

SPECIAL NEW

ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE FOR NWO AND FOM

On Tuesday 14 April NWO announced plans for the new organisational structure. This has major consequences for FOM. With this FOM expres Special we inform you about the decisions and their impact on FOM. We will keep you informed of any new developments via FOM expres and www.fom.nl.

DUTCH VERSION

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LETTER FROM NIEK LOPES CARDOZO – CHAIR FOM, AND WIM VAN SAARLOOS – DIRECTOR FOM

DEAR RELATION OF FOM,

Fundamental changes are ahead for NWO and FOM. Changes that some of you have seen coming in the last few months, whereas for others these might come as a surprise. Changes which the Executive Board of FOM are convinced will offer new opportunities for physics, especially in the collaboration with other science disciplines. But also changes that will have major effects on the operation and organisation of FOM.

THE PLAN

In brief: FOM will be split into a 'granting' part and a part that will be incorporated in a newly formed organisational unit that will manage and support the NWO institutes. Together with the NWO divisions Physical Sciences (astronomy, mathematics and computer science), Chemical Sciences, and Earth and Life Sciences the granting part of FOM will form the new Natural Sciences domain of NWO. The institute part of FOM will provide a model for and become part of the new unit within NWO that will support all the NWO institutes. The role of FOM as a unique independent organisation for Dutch physics that manages institutes and also funds and supports research in universities will therefore come to an end. The FOM team and the best practices will be given a place in the new NWO organisation.

THE FUTURE

What does this change mean for you in practice? All existing contractual obligations with universities, companies and other partners will continue as normal. For the FOM personnel there will be no job losses, no relocation and no other employment contract. The location in Utrecht – also

home of the NWO-divisions STW and SIA - will continue to exist and can further develop into a good network location for the entire of NWO. Various operational changes will take place at the FOM office. The collaboration and exchange with colleagues within and outside of the Natural Sciences domain will intensify and more harmonisation will take place of funding instruments and their execution. The philosophy behind this integration is: uniformity where useful and possible, pluriformity where needed.

The implementation process and the associated timeframe have not been decided yet. We are calling for a quick development of an implementation plan and are already involved in informal consultations with our future colleagues within the Natural Sciences domain. The transition will of course require the necessary time: carefulness has more priority than speed. And with this the motto for the entire NWO organisation is: 'During the renovation the shop will remain open as usual'.

BACKGROUND

This historical and radical change in the NWO organisation is a direct consequence of policy intentions from the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science as worded in the Science Vision. And these in turn go back to the recommendations of the Stoof committee that evaluated NWO at the end of 2012 and which amongst other things concluded that NWO was an organisational 'patchwork' and that the division into disciplinary areas resulted in 'fragmentation'.

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TIMELINE

- 21 May 2013 • Publication of NWO evaluation report by Stoof Committee
- 25 november 2014 • Minister Jet Bussemaker and State Secretary Sander Dekker send Science Vision 2025 document together with the report of the Van der Steenhoven Committee to the Dutch House of Representatives
- 28 January 2015 • Hearing Dutch House of Representatives about Science Vision
- 13 February 2015 • Start internal workgroup under the leadership of Douwe Breimer
- 7 April 2015 • Report workgroup Breimer about governance and organisational structure NWO
- 9 April 2015 • State Secretary Sander Dekker approves plan NWO new style
- 14 April 2015 • Internal and external announcement of plans
- As from today • Start development implementation plan

On the FOM website you can download the full report of the Breimer workgroup entitled, 'Aanpassing governance en organisatie NWO' (available in Dutch only).
→ www.fom.nl/governanceNWO



Niek Lopes Cardozo, chair FOM (left) and Wim van Saarloos, director FOM (right)

→ LETTER CONTINUED

The ministry was very clear: major changes had to take place at NWO. And although different parties had different ideas about the form this change should take, the need to simplify the governance of NWO was recognised by many parties such as the Association of Universities in the Netherlands (VSNU), the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW) and the Confederation of Netherlands Industry and Employers (VNO-NCW). It was also clear that in particular in the natural sciences area, the only area where monodisciplinary organisations such as Physics/FOM and Chemical Sciences existed, a different approach was needed. The Executive Board of FOM recognised this early on and, with the support of FOM's Supervisory Board, we have therefore, right from the start, directed our efforts at realising a better NWO in which the best practices from FOM will be given the space to flourish.

The current plan, which was embraced by the State Secretary for Education, Culture and Science, Sander Dekker, on 9 April, was realised by a working group of NWO constituted of three members of the Governing Board, three chairs of divisional boards and one chair of an institute board. The working group was chaired by Douwe Breimer. Since January 2014, the chairs of the NWO divisional boards had met regularly and that made a substantial contribution to the mutual understanding of both the common ground as well as the essential differences between the scientific disciplines. The resulting plan is supported by all NWO divisions even though the proposed structure will mean substantial changes for all of the divisions. And it may be said here: of all the divisions concerned FOM must make the biggest changes.

WHAT EXACTLY DOES ALL OF THIS MEAN FOR FOM?

Let us start by saying that FOM is widely viewed as an outstanding organisation, which plays a key role in Dutch physics and enjoys a considerable international reputation. This appreciation comes from both academia and industry as well as from the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science and the Ministry of Economic Affairs. FOM and Technology Foundation STW are explicitly referred to as best practices that must be retained and recognised within the new NWO. It is certainly not the current performance of FOM that triggered the fundamental changes we are looking at.

Nevertheless, already for many years we have seen the trend to more transdisciplinary and multidisciplinary research. This is sometimes because interesting research questions occur at the interfaces of disciplines. And more and more often research is realised within the context of societal challenges, for which teams of researchers from a broad spectrum of disciplines must be brought together. With this development, we also recognize that outstanding research proposals in the twilight zone between disciplines can encounter difficulties.

In the current structure every form of collaboration means that more than one board is involved in the granting decision and that negotiations need to take place about contributions from different divisions. Furthermore, differences in funding instruments between divisions can sometimes cause problems. The FOM board notes that an increasing part of the FOM budget goes to these multilateral collaborations, which are also making an increasingly larger call upon the director, office and board. The board therefore views the formation of a broad Natural Sciences domain to a desirable as unavoidable way forwards. Desirable because we expect that for researchers it will actually be easier to get transdisciplinary research funded, whereas the administrative and organisational pressure associated with such research projects will be considerably reduced. Unavoidable, because in the current science system a monodisciplinary organisation has no future.

TOP PHYSICS REMAINS

All of this does not detract from the fact that physics will of course continue to exist as a discipline, that realising top physics in the Netherlands will remain just as important as before, whether that is monodisciplinary or multidisciplinary in nature, and that the strong physics community in the Netherlands must be cherished. Quality attracts quality. That we are able to attract top talent to the Netherlands and to keep it here is neither due to the salary we can offer nor the level of investments from the Dutch government in physics research, but solely to the culture of excellence. This is our most important heritage and this we must guard in the new NWO. We are convinced that this is possible in the proposed structure and that is what we are committed to realising.

FINALLY

We face major changes. As board and directors we have been busy with this for many months; the current proposal for the restructuring of NWO is a result of a long and intensive process. We are aware that many of you have only been able to follow this process from a distance and that you might be surprised and even shocked by this radical change. Nevertheless we hope that you can appreciate the considerations of the board and the director. We support the proposed structure of NWO, including the consequences for FOM, and will now work on its implementation. We will of course keep you well informed about the transition process. Our goal is that in a number of years from now you will recognise many of the characteristics of FOM in the Natural Sciences domain and preferably in the entire NWO organisation.

Niek Lopes Cardozo,
chair FOM

Wim van Saarloos,
director FOM

CONTOURS NEW NWO ANNOUNCED

NWO will become more effective, respond more flexibly to developments in science and will strengthen collaboration within science and with society. Today NWO announced the contours of its new governance and organisation. The organisation will have a more efficient structure: the current science divisions and foundations will be clustered into four domains. In the new structure decision taking will be concentrated in an Executive Board. Four active scientists will be part of this board and they will also be the chairs of the four domain boards. The new structure is a vital step for realising the NWO strategy 2015-2018 that was announced on 13 April 2015.

EFFECTIVE AND FLEXIBLE NWO

There will be four domains: natural sciences, technical and applied sciences, social sciences and humanities, and health research and medical sciences. Each domain will be managed by active and prominent scientists. The four chairs of the domain boards will be part of the Executive Board which will also have a full-time chair and a director of finances/operations. The management of the NWO institutes will be brought together in a separate management organisation. The office organisation will be linked to the domains and disciplines and at the same time provide space for cross-fertilisation and interdisciplinary collaboration. Scientists and stakeholders from society will receive more influence on the strategy and policy of NWO via an Advisory Board. Through this NWO will gain in flexibility by better anticipating and responding to developments in science, policy and society. With this new structure NWO will be able to more efficiently realise its core tasks: facilitating quality and innovation in curiosity-driven and thematic scientific research within all disciplines. At the same time the connections among researchers and with the business community and society will be strengthened. *"I am very pleased that within NWO we have achieved agreement about these main contours within a period of two months. With this new governance and organisation NWO can contribute to keeping the Netherlands at the scientific top",* says Jos Engelen, chair of the Governing Board of NWO.

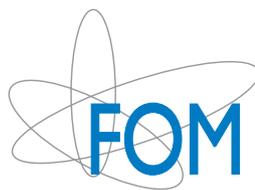
STRUCTURAL CONNECTIONS WITH ACTIVE SCIENCE

In November 2014 the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science published the 'Science Vision 2025: choices for the future'. After the publication of the Science Vision, concerns arose within the scientific community that NWO would become a bureaucratic entity without direct managerial influence

from active scientists. With the structure that has now been announced, the current managers within the NWO organisation feel that a good balance has been achieved between centralised coordination, collaboration and the specific needs of the disciplines. In an initial information meeting, NWO has informed the employees of the various NWO units about the new organisation. Today, the State Secretary for Education, Culture and Science, Sander Dekker, sent the memorandum with the contours for the new organisation to the Dutch House of Representatives.

STRUCTURE FOLLOWS VISION AND STRATEGY

In the Science Vision the Dutch cabinet states that the basic position of Dutch science is good and that the Netherlands may be proud of its science sector and its scientists. However, more collaboration and connections are needed to remain at the scientific top and to further increase the contribution of science to society. This principle has guided the realisation of the NWO strategy 2015-2018 and in turn the new governance and organisation of NWO.



FOM press release • Tuesday 14 April 2015

NEW ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE NWO AND FOM ANNOUNCED

On Monday 13 April NWO presented its new strategy memorandum to the State Secretary for Education, Culture and Science Sander Dekker. In conjunction with this occasion the contours for the new NWO organisation have also been outlined. The main structure will be formed by four domains including one broad natural sciences domain. The NWO institutes will be brought together in a separate support unit. This means that the current FOM organisation will be split up. The granting part together with Chemical Sciences, Astronomy, Mathematics, Computer Science, and Earth and Life Sciences will form the new mathematical and natural sciences

domain. The part of FOM that now manages the FOM institutes will be a model for and part of the new NWO organisational unit that will manage and support all NWO institutes.

These changes will have major consequences for the FOM organisation. The board and directors are convinced that this embedding in the new NWO organisation will provide opportunities for physics while largely retaining FOM's strengths and - where applicable - using these more widely within NWO. Integration of the existing agencies will facilitate cross-fertilisation and coherence within the organisation, while the dividing up in domains

safeguards that specific knowledge of and connection with scientific practice remains possible. The Executive Board will advise the Governing Board and Central Works Council of FOM to agree with the restructuring and integration of FOM within the new NWO organisation. For the 1100 FOM employees nothing will change in their employment contract in the coming years. Current projects and programmes will not change. The funding instruments will also continue to exist for the time being.

The full FOM press release with the report on the governance: www.fom.nl/news.

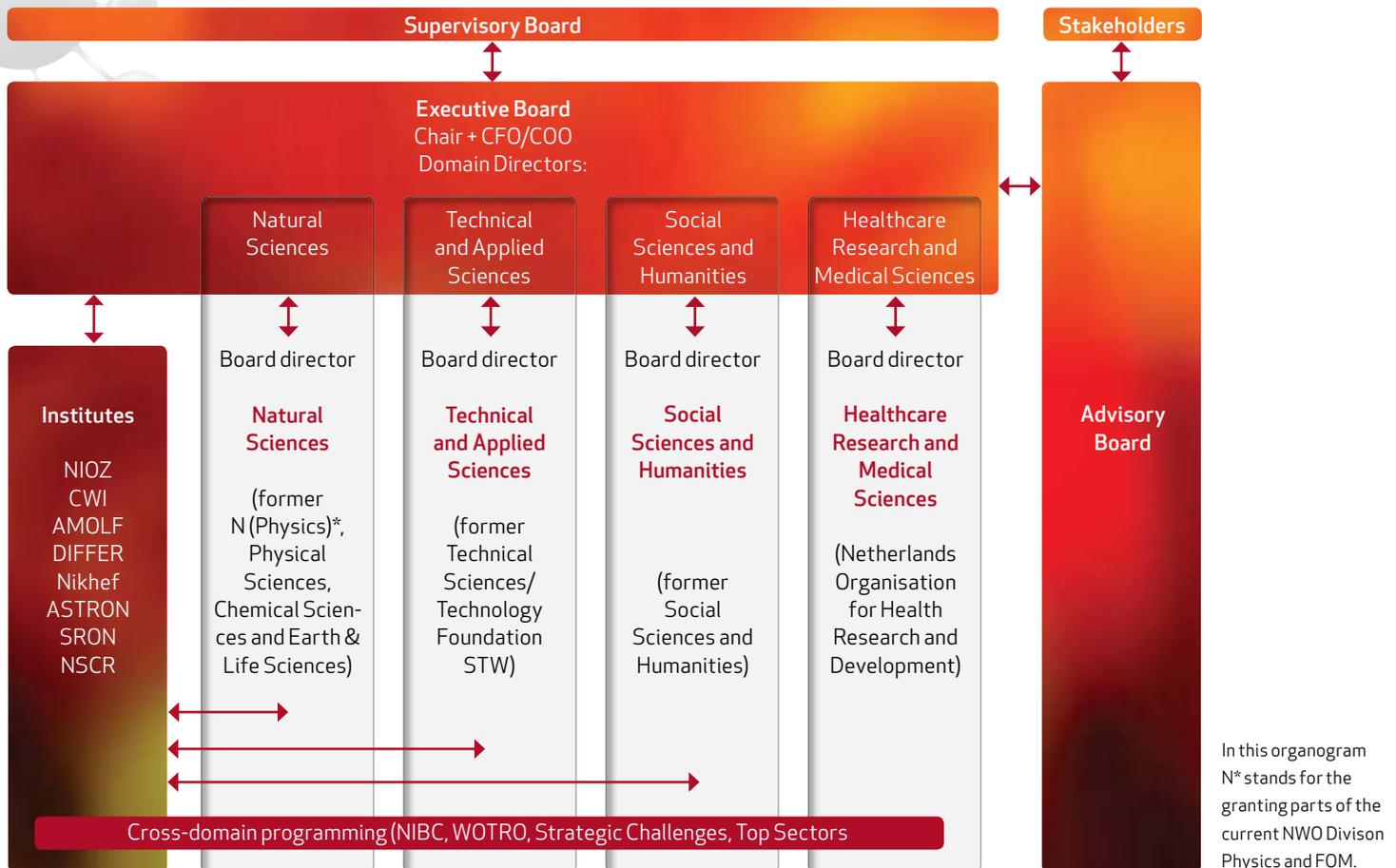
Niek Lopes Cardozo, chair FOM, who was actively involved in the development of this proposal as a member of the workgroup: *"The proposed new NWO organisation means in effect that FOM as we currently know it will cease to exist. That is a huge step. FOM has an outstanding reputation among the researchers it supports and its stakeholders. Nevertheless we are convinced that for the field, physics and physicists, it is better to integrate in a broad*

natural sciences domain. The Executive Board of FOM sees a clear added value in this model for Dutch science in general and physics in particular. The board will therefore work on ensuring that the new NWO is a success and on enabling the FOM's best practices to bear further fruit."

Wim van Saarloos, director FOM: *"We are glad that this plan creates a positive future within the new NWO, and that the passion and drive with*

which our employees have worked for science, our organisation and the connection with the field, will also be given plenty of opportunity in the future. We will work on fully utilising the new possibilities for encouraging cross-fertilisation and collaboration together with our colleagues in other disciplines and for realising a powerful and flexible NWO."

ORGANOGRAM FUTURE NWO



STRATEGIC PLAN FOM/N 2015-2019

In conjunction with the publication of the new NWO strategy, the Governing Board of FOM and the NWO Divisional Board for Physics (together FOM/N) have published the Strategic Plan FOM/N 2015-2019. The plan (in Dutch only) entitled 'Top Physics in the Middle of a Changing World' states the direction for physics research in the Netherlands for the next five years.

This final plan has been realised after an extensive strategy meeting with more than hundred representatives from science, industry and other research institutions in May 2014. It was finalised by the Governing Board of FOM on 9 December 2014. Due to changes within the NWO organisation a considerable part of the strategic plan will have to be realised in a different administrative context.

- ➔ www.fom.nl/strategie
- ➔ www.nwo.nl



CREDITS

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Comments and suggestions

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