

## **Changes to NWO's governance and organisation: further elaboration of the contours**

### **O. Introduction**

The NWO strategy for the years 2015 - 2018 integrates new activities into NWO's core task: contributing to a strong scientific sector in the Netherlands and increasing science's contribution to society. In its role of national research council, NWO encourages the quality and progress in scientific research at universities and national research institutes in the first place. It links this research with the questions and needs of government, the private sector and other social and knowledge organisations.

NWO will encourage collaboration and cohesion even more strongly than in previous years: among scientists and disciplines, among universities and knowledge institutions mutually - both nationally and internationally - and between science and stakeholders in society. By extension, with the drafting of the Dutch Science Agenda, the Science Vision demands of NWO that it supervises the secretariat and that it contributes to the execution of that agenda. Furthermore, the permanent committee for large-scale scientific infrastructure will be brought under the aegis of NWO.

This confirms that NWO will evolve in the coming years into a broad, national research organisation that shares responsibility for Dutch science and its importance to prosperity and welfare.

Against this backdrop and partly on the basis NWO's evaluation and subsequent recommendation, the Science Vision also contains intentions with respect to changes to NWO's governance and organisation. The purpose of this is to create conditions that enable NWO to fulfil its tasks optimally in the future as well, and with a broader remit. This requires an NWO that positions itself more strategically than it currently does; gains increasing decisiveness and organizing ability; can deploy its resources with more flexibility, operates from a single cohesive programming and that is more capable of encouraging collaboration across disciplines and across all of NWO. With this, NWO will become more transparent for stakeholders.

The Science Vision indicates that changes will relate, among other things, to the central board (shoring up of the administrative efficiency of the central board), to advisory tasks (by means of a large variety of stakeholders), to the bureau organisation and to the positioning of the national research institutes. Existing procedures, attainments and best practices will be anchored in the new organisation. Scientists and other parties who currently participate in the decentralised boards will continue to play an important role.

The intentions in the Science Vision are elaborated further in this report. The general board and the chairpersons of the divisions and national research institutes support this elaboration; it consists of the following elements:

- A central board will be established, with a good connection to and support from science. This board will concentrate decision-making in such a way that the efficiency and flexibility in the deployment of people and resources are increased and such that the effectiveness and legitimacy of that deployment can be adequately justified;
- Advisory efforts by the most important stakeholders about strategy and policy will be structurally embedded;
- A contribution from active scientists (and others) at the level of the domains will be provided in such a way that they have an actual effect on decisions concerning policy and the deployment of resources;
- A bureau organisation will be provided with a good balance between alignment with the domains and disciplines and room for cross linkage and which is formed in such a manner as to permanently increase efficiency and adaptability;
- By means of changes to governance and organisation, the safeguarding of joint strategy and policy formation, including (interdisciplinary) programming and collaboration across all of NWO will be provided;
- A positioning of the national research institutes will be provided that fits with professional management, that safeguards improved alignment with the joint programming and that further strengthens their (high) scientific quality and national role.

In summary, a new model for the governance and organisation of NWO has been designed that safeguards NWO's ability to execute its (broader) tasks in the future; ensures that it will benefit from a broad base and support; works on the basis of a joint vision and collaboration across disciplines, has adequate flexibility to respond to developments in science, science policy and society; and that has an efficient bureau organisation with sufficient adaptability and that is transparent for its partners and stakeholders.

This report describes the new model. Now it is down to implementation with the proper balance between diligent progress and carefulness. It must be kept in mind here that this concerns an amalgam of proposed changes that must be performed completely and cohesively. It is emphatically not an à la carte menu from which certain elements may be addressed and others may be dismissed. Another important precondition is that the continuity and high quality of the activities remain safeguarded.

## I. Supervisory Board

- Appointed by the Minister of Education, Culture and Science (OCW).
- Five members with backgrounds in science and society (private and public sector), of whom two at the nomination of the relevant governmental departments (Economic Affairs (EZ), Health, Welfare and Sport (VWS), Foreign Affairs (BuZa) and Infrastructure and the Environment (I&M)).
- Tasks and authority: ensures the organisation's "good governance" - unburdened and without consultation - as is customary for a supervisory board in the public sector, including the approval of budgets and annual reports, as equally strategy.
- Nominates members of the Executive Board for their appointment by the Minister, taking into account the domain boards' nomination of the portfolio holders for the domains.

## II. Executive Board

- **Profile and commitment of the members of the Executive Board:**
  - The Executive Board consists of six members:
  - The chairman and CFO/COO full-time; other scientific members (each of whom is also a portfolio holder for a domain), half-time, for example;
  - Collegial governance<sup>1</sup>, aimed at collaboration and connections both inside and outside;
  - The scientific members fill the position for three years in order to encourage dynamism;
  - Chairman's profile: highly experienced with authority both inside and outside the organisation, scientific stature, an inclusive person, preferably with international experience (profile to be specified by the Supervisory Board)
  - CFO/COO is the portfolio holder for the entire organisation's financial and operational functioning;
  - In the event of an equally divided Board, the chairman casts the deciding vote.
- **Scientific members of the Executive Board:**
  - Are leading scientists with extensive administrative experience;
  - Are primarily Board members with responsibility across all of NWO due to their knowledge of the domain for which they hold the portfolio;
  - Are also chairpersons of the domain boards for which they hold the portfolio;
  - Shall also have other (cross-domain) themes in their portfolios in addition to a single domain;
  - Will be appointed by the Minister for three years, nominated by the Supervisory Board, taking into account the nomination by the particular domain boards (after consultation with the relevant stakeholder organisations - e.g., Royal Netherlands Academy for Arts and Sciences (KNAW) and Association of Universities in the Netherlands (VSNU)).

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<sup>1</sup> Since the Netherlands Organisation for Health Research and Development (ZonMw) is an Independent Governing Body (ZBO), the relationship with it must be further elaborated.

- **Executive Board' tasks and responsibilities:**
  - Carry joint integral responsibility for NWO's strategy, administration, policy, the management of the national research institutes and business operations;
  - The chairman, possibly with other Board members, represents the Executive Board externally;
  - Appoints domain and board members, directors of domains and national research institutes, and members of the advisory committees;
  - Determines the distribution of budgets among the domains in a transparent manner;
  - Idem with respect to the national research institutes' multiple-year basic budgets;
  - Is responsible for the programming and funding of cross-domain initiatives initiated or approved by the Executive Board;
  - Approves budgets and the financial accountability of domain boards and national research institutes.

### **III. Domains and domain boards**

- The four domains are:
  1. Social Sciences and Humanities;
  2. Health Research and Development;
  3. Technical and Applied Sciences;
  4. Mathematical and Natural Sciences.
- A board of 5-9 persons for each domain, of whom at least one member from society (the business community, for example), and taking diversity and the nature of the domain into account.
- The principle for composing the board is a good reflection of the breadth of the domain's scientific terrain. The scientific members are leading scientists with broad vision.
- Members are appointed by the Executive Board, on the nomination of the domain (possibly with a recommendation/input from KNAW). A three-year appointment with no more than one re-appointment.
- Domain vice-chairs are, in principle, the next chairperson, so that they can grow into the position prior to assuming it and, as necessary, can replace the chairman when representing the domain externally (but not in the Executive Board).
- The tasks of the domain boards include establishing the agenda, programming, the distribution of resources, acquisitions, supervision and performing a platform function within the domain.
- Domain boards advise the Executive Board with respect to the domain's cross-domain or supra-domain initiatives.
- Within a given domain, a number of clusters can be set up with cluster committees of scientists (from academe and beyond) for advice about the programmes, etc.
- Domains must spend a certain portion of the budgets on programmes approved by the Board (on the basis of a recommendation from the Advisory Board, for example).

- The Board ensures that the domains' policies and those of the related national research institutes are aligned. The domain boards maintain substantive relationships with the national research institutes relevant to them.

#### **IV. National research institutes**

- All the national research institutes will be positioned in a separate management/implementing organisation under the auspices of the Executive Board (including personnel and financial support), based on the current FOM Foundation model after hiving off the granting portion. Further building will be done on the basis of the existing "best practices". ARCNL (Advanced Research Center for Nanolithography) will be included in this management organisation.
- This organisational unit supports institutes with their operational and financial functions as necessary - also toward international organisations and collaborative partnerships specific to the national research institutes (Royal Netherlands Institute for Sea Research - NIOZ, Netherlands Institute for Radio Astronomy - ASTRON, SRON Netherlands Institute for Space Research, FOM Institute for Subatomic Physics Nikhef and Dutch Institute for Fundamental Energy Research - DIFFER, for example).
- For their substantive programming, national research institutes are linked with the strategy of the domain most relevant to them, based on the consideration that they are ultimately NWO's "most powerful strategic instrument" and fulfil an important national role, inspired by "best practices" in the management of the FOM institutes.
- Existing institutional boards will be adapted into advisory boards to assist the national research institute's general director. One or more representatives of the domain boards relevant to the national research institute will have a seat on these boards, in addition to representatives of other stakeholders (e.g., the universities with which the national research institute is in a collaborative partnership).
- The director is a leading scientist and functions as a standard bearer and general manager and is appointed by the Executive Board, with input from the national research institute's advisory board, for a period of five years with no more than one re-appointment.
- The director reports to the Executive Board.
- Each institute has/holds an international Scientific Advisory Committee.
- The Board ensures that the domains' policies and those of the related national research institutes are aligned. The national research institutes maintain substantive relationships with the relevant to them.

#### **V. Bureau organisation**

- A single bureau organisation based on the principles of professionalism, efficiency and the sharing and integration of "best practices", and of customer focus and serving science and society.

- Execution is primarily the responsibility of the domains.
- The central bureau is small, focused on the support of the Board and the entire organisation, and closely associated with the domains.
- In the new bureau organisation, the current NWO bureau in The Hague, the FOM Foundation's granting unit and the Technology Foundation STW's bureau will all be conjoined in a single organisation with two locations.
- The bureau works primarily on the basis of collaboration/teams with the substantive experts/employees from the domains - for example, in (flexible) cross-domain teams and in projects for programmes across all of science: as few new sub-organisations as possible.
- Encouraging mobility among the domains and the supporting bureau for the Executive Board, including shared appointments. Also encouraging mobility within and among domains.
- Talent policy for employees, with concern for career development possibilities.
- Each domain has one director, with reporting divisions with advisory boards, e.g., that are clearly recognisable for the stakeholders.
- The director is appointed by the Executive Board, is responsible for managing the bureau organisation in the domain, and serves the entire organisation.
- Business operations and staff departments are part of the CFO/COO's portfolio; staff departments are customer-focused and have short lines of communication with the primary process in the domain.
- The four domain directors meet regularly with the CFO/COO and chairman of the board.
- Each director has performance and development interviews with the CFO/COO, the domain chairman and the chairman of the board.
- Stronger links between the locations in The Hague and in Utrecht (as compared with the Physics bureau's current role).
- Cross-pollination will be encouraged within and among the domains - collaboration is a plus in performance and development interviews.
- Maximum term for directors' appointments (e.g., a maximum of 4-5 years twice). Mobility with the outside world will be encouraged, both during search and selection and at the end of the appointment.
- Integration and mainstreaming wherever possible, taking the differences among the domains into account, of instruments and grant conditions - for example, in the area of intellectual property (IP).
- Instruments are available across the entire NWO organisation, even if a specific instrument is relevant to only a single domain in practice; building on the expertise present and divisions with a service orientation toward the other divisions.

## **VI. Advisory Board**

- Approximately 20 representatives from stakeholders in science and society (for example, NGOs, university rectors, the private sector and governmental departments). At least a few top scientists with a feel for society.

- Point of contact for and dialogue with society concerning broader (societal) themes.
- Focused on content and strategy.
- Advises the Executive Board about NWO-wide initiatives or relevant developments, and advises the domains - solicited or otherwise - about substantive developments and challenges.
- Members of the Executive Board attend meetings of the Advisory Board as guests.
- Gives recommendations about the NWO contribution to Dutch top sectors and the Dutch Science Agenda.
- Members are appointed by the Executive Board for a period of 3 to 4 years; the domains and social organisations are invited to submit nominations.
- Meets at least twice per year.
- Determines its own working method.
- Supported by a team from the central organisation and domains.

## **VII. Supra-domain programming in the structure above**

- Supra-domain/interdisciplinary collaborative programmes will be initiated by domain boards, the Executive Board and/or the Advisory Board depending on topic, breadth and urgency. Office support will be provided by (flexible) cross-domain teams, reporting to the Board.
  - For the current taskforce NIBC a broad administrative taskforce with mandates will be set up in the new structure, for a period of five years, with the possibility of extension, in collaboration with the domain boards;
  - For interdisciplinary collaboration in the area of global sustainability issues, currently taken care of by the WOTRO Foundation (WOTRO Science for Global Development), the Executive Board will set up a broad administrative taskforce with mandates for a period of five years, with the possibility of extension, in consultation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (BuZa)/Directorate-General for International Cooperation (DGIS) and the domain boards.
  - Large multidisciplinary themes (e.g., the strategic NWO challenges, in combination with the Dutch Science Agenda) will be elaborated by an ad hoc working group appointed by the Executive Board and under its final responsibility.
  - Considering the closed agreement, National Taskforce Practice-oriented Research SIA (Dutch acronym: NRPO-SIA) occupies a special position for the time being.
- In principle, non-cross-domain activities will be programmed within a domain (Advisory Board and/or Executive Board can also take the initiative, of course: for topics of great national importance, for example). This applies, for example, to the work of the Netherlands Initiative for Education Research (Dutch acronym: NRO) in the context of the Social Sciences and Humanities domain.
- Above a given amount, consultation with and approval from the Board of Directories is required for long-term, large commitments within the domain.

**7 April 2015**

Annex: draft organogram of the future NOW

**Organogram future NWO**

