

PIONEER Early Career Researchers Training School

The first, annual PIONEER Early Career Researchers Training School, developed and organised by Avans UAS and ISTCE, will take place Monday 28 September – 2 October 2026 in 's-Hertogenbosch, The Netherlands.

The training school will have the following objectives:

1. Develop an understanding and skills of transdisciplinary practice-based research methodologies, driving SDG 11 impact-driven research
2. Critically reflect on opportunities and threats of AI in Research
3. Foster international networking & research collaboration

The training will be tailored for Early Career Researchers (ECRs) to engage them in PIONEER research activities focused on SDG 11 Safe, resilient and sustainable Cities, Regions and Communities and create supportive connections.

The societal challenges related to SDG 11 safe, resilient and sustainable regions, cities and community's offers opportunities for a transdisciplinary and practice-based research approach. Its success is not just about advancing academic knowledge but also driving tangible societal change. It involves a multitude of stakeholders: government and institutional bodies, industry, service providers, communities, researchers, students and citizens.

The usefulness and practical applicability of research outcomes are key to bringing actual change. Practice-based research requires collaboration, inclusivity, different perspectives and actionable outcomes that resonate with the needs of regions, businesses and communities. Co-creation in driving meaningful change and impact is key.

Artificial Intelligence is a powerful tool which accelerates research process and redefines cross-disciplinary dialogue. It can in fact support scholars to develop in their research. At the same time, the rapid adoption of AI also brings significant challenges that the research community must address. It also presents significant challenges with respect to gender balance, equality, ethics, north-south and center-periphery discrepancy in epistemic power, research integrity, impacts and applications.

With a mix of academic and applied research practitioners we will explore the characteristics of transdisciplinary applied research, discover different research methodology paradigms, explore key criteria for successful demand articulation, network building and research plan, visit and get insights into successful co-creation and impact driven networks and projects with our ecosystem partners in the region of North-Brabant, The Netherlands. A SDG11 related challenge from our ecosystem will be integrated in the programme. The training school will provide the ideal environment to

learn, experience and apply, allowing ample opportunities to foster new connections and collaborations.

Joining academics from different disciplines who have been integrating AI in their research and developed a deep scientific, epistemic and ethical reflection on its use, the training school will address all these aspects, also introducing crucial insights on possible future perspectives, particularly focusing on potential ways of human-AI collaboration.