

SYNC WRAPPED 2023



A YEAR
OF CONNECTING
SOCIETY
YOUTH AND
NEUROSCIENCE

**A YEAR OF
CONNECTING
SOCIETY**



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WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE DO

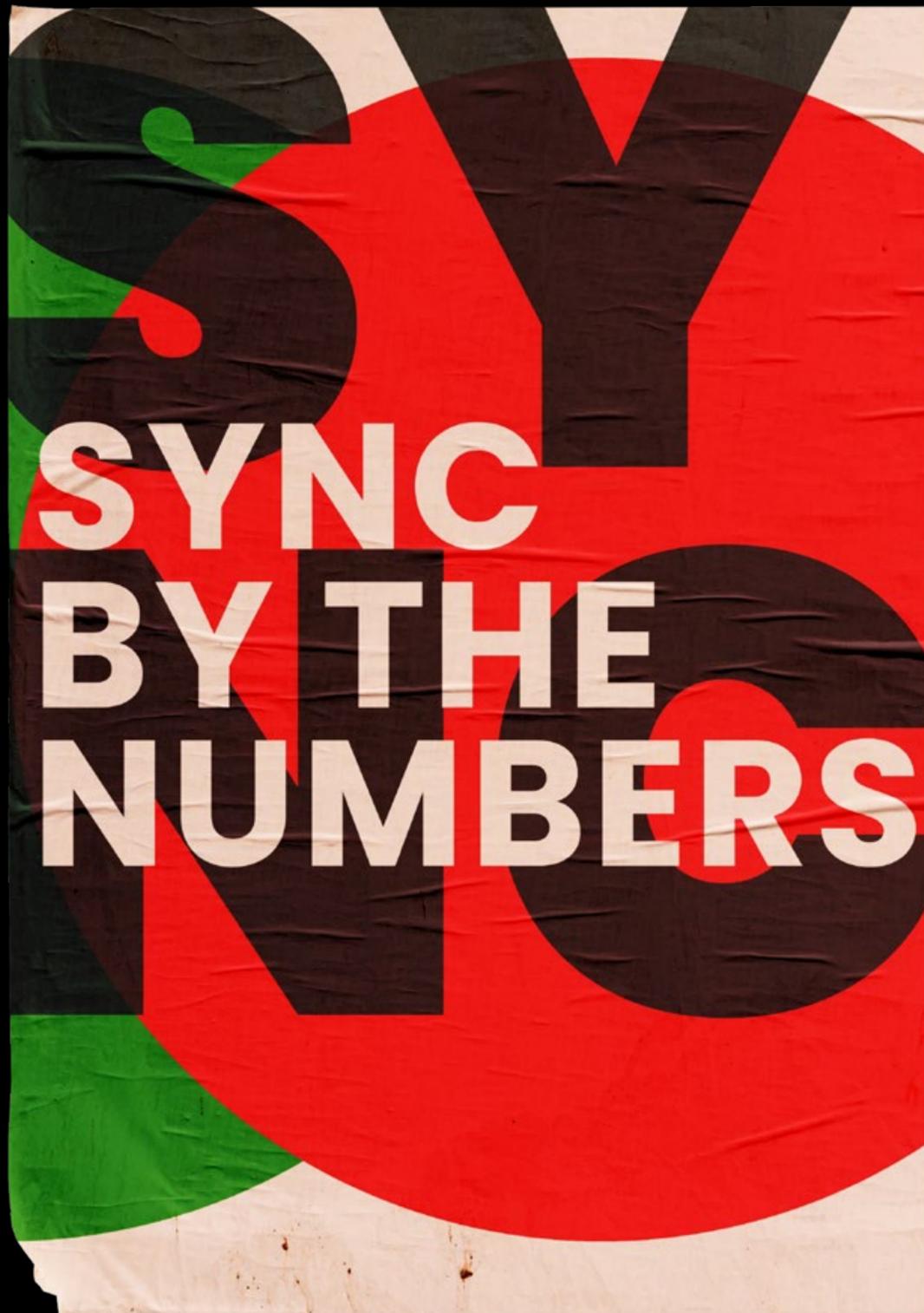
The Erasmus SYNC-lab is a research group that bridges multiple levels of measurement to understand how young people develop into contributing members of society. SYNC stands for Society, Youth and Neuroscience Connected. The SYNC-lab is firmly grounded in exciting new perspectives that have emerged from understanding the dynamic development of the adolescent brain.

Our vision is that science becomes better when conducted together with societal partners, including youth panels, schools, and co-creation teams. We highly value the public understanding and practical implications of scientific knowledge. Therefore, it is important to us to connect and share the knowledge we obtain during our research projects with others. We aim to connect all of society: regardless of origin, skin color, gender, education level, or sexual preference.



“It’s so exciting to work with this team of brilliant young minds, last year truly felt like we could make a difference.”

Eveline Crone
(Principal Investigator
SYNC-lab)



8



RESEARCH
PROJECTS

17

Scientific publications →

Covering a wide range of topics including brain development, genetic and environmental influences, antisocial behavior, self-concept and pro-social behavior

414

Brain scans

as part of the final phase of the longitudinal project [Braintime](#). This year, we did our first pilot at Erasmus MC: 46 participants (who have been participating since 2011!) underwent 9 brain scans per person.

20

Focus groups

In which we empower our target audience to participate in the full research cycle, from creating questionnaires to communicating research outcomes

28000

Youths reached

Via focus groups, school projects, street interviews, social media, science festivals, public lectures, etc

1

Manifesto presented to policymakers

Addressing the theme '[Performance pressure](#)' based on facts from scientific research and take actions from citizen science and focus groups and other interested parties.

14

Scientific keynotes and conference lectures

11

Public lectures and masterclasses

2

Science festivals for children

1

Webinar →

In which we shared knowledge and tips on the topic performance pressure with teachers, policymakers, youth workers, and other interested parties.

1

Lowlands Science

2

Member of advisory board

Eveline is advisory board member of the Nationale Jeugdraad (NJR) and Stichting Lieve Mark.

8

Podcasts and radio
interviews

2

PhD defences

By Simone Dobbelaar with the title [‘Helping me, helping you. Behavioral and neural development of social competence from childhood to adolescence’](#) and by Ilse van de Groep with the title [‘Resisting, Desisting or Persisting? Neural correlates of antisocial and psychopathic pathways in early adulthood’](#).

1

Nomination [Klokhuis
Wetenschapsprijs](#) →

1

[Erasmus Professor](#) →

1

[Documentary about
Eveline Crone](#) →

2

Veni grants →

One for Dr. Michelle Achterberg and her research project 'Dealing with social rejection and the well-being of youth' and one for Dr. Lysanne te Brinke and her research project 'Young people as agents of change'.

3

Healthy Start Fellows

Yara Toenders, Ilse van de Groep, Lysanne te Brinke.

3

Science awards

Including Kayla Green's [Societal Impact Award](#), the [J.C. Ruigrokprijs for behavioral sciences](#) for Michelle Achterberg, and the Graduate Research Day award for Sophie Sweijen.

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A YEAR OF IMPACT

HOW THE SYNC-LAB MADE IMPACT THIS YEAR



This year, we studied the theme performance pressure via our youth platform YoungXperts. Together with young people, we explored what is needed to find solutions. This approach enables us to really make an impact on society.

We used our 'Facts – Take Action' approach, in which we combine neuroscience insights, large-scale survey research, and brainstorms with youth. In collaboration with youths, we proposed solutions that are both feasible for adolescents and based on scientific facts. The solutions for performance pressure range from short-term actions, such as adjusting the language used by teachers, to systemic changes, such as creating

recognizable role models for everyone. In short, the solutions not only lie with youths themselves, the systems and people around young people also play a role.

The YoungXperts team compiled the results in an online manifesto titled 'Youth perspective on performance pressure' and presented this to Robbert Dijkgraaf, the Minister of Education, Culture, and Science. Read the manifesto. Read the manifesto [here.](#) →

In this way, the solutions of the young people actually reach policymakers and politicians, allowing us to contribute to changes in the environment of young people.

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YoungXperts researchers organized an exciting webinar to present the insights from the manifesto to teachers, professionals and policy-makers. In the webinar, Lysanne te Brinke and Kayla Green pointed out the findings and solutions regarding the theme of performance pressure.

The webinar took place on March 15 and was hosted in collaboration with our partners NWA-route Youth, Healthy Start, and NJR.

Watch the full webinar [here](#). →



// *An important finding of our project is that adolescents experience similar levels of performance pressure from both their parents and teachers. The solutions that youth provided in the brainstorming sessions were diverse. For example, more conversations about performance pressure between teachers and students. The youth also proposed more long-term systemic changes, such as reducing the pressure to graduate fast. It was very inspiring to make these voices of youth heard!* //

Dr. Lysanne te Brinke (Researcher)

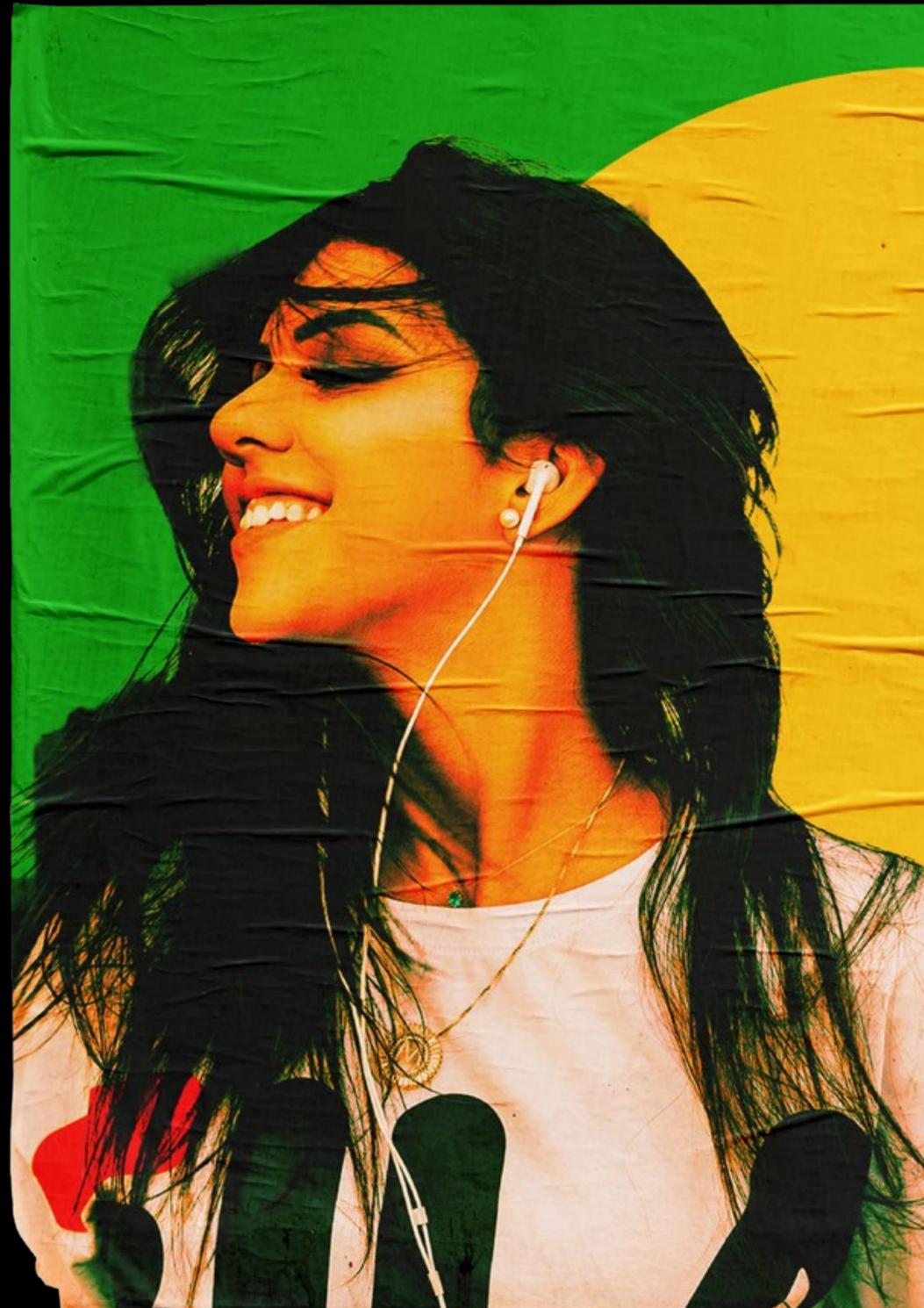
[Read more](#) →

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MORE IMPACTFUL RESEARCH PROJECTS AND SOCIAL INITIATIVES

**A YEAR OF IMPACTFUL PROJECTS
AND COLLABORATIONS**



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URBAN ROTTERDAM PROJECT

In a society filled with crises, we find it important to understand how young people feel and what they need. The aim of this project is to gain more insight into what young people and young adults in Rotterdam need to grow up optimally.

The Urban Rotterdam Project is an online longitudinal behavioral survey study including adolescents and young adults aged 10 – 25 years living in Rotterdam and surrounding areas, with varying socio-economic backgrounds. Every year, we ask about 250 young Rotterdammers to fill in multiple questionnaires about specific actions or behaviors that have an impact on their physical, emotional, and mental well-being.

This way, we map out how young Rotterdammers feel and interact with others, and most importantly, what young individuals, regardless of their starting position, need to become the best version of themselves.

This year, we have conducted our measurements for the 7th and 8th time. A significant number of young people have been participating since our first wave in May 2020. Additionally, we recruit new participants every year, actively seeking young individuals from a wide range of educational backgrounds. In total, we have reached approximately 2500 young people through these efforts.



// The strength of the Urban Rotterdam Project lies in the possibility to respond to actualities. Each wave, we adjust our surveys to address societal themes that are relevant at that time, such as the war in Ukraine, the elections, or the climate crisis. //

Sophie Sweijen (Researcher)

What is the educational background of the participants of the Urban Rotterdam surveys from the past few years? The inner pie-chart shows whether participants go to secondary school (orange) or higher education (blue). The greater the distribution of colors in the outer pie chart, the more diverse the participant sample was in that particular year.

This project is supported by the [Erasmus Trustfonds](#).

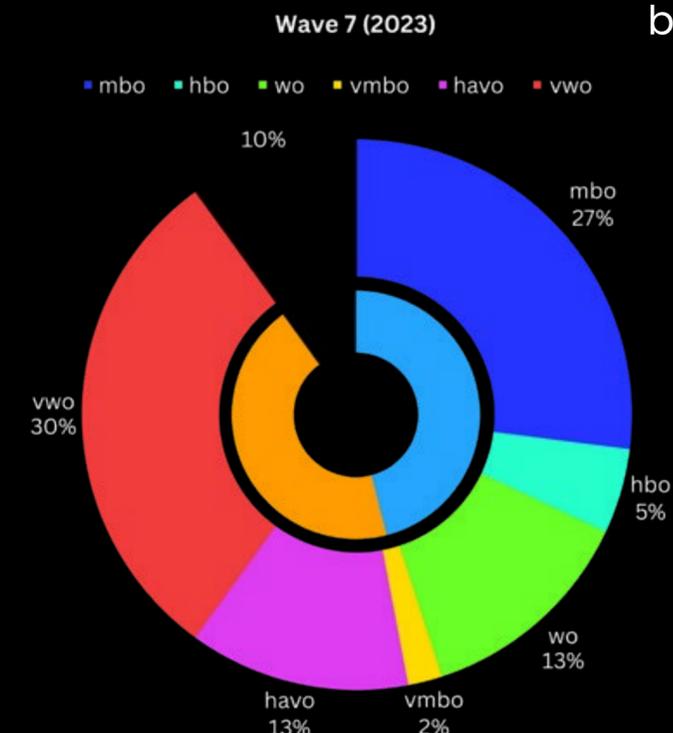
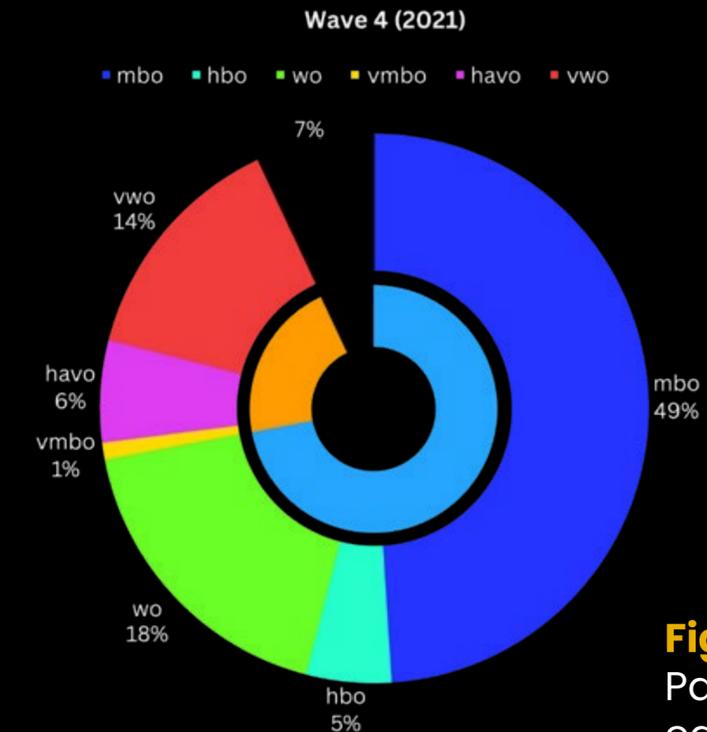


Figure 1
Participants' educational background



'ALL SCHOOLS COLLECT TOGETHER'

This year, our citizen science project 'All Schools Collect Together' has been nominated for a Klokhuis Science Award. Together with 3000 children across the Netherlands, Yara Toenders explored what children find important in their social environment.

Pupils from the 6th, 7th and 8th grade of primary school were researchers for one day. They interviewed adults in their social environment, such as their mother, teacher, or the mayor. In doing so, the children investigated the question whether what they find important is also considered important by adults.

// *The added value of citizen science became very clear to me during the 'All Schools Collect Together' project. Firstly, it was a lesson in letting go: we allowed the pupils to collect their own data by themselves. It quickly became apparent that this approach contributes significantly to our research; we indirectly saw the children's perspective on the theme we are studying. Also, their enthusiasm was contagious!* **//**

Yara Toenders (Researcher)

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WEEKEND OF SCIENCE



During the science festival *Weekend van de Wetenschap*, children could join in our new SYNC-game: *Levend ganzenbord met een twist!* In this life-size version of *Game of the Goose*, children explore the winding journey of growing from child to adult and discover what happens in the brain. Players face challenging choices, such as *'You get 8 steps: you may choose how many you take yourself and how many you share with your fellow-players. What do you do?'*

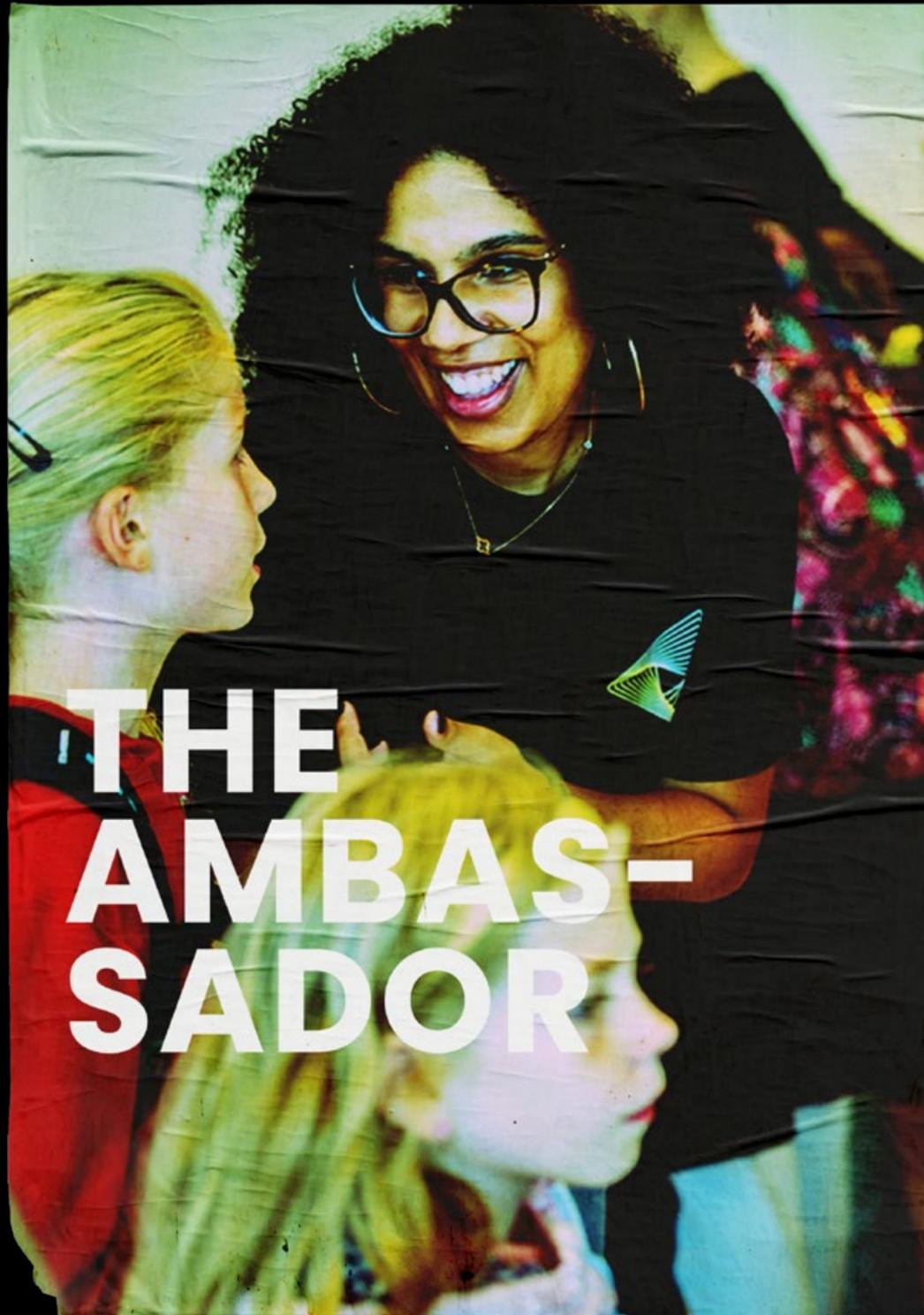
On October 8th, over 900 children and parents visited the Erasmus University, where our successful activities took place. Besides playing the SYNC-game, children could draw their future, participate in real cognitive experiments, give advice to the boss of the Netherlands, and visit our special brain cinema.



// *In the SYNC-game, children almost always choose to share their extra steps instead of taking them all themselves, even when they are close to reaching the finish. This tendency aligns well with the findings from our lab. Our research shows, for instance, that when you do something kind for someone else, especially if you like that person, the reward center in your brain is activated.* **//**

Sterre van Riel

(Science Communication manager)



This year, Kayla Green was the national ambassador for *Weekend van de Wetenschap*:

// *As an ambassador, I hope to ignite enthusiasm for science among as many people as possible. Because after all, science is everywhere and meant for everyone.* **//**

Kayla Green
(Researcher)

MOVIE →





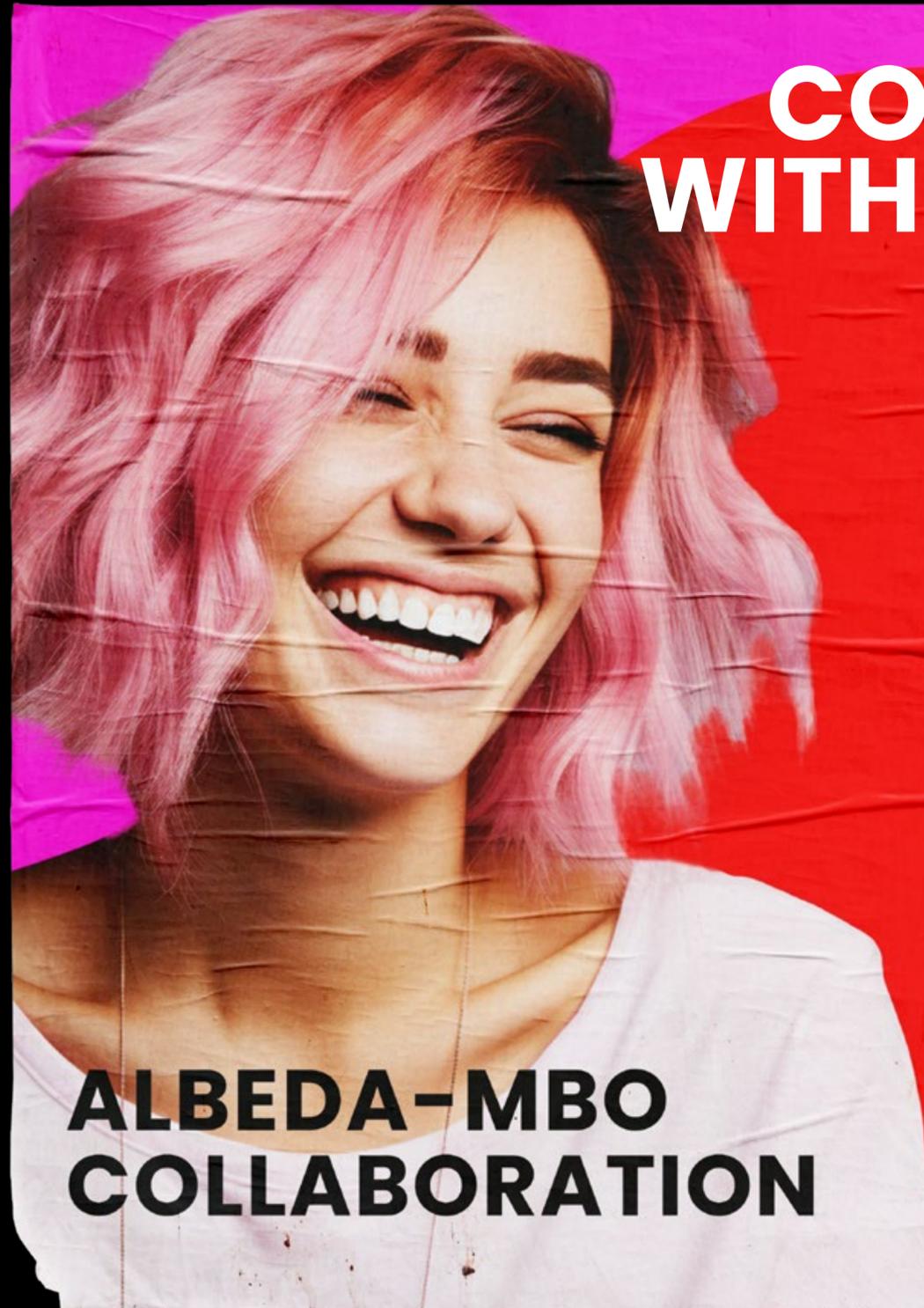
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We were also present at this years' editions of Expeditie Next and Lowlands Science.



COLLABORATION WITH ALBEDA-MBO

ALBEDA-MBO COLLABORATION

The SYNC-lab has started a collaboration with Albeda. Together with thousands of mbo students, we aim to set up new insights and innovations that contribute to equal opportunities for all young people.

The SYNC-lab will provide lectures on topics that are relevant for adolescents, such as mental health and fake-news. Additionally, we will collaborate with the students to shape our research questions and practical applications: what research areas require further investigation, what are the needs of the current generation of young people, and how do we ensure that youth really benefit from research? This strategic partnership establishes the foundation for the upcoming years of collaboration.



**READ
MORE**



“ I believe that science improves when performed in collaboration with societal partners, including youth panels and schools. The collaboration with Albeda fits perfectly with this perspective. **”**

Eveline Crone

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VISION FOR 2024



VISION FOR 2024

In the coming year, the SYNC-lab will continue its efforts to shape an optimal future for youth, in collaboration with our scientific partners Healthy Start and GUTS, and in close cooperation with youth organizations and societal partners:

- In 2024, the extensive GUTS program kicks off: 600 young people in Rotterdam will have their brains scanned and think along with scientific questions.
- As part of the Healthy Start program we will continue to use a transdisciplinary perspective to study how youth can have the opportunity to reach their full developmental potential. In this

collaboration, we focus on young people's mental wellbeing, juvenile delinquency and addiction and youth participation.

- The SYNC-lab, YoungXperts and Albeda-mbo will further develop their strategic collaboration through lectures, brainstorming sessions, and events.
- We will proceed with our collaboration with NJR, Lieve Mark, MindUs, and many other partners.
- You can find us again at ExpeditieNext, Weekend van de Wetenschap, Lowlands Science, and more!

The Growing Up Together in Society (GUTS)

program is a large-scale research project aiming to answer the question: how do young people navigate their lives in a complex society? GUTS approaches this from different angles in both science and society itself. The SYNC-lab is closely connected to GUTS: Eveline Crone is the project lead and several SYNC-colleagues are members of the GUTS program. Seven universities are collaborating on this initiative, bringing together expertise on topics such as inequality, education, friendships, brain development, family dynamics, and genetics.

Healthy Start is a unique collaboration between Erasmus University Rotterdam, Erasmus Medical Center and TU Delft. Eveline Crone is one of the academic leads of the Healthy Start Program. Three SYNC-colleagues work as Healthy Start Fellows, in which they use knowledge from combined research fields to combat mental health problems in youth, antisocial pathways and the ways to empower the voices of youth. More than 150 scientists and societal partners are associated with this important program.

OUR PARTNERS

Albeda mbo

NJR

Healthy Start

NWA Route Jeugd

GUTS

Hot Politics Lab

Strategiegroep Kennis van ministerie

OCW

MindUS

Lieve Mark

Erasmus Verbindt

Netwerk Nieuw Rotterdam

IDEA center

MDT op Zuid

Stichting Me & Society

De Kindertelefoon



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