



Press release

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Dutch universities of applied sciences join forces in research into experiential therapies for psychological complaints

Six Dutch universities of applied sciences have decided to work more closely together in the field of arts therapies to treat psychological complaints. To this end, they have set up the new [cooperative venture KenVaK](#) (*Kennisontwikkeling Vaktherapieën*) - a research centre for arts therapies and psychomotricity. The expectation is that this form of cooperation will make it possible to help more people with psychological complaints and also to improve the help provided. As far as we know, this is the first time that Dutch universities of applied sciences have combined their research activities in a single cooperative venture. KenVaK has around 25 affiliated researchers, who will implement a joint research programme amongst other things. The cooperative venture is led by Professor [Dr Susan van Hooren](#). The launch of the KenVaK cooperative venture will be on 10 June, and the occasion will be marked with the '[Krachten gebundeld](#)' (Joined Forces) conference in Ede.

Interventions

Arts therapies and psychomotricity are therapies used to treat or support people with psychological complaints. This form of therapy is largely non-verbal and experiential: the focus is on the actions and the experience and not on talking. The therapist makes methodical use of interventions with art, dance, drama, music, or movement. These offer the client a different perspective from verbally-oriented therapies such as psychotherapy or cognitive behavioural therapy. Arts therapies and psychomotricity can be used for various groups of people with psychological complaints, such as elderly people with dementia, psychiatric patients, children with autism, vulnerable young people, and people with an intellectual disability. People who have taken part in this form of therapy are often very satisfied with it. In the Netherlands, arts therapies and psychomotricity are anchored within mental health care and are used in fields including special education, care for the elderly, forensic care, and the prevention of illness or problems.

Decline in psychological complaints

A growing number of studies have demonstrated that arts therapies and psychomotricity can reduce the symptoms of psychological complaints. This improves the clients' ability to function within society. A recent study by KenVaK demonstrated that the integration of

arts therapies principles into activities for young people in urban neighbourhoods leads to greater resilience in vulnerable young people. It has also been demonstrated that art therapy used for people with personality disorders result in a decline in symptoms and greater resilience.

A unique initiative

Until recently, research was being carried out into the effects of arts therapies and psychomotricity by various universities of applied sciences in the Netherlands. Over recent years, cooperation between institutes has gradually increased. The universities of applied sciences have now decided to firmly join forces in the form of a cooperative venture with a common research programme. Institutions and practices can affiliate themselves with this cooperative venture. This approach is unique within the Netherlands.

The parties behind the KenVaK cooperative venture are (in alphabetical order): HU University of Applied Sciences Utrecht, HAN University of Applied Sciences (Arnhem and Nijmegen), Stenden University of Applied Sciences, and Zuyd University of Applied Sciences. Codarts University for the Arts and University of Applied Sciences Leiden will soon also be joining this cooperative venture, and discussions are underway with ArtEZ University of the Arts too. The KenVaK cooperative venture closely aligns its research policy with the [Federatie Vaktherapeutische Beroepen](#) (federation of arts therapy-related professions).

END OF PRESS RELEASE

This is a joint press release issued by HU University of Applied Sciences Utrecht, HAN University of Applied Sciences (Arnhem and Nijmegen), Stenden University of Applied Sciences, and Zuyd University of Applied Sciences.

Photo caption: The KenVaK cooperative venture is led by Dr Susan van Hooren, Associate Professor at Zuyd University of Applied Sciences.

Note for editors, not for publication:

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