



NWO Programme MEERVOUD

More female researchers as assistant professor

Evaluation report 2005 – 2010

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Introduction

This report presents the results of the evaluation of the NWO ALW-EW programme called MEERVOUD – *More female researchers as assistant professor* – carried out in October 2010.

The programme MEERVOUD started more than a decade ago in 2000 at the initiative of the NWO Divisions for Earth and Life Sciences (ALW), Physical Sciences (EW), and Chemical Sciences (CW) in order to support and improve the career progression of female researchers in postdoc positions to a tenured appointment. MEERVOUD is a Dutch acronym for “More female researchers as assistant professors”.

For the evaluation of the programme over the period 2005 - 2010 a temporary committee was installed. The committee consisted of representatives of the two NWO Divisions involved (Earth and Life Sciences and Physical Sciences) in the programme (see *appendix B*) and two experts on gender studies. The committee met on 15 October 2010, the agenda of the meeting is listed in *appendix C*. The meeting started with a discussion based on the key figures provided by NWO (*appendix D*) and the results of a questionnaire completed by the laureates. This information was sent to the committee prior to the meeting. Following the discussion the committee interviewed two MEERVOUD laureates on their experiences with the programme and their own research. The findings of the committee presented in this report are based on the full range of this information.

The Division for Chemical Sciences no longer participates in MEERVOUD and now has its own incentive programme, Athena, to increase the number of female researchers holding tenured positions within the chemical sciences.

MEERVOUD was first evaluated in 2005 to ascertain whether a continuation of the programme was desirable. That was then the case. The programme was therefore extended and now, after a second period of five years, it has again been evaluated whether this programme still has enough impact and added value for Dutch female researchers.

1 Conclusions and recommendations

Based on the full range of information that the committee received prior and during its meeting, the committee comes to the following main conclusions and recommendations:

- 1 MEERVOUD is successful. Continuation of the programme is both desirable and necessary, at least until a better analogous programme is launched (e.g. “20 in 2020”¹)**

The committee noted that programmes aimed at female academics such as MEERVOUD are still very much needed in the Netherlands, as previously set targets have not been met. Within Europe the Netherlands is one of the very lowest performers when it comes to the proportion of female researchers. In the Netherlands the proportion of female researchers at present is still only 18%, compared to 29% in the EU-15. The committee regards MEERVOUD as an exceptional programme Europe-wide. They note that the MEERVOUD programme is a very competitive programme selecting excellent candidates.

- 2 The budgets for MEERVOUD grants are relatively modest compared to other grants. Increasing the grant payment is strongly recommended with a view to the career opportunities of candidates**

This recommendation was also made after the previous evaluation, but was not implemented. The committee strongly advises that this recommendation should be implemented. According to the committee an increase in the budget for a MEERVOUD grant increases the chances of a scientific career of a MEERVOUD laureate. The committee recommends that the grant should include budget for a PhD position or a technician, enabling the laureate to start her own group.

¹ 20 in 2020, a proposal for 20% female professors in 2020, <http://www.lnvh.nl/files/downloads/132.pdf>

3 The committee recommends that the MEERVOUD programme should include an alumni network, (sessions at) networking events and a mentor for each laureate to increase the benefits of the grant

The committee noted that the attractiveness of the MEERVOUD programme could be increased by networking the MEERVOUD laureates and by giving each MEERVOUD laureate a mentor (male or female). This was also mentioned by one of the laureates who saw a need for activities which allow female researchers to observe female professor role models in their daily work. The committee also recommends setting up an alumni network of MEERVOUD laureates.

4 MEERVOUD is still not well-known enough. More publicity is essential for an effective continuation of the programme

This recommendation was also made in the previous evaluation. Though it was implemented for the Division for the Earth and Life Sciences, and has proven to work, the committee stresses that more publicity is still important. They recommend that the female Veni laureates, gatekeepers², existing networks of female researchers, and the Deans and the HR departments of the universities should be targeted, e.g. with information packages. In addition, they recommend that MEERVOUD should be mentioned in mentoring programmes. They also considered it of great importance to emphasize in any PR activities that MEERVOUD is a highly competitive programme focussed on scientific excellence. The committee recommends that a session comparable to the information day on the Veni/Vidi/Vici scheme is regularly organised for MEERVOUD.

5 The required appointment guarantee ensures a relatively high status for the MEERVOUD grant. This appointment guarantee *must* continue to be an aspect of MEERVOUD

The committee regards the guarantee for promotion as a crucial element of the MEERVOUD programme, being an important benefit for the laureate and, as such, increasing the attractiveness of the programme.

² Gatekeepers are persons who control access to something, in this case to the upper echelons of academia.

6 The committee strongly recommends that the Division for the Earth and Life Sciences expands the evaluation procedure with an interview of the candidate

This recommendation was also made after the previous evaluation but was not implemented at the Division for the Earth and Life Sciences. The committee strongly advises that this recommendation should be implemented.

A list of all recommendations is given in appendix E.

2 Framework

2.1 Aim of the programme

MEERVOUD aims to facilitate the career progression of female researchers by creating temporary (part-time) assistant professor positions (or a comparable position within a research institute) which are linked to a tenured scientific position within the research institute. Ultimately the tenured staff of research institutes should be a reflection of the graduate population. Unfortunately this is rarely achieved in practice.

A survey held among all MEERVOUD programme applicants within the Division for the Earth and Life Sciences in 2009 still indicated that in the majority of scientific positions the number of female researchers decreased, the higher the position concerned. For researchers supported by the Division for Physical Sciences it is also generally the case that the number of female researchers decreases as the level of the position increases³. An exception to this is mathematics, where the number of female assistant professors is larger than the number of female postdocs. From a national perspective, averaged over all HOOP⁴ areas, this observation applies even more strongly still (also for PhDs). This is apparent from a picture that the Association of Universities in the Netherlands (VSNU) sketched of the situation in mid-2009⁵. Both the Dutch government and European policy makers have high ambitions: in his Emancipation Memorandum 2008-2011, the former Dutch Minister of Education, Culture and Science, Ronald Plasterk, adopted a target value for 2010 of 15% female professors. By the end of 2008 a figure of 12% had been achieved. The EU set itself the target of 25% female professors in 2010. This was not realised either. In its Monitor Women Professors 2009, Foundation de Beauvoir (*Stichting de Beauvoir*) states that if the trend continues at the present rate, the objective of the

³ See for example: National Research Agenda Information and Communication Technology (NOAG-ict), *Masterplan Toekomst Wiskunde* (Master Plan Future of Mathematics), *Toekomstplan Sterrenkunde* (Future Plan for Astronomy) 2011 - 2015.

⁴ HOOP (Higher Education and Research Plan) area Agriculture: veterinary science, animal sciences; HOOP area Nature: biology, plant breeding, biotechnology with primarily biological problems, earth sciences; HOOP area Technology: earth sciences

⁵ Source: VSNU data taken from VSNU website (<http://www.vsnunl.nl/Universiteiten/Feiten-Cijfers/Personeel/Vrouwen-in-wetenschappelijke-posities.htm>)

Ministry of Education, Culture and Science will be achieved in 2014 and that of the EU in 2030. Therefore a lot of work still needs to be done.

The idea behind the MEERVOUD programme is to support growth in numbers of female professors by providing the large numbers of female postdocs in the natural sciences a better chance of obtaining a tenured position on the scientific staff. After all, only associate professors can become full professors and to become an associate professor you must first of all be an assistant professor. Throughout the sciences, the largest threshold for female researchers to cross is the step from assistant to associate professor. However, at the start of MEERVOUD and after the evaluation in 2005 there was a bottleneck within the life sciences (the HOOP areas Agriculture and Nature) in the step from postdoc with a temporary contract to a tenured position within the scientific staff of a university. Within the earth sciences (HOOP area Technology) the bottleneck was more at the step from assistant to associate professor. In 2008 some shifts in these bottlenecks arose: Within the HOOP area Agriculture, the biggest bottleneck shifted from postdoc à assistant professor to assistant professor à associate professor. Within the HOOP area Nature, the bottleneck continues to exist in the step from postdoc à assistant professor, although this bottleneck has become somewhat smaller in size. Within the earth sciences, the largest bottleneck is still the step from assistant professor à to associate professor. For all of these three HOOP areas it is still the case that the step from postdoc to associate professor forms a bottleneck (see Monitor Women Professors 2009, Chapter 6).

Within the NWO Division for Physical Sciences the threshold for female researchers lies mainly in the step from postdoc to assistant professor³. Within astronomy there is a second threshold in the step from associate professor to full professor. Within mathematics there are thresholds in the step from PhD to postdoc and in the step from assistant professor to associate professor.

2.2 NWO wide policy regarding female researchers

Across NWO there is the incentive programme for female researchers, Aspasia. For this, the executive boards of knowledge institutes, who have yielded female Vidi and Vici laureates, are approached. These boards are requested to promote these laureates within one year of the grant being

awarded to either an associate or full professorship. If this happens then the board concerned is eligible for a premium.

Within the NWO Division for the Chemical Sciences, MEERVOUD failed to make sufficient impact. Few, if any, applications were received. MEERVOUD CW has now been replaced by Athena, which is similar to Aspasia but only applies to Veni laureates. The target group of Athena is therefore smaller than that of MEERVOUD.

ZonMW (the "Division" Medical Sciences) participates in the Aspasia programme. At present it has no separate programme to stimulate the participation of female researchers. However, this division has also concluded that in the medical sciences it is equally the case that the higher the scientific position, the lower the female participation, despite a large supply of young female researchers.

The NWO Division for Physics and FOM (Foundation for Fundamental Research on Matter) has the incentive measure for female researchers, FOM/v. This measure creates individual positions for postdocs which are intended for female researchers who wish to shape their career within Dutch physics in the longer term. FOM funds a postdoc position for a maximum of three years spread over a period of maximum five years. A condition for this is that the female researcher concerned has organised a stay - not funded by FOM - of 1 to 2 years at a foreign institute. The period abroad can be planned according to the candidate's wishes, before, during or after the period that FOM funds.

2.3 Influential policy regarding female researchers outside of NWO

For the recruitment of female talent with leadership potential several universities initiated special programmes for female researchers who aspire to a career as university professor.

For several years now, the University of Groningen has operated the prestigious Rosalind Franklin Fellowship Programme. At the University of Amsterdam the first round of the MacGillavry Fellowship Programme of the Faculty of Science was recently closed with great success. Female researchers are invited within these programmes to apply for tenure track positions with a career path leading to full professorship.

In order to guarantee an better coordination with the university programmes, the admission requirements for future MEERVOUD candidates should be synchronized with the requirements for the (temporary) tenure track positions applied by many universities in the Netherlands.

At the moment the guarantee of promotion to a permanent academic post within the research institution (doorstroomgarantie) for MEERVOUD laureates is considered a potential obstacle for female researchers aspiring or holding a tenure track position. From a contact person for the Rosalind Franklin Fellowship Programme the authors learned that in the case of the University of Groningen a MEERVOUD grant with its present status could affect their tenure track procedure in an unwanted manner. This is the case because at the University of Groningen very strict criteria are in place for the promotion of the fellows. However, according to the coordinator of the MacGillavry Fellowship Programme a MEERVOUD grant would be complementary to their procedures and very welcome.

3 A grant instrument

3.1 Types of grant

Within MEERVOUD three constructions are possible. For all of these constructions the aim is to create temporary part-time assistant professor positions (or a similar position within a research institute) of 0.8 fte linked to a promotion guarantee to a (different) scientific position within the research institute concerned.

The constructions are:

- **Dual construction I:** this is an overarching construction for existing assistant professor positions. The pair consists of an assistant or associate professor with a tenured appointment who will retire in the near future, and a female researcher who will occupy the supernumerary position of assistant professor (the candidate). It is recommended, but is not obligatory, that the female candidate works in the same area as the current assistant professor. The candidate is appointed as a temporary assistant professor. With this temporary position the intended successor bridges the period until the tenured assistant professor position becomes available. The bridging period (the period for which a grant can be applied for) is at least two and no more than four years;
- **Dual construction II:** an existing full-time tenured assistant professor position is converted into two part-time positions. The positions are occupied by two female researchers or a female researcher and a male researcher. The period for which a grant can be applied for is at least two and no more than four years;
- **Construction III:** An extra assistant professorship position is created, which is not linked to an existing assistant professorship position. The period for which a grant can be applied for is at least two and no more than four years.

3.2 Approach

In the period which was evaluated (2005-2010) the NWO Earth and Life Sciences Division has organized one funding round since 2007. Before 2007 each proposal submitted to MEERVOUD was evaluated separately. Since 2005 the NWO Physical Sciences Division has organized one round each year. The applicants must satisfy the following criteria:

- Proposals may be submitted by researchers from Dutch universities, university medical centers and research institutes recognized by NWO;
- The candidates for a MEERVOUD position have either no appointment or hold a temporary appointment at the moment when the awarded projects start;
- At least 60% of the available time in the project applied for is for research.

For the current round (2010) the NWO Earth and Life Sciences Division has made some changes to these conditions because there was unfair competition between young researchers who had just gained their doctorates and highly experienced researchers. Another reason was that in 2008 almost no applications were received from universities, even though that is where the most important target group is.

Consequently, for the 2010 round the following restrictions applied to proposals submitted to this Division:

- The applicant should have gained a doctorate at least three years ago;
- Only proposals for a project at a Dutch university or a university medical centre were eligible.

Dutch research institutes were not permitted to participate in this round. These restrictions were added following a Quick scan carried out about MEERVOUD for the Earth and Life Sciences in 2009.

At the Physical Sciences Division the conditions remained unchanged.

For every MEERVOUD round a grant for a research project can be applied for, with a maximum material credit of € 6,000 per year. The project should last for at least two and no more than four years. A declaration of intent should be sent with the application. In this declaration the university or

institute at which the project applied for will be carried out, states that if the candidate successfully completes the research project then a position on the tenured staff will be offered. This position should be of at least an assistant professorship level, for at least 0.8 fte. Without this statement of intent, the MEERVOUD application will not be processed.

Both NWO divisions involved operate separate funding rounds. A funding round for MEERVOUD is open for a period of about 3 months. The applications are checked for admissibility by the office of the relevant NWO division. The evaluation procedure is announced in a joint call for proposals, which is published prior to each round. This call also contains all of the guidelines.

For each round an ad hoc evaluation committee is appointed per division as soon as the proposals have been received. Efforts are made to ensure some continuity in the composition of the evaluation committee, as a result of which a number of members will have served for several years. The NWO Code of Conduct on Conflicts of Interest applies to this committee. For the Physical Sciences Division, the divisional board was responsible for the prioritization until 2009. Since 2009, this division has also had an evaluation committee. The members of this committee should have the necessary expertise to cover the range of the proposals and at the same time be able to act as a generalist and be able to assess the opinions of the referees and the rebuttals received from the applicants. Based on the research proposals, interviews, referees' reports and the rebuttals from applicants, each evaluation committee puts together a funding recommendation. The divisional board of each division takes the final decision about whether or not to award a grant based on the recommendation of the evaluation committee.

The research plans are assessed against the following criteria:

- Appropriateness within the NWO division to which the proposal was submitted;
- Innovative character of the proposed research, with respect to, for example, scientific innovative elements and potential to make important contributions to science or technology;
- Scientific quality of the research proposal, with respect to, for example, scientific/technological developments, originality of the approach, effectiveness of the methods and presence of infrastructure needed to carry out the research;

- Quality of the candidate, with respect to, for example, past performance (apparent from factors such as PhD thesis, publications and/or other scientific achievements) and talent to carry out scientific research, especially in the field of the proposed research. Candidates who have successfully passed through the evaluation procedure of the Innovational Research Incentives Scheme (Veni or Vidi) and have been recommended as excellent or very good have an advantage.

3.3 Finances

In 2005, the Earth and Life Sciences Division did not yet have a fixed budget for MEERVOUD (see Table 1). From 2006 onwards the evaluation has been by means of a competition (there is a round with a deadline and the proposals submitted are compared with each other). In 2006 and 2007 the budget available was variable. Since 2008, the number of projects to be awarded has been budgeted instead of a fixed amount of budget. In 2008 and 2009 there was a budget for 4 positions per round. In 2010 there was budget for 3 positions. The Physical Sciences Division provided (see Table 2) an annual budget of € 120,000 euro since 2005. With this budget 1 project could be funded. In 2007 no awards were granted.

Table 1. Budgets and grants realized Earth&Life Sciences

Earth and Life Sciences					Costs per project				
		Number of proposals		Budget (kEuro)		4y-0,6 fte	Benchfee	Material	Total
Year	Applications	Granted	Planned	Realized	(kEuro)	(kEuro)	(kEuro)	(kEuro)	
2005	7	7	N/A	1.185	156	5	24	185	
2006	8	3	650	460	160		24	184	
2007	7	3	550	601	176		24	200	
2008	17	4	800	853	189		24	213	
2009	7	4	800	858	199		24	223	
2010	22	3	700	665	198		24	222	

** In 2005 there was no separate budget for MEERVOUD. Neither was a funding round organized. Each proposal received was evaluated immediately. Proposals were awarded according to the budget available at that moment.*

Budgeted amounts are usually lower than the amount realized. When the award is made, there are unknown amounts that still have to be determined each year to compensate for salary increases of researchers.

Table 2. Budgets and grants realized Physical Sciences

	Physical Sciences				Costs per project			
	Number of proposals		Budget (kEuro)		4y-0,6 fte	Benchfee	Material	Total
Year	Applications	Granted	Planned	Realized	(kEuro)	(kEuro)	(kEuro)	(kEuro)
2005	1	1	120	174	160		14	174
2006	1	1	120	173	163		10	173
2007	0	0	120	0	0		0	0
2008	3	1	120	206	182		24	206
2009	5	1	120	210	186		24	210
2010	7	2	120	398	183		16	199

The costs for a four-year project (based on 0,6 fte) have risen during the period evaluated (see Table 1 and 2). The bench fee of the Earth and Life Sciences Division was taken out of the MEERVOUD grant after 2005 (see Table 1).

The key figures for MEERVOUD can be found in Appendix 4. One of the recommendations of the evaluation committee 2000-2004 was the introduction of a competitive element so that the proposals could be compared with each other. This came into effect from the 2005 round and since then the number of proposals received per year has varied (see number of proposal in table 1 and 2).

From the start of the second phase of the programme in 2005 up until 1 May 2010, a total of 68 proposals were received by the Division for Earth and Life Sciences and 17 by the Division for Physical Sciences. Of these 85 proposals, 9 were declared inadmissible. A total of 30 proposals were awarded. Three proposals were withdrawn by participants during the review procedure, 43 proposals were not honoured. Many of the proposals were rejected due to the candidate's lack of experience. Quite often a lack of mobility was also referred to. However, this is a difficult issue for women if they have children. Other proposals were rejected on the basis of standard arguments such as a lack of focus in the proposal, a lack of clarity

in the proposal description, or too little prior work having been performed to provide a thorough research plan.

The majority of the admissible proposals were proposals for construction III (61). A total of 23 proposals were submitted for dual construction I and 1 was submitted for dual construction II. The highest number of proposals for the Earth and Life Sciences Division came from Utrecht University (15) closely followed by Wageningen University and Research Centre (13). For the Physical Sciences Division most proposals came from the Delft University of Technology (4).

Both participating divisions contain different disciplines. For Earth and Life Sciences these are the earth sciences and the life sciences. A large difference is visible in the number of proposals from both disciplines: 6 proposals came from the earth sciences as opposed to 53 proposals from the life sciences. When comparing these figures it is important to remember that in the Netherlands the earth sciences are a smaller discipline than the life sciences.

For the Division for Physical Sciences the disciplines are mathematics, ICT and astronomy and large differences in the number of applications were also found between these disciplines: ICT and mathematics had 8 proposals each as opposed to just 1 proposal from astronomy.

Table 3. Origin of proposals and awards per knowledge institute sorted according to application pressure

Host organisaton	NWO-ALW # Received	NWO-ALW # Granted	NWO-EW # Received	NWO-EW # Granted	Total # ALW & EW Received	
					Received	Granted
UU	15	6	0	0	15	6
WUR	13	4	0	0	13	4
VUA	8	2	2	1	10	3
UvA	7	3	1	1	8	4
TUD	3	0	4	1	7	1
RUN	5	2	1	0	6	2
UT	1	0	3	1	4	1
UL	4	1	0	0	4	1
RUG	3	1	1	1	4	2
UM	3	0	0	0	3	0
TUE	0	0	3	0	3	0
NIOO KNAW	3	1	0	0	3	1
UvT	0	0	2	1	2	1
EUR	2	0	0	0	2	0
NIOZ	1	1	0	0	1	1
Total:	68	21	17	4	85	25

4 Impact

Following on from the evaluation of MEERVOUD in 2005, a Quick scan was held in the summer of 2009 among the applicants in the Earth and Life Sciences MEERVOUD over the past 10 years to gain an insight into the influence of this programme. This yielded the following results:

- In view of the registered male/female ratios (the higher the position, the greater the number of men) at the departments where the applicants work, there would still appear to be a need for an extra incentive to promote female researchers to higher scientific positions.
- More female assistant and associate professors are present in departments where applicants of completed MEERVOUD projects work, compared to departments where applicants of running projects and non-awarded projects work. This indicates a positive result of the MEERVOUD programme.
- MEERVOUD appears to select successful researchers, in view of the number of grants obtained after their projects had been awarded (average 2.4 per person) compared to the group of non-awarded projects (average 0.6 per person).

No Quick scan was performed among the applicants for the Physical Sciences MEERVOUD. However the MEERVOUD laureates did answer various questions in their final reports (submitted after completion of their MEERVOUD project). This revealed the following:

- Of the MEERVOUD candidates who completed their projects, two of the four received a full-time assistant professor appointment. The other two received an assistant professor appointment for 0.8 FTE.
- The MEERVOUD candidates stated that the MEERVOUD project had led to successful possibilities for obtaining other grants.
- The majority also stated that the MEERVOUD project had led to new national and international contacts and/or the renewal of old contacts.

5 Evaluation 2000-2004

In 2005, MEERVOUD was evaluated by an internal NWO evaluation committee. Several recommendations were made in the report compiled following this evaluation:

Recommendation 1. “MEERVOUD is successful. Continuation of the programme is both desirable and necessary.”

This recommendation has been implemented by both divisions.

Recommendation 2. “MEERVOUD is still not well-known enough. More publicity is essential for an effective continuation of the programme.”

This recommendation has been implemented to some extent. In recent years both divisions have matched the level of publicity with the budget available for MEERVOUD. Only for the year 2010 has the Division for the Earth and Life Sciences spent a disproportionate amount on publicity (for a budget of 3 possible MEERVOUD awards) in order to determine how great the demand for a female incentive programme is within the field.

Recommendation 3. “The required appointment guarantee ensures a relatively high status for the MEERVOUD grant. This appointment guarantee must continue to be an aspect of MEERVOUD.”

This recommendation has been implemented.

Recommendation 4. “The budgets for MEERVOUD grants are relatively modest compared to other grants. Increasing the grant payment is strongly recommended with a view to the career opportunities of candidates.”

This recommendation has not been implemented. The grant payments are awarded for a minimum period of two years and a maximum period of four years. The grant payments are dependent on the salary scale in which the candidate has been placed by the institute where she is employed. However, NWO does apply minimum and maximum rates. The grant payment covers 0.6 fte gross salary of a candidate and a maximum budget for materials (€ 6,000 per year). No budget is available for the appointment of additional personnel. For this, a proposal can be submitted to the Innovational Research Incentives Scheme.

Recommendation 5. "The current dual constructions are no longer adequate. A flexible attitude towards the conditions for the grant is desirable."

This recommendation has been implemented. After the evaluation of 2005, a third construction was added. With this a completely new assistant professorship position was created, without succession of a retired assistant/ associate professor or job-sharing. This Construction III is by far the construction most applied for.

Recommendation 6. "It is not easy to compare the quality of the applicants. The introduction of a competitive element is recommended."

This recommendation has been implemented. For both divisions, proposals could previously be submitted on a continuous basis. Following the evaluation, both divisions have switched to a single closing date for submission each year. As a result of this it has become easier to evaluate the proposals in competition.

Recommendation 7. "At present the evaluation of the scientific quality of the candidate is based solely on the proposal. Expanding the evaluation procedure with an interview of the candidate is suggested."

This recommendation has been implemented by the Division for the Physical Sciences. This option is included as a possibility in every call. However, the Earth and Life Sciences Division makes no use of this, whereas the Physical Sciences Division has made use of this since 2009. The experiences gained with the interview are positive and the evaluation committee found the interviews most valuable.

Appendixes

Appendix A

MEERVOUD Brochure 2010

Introduction

This brochure explains how to submit a proposal for a MEERVOUD grant (MEERVOUD is a Dutch acronym for 'More Women Researchers as University Lecturers'). With MEERVOUD, NWO hopes to increase the number of female postdocs moving on to senior academic positions in the Earth and Life Sciences and Physical Sciences.

The proportion of women in the Dutch natural sciences declines the more senior the position. Though it has risen from 5% to more than 30% over the past few decades, women are still underrepresented among the ranks of university lecturers, assistant professors and professors. With the Aspasia Programme NWO facilitates the promotion of women to senior lectureships and professorships in all academic disciplines.

However, NWO's Earth and Life Sciences (ALW) and Physical Sciences (EW) Divisions have concluded that further action is needed to ensure that women from among the large group of postdocs on temporary contracts progress to higher academic posts. These Divisions have established MEERVOUD to facilitate this process.

In 2010, both Divisions handle different conditions for application. Please see appendices 6.1 (for Earth and Life Sciences) and 6.2 (for Physical Sciences) for their conditions. Most important difference is that it is only possible to apply within the Earth and Life Sciences Division when the applicant will execute the MEERVOUD project and permanent position at a Dutch university or a university medical center. For applicants in the Physical Sciences, it is still possible to apply when the MEERVOUD project and permanent position will be executed at an NWO recognised research institute.

Important

One call will be held in 2010

The Boards of both Divisions will decide on the allotments in November 2010

The Divisions use different conditions for application. Please see Appendix 6.1 (ALW) and Appendix 6.2 (EW)

Aim

The number of women in the natural sciences in the Netherlands declines, the more senior the position. MEERVOUD (the Dutch acronym for 'More women researchers as university lecturers') aims to foster the promotion of female postdocs to university lecturer positions by creating temporary part-time or full-time lectureships (or similar posts within an institute) linked to a guarantee for promotion to a permanent academic post within the research institution.

Guidelines for applicants

Who can apply

Conditions for application differ for both Divisions. Please see Appendix 6.1 for applications in the Earth and Life Sciences, and appendix 6.2 for applications in the Physical Sciences.

What can be applied for

Conditions for application differ for both Divisions. Please see Appendix 6.1 for applications in the Earth and Life Sciences, and appendix 6.2 for applications in the Physical Sciences.

When can applications be submitted

The deadline for the submission of proposals for 2010 is **Monday 3 May 2010, 12.00 hrs**. Applications may not be amended after the deadline.

Drawing up an application

An application consists of two parts: (1) a declaration of intent signed by the Executive Board or institute director, (2) a completed application form containing personal details, a research proposal and the candidate's CV (i.e. two application forms for duo construction II). The application needs to refer to the fields covered by NWO's Earth and Life Sciences and Physical Sciences Divisions. See appendices 6.3 – 6.5 for specific guidelines on the various constructions. The application has to be completed in English.

Applications for duo construction II and multidisciplinary applications

The two research plans submitted under duo construction II (see appendix 6.4) need not be related. The candidates do not even need to be appointed in the same discipline or faculty. They should however be working in the same field, which should be covered by either NWO's Earth and Life Sciences, or NWO's Physical Sciences. Plans that are related are welcome too. Plans that are not related will always be assessed independently of each other. Research plans that are related will be assessed by the same reviewers (one or more), depending on the degree to which the same expertise is required. However, each plan will be assessed by at least two reviewers. Both research plans must receive a positive assessment for the application to be granted.

Specific conditions

- The 'General Terms and Conditions of NWO Grants' apply. Where the MEERVOUD guidelines deviate from the aforementioned General Terms and Conditions of NWO Grants, the provisions in the MEERVOUD guidelines take precedence;
- The research institution shall regularly assess the performance of the MEERVOUD lecturer throughout the duration of the project. The institution must guarantee the MEERVOUD lecturer that, if she receives a positive final assessment at the end of the project, she will be promoted to an academic post at the institution and will be included in the staff establishment at a minimum of 0.8 FTE. This guarantee will apply to both researchers in duo construction II;

- The research institution shall make the usual facilities available to the MEERVOUD lecturer.

Submitting an application

The application form can be downloaded from the Subsidy Guide at the NWO website: www.nwo.nl. Please complete the form fully (in English). The completed application form should be submitted via Iris, NWO's electronic submission system: www.iris.nwo.nl. If you experience any technical problems, please contact the Iris Helpdesk on +31 (0)900 696 4747 (Mon-Fri, 11.00-16.00) or by email: iris@nwo.nl.

Assessment procedure

Procedure

Applications should be submitted by the candidate(s), accompanied by a declaration of intent from the research institution. Please see appendices 6.3 – 6.5 for the content of the declaration of intent.

NWO will assess the proposal's relevance to the division to which it has been submitted and will assess the completeness of the application: the application form has to be fully completed and a declaration of intent from the involved university/ research institute has to be received by the concerning NWO Division. One completed application form is needed for an application for constructions I and III. For an application for duo construction II, two completed application forms should be submitted. Only applications which comply with above mentioned requirements will qualify for further consideration by the concerning NWO Division.

Due to uncertainty about the number of applications, a pre-selection process will be a possibility. The applications will be assessed in general on the given selection criteria (see 4.2) by an assessment advisory committee. On the basis of the advice of the advisory committee will the Division Board(s) decide which applications shall be considered for further assessment.

NWO takes care of the assessment of both the quality of the research proposal and the quality of the candidate(s) in terms of their ability to perform the proposed research. International reviewers will assess proposals on the basis of criteria 2-4 (see section 4.2). Applicants will have an opportunity to respond in writing to the reviewers' reports. The assessment procedure may include an interview with the candidate. Depending on the number of applications, a decision will be taken as to whether an interview round should be held for each division. The Division Board will decide whether to award grants on the basis of the application, the reviewers' reports, the candidate's response, any interview held, and priority recommendations made by an assessment advisory committee. If the number of positively assessed applications exceeds the number of places available, NWO will prioritise the applications, with the applications that achieved the best assessment receiving the highest priority.

The Division Boards will decide once a year (in November) on the applications.

Criteria

NWO will assess the research plans on the basis of the following criteria:

1. Relevance to the NWO division to which it has been submitted;
2. The innovative character of the proposed research in terms of scientific innovation and potential to make a major contribution to science or technology;
3. The scientific quality of the research proposal in terms of scientific/ technological relevance, the originality of the approach, the effectiveness of the methods and the presence of the infrastructure needed to perform the research;
4. The quality of the candidate in terms of past performance (as evidenced by their thesis, publications and/or other scientific achievements) and talent for performing scientific research in the proposed field. Any candidate who has been through the Veni or Vidi assessment procedure and achieved a score of 'excellent' or 'very good' will have an advantage.

Composition of committee

The composition of the Assessment Advisory Committees will be divisionwide. Both Assessment Advisory Committees will be composed of 3 to 4 members. A policy officer from the concerning Division acts as secretary.

Other information

Contact

Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO)

Division Earth and Life Sciences

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Appendix 1

Conditions for applications within Division for Earth and Life Sciences

Who can apply

- The following conditions apply to all 'constructions':
- Researchers at Dutch universities and university medical centers may apply;
- Candidates must be unemployed or have a temporary position at the start of the approved project;
- The candidate has completed her PhD at least three years ago;
- At least 60% of the available time must be devoted to research.

What can be applied for

MEERVOUD-ALW is about creating temporary university lecturer positions linked to a guarantee for promotion to a permanent post as university lecturer within the university. Both the applied temporary position, as the permanent position should constitute at least 0.8 FTE. Along with the application, the university will give a declaration of intent that the candidate will be given a permanent position as university lecturer, after successful completion of the MEERVOUD project. In case of successful completion of the MEERVOUD project, but no promotion to a permanent position as university lecturer, NWO-ALW will reclaim the subsidy. In case of any problems existing between the candidate and the university leading to restraining the candidate from a permanent position, the university needs to contact NWO as soon as possible in order to find a suitable solution.

Various 'constructions' are possible for the creation of temporary lecturing posts:

- Duo construction I: this involves a tenured university lecturer or senior university lecturer who is due to retire in the foreseeable future and a woman (the candidate) who will take over his/ her position. It is advisable, though not strictly necessary, for the candidate to work in the same field as the current incumbent. The

candidate will be appointed as a temporary university lecturer, to bridge the period until the tenured post becomes available. The bridging period (i.e. the period for which a grant may be requested) will last a minimum of two years and a maximum of four years.

- Duo construction II: an existing full-time tenured university lecturer post will be converted to two part-time positions, which will be occupied by two women or one woman and one man. Grants may be requested for a minimum period of two years, and a maximum of four.
- Construction III: an extra university lecturing post will be created, which is not linked to any existing position. Grants may be requested for a minimum period of two years, and a maximum of four.

NWO's Earth and Life Sciences Division will provide a grant for staffing costs to cover a 0.6 FTE university lecturer position (or 0.3 FTE per post under duo construction II) for a maximum of four years (including pay increases). NWO will also provide up to EUR 6000 a year in material costs. Wage costs should be based on a salary scale that is reasonable in view of the work experience of the prospective university lecturer, to be decided at the discretion of NWO. The Earth and Life Sciences Division applies a maximum contribution to staffing costs equivalent to the Association of Dutch Universities' scale 11.7.

Appendix 2

Conditions for applications within Division for Physical Sciences

Who can apply

The following conditions apply to all 'constructions':

- Researchers at Dutch universities and NWO-approved research institutes may apply;
- Candidates must be unemployed or have a temporary position at the start of the approved project;
- At least 60% of the available time must be devoted to research.

What can be applied for

MEERVOUD-EW is about creating temporary university lecturer posts (or similar positions within an institute) linked to a guarantee of promotion to a permanent academic post within the research institution constituting at least 0.8 FTE. Various 'constructions' are possible for the creation of temporary lecturing posts:

- Duo construction I: this involves a tenured university lecturer or senior university lecturer who is due to retire in the foreseeable future and a woman (the candidate) who will take over their post. It is advisable, though not strictly necessary, for the candidate to work in the same field as the current incumbent. The candidate will be appointed as a temporary university lecturer, to bridge the period until the tenured post becomes available. The bridging period (i.e. the period for which a grant may be requested) will last a minimum of two years and a maximum of four years.
- Duo construction II: an existing full-time tenured university lecturer post will be converted to two part-time posts, which will be occupied by two women or one woman and one man. Grants may be requested for a minimum period of two years, and a maximum of four.
- Construction III: an extra university lecturing post will be created, which is not linked to any existing post. Grants may be requested for a minimum period of two years, and a maximum of four.

NWO will provide a grant for staffing costs to cover a 0.6 FTE lecturer post (or 0.3 FTE per post under duo construction II) for a maximum of four years (including pay increases). NWO will also provide up to EUR 6000 a year in material costs. Wage costs should be based on a salary scale that is reasonable in view of the work experience of the prospective university lecturer, to be decided at the discretion of NWO.

Appendix 3

Guidelines for Duo construction I MEERVOUD applications

General

- An application consists of two parts: (1) a declaration of intent signed by the Executive Board or institute director, (2) a completed application form containing personal details, a research proposal and the candidate's CV;
- The declaration of intent should be sent to NWO by regular mail, for the attention of the contact person of the relevant Division (see chapter 5);
- The completed application form should be submitted via Iris, NWO's electronic submission system: www.iris.nwo.nl;
- The application form can be downloaded from the Subsidy Guide at the NWO website: www.nwo.nl. To submit the proposal electronically, you will need to convert the form to pdf format after completion. If you need help with this, please contact your IT department or the Iris helpdesk at NWO (see also www.iris.nwo.nl).

Declaration of intent

- The declaration of intent should be signed by the Executive Board or institute director;
- The declaration should contain the following wording: 'The research institution undertakes to conduct regular performance interviews with the prospective extra university lecturer throughout the duration of the project. If the final assessment on completion of the project is positive, the extra university lecturer will be offered a permanent position of at least 0.8 FTE.';

- The declaration should include the following table:

Summary of application		
Extra university lecturer post (minimum 0.8 FTE):		FTE
of which, for research (minimum 60%):		%
Retirement date of incumbent (senior) university lecturer		
Duration of project (minimum 2, maximum 4 years):		years
NWO support requested	in FTE (maximum 0.6 FTE):	FTE
	for wage costs (initial scale: ...)	K€
	for material costs (maximum € 6K per year):	K€
	total support requested in K€ (wage + material)	K€

Application form

The application form can be downloaded from the Subsidy Guide at the NWO website: www.nwo.nl. Please complete the form in full (in English).

Appendix 4

Guidelines for Duo construction II MEERVOUD applications

General

- An application consists of three parts: (1) a declaration of intent signed by the Executive Board or institute director, (2) a completed application form containing candidate A's personal details, research proposal and CV and (3) a completed application form containing candidate B's personal details, research proposal and CV;
- The declaration of intent should be sent to NWO by regular mail, for the attention of the contact person of the relevant Division (see chapter 5);
- Both application forms should be submitted via Iris, NWO's electronic submission system: www.iris.nwo.nl;
- The application form can be downloaded from the Subsidy Guide of the NWO website: www.nwo.nl. To submit the proposal electronically, you will need to convert the form to pdf format after completion. If you need help with this, please contact your IT department or the Iris helpdesk at NWO (see also www.iris.nwo.nl).

Declaration of intent

- The declaration of intent should be signed by the Executive Board or institute director;
- The declaration should contain the following wording: 'The research institution undertakes to conduct regular performance interviews with the prospective researchers throughout the duration of the project. The research institution will include any researcher who receives a positive assessment in its staff establishment. The research institution guarantees this/these researcher(s) an academic post of at least 0.8 FTE.';

- The declaration should include the following table:

Summary of application			
		Researcher-A	Researcher-B
University lecturer post:		FTE	FTE
of which, for research (minimum 60%):		%	%
Duration of project (minimum 2 years, max. 4 years)		Year	Year
NWO requested support	in FTE (maximum 0,6 fte of 0,3 fte per researcher)	FTE	FTE
	for wage costs (initial scale: ...):	K€	K€
	for material costs (maximum € 6K per researcher):	K€	K€
	total application in K€ (wage costs + material for both researchers)	K€	

Application form

The application form can be downloaded from the Subsidy Guide at the NWO website: www.nwo.nl. Please complete the form in full (in English). Both researchers performing the project should submit an application form to the NWO Division responsible for correspondence.

Appendix 5

Guidelines for Construction III MEERVOUD applications

General

- An application consists of two parts: (1) a declaration of intent signed by the Executive Board or institute director, (2) a completed application form containing personal details, a research proposal and the candidate's CV;
- The declaration of intent should be sent to NWO by regular mail, for the attention of the contact person of the relevant Division (see chapter 5);
- The completed application form should be submitted via Iris, NWO's electronic submission system: www.iris.nwo.nl;
- The application form can be downloaded from the Subsidy Guide at the NWO website: www.nwo.nl. To submit the proposal electronically, you will need to convert the form to pdf format after completion. If you need help with this, please contact your IT department or the Iris helpdesk at NWO (see also www.iris.nwo.nl).

Declaration of intent

- The declaration of intent should be signed by the Executive Board or institute director.
- The declaration should contain the following wording: 'The research institution undertakes to conduct regular performance interviews with the prospective extra university lecturer throughout the duration of the project. If the final assessment on completion of the project is positive, the extra university lecturer will be offered a permanent position of at least 0.8 FTE.'

- The declaration should include the following table:

Summary of application		
Extra university lecturer post (minimum 0.8 FTE):		FTE
of which, for research (minimum 60%):		%
Duration of project (minimum 2, maximum 4 years):		years
NWO support requested	in FTE (max. 0.6 FTE):	FTE
	for wage costs (initial scale: ...)	K€
	for material costs (maximum € 6K per year):	K€
	total support requested in K€ (wage + material)	K€

Application form

The application form can be downloaded from the Subsidy Guide at the NWO website: www.nwo.nl. Please complete the form in full (in English).

Appendix B

Members of the meervoud programme evaluation committee 2010

Name	Expertise	Organisation
Prof. Titti Mariani, Chair	plant cell biology	Faculty of Science, Radboud University, Nijmegen
Prof. Frances Brazier	engineering systems foundations	Faculty of Policy, Technology and Management, Delft University of Technology
Prof. Liisa Husu	gender studies	Örebro University and Linköping University, Sweden/ Hanken School of Economics and University of Tampere, Finland
Dr M. van den Brink	gender studies	Department of Business and Administration, Radboud University Nijmegen
Liesbeth Noor, MSc. /Dr. ir. Christiane Klöditz " /Marieke van Duin, MSc. executive secretary	policy officer	Earth and Life Sciences Division/Physical Sciences Division, Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research

Appendix C

Agenda meervoud evaluation committee meeting, 15 October 2010

10:00 – 10:30	Meet and greet
10:30 – 11:30	Discussion about the information that was sent previously
11:30 – 12:15	Interview Dr M.B. Soons, Utrecht University, Department of Biology – MEERVOUD laureate Earth and Life Sciences since 2008
12:15 – 13:00	Lunch
13:00 – 13:45	Interview Dr M. Daneva, University of Twente, Faculty of Electrical Engineering, Mathematics and Computer Science – MEERVOUD laureate Physical Sciences since 2006
13:45 – 14:00	Break
14:00 – 15:00	Discussion interviews
15:00 – 16:00	Formulate conclusions and final advice
16:00 – 16:15	Completion of the day

Appendix D

Key figures MEERVOUD 2005-2010

Division	Number of proposals received			Number of proposals received per scientific field*		awarded	rejected	under consideration	with-drawn				
	Dual I	Dual II	III	Total									
PS	5	0	12	17	8 CT	8 maths	1 astro	0	6	10	0	0	1
E&LS	18	1	49	68	6 earth sci	53 life sci		9	24	33	0	0	2
Total	23	1	61	85				9	30	43	0	0	3

*: non-admissible proposals are not included here.

Division	stopped before end		successfully completed		still in progress	
PS	0		0		6	
E&LS	0		5		16	
Total	0		5		22	

Appendix E

All recommendations

1. MEERVOUD is successful. Continuation of the programme is both desirable and necessary, at least until a better analogous programme is launched (e.g. "20 in 2020").
2. The budgets for MEERVOUD grants are relatively modest compared to other grants. Increasing the grant payment is strongly recommended with a view to the career opportunities of candidates.
3. The committee recommends that the MEERVOUD programme should include an alumni network, (sessions at) networking events and a mentor for each laureate to increase the benefits of the grant.
4. MEERVOUD is still not well-known enough. More publicity is essential for an effective continuation of the programme.
5. The required appointment guarantee ensures a relatively high status for the MEERVOUD grant. This appointment guarantee must continue to be an aspect of MEERVOUD.
6. The committee strongly recommends that the Division for the Earth and Life Sciences expands the evaluation procedure with an interview of the candidate.
7. The committee recommends that the success rate of MEERVOUD should be 20-25%.
8. The committee suggests that NWO could organize an information day for gatekeepers to inform them of the programme and its benefits and to give the gatekeepers the opportunity to discuss potential difficulties. That way, the gatekeepers could inform each other of possible solutions to potential problems. Additionally, it would inform NWO of potential problems and their scope.
9. The committee suggests that NWO could make MEERVOUD more attractive for the gatekeepers.
10. The committee pointed out that it is important to carry out a survey also among female researchers who have not applied to MEERVOUD and that feedback from the research institutes should be included in the survey. (In the current evaluation the questionnaire has only been sent to MEERVOUD laureates.)

11. The committee recommends that NWO continues to monitor whether the laureates obtain permanent academic posts of at least 0,8 fte.
12. They recommend that the 'Pump your career' talent days for female academics are organised on a regular basis and that the follow up after the event should be increased.
13. The committee recommends that the typical representative of the target group for MEERVOUD is a Veni laureate. They stress however, that this should not be set as a rule, and that the current flexibility in the programme should be maintained.
14. The committee advises that the dual-constructions remain available. The constructions provide an opportunity in case no extra university lecturing post can be created.
15. The committee recommends that the acquirement of teaching and mentoring skills is included in MEERVOUD projects as there currently is a discrepancy between the requirements during a MEERVOUD project and the requirements of an assistant professorship.
16. The committee recommends that the MEERVOUD, ASPASIA and ATHENA programmes are continued as distinct programmes as they judged each programme to have certain benefits.
17. The committee recommends that candidates who are in a tenure track should not be excluded from the MEERVOUD programme, but that the declaration of intent should contain a specific statement that the candidate's current tenure track position is not guaranteed to result in a permanent position. (The committee noted that there are differences among the universities regarding whether a tenure(d) track position is guaranteed to result in a permanent position or not.)