Dutch Brain Cognition and Behavior Day

Current state, challenges, and future perspectives of BCB research in NL

26th of March, 2025

Morning program (9.30-14.00)

Organized by BCB-NL & Young NeurolabNL

9.30 – 9.45 | *Entrance*
Registration & Reception

9.45 – 10.00 | *Eventspace*
Introduction to BCB-NL & Young NeurolabNL

10.00 – 10.45 | *Eventspace*
Keynote lecture – Eveline Crone

10.45 – 11.45 | *Eventspace*
Plenary discussion
"The Future of Brain and Cognition research in the Netherlands"

11.45 – 12.00
Coffee break

12.00 – 13.00 | *Eventspace*
Brainstorm / break-out groups
"BCB-NL network, white paper & funding"

13.00 – 14.00
Lunch
(+ NeurolabNL Taskforce meeting for invitees)

Afternoon program (13.00 – 18.00)

Organized by Young NeuroIabNL
for early career researchers

13.00 – 14.00 | *Entrance*
Registration & lunch

14.00 – 14.40 | *Eventspace*
Key-note lecture – Lisanne Stone

"On Working in a Pressure Cooker:
Budget Cuts and Academic Activism"

14.45 – 15.25 | *Eventspace*
Workshop – Agnieszka Bojanowska

"Pillars of Workplace Well-being (part 1)"

15.25 – 15.45
Coffee break

15.45 – 17.00 | *Eventspace*
Workshop – Agnieszka Bojanowska

"Pillars of Workplace Well-being (part 2)"

17.00 – 18.00
Networking borrel

Message from Young NeurolabNL & BCB-NL

Dear researchers in Brain, Cognition, and Behavior,

Welcome to today's gathering — a day dedicated to connecting, reflecting, and looking ahead as a research community.

This morning, we focus on the future of Brain, Cognition, and Behavior (BCB) research in the Netherlands. Together, we will explore where our field stands, the challenges we face, and how we can continue to push the boundaries of knowledge in the years to come. In the afternoon, we turn to a crucial issue for our community: the position and well-being of early-career researchers, with sessions on the impact of budget cuts, the growing pressure on young scientists, and the importance of supporting mental health in academia.

As researchers, we are united by a shared mission: to understand the brain and behavior in all its complexity. Fundamental research in this domain is essential for uncovering the neural and psychological mechanisms that shape how we think, feel, and act. It lays the groundwork for future treatments of brain-related disorders and deepens our understanding of individual differences in behavior. But while the road of fundamental research is long, it is increasingly under threat. Shifts in (public) funding toward short-term outcomes and immediate applications make it harder to pursue the foundational studies our field depends on.

At the same time, we see growing pressure on early-career researchers, whose future in science is made uncertain by budget cuts and structural challenges. Today's keynote and workshop on mental health and well-being aim to give space to this conversation, which is essential for sustaining a healthy and innovative research community.

We hope today inspires new ideas, collaborations, and shared strategies for strengthening BCB research in the Netherlands.

Best wishes,

The Young NeurolabNL core team
Eliana Vassena
Ewa Miedzobrodzka
Desiderio Cano Porras
Sanne Moorman
Florian Krause
Chris Vriend
Amy Abelmann

BCB-NL coordinators
Michiel van Elk
Eliana Vassena

BCBNL
Brain Cognition Behaviour The Netherlands

Young Neurolab NL

Location & Route

Social Impact Factory - Vredenburg
Vredenburg 40, Utrecht

https://www.socialimpactfactory.com/locaties/vredenburg/

TRAIN & BUS
The venue is easily accessible by public transport. From Utrecht Central Station, several buses depart from bus station Jaarbeurszijde, stops C and D. Plan your journey to the bus stop: Vredenburg, Utrecht.
Click here for directions.

WALKING FROM UTRECHT CS
You can find our location Vredenburg just a 5-minute walk from Utrecht Central Station.

- Walk from Utrecht CS via the new station square to the new main entrance of Hoog Catharijne (currently, after the station area, head left towards 'outside' onto the new station square, and then you can enter Hoog Catharijne through the sliding doors diagonally to the right).
- Then, turn left. Walk past Douglas (on your left) and then keep right, towards Vredenburgplein/Tivolivredenburg/Binnenstad. Continue straight and go downstairs via the escalator.
- At the bottom of the escalator, exit Hoog Catharijne on the left side (near The Burger Federation). Then, walk straight ahead and after about 200 meters, you'll come across the Social Impact Factory (a large white building).
- Once inside, walk through the brasserie and you'll find the stairs to the entrance on the right.

TRAVEL BY CAR & PARKING
Parking by car is available at Paardenveld and P5 Hoog Catharijne in Utrecht.

Morning program

9.30 – 14.00

Organised by
BCB-NL & Young NeurolabNL

9:45 – 10:00

Welcome by Young NeurolabNL & BCB-NL

Eliana Vassena & Michiel van Elk

YOUNG NEUROLABNL

Young NeurolabNL is a platform by and for young researchers in the field of brain, cognition and behavior. It is an initiative to give a voice to, empower, and actively engage young researchers, and to promote interdisciplinary and multicentric collaborations.

Our main goals are:

1. Increasing **visibility** of young researchers in the field of Brain, Cognition and Behavior
2. Building a **network** and **connecting** with each other
3. Supporting **interdisciplinary research** and **knowledge exchange** among young researchers
4. Performing **outreach** activities that inform society
5. **Representing** the needs of young researchers
6. Supporting the **professional** development of young researchers

BCB-NL

The Brain Cognition and Behaviour – Netherlands platform unites Dutch researchers in neuroscience, psychology, and related fields, fostering an interdisciplinary and collaborative approach to brain and behavior research. BCB-NL aims to advance both fundamental and applied research, thereby increasing the field's societal impact. Key areas of focus include tackling societal issues like mental health, education, and public safety, where cognitive, neuro- and behavioral sciences can make a significant contribution.

BCB-NL also advocates for greater visibility and support for this research domain, engaging with governmental agencies (NWO; ZonMW), universities, and research initiatives (e.g., Neurolab.nl; YoungNeurolab; Hoofdzaken.nl) to promote funding and policy alignment. Through organized knowledge exchange, lobbying efforts, networking events and outreach initiatives, BCB-NL enhances the effectiveness of brain and behavior research, enabling the different organizations in this field to speak with one voice.

Eliana Vassena is an Assistant Professor of Experimental Psychopathology at Radboud University and associate researcher at the Donders Institute and Radboudumc. She obtained her Phd in experimental psychology and cognitive neuroscience from Ghent University in 2014. Subsequently she moved to the Donders Institute and now to the Behavioural Sicence Institute (Radboud University). Her work combines neuroscience with computational psychiatry, studying the cognitive and neural mechanisms of motivation and decision-making. She investigates how these mechanisms are impaired under stress and in psychiatric disorders such as depression and anxiety, using computational modeling, pharmarcology and neuroimaging. Her research is funded by NWO and ERC grants. She is co-founder and lead of the Computational Neuropsychiatry Platform (CNP) Nijmegen. She is co-chair of the Radboud Young Academy and coordinator of BCB-NL. Eliana is highly committed to promote diversity, inclusion and sustainability in academia. She has been a member of Young NeurolabNL, the https://www.winrepo.org/ initiative, and the Donders Diversity and Sustainable science initiative. She engages in outreach through live and online platforms, including for example the InScience Film Festival in Nijmegen, and has served as editor in chief of https://it.in-mind.org/.

Michiel van Elk obtained degrees in philosophy (MA), biological psychology (MSc) and the psychology of religion (MSc) in Utrecht, Amsterdam and Nijmegen. He completed his PhD in Cognitive Neuroscience at the Donders Institute in Nijmegen (cum laude). He worked as a visiting researcher at the University of California Santa Barbara (2010), as a Marie Curie post-dotoral fellow at the École Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne in Switzerland (2010-2012), as a Fulbright Scholar at Stanford University (2017), as a Research Fellow at the Netherlands Institute for Advanced Studies (NIAS) in Amsterdam (2019-2010) and as a researcher at the University of Amsterdam (2013-2020). Since 2020 Michiel is affiliated as Associate Professor to the University of Leiden and supported by prestigious grants from the John Templeton Foundation, NWO and the BIAL Foundation he supervises the Psychedelic, Religious, Self-transcendent and Mystical Experiences (PRSM) Lab (www.prsmlab.com). He has published more than 100 peer-reviewed papers in prestigious peer-reviewed scientific journals, including Nature Human Behavior, Cortex, Scientific Reports and Neuroscience and Biobehavioral Reviews. Michiel has also published several popular science books on such different topics as the Babybrain, the Evolution of Religion, Ecstatic Experiences and Psychedelics.

10.00 – 10:45

Key note lecture – Eveline Crone

Why we need fundamental science to understand human connections on a troubling world

We live in a world with increasing polarization and rising hostility between social groups in our society. How do we bridge those divides? In this talk, I will show why a frontiers science program is essential to increase our understanding of how the human brain is wired to connect.

In my first ERC grant, a starting grant in 2010, I discovered with my team that brain regions that are important for reward processing develop earlier in our lifetime than the brain regions that are important for controlling our thoughts and actions. My second ERC grant, a consolidator grant in 2016, demonstrated that these same neural systems allow us to collaborate and have deep emotional social connections. These processes emerge between childhood and adulthood and are shaped during that time for our lives.

But if these neural systems are so sophisticated, why do we still see so many divides in our society? This is because our sophisticated brain also facilitates ingroup-outgroup thinking. We discovered the neural underpinning for why it is rewarding to share with family, but not with strangers. It makes sense that we distinguish between people we trust and people with whom we need to build trust over time. But our society changes quickly, and connecting to others is more important than ever.

The rise of technology was a major step forward for digital communication, but now our brains have difficulty keeping up because we search for like-minded people and we need to invest effort to connect.

Unlike applied research, which targets immediate challenges, frontier research explores fundamental questions with no guaranteed path to immediate application. Yet, over time, these explorations have been proven, time and time again, to yield transformative impacts. These can provide answers to questions that we did not even know to ask, and opportunities that we did not anticipate.

This is why it is vital that funding for research and innovation is balanced. These are troubling and unpredictable times, but if there is one thing that is certain, it is that investing in science today will secure tomorrow's breakthroughs and a better society for our children.

Eveline Crone is professor in Developmental Neuroscience in Society at Erasmus University Rotterdam and Professor of Neurocognitive Developmental Psychology at Leiden University. Her Society, Youth and Neuroscience Connected (SYNC) lab examines the psychological and neural processes involved in self-regulation and social development from birth to adulthood, with a special focus on adolescence. Her research relies strongly on neuroscience and translational approaches, involving societal partners and youth in the full research cycle and with a direct link to youth policy. One of her special interests involves enrichment of cognitive and social experiences of children and adolescents using longitudinal, training and intervention designs. Prof. Eveline Crone and her team regularly publish in leading international journals (> 200 international articles). She currently leads the 10-year Growing Up Together in Society (GUTS) Gravitation program (2023-2033) a large-scale multi-site program on adolescent neural and social development.

Prof. Eveline Crone is a member of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW), Corresponding Fellow of The British Academy, and Member of the US National Academy of Sciences (NAS). She is the President of the International Flux Society for Developmental Cognitive Neuroscience and past Vice-President for Social Sciences and Humanities of the Scientific Council of the European Research Council (ERC), the European Commission's flagship program for excellent science. Prof. Crone has been awarded several prestigious research grants and recognitions including the Spinoza award for her research on the adolescent brain. The Spinoza award is the highest recognition in Dutch Science.

In addition to her scientific work, Prof. Crone has been successfully communicating her findings to the general public. In 2018 she published the revision of the Dutch book "The Adolescent Brain" for a wide audience, of which over 100,000 copies have been sold. The book has been translated into six languages. In this book, Eveline Crone explains the influence of brain development on learning, risk-taking and the social relations and friendships of adolescents. Her new book 'Generation Self-Confidence appeared the fall of 2024.

10.45 – 11:45

Plenary discussion

The future of brain and cognition research in the Netherlands

Brain, Cognition, and Behavior (BCB) research in the Netherlands is a rapidly evolving field, with a strong foundation but also facing significant challenges. This panel brings together researchers from across the BCB domain to reflect on where we stand today and where we need to go next. Panelists will share their views on current breakthroughs and ongoing hurdles, including issues around funding, interdisciplinary collaboration, and ethical considerations that increasingly shape the way we work.

The discussion will focus on identifying the most pressing challenges for BCB research in the Netherlands, such as how to maintain excellence in a competitive funding landscape and how to bridge disciplinary divides to address complex research questions. At the same time, the conversation will look ahead to emerging opportunities. What are the key research questions for the next decade? Which technological and methodological innovations are likely to redefine the field? And how can we strengthen collaborations — both within the Netherlands and internationally — to ensure BCB research remains at the forefront?

With contributions from both panelists and the audience, this session aims to generate an open and constructive conversation about the future of BCB research in the Netherlands. It will conclude with reflections on the concrete steps that researchers, funders, and institutions can take to foster a thriving and forward-looking research community.

Biographies of panel members

Marie-José van Tol works as a full professor of Cognitive Neuropsychiatry at the University Medical Center Groningen. In her work, she combines perspectives from cognitive neurosciences with clinical psychology. She strives to understand the role brain functioning plays in the development, recovery, and recurrence of mood disorders.
Marie-José studied Clinical and Health Psychology at Utrecht University and obtained her PhD at Leiden University on brain functioning in individuals suffering from depressive and anxiety disorders. After post-doctoral appointments in Leiden, Groningen, and Magdeburg (Germany), she started her research line focusing on the long-term course of mood disorders at the University Medical Center Groningen in 2015. Since 2024, Marie-José is the director of the Research School of Behavioural and Cognitive Neurosciences that joins neuroscientific research of five faculties of the University of Groningen and serves as chair of the Netherlands Brain Initiative (Nationaal Plan Hoofdzaken) that aims to promote transdiagnostic and transdisciplinary collaboration to improve mental health and brain health.

Jeanet Bruil is head of the Dutch Research Agenda (NWA) at the Dutch Research Council (NWO). After a research career at the university and the Netherlands Organisation for applied scientific research TNO, she started to work in research funding. As head of the Public Health team at the Netherlands Organisation for health research and development (ZonMw), she worked with her team on stimulating research on the promotion and protection of health and prevention of disease. Subsequently she worked as head Strategic Partnerships & Policy, Social Sciences and Humanities at the Dutch Research council. Nowadays she works as head of the Dutch Research Agenda. Driving force in her work is to facilitate researchers and societal organisations to work together to answer research questions formulated by the society. Research funding has, in her opinion, an essential role to play in stimulating the scientific and societal impact of science, as an intermediary between science, policymakers and societal stakeholders.

Suzanne L Dickson is a neurobiologist and Professor of Neuroendocrinology at the University of Gothenburg. She graduated with a Ph.D. in Neuroendocrinology from the University of Cambridge in 1993, where she later became Senior Lecturer in Physiology. She is a leading figure in neuroendocrinology and works within many European Union and international organisations and societies to promote research, facilitate grant funding and training of Early Career Scientists. Her research into the neurobiology of appetite aims to unravel neurobiological pathways that respond to orexigenic signals, such as the hormone, ghrelin, and that drive feeding behaviours, not only food intake but also food choice, food anticipation, food reward and food motivation. This work involves mostly preclinical studies and includes behavioural tasks, viral vector mapping, chemogenetics and RNAscope. She is President of the European Brain Council, Secretary of the European College for Neuropsychopharmacology and a member of the International Brain Research Organization – Pan European Regional Committee

Eveline Crone is professor in Developmental Neuroscience in Society at Erasmus University Rotterdam and Professor of Neurocognitive Developmental Psychology at Leiden University. Her Society, Youth and Neuroscience Connected (SYNC) lab examines the psychological and neural processes involved in self-regulation and social development from birth to adulthood, with a special focus on adolescence. Her research relies strongly on neuroscience and translational approaches, involving societal partners and youth in the full research cycle and with a direct link to youth policy. One of her special interests involves enrichment of cognitive and social experiences of children and adolescents using longitudinal, training and intervention designs.

12:00 – 13:00

Brainstorm/break-out groups

Brain, Cognition and Behavior research: Current state, challenges, and future perspectives of BCB research in NL

Instructions:
We invite you to join us in writing a White Paper titled: "Brain, Cognition and Behavior research: Current state, challenges, and future perspectives of BCB research in NL". The purpose of this paper is to highlight the importance and current societal need for fundamental brain, cognition and behavior research. This White Paper will be published on open platforms, and all participants in this workshop will have the opportunity to co-author it. Please find the survey linked here to collect your affiliations etc. The White Paper is intended to inform and inspire policy makers, funders, colleagues and laypeople.

During this session, you are invited to join one of the six thematic groups that are listed below. Each group will brainstorm and draft part of the text for the White Paper. There will be opportunity to volunteer to join a smaller group who will finish the paper in April. The final version will be sent to all contributors to allow final decision on co-authorship.

1. Facts & Figures: How many researchers work in our field of Brain, Cognition and Behavior? What output do we generate? How does this situation compare to other countries? This topic will be partly supported by data analysis from the Research Intelligence Service from the University of Groningen.
2. Research agenda: How has research in our field addressed questions of the National Research Agenda in the last 10 years,

and what are new developments? What are the results? Which themes and questions should be addressed in the next 10 years?

3. **Fundamental research:** What are examples of successful implementations in fundamental research in our field of Brain, Cognition and Behavior? How does research expertise in the Netherlands relate to international research? (Why) are animal experiments necessary and important?
4. **Applied research:** What are examples of successful implementations in applied research in our field of Brain, Cognition and Behavior? Who are our stakeholders? Which ones are missing and should be included?
5. **Funding landscape:** Which agencies fund research in our field of Brain, Cognition and Behavior? What other funding opportunities do you know beyond the usual suspects? How does our field relate to recent calls? Are there sufficient opportunities for interdisciplinary research?
6. **Public outreach:** In what ways is our research visible to the Dutch society? What are examples of successful implementations? How can we increase the visibility of BCB research in the NL?

Afternoon program

For early career researchers

14.00 – 18.00

Organised by
Young NeurolabNL

14:00 – 14:40

Key-note lecture – Lisanne Stone

On working in a pressure cooker: Budget cuts and academic activism

The Schoof government is planning to impose massive budget cuts to the higher education sector. In this talk, Dr. Lisanne Stone will argue these cuts are irresponsible, fiscally unnecessary, and a form of breach of contract. Subsequently, she will ask the question how can we understand why Schoof I is causing this battlefield and will connect the budget cuts to the current political context and academic culture. Specifically, she will speak about the consequences for junior staff and the possibilities academic activism provides for defending our institutions.

Lisanne Stone did her PhD in Developmental Psychopathology at Radboud University, examining both the psychometric properties of a screening instrument for psychosocial problems and the development of childhood internalizing problems using longitudinal multi-informant multi-method data (2009-2014). In parallel, she worked in clinical practice where she obtained her registration (2017; GZ-psycholoog). She joined Karakter, Child and Adolescent Psychiatry University Center, in 2017 where she discovered her passion for working from a collaborative relationship perspective with adolescents and their parents. During her clinical work, she obtained ample experience in treating high-risk emotion regulation problems via systemic, outreaching and high intensive care. As of 2024, she moved to the department of Developmental Psychology at Tilburg University and aims to connect conceptual systems research with clinical practice. Her mission is to contribute to understanding and collaboration around systemic crisis care for youth.

14:45 –17.00

Workshop - Agnieszka Bojanowska

Seven Pillars of Workplace Well-being for Early Career Researchers

This workshop is dedicated for early career researchers who would like to develop and maintain a healthy relationship with work in academia: avoid burnout, reduce stress, and regulate engagement in a way that makes it sustainable, leading to career progression and to growth. During the workshop, you will learn about the Seven Pillars of Workplace Well-being - seven psychological skills responsible for how people feel at work and how they deal with stress. You will gain valuable insights into your own workplace well-being skills and understand their mechanics and common pitfalls.

Self-assessment (https://sustainableperformance.scoreapp.com)
A week before the workshop, participants will receive access to a self-assessment form which would allow them to reflect on their relationship with work in academia. Participants will be invited to use their insights from the self-assessment during the workshop.

Overview workshop program:
14.45 – 15.25: Part 1

- Lecture on the Seven Pillars of Workplace Well-being

15.25 – 15.45: Coffee break
15.45 – 17.00: Part 2

- In smaller groups, you will apply the Seven Pillars to your own work and personal life.

Agnieszka Bojanowska is an associate professor in well-being psychology, author of scientific publications, a therapist and a trainer specialised in workplace well-being issues. She helps people and organisations in building skills responsible for maintaining well-being at work, she also creates training programs on sustainable engagement and burnout prevention. She developed her own way of working with well-being issues: Seven Pillars of Workplace Well-being.