

The success of the Dutch Biology Council

Jacintha Ellers, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam – *chair*; Roy Erkens, Maastricht University – *vice chair*; Gilles van Wezel, Leiden University; Ton Groothuis, University of Groningen; Laura van Niftrik, Radboud University; Richard Visser, Wageningen University & Research; Stanley Brul, University of Amsterdam; Sander van den Heuvel, Utrecht University; Geert de Snoo, Netherlands Institute of Ecology; Rens Voesenek, Utrecht University – *co-founder and former chair*; Liesbeth Noor, Utrecht University – *secretary*; Twan Maintz, Utrecht University – *policy advisor*; Barbara Hendricx, Utrecht University – *management assistant*.

INTRODUCTION

Bringing together the academic Biology institutions in the Netherlands to represent the field's national interest is the main goal of the Dutch Biology Council. For instance, to successfully participate in the **Sector Plan** for Science – a major instrument of our government to financially support scientific disciplines – the field first needed to write a **Sector Portrait** ('Sectorbeeld') of itself. This is where the Dutch Biology Council took a leading role!

METHODS

In 2019 the Taskforce Sector Portrait Biology was formed. Its goal was to answer some key questions:

- ▶ What are the key strengths of Dutch biology research?
- ▶ what can Dutch biological institutions contribute to society?
- ▶ which specific fields of biological knowledge are best fitted to make this contribution?
- ▶ what is the international position of Dutch biology research?

and arguments are given why this field needs extra investment.

With help from NWO and its round table for Life Sciences, the Taskforce wrote a Sector Portrait for biology in 2020. Based on this Sector Portrait the field of biology wrote the Sector Plan, which was presented to the ministry of Education, Culture and Science in 2022.



RESULTS

For writing the **Sector Plan**, the Dutch Universities and national research institutes founded the Dutch Biology Council (almost the same members as the Taskforce for the Sector Portrait). In the plan, the Council specifically laid out in what specific field within biology the universities would invest and gave their required budget for each university to achieve their goals. On 11th April 2023, the minister of Science approved the Sector Plan Biology (along with plans for other sectors). As a result the field of Biology will now be **structurally strengthened with 16,7 M€ on an annual basis**.

CONCLUSION

A nationally organised field of Biology works to get things done. Following the success of the Sector Plan Biology, the Dutch Biology Council will continue to take on other national issues that would benefit from a unified representation of the field of Biology.

WHAT'S NEXT?

- ▶ Serve the interests of the field of Biology in the Netherlands at the national level
- ▶ Take up strategic roles in national opportunities such as Sector plans
- ▶ Coordinate plans crossing institutional borders, and
- ▶ Communicate and collaborate with other disciplines and societal parties to serve the goals of science and society from the perspective of Biology.

OUR PORTRAIT OUR PLAN

In a Sector Portrait, a sector, or science field, describes current and future focal points of the sector, its strong points and its needs, how the sector is organized, and how it contributes to society. It informs the ministry of the reasons to invest in the sector and as such is a necessary step before the sector can draw up a Sector Plan.

In a Sector Plan, a sector specifies how it will accomplish the aims described in the Sector Portrait: This includes an overview of which focal points each university commits to. In this way, we achieve a balanced distribution of different biological research fields in the Netherlands. It also details the positions that are needed to accomplish the aims (both scientific personal and technical staff) and what scientific equipment is needed (equipment that cannot be submitted in the calls for proposals of the different research financiers).

DUTCH Biology Council



www.raadvoordebologie.nl / secretaris@raadvoordebologie.nl

