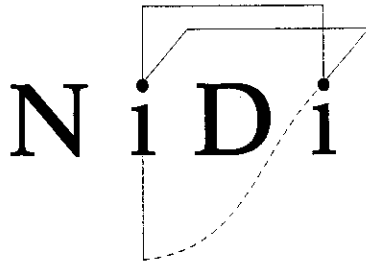


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subject NIDI Evaluation 2008



The Board of the Royal Netherlands
Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW)
Attn: prof dr Theo Mulder
PO Box 19121
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KONINKLIJKE NEDERLANDSE AKADEMIE VAN WETENSCHAPPEN		
No. 9234		
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The Hague, 8 October 2008

Dear professor Mulder,

This is to inform you that the Scientific Advisory Board of NIDI met on 3 October 2008 to discuss the outcome of the external review of the institute which was carried out according to the guidelines of the national evaluation system for publicly funded research in the Netherlands (the Standard Evaluation Protocol 2003-2009).

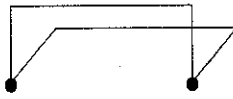
In the evaluation process the Board had previously been consulted by NIDI on the draft self assessment of the institute and had received the final assessment (New Balance. Self Assessment NIDI 2007) and had been informed about the preparations and the proceedings of the site visit by the Review Panel on 17 and 18 January 2008; one member of the Board had the occasion to meet with the Panel during the site visit. By the end of April 2008 the Board had received the report of the Review Panel (Evaluation of the Netherlands Interdisciplinary Demographic Institute NIDI, March 2008), while it also received the reaction of NIDI (Reaction of NIDI to the Evaluation and Recommendations of the External Review Committee, 29 June 2008).

The Board noted with appreciation that the entire process of the external evaluation had been very well prepared by the institute, allowing the Board as well as the Review Panel to perform their respective tasks. During the meeting the Board focused its discussions on the report of the Review Panel, most notably the section on recommendations, taking also the reaction of NIDI into account. The considerations of the Board may be summarized as follows.

1. Overall Evaluation

The Board enthusiastically welcomed the very positive evaluation of NIDI which had been rated as "very good to excellent" by the Panel and the Board fully agreed with this judgment. The Board warmly commended NIDI with this well deserved and very favorable outcome of the review. The Board agreed with NIDI that indeed this could be seen as the result of a joint effort of the entire institute as was also made clear in the institute's reaction. The Board also commended the Review Panel for having conducted a very thorough study; the Panel's judgment was considered to be well balanced and well founded. The evaluation of the Panel had clearly been based on an in-depth analysis of the various dimensions of the institute and a focused, well organized site visit. Obviously NIDI also managed to present its case well to the Panel.

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2. Recommendations for NIDI

The Board supported these recommendations of the Panel which were considered to be very useful for the further development of the institute. The Board agreed to the view expressed by NIDI that the positive evaluation was fully supportive of the scientific refocusing and repositioning of the institute. The Board gladly noted NIDI's positive reaction and follow up to the Panel's recommendations.

The Board attached high priority to the recommendation for the institute to attract new staff and noted with pleasure that recently indeed new staff had been hired including staff at the post doc level as had been recommended by the Panel. The Board expressed some concern that for reasons of effectiveness contracts of post docs should not be too short. The Board also noted that the balance of tenured vs. non tenured scientific staff had recently shifted to more non tenured staff. The Board observed that this shift reflected the "culture of mobility" which NIDI seeks to promote and which the Board supports. The Board reiterated that hiring international staff should be promoted, supported the recommendation that NIDI should become more attractive to researchers from abroad and recommended that English should become the working language of the institute. While various recommendations, such as those on mobility and recruitment, related to human resources policy, the Board noted to its regret that this policy had not been evaluated separately by the Panel (such as for instance the individual career plans in POP). At the same time the Board judged the institute's human resource policy as sound.

The Board shared the Panel's concern about the representativeness of survey data due to selective non-response and supported the possible ways NIDI indicated to address this important issue. The Board also supported the turn to health issues in NIDI's strategy and noted that NIDI had succeeded to further clarify its comparative advantages in this field. The Board agreed with the Panel on the further exploitation of the multi state methodology and welcomed the new steps taken in that direction by NIDI.

Regarding publications the Board noted with appreciation that overall productivity had substantively increased which trend was expected to continue. The Board supported NIDI's efforts to further improve productivity. The Board stressed that with NIDI's mission both academic and societal publications were important for the institute and recommended a balance of the two to be continued. The Board agreed that public relations were important and supported NIDI's views on how to improve external relations, noting that the suggestion to employ a separate external relations officer would not be followed up.

3. Recommendations for the Academy

The Board supported these recommendations of the Panel and hoped that they would favorably be considered by the Academy.

The Board considered on line access to academic journals of key importance for all Academy staff including NIDI staff and fully supported the Panel's plea to work towards this. The Board noted that this type of direct access would however be very costly and thus might not be feasible for the Academy; indirect access through collaboration with universities (as is current practice) could then be a second best solution although "open access" to all publications would of course be the preferred solution.

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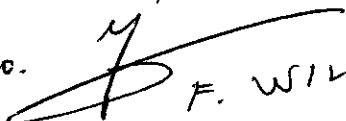
The Board stressed that the Academy salary system needed to be sufficiently flexible to attract qualified staff to the institute and gladly noted that this flexibility would indeed be allowed within the restrictions of the institute's budget. The Board further noted that potential new staff also had other than financial considerations when deciding to join the institute and/or to come to the Netherlands (such as for instance employment of the spouse). The Board would favor flexible policies which promote mobility for (international) knowledge migrants and invites the Academy to continue to work towards that end.

Regarding the location of NIDI the Board supported the view of the Panel that the NIDI building has an important immaterial value which needs to be taken into consideration when reviewing location options. Being aware of the discussion in the Academy on the possible clustering of institutes as well as the "on campus" option, the Board noted that several universities have well functioning multi site locations. The Board noted that NIDI would be open to any type of collaboration within or outside the Academy provided that the institute would benefit from such collaboration. The Board shared the view of NIDI that the option of "shared services" would only be feasible when this would be cost effective and the quality of services would be guaranteed.

The Board expresses its appreciation to the Academy for the role it was allowed to play in the evaluation of NIDI. The Board hopes that its views on the evaluation and on the report of the Review Panel will be of use both to the Academy and to NIDI. Towards the end of this very thorough evaluation exercise, the Board is eagerly looking forward to the final considerations of the Academy.

On behalf of the Board,

Guillaume Wunsch, President

i.o.  F. WILZEKENS



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