



MANUAL Knowledge utilisation in the social and behavioural sciences

The importance of knowledge utilisation in scientific research has grown in recent years. The aim of this manual is to help social and behavioural scientists respond to this development.

What is knowledge utilisation?

Knowledge utilisation is the process of making scientific knowledge suitable and available for use outside of the academic world and/or use within other scientific disciplines. This is not a linear process but a continuous exchange between research and practice. Through the application of scientific knowledge, companies and organisations can better respond to developments in society. At the same time researchers familiarise themselves with insights from everyday practice.

Why is knowledge utilisation important for social and behavioural scientists?

The social and behavioural sciences can contribute to solutions for societal and scientific issues concerning mobility, sustainability, urbanisation, administration and management, human capital and education, for example. It is therefore hardly surprising that knowledge and skills from the social and behavioural sciences are increasingly in demand within politics, education, companies, policy and administration and in other scientific disciplines as well. If this trend is to be further strengthened then social and behavioural scientists need to disseminate their knowledge and make a contribution to its application. NWO Social Sciences (NWO MaGW) therefore wants to encourage and support the interaction between science and society.

What is the role of the researcher?

Not all research in the social and behavioural sciences is equally suitable for knowledge utilisation. Nevertheless, the researcher plays an important role in realising the knowledge utilisation. He or she can take initiative to seek contact with possible partners and to make a plan with them to realise the use of the research results. The researcher can also develop a research question together with a partner, which is inspired by societal issues to which scientific knowledge can make a contribution. The collaboration to utilise knowledge can also go a step further still. The researchers are then part of a consortium with partners. The basis for this form of knowledge utilisation is often a specific need for applicable knowledge.

Knowledge utilisation and the various funding instruments of NWO Social Sciences

NWO asks researchers who want to be considered for funding to explain the possible knowledge utilisation from their project. This explanation counts towards the assessment. The degree to which knowledge utilisation plays a role in the assessment of applications differs per instrument.

In the **Innovational Research Incentives Scheme**, NWO requests the researcher to describe in the application – if relevant – what the potential of the societal impact is and how the researcher thinks he/she can realise that.

Within the instrument **Research Talent**, knowledge utilisation is also included as a separate assessment criterion. Researchers are requested to indicate whether their research can contribute to solving societal or economic challenges.

For the **thematic research programmes** more explicit requirements apply with respect to knowledge utilisation. In most programmes, the collaboration with external private and/or public partners is required to form the basis of the research proposal. The partners are also asked to make a contribution in cash or in kind. Knowledge utilisation is then a more integral part of the entire research trajectory, for example in the form of coproduction of knowledge. Such a collaboration is termed a public-private partnership (PPP).

Manual for knowledge utilisation

The intended knowledge utilisation is most clearly seen in a proposal if attention is devoted to two subjects: **potential** and **implementation**.

Potential

Research in the social and behavioural sciences can have a societal impact in various ways. It is important to describe in your application what the relevance of your research is for societal, economic, cultural, policy or technological challenges. To which issues does your knowledge make a contribution and what is the current relevancy and urgency of this? Once you have established how your research is important (relevant) for the third parties concerned you can formulate an objective. Your objective should be positioned as close as possible to the subject you are researching.

Implementation

The degree to which knowledge utilisation is successful largely depends on its implementation. In the knowledge utilisation section of your research proposal you should specify who the interested parties are. Your target group should match the relevancy and objective defined by you (and your partners). The target group can be local, provincial, national or international in character and its scope can be within the Netherlands as well as abroad.

The target group of your research can only use the knowledge and skills if these are made suitable and available for it. It is therefore important that during the design and realisation of the research, you bear in mind the steps you will take to make the knowledge usable and the activities that you and/or the partners will deploy to reach the target group. Harmonisation and collaboration with the target group can play an essential role in this. You can also state with which parties and people you think you will realise knowledge utilisation, which contributions partners will make and how the collaboration will be realised.

For all projects, but especially those where partners will be worked with from the start, you should state what the concrete societal benefit will be, when you expect to realise the objective and how this will be evaluated.

Further information

Since 2013, knowledge utilisation has been included as a compulsory part of all NWO funding instruments. If you would like to know more about knowledge utilisation in one of the funding instruments of NWO Social Sciences then please send an email to the contact person stated in the Call for Proposals to which you want to submit a research proposal.

See also: www.nwo.nl/magw/kennisbenutting



Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research
Social Sciences

About NWO

The Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research is one of the most important science-funding bodies in the Netherlands and ensures quality and innovation in science. Each year NWO invests more than 650 million euros in curiosity-driven research and research related to societal challenges. NWO selects and funds research proposals based on the advice of experts from science and society from the Netherlands and abroad. NWO encourages national and international collaboration, invests in large-scale research facilities, promotes knowledge utilisation, and manages research institutes. NWO funds more than 5600 research projects at universities and knowledge institutions.