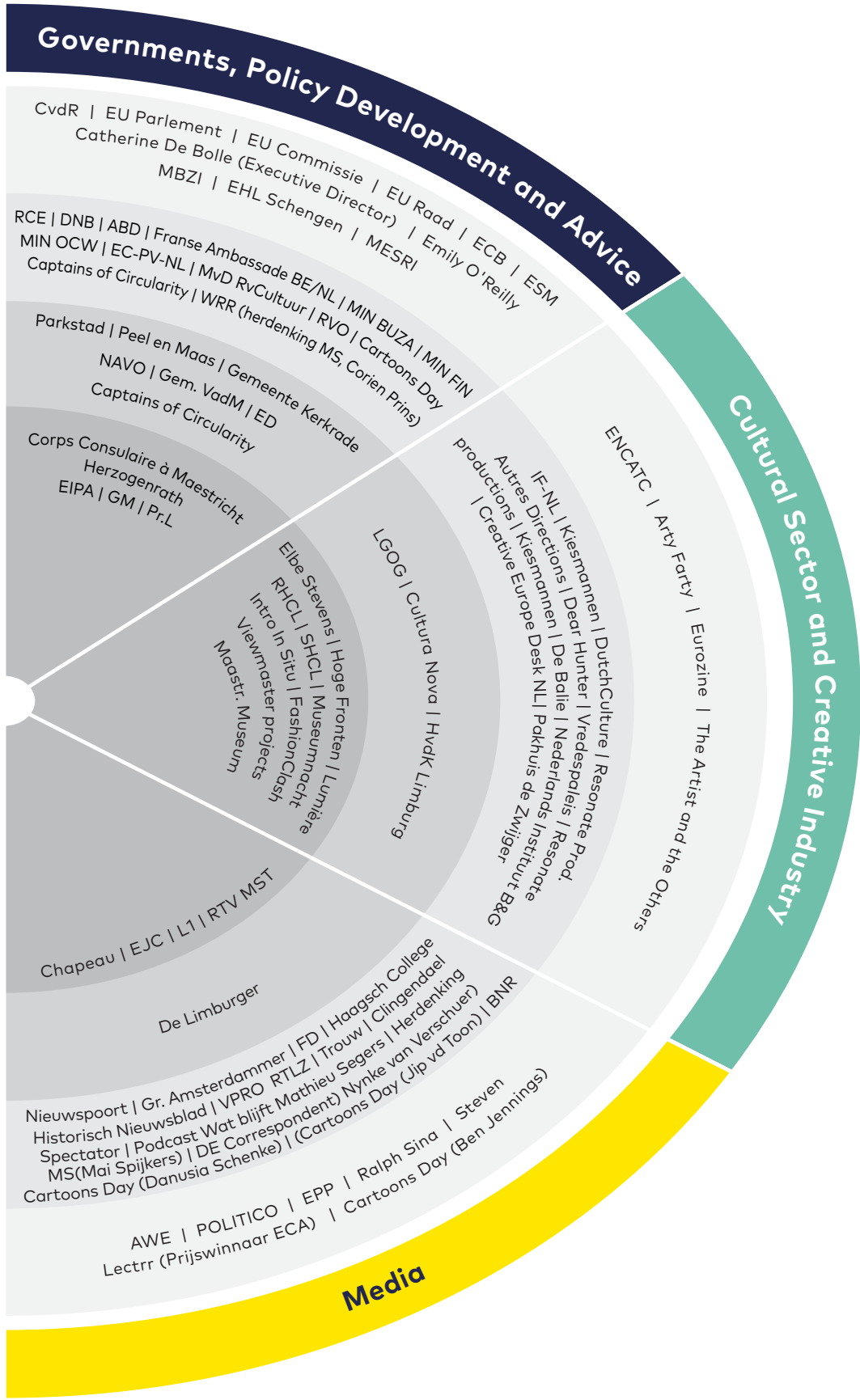
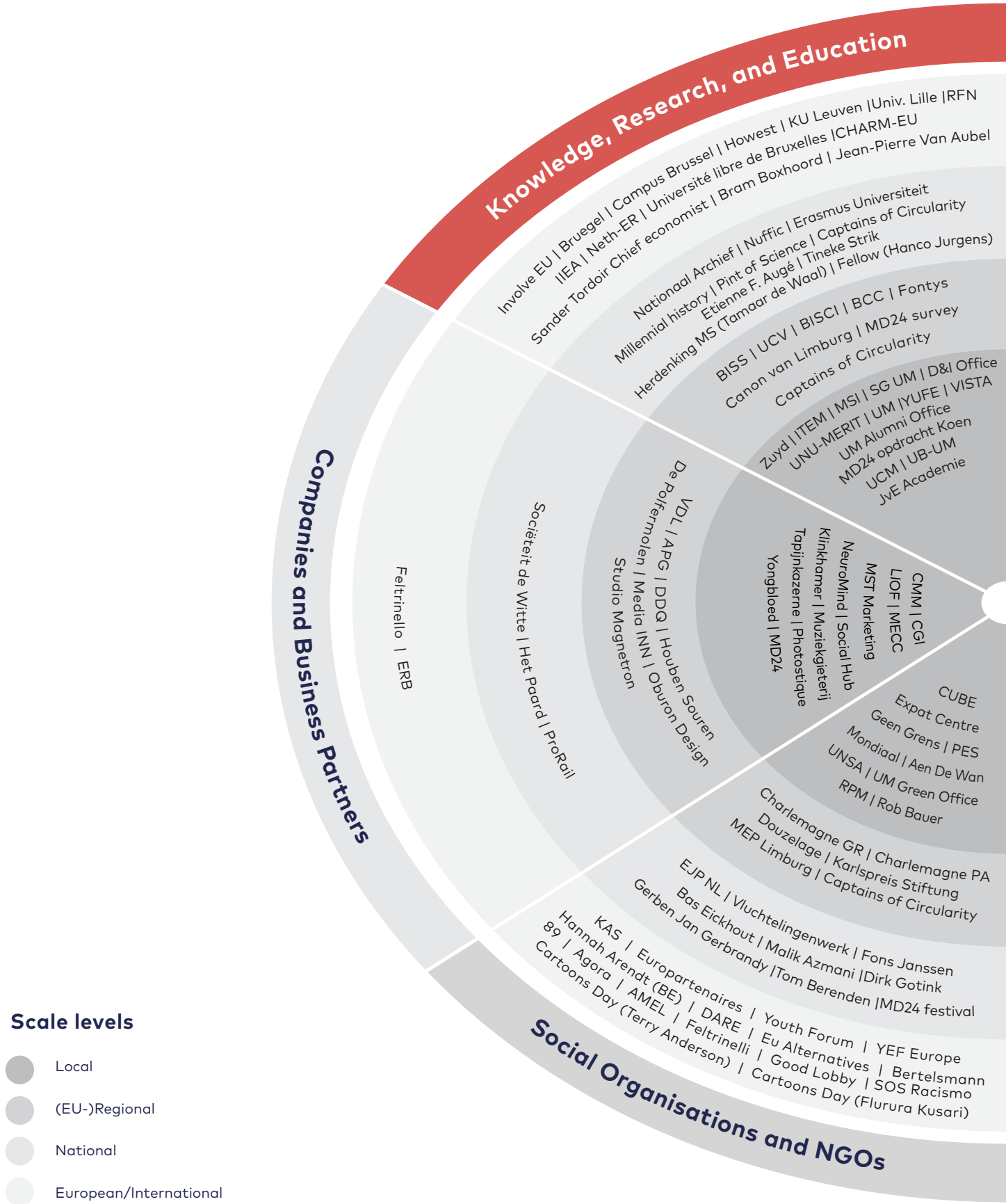
These efforts are complemented by Café Europa, our podcast co-produced with Haagsch College and hosted by Annette van Soest. With around 6,000 regular listeners — including policymakers and engaged citizens — the podcast brings European affairs to a broad audience in an accessible format. Annual live recordings in The Hague extend our reach to national political circles and further broaden our public profile.

Together, these initiatives serve as powerful instruments for outreach and reputation-building. They create spaces for public engagement with key European topics, contribute to democratic dialogue, and position Studio Europa — and by extension UM — as a visible and trusted partner in European affairs.



NETWORK AND PARTNERSHIPS

SEM as a connecting hub of 200+ partners from different sectors and levels.



SEM has also made special efforts to reach out to and be in touch with other European organisations and public debate and cultural centra in the city, such as e.g. EIPA, Centre Céramique, Sphinx Debat Centrum, to contribute to the local network of civically engaged organisations and increase the immediate links of our university and research community to them and local citizens. Examples of SEM events and initiatives with a specific local or regional focus include:

- **Workplace Europe Series: Collaboration and Innovation in the Euregion**

[The Workplace Europe event series](#), with five events organised between 2019 - 2021, explored key regional issues in the Euregion, bringing together stakeholders from Belgium, the Netherlands, and Germany. Past editions have tackled topics such as digital innovation, cross-border cooperation, and the future of work. The series provides a platform for dialogue between industry, policymakers, and academics, fostering collaboration and addressing regional challenges to strengthen cross-border ties and innovation.

- **Meet-Up: Women and the Challenges of Integrating in Limburg**

In October 2021, SEM hosted a [meet-up](#) focused on the integration challenges faced by women in Limburg. The event facilitated a dialogue between local women, researchers, and policymakers to address integration barriers and promote social cohesion in the region. It was a platform for sharing personal experiences and developing strategies to improve the support systems for immigrant women, strengthening their connections in the region.

- **G30: The Next Generation of European Thinkers and Creatives**

The [G30 initiative](#), part of Re:Generation Maastricht, invited thirty students to shape the future of Europe. In 2022, the group worked together to create a collaborative piece reflecting their vision for the EU's future. Throughout the project, the G30 members met with policymakers, thought leaders, and experts to gain insights and refine their ideas. The final work, a creative expression of their ideas on Europe's future, was publicly exhibited in May 2022.

- **Initiatives to keep the memory of the Maastricht Treaty (1992) alive**

The Maastricht Treaty is one of the most significant treaties in post-war European history. This is why the European Commission designated it as European Heritage in 2018. Studio Europa brings the history and meaning of the treaty to life through various initiatives, including the memory landscape [‘Mestreech ‘92’](#), which collects local stories about the historic Euro Summit of 1991, and the [Café Europa podcast miniseries](#), produced for the 30th anniversary of the treaty in 2021.



"Studio Europa is a visible and indispensable link between Maastricht and its European heritage. As part of the university's strong presence in the city, SEM brings European issues closer to our residents. Through debates, expositions, workshops and key events like the Maastricht Debate, SEM makes complex developments more accessible and helps citizens navigate today's changing world. By fostering dialogue and understanding, SEM strengthens the bond between the university and the city, ensuring that European affairs and discussions connect with the daily lives of Maastricht's residents. "

Wim Hillenaar,

Mayor of Maastricht

Conclusions

Looking Backward: Key Achievements and Reflections

Over the past five years, SEM has developed into a central element of UM's European mission and positioning. Through stimulating interdisciplinary research collaboration, strategic partnerships, and impactful public outreach initiatives, SEM has not only strengthened the cooperation amongst UM scholars working on Europe and the EU, but it has also contributed to UM's reputation as a hub for European expertise and enhanced its societal impact, particularly through shaping public debate on crucial European issues. We have built a vibrant network spanning actors from our university, our city and region as well as external partners in Brussels, The Hague and beyond and including actors from academia, policy, businesses, and civil society. In this way, we have contributed to UM's visibility, fostered new collaborations, and realised the university's broader societal mission. Additionally, we have played a key role in reinforcing Maastricht's and Limburg's European identity, attracting high-level discussions and decision-makers to the region. This has been made possible through a strong core team based at SEM and through the contribution of scholars based in all six UM faculties, working on European affairs.

Our key achievements include:

- **Research excellence:** SEM has been successful in bringing together inter-faculty teams of researchers working on pressing European issues, resulting in concrete academic outputs such as journal publications and policy briefs. SEM's postdoctoral programme has provided valuable opportunities for early-career researchers to pursue their individual European research and develop their own and SEM's public engagement. It sets a valuable example for how to integrate societal engagement components in academic career trajectories, linking to the goals of the 'Rewards and Recognition' programme. With the Europe Chair, SEM has created a position that highlights UM's expertise on European issues and adds to our visibility in public debates.
- **Public engagement:** Through events, workshops, and public debates, SEM has contributed to bridging the gap between academia and society, fostering discussions on key European issues and enhancing UM's reputation as a socially engaged university. It has built a household brand and vibrant network for public and societal debate that is accessible to and interlinked with our UM research community, facilitating researchers in their valorisation efforts. Since a couple of years, SEM is regularly contacted by key players in The Hague to serve as a platform to deliver strategic speeches on European challenges.
- **Policy-oriented work:** SEM's thematic policy briefs collections and events have sparked conversations on crucial topics like the circular economy and digitalisation, targeting policymakers at both national and European levels. This work has allowed putting UM's research and expertise into spotlight. It also acts as proof of concept for the future 'policy powerhouse – ambition' that UM formulates in its new Europe Strategy (2025).

7

Studio Europa Maastricht in numbers

Academic outputs and achievements in 2019 – 2024

3 Policy Brief collections



1. Circular Economy
2. Digitalisation
3. Migration (in press)

16 Individual Policy Briefs



23 Seed-funded Workshops and Symposia at faculties



33 Thematic policy briefs in total

12 SEM Post-docs appointed at SEM supervised by two faculties

21 Seed-funded Interdisciplinary research projects and/or large grant applications and strategic consortia



46 Expert Interviews



170+ Scholarly and popular publications by researchers appointed at SEM

and many more UM-experts from all faculties involved in SEM's public events



"Studio Europa Maastricht has been instrumental in strengthening Maastricht University's European focus and positioning. Through its strategic research agenda, SEM fosters interdisciplinary collaboration across faculties, empowering UM researchers to engage with Europe-related themes in ways that resonate beyond academia. By bridging UM's expertise with societal and policy networks - from Maastricht and the Euregion to Brussels and The Hague - SEM contributes to the relevance and impact of our research. It has also played a key role in positioning our university as a key venue for European debate, attracting politicians, policymakers, experts, and the broader public to engage in meaningful discussions. As SEM enters its next phase, I look forward to its continued contribution to strengthening UM's reputation as a trusted partner in European research and policy."

Prof Rianne Letschert,
President of Maastricht University

LOOKING AHEAD: FUTURE VISION AND PLANS

Against a background of a rapidly changing international and European context and multiple domestic challenges, the mission of SEM as a centre of excellence for research on European themes and a meeting place for critical debate and dialogue with citizens and policymakers is more relevant than ever. After the first five pioneering years where much effort has been invested in shaping the foundations of this new interdisciplinary and inter-faculty UM platform, time has come to move to a next phase. Hereby, it is important to build on our existing strengths, while at the same time exploring new paths. It is important that SEM's agenda remains well integrated into the broader vision of UM and more particularly in its ambition to position itself as the European University of The Netherlands. In that light, UM's renewed Europe Strategy (2025 – 2030) provides an important anchor point.

Looking ahead, we remain committed to our mission and vision. Together with our internal and external partners, we will continue implementing the UM-wide research agenda, fostering interdisciplinary and inter-faculty collaboration, and advancing the public and policy debate. In line with the UM's European policy powerhouse-ambition, special attention will be paid to reaching out to the policy world, both in the Euregion, The Hague and Brussels.

We will keep the following key initiatives at the core of our research-focused portfolio:

- **The UM-wide strategic research agenda;**

The strategic research agenda implemented under the leadership of SEM has successfully inspired new interdisciplinary and interfaculty research and supported existing work on European themes and disciplines across UM. It aligns with one of the four UM strategic research themes, "Europe and a Globalising World", contributing to impactful research at the university level. Given ongoing (geo-) political shifts and relating European challenges, European-focus research remains highly relevant. To reflect this, the research agenda will be updated in 2025 and revised periodically thereafter.

- **An ever closer collaboration with the UM faculties;**

Building on our ongoing collaborations with all UM faculties, we will remain committed to strengthen interdisciplinary collaboration within UM to support researchers to position UM as a thought leader in key areas such as European integration, governance, and major transitions in Europe—green, sustainable, digital, social, security and just. At the same time, we strive to connect and amplify the wide range of state-of-the-art research outcomes across UM to more strategically position our collective European expertise—both as the European university of the Netherlands and as a centre of expertise on Europe nationally and beyond. We will continue to support UM researchers in facilitating their engagement with society and warmly invite them to continue engaging with our work under the umbrella of the UM-wide research agenda on Europe.

- **The SEM seed funding (calls);**

SEM's seed funding has fostered impactful research and outreach projects on European themes. To enhance its alignment with UM's strategic priorities, future calls will place even greater emphasis on societal impact and outreach, supporting researchers in translating their work into evidence for policymakers, solutions for society, and accessible knowledge for citizens. Strengthening ties with UM faculties will be key to addressing evolving research needs and maximising impact.

- **Dedicated research capacity at SEM;**

To sustain and expand research capacity, SEM will continue initiatives like the Europe Chair and postdoctoral appointments. In academic year 2025/26, new researchers will be appointed, driving SEM's impact and outreach agenda as well as fostering strong relations to and collaboration with our UM-expert network. Their work will align with UM's Rewards and Recognition framework, integrating engagement activities into academic career pathways and championing SEM's impact and outreach agenda.

- **Expanding Public Outreach and Policy Influence;**

We will remain curious and keep exploring new ways of engaging with society and fostering strategic partnerships that ensure academic research has a meaningful societal impact. The renewed Europe Strategy of the UM (2025 – 2030) formulates a clear role for SEM in strengthening UM's science-to-policy impact. Deepening connections with The Hague, Brussels, and Limburg—through collaboration with the Brussels Hub, ITEM and other research institutes, Marketing and Communication and other UM offices—will further enhance SEM's added value to the UM and its research community.

- **Enhancing Visibility and Strengthening Partnerships;**

We aspire to be a primary point of contact for societal and policy engagement within UM. This involves positioning SEM as a key part of UM, as a partner for external stakeholders and expanding its network and partnerships. This effort will be guided by the framework of the new International Office, along with a targeted branding and communications strategy, to be developed and implemented in close collaboration with Marketing and Communication.

Authors

Magdalena Kohl

Senior Policy Advisor, Research and Societal Impact,
Studio Europa Maastricht

Dr Gonny Willems

Founding Director of Studio Europa Maastricht and current
Director of Internationalisation at Maastricht University

Prof. Sophie Vanhoonacker

Chair in Administrative Governance and Jean Monnet Professor,
Chair Academic Board Studio Europa Maastricht

Contact

Studio Europa Maastricht
Maastricht University
22a Onze Lieve Vrouweplein
6211 HE Maastricht
The Netherlands
+31 (0)43 388 46 90

Valentino Vondenhoff

Head of Studio Europa Maastricht

research@studioeuropamaastricht.nl

www.studioeuropamaastricht.nl/