

An Innovative Call for Collaboration between UM student teams and External Partners



Introducing SPARK

(Societally relevant Projects to Apply and Retain Knowledge)

At Maastricht University's School of Business and Economics, we are innovating our problem-based learning. In the new teaching model SPARK, we integrate a societally relevant, complex project into the academic curriculum for third-year Bachelor students in our Economics and Business Economics (EBE) program. This will allow students to gain hands-on experience tackling real-world challenges. We would like to have **you** on board as an external partner for this project!

Topic of the project: *"Redefining Fairness in Food Value Chains"*

Smallholder producers often receive the lowest value in global supply chains. This project encourages students to examine the distribution of value and propose innovative solutions for equitable compensation, improved market access, and sustainability. Possible spinoffs include (but are not limited to):

- *Establishing Data-Driven Supply Chains for Sustainable Agriculture*
- *Rethinking Fair Carbon Pricing in Agriculture*
- *New Frontiers in Fairness through Smart Data and Digitalization*
- *European Food systems in the current evolving political context*

Why Join SPARK?

By participating, you gain access to:

- **Talent Pipeline:** Identify and build relationships with near future graduates.
- **Networking Opportunities:** Connect with academic and industry leaders.
- **Innovative Solutions:** Access fresh, out-of-the-box ideas from student teams addressing the complex challenges in your industry or sector
- **Societal Impact:** Ensure your perspective influences the next generation of changemakers.
- **Organizational Exposure:** Collaborate with UM SBE on a cutting-edge education model.

What do we expect from you

Stakeholder involvement is integral to the program, structured into three key in-person engagement sessions:

1. **Initial Meeting (Plenary):** You and other external partners outline your perspectives on the challenge, highlight bottlenecks, and propose pathways forward.
2. **Midterm Feedback Session:** Student teams present their chosen focus areas for the project to obtain your feedback and refinement.
3. **Final Presentation:** Students present their final solutions, and you get the chance to engage with students

NEW! SPARK Project Design

SPARK proposes a new type of Project design, by envisioning a meaningful cooperation with external partners. Each SPARK Project develops a dynamic forum around a larger societal challenge, serving as a meeting place between multiple stakeholders—academic, industry, and policy.

Students, in teams of five, dedicate a semester to exploring a specific angle on this broader societal challenge, delivering structured and competent solutions. Each team benefits from guidance by academic coaches and insights from academic, industry and policy experts. The program can host up to 12 student teams per semester, offering rich networking opportunities.

UM ensures structured academic oversight and consistent support for student teams throughout the project through a diverse team of academic staff available for the student teams. Stakeholders contribute their expertise without bearing the responsibility of managing student progress.

Get involved

If this model aligns with your organization's goals, we would be delighted to explore opportunities for collaboration. Let's begin the conversation—in person or online—to shape impactful projects for the future together.