International peer review conference

29-30 june 2017

Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research

International peer review conference

29-30 June 2017

Table of Content

Preface

Peer review has always been the standard procedure in selecting the best research proposals for decades, but now the system is facing pressure for various reasons. First of all, the number of grant applications has increased in most countries, whereas the funding did not increase by the same amount. Consequently more and more academics write and evaluate grants with very little chance of granting opportunities.

Peer review has proven to be an academically effective route to select proposals with the highest scientific impact. However, to predict societal impact – an important criterion for funding – it has proven to be less useful selection method.

The Dutch minister of Education, Culture & Research recently asked the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research NWO to consider alternative methods for evaluating proposals and to explore alternative evaluation strategies. NWO organised a series of conferences dedicated to discuss the consequences of the high application pressure on the peer review procedure to investigate possible opportunities.

NWO started off with a national conference on April 4, 2017 in Amsterdam. As a follow-up on this, on May 21, 2017 employees of NWO explored in an internal conference about the same topic possibilities to mitigate application pressure due to the large number of proposals.
This international conference is the third and final one in this series.

Why do we invest in these meetings?
We experience a huge misbalance between the number of applications and the number of granted proposals. Many scientists spend lots of time preparing their own funding proposals and being involved in the peer review process of their colleagues. We definitively should redefine the way we prepare and evaluate grant research proposals to achieve a more acceptable balance between available budget – limited by definition – the success rates and the time spent on funding acquisition.

What is our purpose here today?
We aim to jointly discuss various topics regarding application pressure, applicant workload and the cost and efficacy of peer review in its current form. Are there any alternatives we could take into consideration? How can we implement them? And, building on our joint experiences: how can we solve the problems we have come to identify and how can we join hands to improve the peer review system? Should we consider alternative methods of evaluating research proposals? If so, which methods suit best?

We will have a discussion around several topical themes, addressed both in keynote speeches, panel discussions as well as workshop sessions.

NWO hopes that a strong network of Research Council members and other stakeholders will emerge as a result of these discussions. We aspire to ensure that the issues discussed today and tomorrow will continue to be a point of attention and will be leading to a further improvement of our methods of evaluation.

All participants and other interested parties will be informed about the latest developments and the results of the conference through the site.

All participants and other interested parties will be informed of the latest developments and about the results of the conference through the site www.nwo.nl/peerreview

Prof. Stan Gielen
President NWO

Programme

Thursday 29 June 2017

08.30	Doors open
09:00	Welcome by **Stan Gielen**, president NWO
09:10	Opening by **Aafke Hulk**, chair (University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands)
09:20	Keynotes with panel discussion (**Aafke Hulk**, chair) **High numbers of applications, the workload of applicants, and the duration of the peer review** Keynotes: **Stephanie Robertson** (CIHR/IRSC, Canada), **Hans Willems** (FWO, Belgium) Panel: **Jose Labastida** (ERC), **Jan Philip Solovej** (Danish Council for Independent Research, Denmark), **Jeremy Wyatt** (Southampton/NIHR, United Kingdom)
10:30	*Break*
11:00	Plenary kick-off workshop 1: **Frédéric Sgard** (OECD) **Competitive research funding processes and an analysis of the peer review challenges**
11:30	Workshop 1 (in session group) **Effectiveness of current assessment procedures: High numbers of applications:** – Have the numbers of applications risen in your country? If so, why? – How do different councils deal with high volumes of applications? – What measures can be taken to bring the number of applications down? – What role can other institutions, such as universities, play? – How effective are current assessment procedures in view of low available budgets? Is the quality of selection effected by high number of applications? Are they selecting the right candidates?
12:30	Plenary round-up workshop 1
12:45	*Lunch*
13:45	Plenary kick-off workshop 2: **Jose Labastida** (ERC) **The workload of applicants, and the duration of the peer review**
14:15	Workshop 2 (in session group): **Efficiency of current assessment procedures. The workload of applicants and reviewers, and the duration of the peer review** – What is the average duration of peer review processes? – What can be done to reduce the duration of the procedure? – How efficient are current assessment procedures in terms of workload for applicants and assessors? – What measures can be taken to lower the workload of researchers, both applicants and reviewers?
15:15	Plenary round-up workshop 2

15:30   *Break*

16:00   Keynotes:
Peer review methods applied in art and culture funding

Keynotes: **Jeroen Bartelse** (Council for Culture, the Netherlands), **Ulrike Bischler** (VolkswagenStiftung, Germany)

17:00   Closing by **Aafke Hulk**, chair

17:15   Social activity

19:15   *Dinner*

Friday 30 June 2017

09:30   Opening by **Aafke Hulk**, chair (University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands)

09:45   Keynote with panel discussion (**Aafke Hulk**)
Peer review, sandpit and alternative review methods

Keynote: **Kristin Oxley** (Research Council of Norway)
Panel: **Philippa Hemmings** (EPSRC, United Kingdom), **Ralph Reimann** (FWF, Austria),
Clemente López (Head of the Evaluation Division of the Spanish State Agency for
Research, Spain)

10:45   *Break*

11:00   Plenary kick-off workshop 3: **Jeremy Wyatt**, **Helen Payne** (Southampton/NIHR, United Kingdom)
An evaluation of alternatives to, and adjustments to, the peer review process, to help build the evidence base for peer review innovations

11:30   Workshops round 3 (in session group):
Evaluating and adjusting the peer review process
– What can peer review evaluate and what not? Can peer review be used to evaluate societal impact? How?
– What are councils learning from evaluations of their peer review processes?
– What adjustments have they made and what have they learnt from that?
– How difficult is it to convince referees to review applications? Should referees be paid for their services?
– What is the quality of review reports? How can we improve the quality?
– How important are interview sessions?
– Are there culture differences in assessing research proposals?

12:30   Plenary round-up workshop 3

12:45   *Lunch*

13:45   Plenary kick-off workshop 4: **Michael Hill** (SNF, Switzerland) and **Ina Matt** (FWF, Austria)
First insights: FWF-DFG-SNF Workshop on Peer Review

14:15   Workshops round 4 (in session group):
Sandpit and alternative review methods
– What alternatives to peer review have been tested by the councils?
– Which elements work, which don't?
– Is sandpit a reasonable alternative for peer review? For which types of grants/competitions?
– Alea iacta est: throwing the dice as a last resort? For parts of the procedure perhaps?

15:15   Plenary round-up workshop 4

15:30   *Break*

15:45   Final wrap-up by **Aafke Hulk**, chair

16.45   Closing by **Stan Gielen**, president NWO

17:00   *Drinks*

Key indicators and key issues regarding peer review for several countries and organisations

Austria | Austrian Science Fund (FWF)

Representative: Ina Matt and Ralph Reimann

1 | Key indicators

Table 1 | Total Number of decided Proposals per year ("applications")

2012	2,216
2013	2,386
2014	2,432
2015	2,617
2016	2,569

Table 2 | Total Number of Received Reviews – FWF: all written reviews, only from international Reviewers ("review rapports")

2012	5,116
2013	5,311
2014	5,131
2015	4,831
2016	4,723

Table 3 | International Reviewer Response Rate

2012	33 %
2013	34 %
2014	34 %
2015	33 %
2016	31 %

Table 4 | Total number of funded proposals ("grants")

2012	684
2013	632
2014	691
2015	655
2016	624

Table 5 | Success Rates (Stand-Alone Projects) – Number of Approved Grants divided by the number of submitted grants

2012	31%
2013	29%
2014	27%
2015	27%
2016	26%

Table 6 | Funding Rate (Stand-Alone Projects) – % of amount requested that was approved

2012	30%
2013	29%
2014	26%
2015	26%
2016	25%

2 | What are the key issues concerning research assessment and peer review that your organisation is facing now?

– Success rates and funding rates are decreasing
– Increasing number of review requests are needed due to an increasing number of applications and decreasing reviewer willingness, this picture is similar across all disciplines;
– Reasons for refusal of the reviewers are mostly "no time" (~70%) or "outside of my area of expertise (~13%)
– Concentration of reviewers in "strong" scientific countries (measured by citations); FWF receives 80% of its reviews from its top 9 countries – The Top-5 countries are: USA, DEU, GBR, FRA, CAN

3 | What is being done or has been done to tackle these issues? Are there any alternative procedures being tested or already installed? What are the effects of these measures?

a. Ongoing measures
   – Proposals that are revised and resubmitted twice and are rejected upon the third submission will be banned from resubmission for at least 12 months from the date of the third decision
   – Ongoing Monitoring and publication of funding data, statistical analysis – also with external scientists
   – Participation in international exchange and networks concerning the topic (National and International Conferences, Science Europe, contact with other funding organisations)
   – Systematic internal and external empirical studies about the FWF decision making procedure, see: http://www.fwf.ac.at/en/about-the-fwf/publications/
   – Workshop on Peer Review
   – Discussion of the topic at the FWF Board, which consists of the executive board and the reporters of the FWF

b. Temporary measures
   – In order to maintain stable rates of approval within the FWF's current budgetary constraints the following changes were temporarily made by Apr 2016 for the Stand-Alone Projects (P), International Programmes (I), Clinical Research (KLIF) and Arts-Based Research (PEEK)
   – maximum of two projects per Principal investigator
   – funding limited to a max of €400,000.00 per project
   – maximum duration of extended from 36 to 48 months
   – extending of project duration (without additional costs) shortened from 24 to 6 months

Belgium | European Research Council

Representative: Jose Labastida

1 | Key indicators
The annual total number of:
– Applications: 9,000
– Review rapports: 45,000
– Grants: 1,000
– Success rates: 12%

2 | What are the key issues concerning research assessment and peer review that your organisation is facing now?
– High number of applications, implementation of a new type of call

3 | What is being done or has been done to tackle these issues? Are there any alternative procedures being tested or already installed? What are the effects of these measures?
– Tight resubmission rules, submission of full proposals

Belgium | Research Foundation Flanders (FWO)

Representative: Hans Willems

1 | Key indicators

The annual total number of:
– Applications: **6,828**
– Review rapports: **13,116**
– Grants: **2,608**
– Success rates: between **21–30%** (fellowships), **18%** (research projects in open competition); **20–40%** (specific funding schemes on translational research; brain gain; etc.), **25–36%** (infrastructure), **64–67%** (mobility)

2 | What are the key issues concerning research assessment and peer review that your organisation is facing now?

– Pressure of submissions, causing overload for peer reviewers
– Modest success rates for fellowships and projects

3 | What is being done or has been done to tackle these issues? Are there any alternative procedures being tested or already installed? What are the effects of these measures?

– The eligibility criteria are under revision, a two stage evaluation process will be installed for several schemes and the budget to be distributed will be increased.

Canada | Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR)

1 | Key indicators

Competition Data FY 2016/17

	Investigator Initiated		Strategic	Awards
	Project	**Foundation**		
Funded Applications	475	TBD	617	984
Total Applications	2,884	600	1,637	3,930
Success Rate	16.5	TBD	37.7	25

* The above data excludes competitions in which all applications submitted were funded (e.g., Canada Research Chairs, President's Fund etc.)

Written Reviews Submitted in Investigator Initiated Competitions in 2016

Competition	Stage 1	Stage 2	Total
Foundation	2,400	912	3,312
Project	12,705		12,705
Total			16,017

2 | What are the key issues concerning research assessment and peer review that your organisation is facing now?

The main issues that CIHR is facing are, current level of funding in the system and ensuring a high quality peer review system, including robust reviews, appropriate matching of reviewers to applications and effective and efficient peer review processes.

3 | What is being done or has been done to tackle these issues? Are there any alternative procedures being tested or already installed? What are the effects of these measures?

CIHR is establishing a College of Reviewers (College) to enhance the current peer review system. The College aims to systematize reviewer recruitment to identify and mobilize the appropriate expertise for the review of all applications and to provide reviewers with the knowledge and resources necessary to conduct consistent, fair and high quality reviews.

To inform the development of the College and peer review processes across CIHR, a number of approaches are currently being implemented in CIHR's Project and Foundation competitions, including:

– A review quality process whereby written reviews are assessed by the Competition Chairs and Scientific Officers (SOs) so that each review is read by a scientific expert. They can then advise CIHR on whether or not the reviews meet a sufficient quality standard. If they conclude that a review is inappropriate, inadequate, and affects the ranking of the application, they can move the application forward to be vetted through the next stage of review in a face-to-face meeting.
– Policies, guidelines and mandatory learning modules to provide reviewers with information on review processes and policies in order to conduct effective and fair peer review. Learning modules include "Conducting Quality Reviews" and "Unconscious Bias in Peer Review".
– Selection criteria to aid in the recruitment of peer reviewers to ensure that only reviewers with a solid review track record (reviewers were engaged, submitted reviews on time, followed appropriate policies) are invited.
– Technologies and processes to facilitate effective and efficient matching and assignment of reviewers to applications. This includes updated expertise descriptors to strengthen the matching of reviewers to applications and a validation process whereby Competition Chairs go through every match produced to validate that these reviewers are the most appropriate to review their assigned set of applications.

These approaches are assessed and continuously improved based on feedback from applicants, reviewers and research administrators. The impacts of these approaches will inform the development of strategies across all competitions.

Canada | Canada Foundation for Innovation

Representative: Guy Levesque

1 | Key indicators

	Innovation Fund	**Leaders Fund**
Applications	350 every 2 years	450 per year (3 intake dates)
Peer review reports	Multi-stage process: 1 expert committee report and 1 multidisciplinary assessment committee report for each proposal	2–3 external reviewer reports per proposal
Grants	App. 115, ranging from $400K to $29M	385 per year, ranging from $25K to $800K
Success rate	App. 35–40%	App. 85%
Type	Open competition with upper limit on total dollar request by each institution	Allocation model; each institution draws down on their 3 year allocation until exhausted

2 | What are the key issues concerning research assessment and peer review that your organisation is facing now?

– Merit review fatigue
– Minimizing review process inconsistencies resulting in "Type 1" (excellent proposals that do not get funded) and "Type 2" (poor proposals that get funded) errors
– Application and review burden associated with small awards
– Managing reviewer conflict-of-interest on large multi-national projects (e.g. subatomic physics, astronomy, genomics)
– Ability to measure the impact of previous CFI investments in proposals seeking further investment
– Guarding against factors that influence the review process and ultimately, the review decisions: 1) unconscious bias, 2) introduction of extraneous and non-relevant information, 3) "aura effect" of candidate's profile and track record versus quality of proposal
– To use, or not to use, H-index, impact factors and citation indices
– Funding research infrastructure without appropriate 1) research grant and 2) operations and maintenance support in place

3 | What is being done or has been done to tackle these issues? Are there any alternative procedures being tested or already installed? What are the effects of these measures?

– **Merit review fatigue:** monitoring practices in Canada and abroad on current compensation approaches
– **Minimizing Type 1 and Type 2 errors during the review process:** see #6 below (Guarding against factors that influence the review process and ultimately, the review decisions)
– **Application and review burden associated with small awards:** we are developing a "light touch" review process so that the review effort is commensurate with the requested amount
– **Managing reviewer conflict-of-interest on very large-scale multi-national projects (e.g. subatomic physics, astronomy, genomics):** we manage, rather than avoid CoI; solicit retired academic experts no longer in conflict
– **Ability to measure the impact of previous CFI investments in proposals seeking further investment:** considering the value of re-introducing a "past CFI investments performance report" which we had in place between 2009–2014.
– **Guarding against factors that influence the review process and ultimately, the review decisions:** developing specific written instructions to reviewers, and briefing meetings with in-person committees to ensure alignment between competition guidelines and reviewer's work. Staff draft committee reports, vetted by committee members and chair Exploring an unconscious bias training module for staff and reviewers.
– **To use, or not to use, H-index, impact factors and citation indices:** monitoring policies on the use of various indicators by counterpart organizations, in Canada and internationally.
– **Funding research infrastructure without appropriate 1) research grant and 2) operations and maintenance support in place:** monitoring the linkages and intersection between successful research grant applicants and CFI investments.

Canada | Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada

Representatives: Dominique Bérubé, Claudie Gosselin, Marie-Ève Gagné

1 | Key indicators

The annual total number of:

– Applications: 13,300 (2015–2016 figures)
– Peer review reports: For the year 2016–2017, SSHRC received over 3,300 external assessments of project proposals, in addition to thousands of reference letters for scholarship and fellowship applications. 708 members participated in 94 application assessment committees.
– Success rates (2015–2016 figures):
    – For our flagship funding opportunity, Insight Grants: 31%
    – For our funding opportunity with the largest grants, Partnerships Grants: 17%
    – For our knowledge mobilization funding opportunity, Connection Grants: 55%

2 | What are the key issues concerning research assessment and peer review that your organisation is facing now?

– Recruitment fatigue/high refusal rate
– Retention of merit reviewers (high drop-out rates after the first year and during the review process)
– Resource constraints have forced us to abandon face-to-face meetings (except for a few funding opportunities)
– Ongoing challenge to recruit committees that are balanced in terms of Canada's official languages, gender and Canada's regions, and committee members who are functionally bilingual (French & English)
– Desire to increase ethno-racial and ability diversity on committees, but lack of data (i.e. we do not ask committee members to self-identify as being Aboriginal, disabled or belonging to a visible minority)
– Appropriate merit review of interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary proposals
– Appropriate merit review of Aboriginal/Indigenous research proposals
– For some of our elite programs, difficulties in meeting equity targets
– Difficult to manage continuous intake funding opportunities (until recently)
– Difficulty of assessing the quality of the peer review done within universities when there is a preselection phase
– Multiplication of guidelines and policies to consider may complicate the reviewers' tasks
– Resource challenges updating information technologies leading to frustration for reviewers
– Low success rates (for some funding opportunities)
– Frustration from the community on feedback to applicants (not sufficient or wrong)
– Reliability of reviews (unconscious bias, reliance on flawed or too targeted indicators [such as h- index])
– Tendency to budget inflation

3 | What is being done or has been done to tackle these issues? Are there any alternative procedures being tested or already installed? What are the effects of these measures?

– Efforts to reduce merit reviewers' workload and improve the training that's available to them
– Calibration teleconference calls prior to the adjudication meeting to ensure every committee member has a common understanding of the evaluation criteria/opportunity to ask questions, establish benchmarks (some funding opportunities)
– Devolution of evaluation of Master's-level research to the universities
– Video-conferencing
– For some funding opportunities, creation of multidisciplinary committees
– Development of Guidelines for the Merit Review of Aboriginal research and, for some funding opportunities, creation of thematic Aboriginal research committees
– Previously continuous-intake funding opportunity now has four set deadlines per year
– Measures to increase success rates (e.g. asking committee members to scrutinize budgets; creation of a new stream for smaller-scale projects)
– Measures to document and support
– Grants: 4,100 (2015–2016 figures, includes fellowships and scholarships)
– Adoption of Equity action plans, including a training module on unconscious bias

Denmark | The Danish Council for Independent Research (As of July 1st 2017 the Council will change its name to Independent Research Fund Denmark (IRFD))

Representative: Jan Philip Solovej

1 | Key indicators

The annual total number of:
– Applications: 2780
– Applications in external review: 764
– Grants: 386
– Success rates: 13.9%

2 | What are the key issues concerning research assessment and peer review that your organisation is facing now?

– Traditionally the review process in the Danish Council for Independent Research has been done in the individual topic specific sub-councils without use of external expert review. In recent years (since approximately 5–7 years ago) this has changed and there is now extensive use of external reviewers. The external reviews serve only as a recommendation to the sub-councils and used only as such
– One of the greatest challenges in the review process in Denmark is that it is not possible to use anonymous external reviewers. As a consequence there is only limited value in individual expert reviews. For this reason and also as a general principle using panels in reviews has proven more beneficial
– Regarding panel reviews the greatest challenges have been to find committed, top level reviewers. Again the lack of anonymity may be an issue. Moreover, in a small country like Denmark the panels will often cover rather broadly and this is less attractive for the reviewers

3 | What is being done or has been done to tackle these issues? Are there any alternative procedures being tested or already installed? What are the effects of these measures?

– Given the difficulties the research council is generally satisfied with the review process, but there is room for improvement, in particular, in recruiting high quality external reviewers. The council is slowly establishing a database of reviewers
– A point of focus has been improving on the workflow of the expert panels, e.g., evaluation criteria and the evaluation forms
– The interaction of the panels with the topic specific councils that are eventually responsible for funding decisions
– The Danish Council for Independent Research believes that greater collaborations between research councils in smaller countries may facilitate the review process

Estonia | Estonian Research Council

Representative: Rainer Randmeri

1 | Key indicators

The annual total number of:

– Applications 355
– Peer review reports 682
– Grants 89
– Success rates 25%

These figures apply only to the personal research funding applications. There are also other financial instruments in the Research Council, with different statistics, e.g. Research Mobility funding (postdoctoral grant, returning researcher grant, top researcher grant).

2 | What are the key issues concerning research assessment and peer review that your organisation is facing now?

The main problem is the increasing number of proposals and dealing with the peer reviewing. Finding the suitable reviewers within given timeframe becomes more difficult as many potential candidates are often already reviewing for several other financiers. The workload of the reviewers in the process can sometimes be quite heavy. Because of that the quality of reviews can be sometimes inconsistent which makes the final funding decisions harder.

3 | What is being done or has been done to tackle these issues? Are there any alternative procedures being tested or already installed? What are the effects of these measures?

We have the database with the reviewers from previous calls. It is also reasonable to assign more than 1 review to reviewer to limit the number of reviewers and to give the reviewer broader picture of submitted proposals. Annually we revise the application and evaluation forms in the Estonian Research Information System to make the info more compact and the evaluation criteria clearer. Lessons from previous call can be addressed in the next call to improve the quality of both the proposals and the reviews.

Finland | Academy of Finland

Representative: Juha Latikka

1 | Key indicators

The annual total number of:
– Applications 2016: 4817
– Peer review reports: around 10000+(?), preliminary & final reports
– Grants: 1096
– Success rates: invited calls: up to 100%; open schemes: 10–15%

2 | What are the key issues concerning research assessment and peer review that your organisation is facing now?

– How to handle with the increase of proposals & decrease in success rates.
– How to get good experts.
– How to develop open practices in peer review.

3 | What is being done or has been done to tackle these issues? Are there any alternative procedures being tested or already installed? What are the effects of these measures?

– The review / decision making system in under internal review.

Germany | **Volkswagen Foundation**

Representative: Ulrike Bischler

1 | Key indicators

The annual total number of (in 2016):

– Applications: 1,573
– Peer review reports: 452 reviewers in total: 135 for panels, 317 for written reviews
– Grants: 238 (in 15 different initiatives)
– Success rates: typically 4 to 80% depending on initiative (2016: 0–100%)

2 | What are the key issues concerning research assessment and peer review that your organisation is facing now?

– increasing numbers of applications / too many applications, too few reviewers
– many review requests declined / more requests needed to find reviewers / overload of the review system in general: applications, journal editors, evaluations, etc. / delayed review reports and sometimes even cancellations on short notice
– shortcomings of peer review: unconscious bias, reproducibility, preference for mainstream?

3 | What is being done or has been done to tackle these issues? Are there any alternative procedures being tested or already installed? What are the effects of these measures?

– adjust review procedures to the specific funding aim of each funding initiative / consider also costs and benefits when choosing a procedure → broad spectrum of assessment types and instruments with more/less workload for all parties involved, for example:
– two step application with pre-proposal) → less workload for applicants in the initial stage, minimizes application numbers for reviewers in the final stage; however: two review sessions needed
– different types of applications requested depending on the program intention (length restrictions, short/full) → shorter applications when sufficient for decision-making, less material to read and assess
– quick assessments (form with questions, tick-boxes and fields for comments) vs. traditional written reviews (free style) → less work for reviewers, better comparison of votes
– review panel meeting with/without presentation by the applicants → fewer reviewers needed for panels, comparability between proposals, possibility of direct interaction of applicants and reviewers (questions answered directly and immediately)
– internal pre-selection (along program criteria) by funding division before an external review → minimizes number of applications to be reviewed
– quick assessments/written reviews/panel involvement as basis for pre-selection of invitation for a presentation → minimizes number of applications for presentations, shorter meetings and/or more time for promising application in the final stage
– interdisciplinary jury instead of peer review by experts from each field → fewer reviewers needed
– new test starting in fall 2017: partially randomized selection (by a jury and by the lot) → lot is bias-free, however, pre-check of quality still necessary for entering the lottery

Ireland | Health Research Board

Representative: Annalisa Montesanti

1 | Key indicators

The annual total number of

–   Application: it depends on the year but average 250–300
–   Peer review reports: 2500–4000 contacted (usually average of 10 per application)
–   Grants: 50
–   Success rates: 18–20%

2 | What are the key issues concerning research assessment and peer review that your organisation is facing now?

–   Best model for a sound peer-review process.

Japan | Japan Society for the Promotion of Science

Representative: Atsuko Nakatsuka

1 | Key indicators
The annual total number of:
– Applications: 101,200
– Peer review reports: No data
– Grants: 26,700
– Success rates: 26.4%

2 | What are the key issues concerning research assessment and peer review that your organisation is facing now?
Amidst a climate of reductions in the basic budget of universities and research institutions allocated to scientific research, the number of applications is increasing and the academic trend is gradually changing.

Current screening system has difficulty in keeping abreast of rapidly changing scientific trends due to its minute partitioning of screening divisions, pigeonholedinto categories, areas, disciplines and research fields. Application-oriented research that produces quick results is increasing.

Given this situation, JSPS is required to improve its the screening process and grant categories.

3 | What is being done or has been done to tackle these issues? Are there any alternative procedures being tested or already installed? What are the effects of these measures?
As JSPS shows the highest level of respect for researchers' own free ideas, which is the wellspring of scientific advancement, we plan to reform our screening system as following;
– We plan to conduct the screening process that is pertinent to each grant category by introducing the new grant categories and screening methods
– New grant category for Challenging Research has been launched on FY2017.

The Netherlands | Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO)

Representative: Stan Gielen

1 | Key indicators
The annual total number of (in 2015):
– Applications talent, bottom up competition, thematic research: 4,157
– Review reports: 9,812
– Grants: 831
– Success rates: 20%

2 | What are the key issues concerning research assessment and peer review that your organisation is facing now?
– Effectiveness of current assessment procedures: high numbers of applications
– The workload of applicants and reviewers, and the duration of the peer review process
– Efficiency of current assessment procedures
– Evaluating and adjusting the peer review process

3 | What is being done or has been done to tackle these issues? Are there any alternative procedures being tested or already installed? What are the effects of these measures?
– In order to improve the available instruments for financing research proposals we continuously evaluate alternatives and possible adjustments to the peer review process. We aim to improve and tackle the challenge of our researcher's workload.
– We Implement measures to tighten the number of applications, by revising eligibility criteria, restricting resubmission, or by submission of pre-proposals
– We have an ongoing discussion with universities aiming to improve the peer review process. E.g. we examine the possibilities of pre-selection by university departments/faculties themselves before actual submission. Also, we discuss and question the organizational management at the universities, such as their tenure track policies and it's relation to qualify for research grants within the NWO. For instance, only the most talented tenure trackers are advised by their universities to submit a research proposal with NWO.
– Examining the possibility of experiments suggested by researchers and others involved, such as a peer review college, a sandpit, SOFA, or even an experiment drawing by lot ('alea iacta est').

New Zealand | Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment

Representative: Joanne Looyen

1 | Key indicators

Please note that this information is indicative and not to be used as official data. The analysis scope is all investment processes created in 2016.

The annual total number of:

Applications: The number of applications (based on proposals only) = 512. If the number of Concepts is also included this figure will increase by about 275. Only Smart Ideas in the Endeavour fund has this. This is a bit of an anomaly so left out.

Peer review reports: We have a practice of all applications being reviewed by at least 4 assessors so the number of peer reviews = 2048. Four assessors is likely to be a conservative estimate.

Grants: The number of grants = 166

Success rates: 32%. The success rate varies significantly between funds. More targeted funds like Preseed http://www.mbie.govt.nz/info-services/science-innovation/investment-funding/current-funding/pre-seed-accelerator-fund have higher success rates. Contestable funds (for example the Endeavour fund) http://www.mbie.govt.nz/info-services/science-innovation/investment-funding/current-funding/2017-endeavour-round have success rates of between 8 – 16 percent

2 | What are the key issues concerning research assessment and peer review that your organisation is facing now?

– Assessment 'burden' on assessors. MBIE does provide a small remuneration for this service but it is not a large amount.
– Finding non conflicted and available assessors with the appropriate knowledge and understanding to fairly review proposals.
– Training assessors so that they have equivalent understanding of the scoring system and scores are comparable.
– Allowing for personal scoring habits i.e. some assessors generally score harder or softer than others.

3 | What is being done or has been done to tackle these issues? Are there any alternative procedures being tested or already installed? What are the effects of these measures?

– Increasing the number of assessors we are able to use. Sharing assessor lists with other agencies.
– Educating applicants on the cost of submitting an application to them so that poor quality applications are discouraged at the applicant level.
– Simplifying training materials.

Norway | Research Council of Norway

Representative: Kristin Oxley

1 | Key indicators
The annual total number of:
- Applications: 5,973 in total
- Review reports: we do not have an overview of the total number of review reports
- Grants: out of the 4234 applications for which a decision was made in 2016, 940 were granted.
- Success rates: the overall success rate was 27% in 2015, but there is a large variation in success rate among the different funding instruments:

	2015
Brukerstyrte innoprogr.	31%
Grunnforskningsprogrammer	43%
Handlingsrettede programmer	18%
Store programmer	28%
Fri prosjektstøtte	16%
Total	27%

2 | What are the key issues concerning research assessment and peer review that your organisation is facing now?
According to surveys amongst applicants to the Research Council, the main challenges associated
with our research assessment and peer review is that:
- The application process is not perceived to be sufficiently cost-effective
- The peer review process is perceived by many as unfair and not sufficiently thorough
- The feedback that applicants receive is perceived by many to be of insufficient quality
- The decision process is perceived by many as insufficiently transparent.

In addition, a recent evaluation of the Research Council of Norway finds that the Council fails to sufficiently
support interdisciplinary, risky and potentially disruptive research.

3 | What is being done or has been done to tackle these issues? Are there any alternative procedures being tested or already installed? What are the effects of these measures?
Two internal reports have been developed; one on how to improve the Research Council of Norway's peer
review processes in general, and one on how to improve our peer review process for interdisciplinary and
potentially groundbreaking research in particular.

Recommendations in these reports have yet to be implemented, but among the measures to be tested
in order improve the peer review process in general, is increasing the minimum number of experts
reviewing each application from two to three, and implementing an expedited review process for weaker
applications.

In order to improve the Research Council of Norway's support for interdisciplinary, disruptive research
one alternative review process has been tested: Idélab. The new support instrument is modelled along the
EPSRC-developed Sandpit concept, and involves residential interactive workshops over three to five days
involving a highly multidisciplinary mix of participants to drive lateral thinking and radical approaches to
address research challenges. Two five-day and two three-day idelabs have been carried out, and experiences
so far are positive.

Norway | Research Council of Norway

Representative: Liv Furuberg

1 | Key indicators

The annual total number of:
- Applications: 150 every 5th year
- Peer review reports: some peer reviewers read several applications and write several reports – in total 150 peer reviewers and about 1000 reports
- Grants: 10
- Success rates: 7%

2 | What are the key issues concerning research assessment and peer review that your organisation is facing now?

The Centres of Excellence needs peer reviewers that are themselves among the top researchers in each field and have themselves lead research that resulted in breakthrough results.

3 | What is being done or has been done to tackle these issues? Are there any alternative procedures being tested or already installed? What are the effects of these measures?

In the previous call we for the first time introduced a screening step (phase 1) with a 27-professor committee that selected the 20% best applications. In phase 2, 20% of the applications were very thoroughly assessed by experts and panels.

Poland | **National Science Centre Poland (NCN)**

Representative: Malgorzata Jacobs

1 | Key indicators

The annual total number of:
– Applications: 9 632 applied
– Peer review reports:10 677 external and 966 internal
– Grants: 2 371 funded
– Success rates: 25%

2 | What are the key issues concerning research assessment and peer review that your organisation is facing now?

One of the problems of the assessment process is the single blind peer-review. Since this process involves the evaluation of the applicant's publication list, the assessment process cannot be double-blind.
Moreover the human factor is an inherent weakness of the reviewing system. It is expected from the internal reviewers (I – internal stage and II – external stage) to be experienced as scientists in single and double blind reviews. Since there in polish science (especially humanities) there is no elaborate tradition of reviewing, most of the reviewers are not prepared well enough to assess scientific projects at this level. Additionally NCN aims to choose reviewers who are considered "generalists" even though the system of polish scientific education encourages narrow specialization. It is therefore a challenge to the organisation to try and achieve a balance between high quality of assessment and sufficient rotation of reviewers, as well as to avoid conflicts of interest.

3 | What is being done or has been done to tackle these issues? Are there any alternative procedures being tested or already installed? What are the effects of these measures?

The review form is gives precise guidelines; it contains detailed descriptions which accompany the reviewer through the assessment and which force the reviewer to choose global scientific standards rather than local.
– This review form is frequently criticized by the applicants and reviewers for being too strict.
– Initially the reviewers had to assess first the publication list and then the scientific merit of the project. However, in order to lower the changes of the reviewer's bias toward the applicant we changed the original order of assessment; now, first the scientific merit of the project is to be assessed and then the publication list.
– This is a new measure, which will be introduced in summer 2017.
– Since 2013 all projects in all research areas have to be submitted in two languages: a short project description in Polish and a detailed project description in English. Initially the applicants in humanities had to submit both project descriptions in Polish.
– The change was heavily criticized at the beginning but now it is accepted. It enables us to obtain external, specialized reviews from non-Polish scholars for all areas.

Poland | Foundation for Polish Science

Representative: Marta Łazarowicz-Kowalik

1 | Key indicators
The annual total number of:
- Applications: approximately 1730
- Peer review reports: approximately 4.650
- Grants: approximately 217
- Success rates: varies upon a programme from 9% to 30%, in total: approximately 12%

2 | What are the key issues concerning research assessment and peer review that your organisation is facing now?
- Reviewers fatigue
- Management of conflict of interest
- Matching expertise of reviewers with applications

3 | What is being done or has been done to tackle these issues? Are there any alternative procedures being tested or already installed? What are the effects of these measures?
- Reviewers fatigue – remuneration for reviews
- Management of conflict of interest – increasing participation of foreign reviewers, conflict of interest statement is required of all the reviewers prior to the assessment of the applications
- Matching expertise of reviewers with applications – reviewers database, individual approach; queries in SCOPUS and WoS

UK | ESRC

1 | Key indicators

The annual total number of:

- Applications: About 1400 per year, but with a range of ±300 and it depends on what exactly is meant by 'an application'. We have a mixture of online (i.e. applications that are received via our dedicated grants system; the great majority) and offline (quite a few proposals come in this way but don't get counted as applications) processes. We probably see and in some way assess something closer to 2000 proposals per year.
- Review reports: We ask for between 4500 and 5500 reviews per year, and have a response rate of about 50%
- Grants: 250 to 300 per year awarded
- Success rates: Over the last three years averaging about 22% across all activities

2 | What are the key issues concerning research assessment and peer review that your organisation is facing now?

- Lack of counterfactual evidence against which we can judge the value of our processes (i.e. what would have happened if we had not had a particular call, or a particular process, or run it differently?)
- Identifying and countering biases of all kinds at all stages of the review process
- Understanding how people make decisions, what evidence is useful, and what influences their thought processes
- Conservatism, driven by low success rates and other factors
- Declining reviewer response rates
- Perceptions and widespread assertions (not based on evidence) that peer review does not accept interdisciplinary work and, alongside this, the challenge of creating awareness of the fact that, even if this were true, it tells us more about the peer reviewers than the peer review process. To put it another way, the difficulty of separating out the effects of the process from the effects of variability in the inputs to the process.

3 | What is being done or has been done to tackle these issues? Are there any alternative procedures being tested or already installed? What are the effects of these measures?

There is little that can be done to establish the counterfactuals, other than to carry out trials which may not be acceptable.

We have provided training to peer reviewers on unconscious bias, and the same to ESRC staff. This is intended to address issues related to equality, inclusion and diversity. Other cognitive biases are likely to be similarly important but have not been addressed to any great extent.

We know nothing about how people make decisions, but there is clearly much that could be learned observationally and experimentally.

As do most funders we have run calls specifically intended to be less susceptible to conservatism, and to encourage risky research. Hover we have not integrated these into all processes, and so they can only affect the funding (a small proportion of the total) that is allocated to them.

We communicate response rates to research organisations to try to improve them. We also have a College of reviewers who are more formally 'signed up' to the idea of providing reviews. They have a higher response rate, but there is a tension between the need to select the most technically appropriate reviewers (who may not be members of the College) and the desire for higher response rates.

We know little about the processes which lead to the submission of proposals and how they affect the interdisciplinarity of the proposals we receive. We know slightly more about how these proposals progress through our peer review process. We know most about how interdisciplinary projects succeed or fail when funded, but this is of little use when it comes to addressing interdisciplinarity in peer review.

UK | EPSRC

Representative: Philippa Hemmings

1 | Key indicators
The annual total number of:
– Applications: 2015–2016: 2425 — 2016–2017: 2375
– Review reports: 2014–15:12095 — 2015–2016: 14650 — 2016–2017: 14875
– Grants: 2015–2016: 784 — 2016–17: 807
– Success rates: 32% (2015–2016), 34% by number (2016–2017); 36% by value (We publish detailed information annually: https://www.epsrc.ac.uk/newsevents/pubs/201516/)

2 | What are the key issues concerning research assessment and peer review that your organisation is facing now?
– Demand Management
– Unconscious bias and good practice in decision making
– Harmonization & standardization within and across different organizations
– Peer review of Multidisciplinary Research
– Reward and incentives for reviewers
– Risk aversion/conservatism

3 | What is being done or has been done to tackle these issues? Are there any alternative procedures being tested or already installed? What are the effects of these measures?

Demand Management

EPSRC operates a policy to restrict repeatedly unsuccessful applicants (defined according to particular criteria) to submitting one application (as PI or Co-I) for a 12 month period. Judged to be working quite well but continue to actively monitor given funding pressures

Unconscious Bias
– Independent review commissioned which pointed out areas of concern and this has helped inform a programme of continuous improvement e.g. ensuring consistency between reviewer and panel guidance
– Some trialing of anonymous peer review (across RCs)
– Rolling out training to reviewers (across RCs)
– Data sharing with universities/research communities on demographics and application numbers and outcomes by certain protected characteristics such as gender
– Part of a RC wide initiative ensuring on ensuring equality and diversity

Harmonization

Ongoing discussions for some time, what should be centralized and when it should be devolved standardized or bespoke to increase the efficiency of peer review and to improve the transparency and consistency across the research councils particularly as part of the work ongoing to establish the new body UK Research & Innovation

Multidisciplinary Research
– EPSRC does not use standing panel but draws panel members from an appointed peer review college to help ensure that panel membership reflects the spread of proposals being assessed.
– Agreements in place between councils to manage peer review of applications which span the remit of more than one council.
– Subject to ongoing monitoring and discussion.

Rewards and incentives for reviewers

We have discontinued our reviewers incentive scheme (funding provided to departments based on number of useable reviews) and efficiently obtaining the required numbers of helpful reviews is an ongoing challenge

We do not pay reviewers (panel members are paid a standard fee)

Risk Aversion/Conservatism of Peer Review

– Development of new approaches such as Sand Pits to encourage researchers from different communities to co-create research proposals to bring new thinking to complex and challenging problems
– Training for peer reviewers
– Monitoring applications (all assigned a score A – least transformative to D most transformative)

UK | Bournemouth University

Representative: Jo Garrad

1 | Key indicators for your organisation

The annual total number of:

– Applications: <600
– Peer review reports: not known but we have approximately 100 reviewers providing reviews for >90 funders, with a significant amount being international funders for Europe, Americas, Asia, Africa and Australia.
– Grants: ~250
– Success rates: in total, around 40%, however, this can go to extremes depending on the funder. Examples over a three year period (2014–2016 by number submitted): AHRC 37%; EPSRC 9%; ESRC 38%; NERC 42%; British Academy 12%; Royal Society 9%, Leverhulme Trust 5%, and Wellcome Trust 15%. From EU H2020 in 2016–2017 – 17%.

2 | What are the key issues concerning research assessment and peer review that your organisation is facing now?

Ensuring the quality of applications being submitted, particularly with funders that have demand management measures or set quotas per institution. This has a knock-on effect of reducing the number of early career researchers (ECRs) applying for funding.

3 | What is being done or has been done to tackle these issues? Are there any alternative procedures being tested or already installed? What are the effects of these measures?

We have introduced a quality approval process in each of the Faculties to ensure that an application is of sufficient quality before being submitted. There is also the option for internal peer review. Some Faculties provide mentors to ECRs.

We have a number of external bid writers on contract to assist our academics with writing applications. These cover a range of disciplines and funders.

We have a Research and Knowledge Exchange Development Framework, which has 150 training and development opportunities, plus online training. These include application writing retreats, sandpits, and funder visits. These all contribute to better quality submissions.

UK | NIHR (National Institute for Health Research), University of Southampton

Representative: Helen Payne

1 | What are the key issues concerning research assessment and peer review that your organisation is facing now?

The National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) in the UK is publicly-funded, and funds health, public health and social care research. It uses peer review to inform the prioritisation of research topics, the assessment of research proposals, and the quality of final reports.

Key questions around peer review are:
– What is a proportionate approach to peer review that is fit for purpose to meet NIHR's needs?
– What characteristics of peer review:
– Improve the quality of research proposals?
– Are helpful to inform decision making?
– What documentation do reviewers need about an application, and what guidance do they need in order to provide effective comments?
– How many reviews are needed, at which stage, and from which expert types?
– Should all reviewers be asked the same questions, or should questions be specific to expert type?
– How can peer review be made more resource efficient?

2 | What is being done or has been done to tackle these issues? Are there any alternative procedures being tested or already installed? What are the effects of these measures?

An NIHR initiative is underway to establish baseline data for NIHR's current use of peer review at application stage, to learn from other research funders' approaches to peer review, and to gauge stakeholder views on what is working well with peer review, and how it could be enhanced.

This builds on process improvements that have already been made, for example:
– Improving guidance notes for applicants and for reviewers;
– Improving the questions asked of reviewers;
– Monitoring business intelligence indicators such as reviewer response rates, and fulfillment rates;
– A patient and public advisory group to inform how NIHR works with public contributors as reviewers and as panel and board members;
– A database of peer reviewers, with data quality improvement measures, and the development of search tools for the reviewer database, to enhance matching of experts to review specific applications;
– Developing a streamlined two-stage research application form (the Standard Application Form – SAF) for use across NIHR project funding programmes and individual fellowships and awards; making it easier for applicants to submit research proposals, and aiding the assessment process.

USA | UMBC/NASA

Representative: Ilana Harrus

1 | Key indicators

(These numbers are for the Astrophysics division of NASA – Not my organization per se. Numbers from the Astronomy branch at NSF are similar in trend but larger in raw numbers.)

The annual total number of:
- Applications: It depends on the programs but roughly between 50 and 300 proposals.
- Peer review reports: One report is generated for EACH proposal received.
- Grants: See answer below
- Success rates: Success rate also varies from program to program but ranges from 10 to 25%.

2 | What are the key issues concerning research assessment and peer review that your organization is facing now?

Many issues:
1. Over-subscription
2. Dwindling budgets
3. Fairness in reviews
4. Availability and quality of reviewers
5. Long time delay between proposal submissions and answers,...

3 | What is being done or has been done to tackle these issues? Are there any alternative procedures being tested or already installed? What are the effects of these measures?

Several solutions under consideration:
1. Moving money around ("phasing" grants),
2. Have some programs announcements only every 2 years,
3. Limit the number of proposals submitted by one PI,
4. Limit the number of proposals submitted by institution. Many other solutions can be proposed and discussed – all come down to the same issue: Diminishing budgets and increasing numbers of applicants.

For reviews fairness: Nothing much is done. There is no unified way to review and grade proposals.

Participants

Anne-Marie	Aubert	CNRS	France
Jeroen	Bartelse	Raad van Cultuur	The Netherlands
Bart Van	Beek	FWO	Belgium
Dominique	Bérubé	Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada	Canada
Monika	Biłas-Henne	Foundation for Polish Science (FNP)	Poland
Andrea	Binder	Alexander von Humboldt-Stiftung	Germany
Ulrike	Bischler	Volkswagen Foundation	Germany
Olivier	Boehme	FWO	Belgium
Didier	Bresch	CNRS	France
Peter Meister	Broekema	London School of Economics and Political Science	United Kingdom
Helena	Burg	FNR	Luxemburg
Peter	Clifford	Science Foundation Ireland (SFI)	Ireland
Sarah	Collinge	MRC	United Kingdom
Hans-Dieter	Daniel	Universität Zürich	Switzerland
Sinnou	David	Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS)	France
Tore	Duvold	Innovation Fund Denmark	Denmark
Gemma	E. Derrick	Lancaster University	United Kingdom
Janneke	Elberse	Dutch Cancer Society (KWF)	The Netherlands
Liv	Furuberg	The Research Council of Norway	Norway
Marie-Ève	Gagné	Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada	Canada
Jo	Garrad	Bournemouth University	United Kingdom
Stan	Gielen	NWO	The Netherlands
Claudie	Gosselin	Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada	Canada
Rainer	Gruhlich	GRC	Germany
Ilana	Harrus	NASA	United States
Nina Espegård	Hassel	Ministry of Higher Education and Science	Denmark
Philippa	Hemmings	ESPRC	United Kingdom
Michael	Hill	Swiss National Science Foundation	Switzerland
Jon	Holm	Forskningsradet	Norway
Aafke	Hulk	UvA	The Netherlands
Ben	Isaacoff	University of Michigan	United States
Malgorzata	Jacobs	National Science Centre	Poland
Leon	Kenemans	Universiteit Utrecht	The Netherlands
Laura	Kitti	Academy of Finland, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research	Finland
Stefan	Koch	DFG	Germany
Jose	Labastida	European Research Council Executive Agency	Belgium
Juha	Latikka	Academy of Finland, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research	Finland

Marta	Łazarowicz-Kowalik	Foundation for Polish Science (FNP)	Poland
Guy	Levesque	Canada Foundation for Innovation	Canada
Joanne	Looyen	Ministry of Business, Innovation & Employment	New Zealand
Clemente	Lopez	Head of the Evaluation Division of the Spanish State Agency for Research	Spain
Ina	Matt	FWF	Austria
Aisling	McEvoy	Science Foundation Ireland (SFI)	Ireland
Marianne Aastebøl	Minge	NordForsk	Norway
Annalisa	Montesanti	Health Research Board	Ireland
Atsuko	Nakatsuka	Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS)	Japan
Søren-Peter	Olesen	Danish National Foundation	Denmark
Kristin	Oxley	The Research Council of Norway	Norway
Helen	Payne	Southampton, NIHR	United Kingdom
Øyvind	Pettersen	The Research Council of Norway	Norway
Catherine	Podeszfinski	Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada	Canada
Rachel	Prosser	MRC	United Kingdom
Rainer	Randmeri	Estonian Research Council	Estonia
Ralph	Reimann	FWF	Austria
Adhemare de	Rijk	Erasmus University Rotterdam	The Netherlands
Jesper	Risom	The Danish Council for Independent Research (DFF)	Denmark
Stephanie	Robertson	Canadian Institutes of Health Research	Canada
Joanna	Rutkowska	FNP	Poland
Sandeep	Sandhu	Research Councils UK/GRC	United Kingdom
Frédéric	Sgard	Global Science Forum, OECD	France
Jan Philip	Solovej	Danish Council for Independent Research	Denmark
Michiel van der	Vaart	Universiteit Leiden	The Netherlands
Krist	Vaesen	Eindhoven University of Technology	The Netherlands
Maja	Vaupotić	Croatian Science Foundation	Croatia
Oonagh	Ward	Health Research Board	Ireland
Hans	Willems	RFF / FWO	Belgium
Jeremy	Wyatt	University of Southampton	United Kingkom
Heather	Young-Leslie	University of Alberta	Canada

NWO and organisation

Annemarie	Bos	NWO	a.bos@nwo.nl
Colette	Bos	NWO	co.bos@nwo.nl
Maaike	Damen	NWO	m.damen@nwo.nl
Marja	Dijksterhuis	NWO	m.dijksterhuis@nwo.nl
Mark de	Graeff	NWO	m.degraef@nwo.nl
Isabel van der	Heijden	NWO/ZonMw	i.vanderheiden@nwo.nl
Anouk de	Hoogh	NWO	a.dehoogh@nwo.nl
Charlotte	Jalvingh	NWO	c.jalvingh@nwo.nl
Marc de	Jonge	NWO	mr.dejonge@nwo.nl
Christiane	Klöditz	NWO	c.kloditz@nwo.nl
Lydia	Langerwerf	NWO	l.langerwerf@nwo.nl
Marc	Linssen	NWO	m.linssen@nwo.nl
Carolien	Maas – van der Geest	NWO	c.maas@nwo.nl
Ivo	Ridder	NWO	i.ridder@nwo.nl
Mirjam	Rigterink	NWO	m.rigterink@nwo.nl
Ammeret	Rossouw	NWO	a.rossouw@nwo.nl
Mariël	Schweizer	NWO	m.schweizer@nwo.nl
Sherida	Soeleman	NWO	s.soeleman@nwo.nl
Sander	Steeman	NWO	s.steeman@nwo.nl
Rita	Struhkamp	NWO/ZonMw	Struhkamp@zonmw.nl
Katrien	Uytterhoeven	NWO	k.uytterhoeven@nwo.nl
Joris	Voskuilen	NWO	j.voskuilen@nwo.nl
Jacomijn	Zoutewelle	NWO	j.zoutewelle@nwo.nl
Astrid	Zuurbier	NWO	a.zuurbier@nwo.nl

About the venue

Het West-Indisch Huis

The long, rich history of this building, located in the centre of Amsterdam, starts in 1617.
Until 1623 the ground-floor was used as meat-market, with rooms above for the 'De Schutterij', the city militia that had to watch over the safety of Amsterdam.

The House owes its name to the period between 1623 and 1647, when the 'Heren Negentien' wielded the sceptre over the Dutch West-India Trading Company ('West-Indische Compagnie') from here. In the Compagnieszaal the decision was made to build the fort 'Nieuw Amsterdam' on the island of Manhattan.

Peter Stuyvesant, whose statue nowadays ornaments the courtyard of Het West-Indisch Huis, was appointed to governor-general of the fort, the fortess that developed to the metropolis New York through the ages.

The privateering of Spanish ships, executed by order of the West-Indische Compagnie, gathered in great loots in the same period.

The biggest blow was the conquest of a fully loaded silver fleet by Admiral Piet Heijn. These treasures were stored in the basement of Het West-Indisch Huis, nowadays the 'Piet Heijn kelder'.

In 1648 the war with the Spanish was ended and the privateering of Spanish ships came to an end.
The 'West-Indische Compagnie' found themselves in a bad financial situation and moved to their own warehouse at the 'Prins Hendrikkade'.

Since then, Het West-Indisch Huis' has known a lot of destinations. The House was used, among others, as the official hotel for distinguished guests and as an orphanage and retirement home.

Later it became the base of a textile firm, which held its storage and office in the building until a fire in 1975. In 1976 the building was bought by the foundation 'Stichting Het West-Indisch Huis'. This foundation restored the building into its original character. The restoration was finished in 1981. Between 1981 and 1988 Het West-Indisch Huis was spot where Amsterdam wedding couples were joined in matrimony.

Since 1991 'a matter of Taste' catering services provides for a diversity of business and celebratory gatherings within Het West-Indisch Huis, next to its outdoor catering activities. The building, consisting of an enclosed courtyard and four impressive, stylish rooms, is a perfect spot for your gathering in a historical atmosphere.

NWO | Netherlands Organisation
for Scientific Research