

Short notes from the Annual Meeting of the Nutricia Research Foundation

Held at Schiphol WTC, 24 October 2017

Scientific Advisory Committee

Prof. Kuipers (chairman)
Dr. Halldorsson
Dr. Brouwer
Dr. Veereman-Wauters
Prof. Dechalotte
apologized: Prof. Carnielli

Board of Trustees

Prof. Ruitenbergh (chairman)
Prof. Hautvast (vice-chairman)
Prof. Soeters
Prof. Sauer
Prof. Bruynzeel-Koomen
apologized: Drs. Van Veen

Scientific Secretariat

Dr. Bindels (minutes)

Meeting of the Board of Trustees

1. Opening & Welcome

The Board meeting was held at the Sheraton Hotel, WTC Schiphol and after opening by the chairman the proposed agenda was approved. Ahead of the meeting, Mr. van Veen had telephone conversations with both the chairman and the vice-chairman explaining his physical inability to attend the meeting. However, the 2016 financial report was made and distributed.

2. Minutes Annual Meeting November 2, 2016 and the Spring Meeting July 3, 2017

Related to the minutes meeting November 2, 2016. Prof Soeters asked information on paragraph 4 "NRF Chair of Prof Renee Blaauw". Prof Hautvast will contact Robin Dolman and she is asked to get from Prof Blaauw a short report about her 4-years professorship related to CEN and NRF. Further minutes approved.

Related to the minutes meeting July 3, 2017. The question of Prof Sauer to get information on the spending in Phase 1 was provided to all Board Members and explained by Prof Hautvast. The minutes were approved.

3. Financial Aspects

The Board of the NRF was very pleased with the excellent Financial report prepared by Mr van Veen. The Board felt very sorry that Mr van Veen was unable to attend the meeting. The Board thanked Mr van Veen for his dedication to NRF and wished him a good recovery. The question was raised whether we should ask Danone in the near future to consider adding some funds for the regular activities of research grants and fellowships. Both Prof Ruitenbergh and prof Hautvast advised the Board not to

start with this now already as the NRF still has sufficient funds for the coming 5 years.

4. NRF chairs

- Amsterdam (Prof. Ruurd van Elburg): The progress report prepared by Prof van Elburg was very clear progress and highly appreciated. The Board was very positive about the achievements so far.

5. Progress Africa Project Phase 2

Professor Hautvast has sent to all Board members a detailed information regarding Phase 2 :

- Reaction CEN and University of Ghana on Phase 2 and their involvement;
- the Phase 2 starting symposium in Accra on 28 and 29 September 2017 with the symposium program, symposium report and lists of participants.

Prof Hautvast explained the different reports and told the Board members that he was very pleased that Mr Bindels and Mr Pepping could attend the symposium. In analogy to Phase 1 where a co-operation and support agreement was signed between NRF and the University of North-West with the duration of 4 years (2014-2017), prof Hautvast explained that we would probably need an addendum now covering the period 2017-2021. He also raised this point to our partners at CEN.

The Board was very pleased with the progress for Phase 2.

Meeting of the Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC)

1. Opening remarks

Prof. Kuipers opened the SAC meeting held at Danone Place Schiphol at WTC Schiphol with a special welcome to Prof. Dechalotte to bring in the expertise of Clinical Nutrition, Internal Medicine and Surgery after Prof Soeters has retired from the SAC. We obtained a last minute apologise from Prof Carnielli who could not attend due to urgent private reasons. This year the number of new applications (77) was again very high and therefore, the Chairman made request the SAB members in advance to make a preselection of the 71 applications for new Research Grants on the basis of perceived priority (from 10: excellent to 1: very poor) of the assigned projects to the "first reviewer". selection.

2. Second year extensions of research grants

On the requests for second-year extension of projects 2018-E2, 2018-E6, 2018-E7, 2018-E8 and 2018-E9, the SAC was happy with the listed progress and the spending of the money for the first year. These projects were accepted for later recommendation to the Board.

Although the reported progress on Project 2018-E5 seemed satisfactorily, the SAC noticed that clearly not all money from the first year was spend. Therefore, the SAC decided to only partially approve the request for the second year and give the applicant the possibility to apply for the remaining part in next year's round.

On second-year project extension 2018-E4, it was agreed already before the meeting with the investigator to postpone the second-year extension till next year due to late start of the project and the difficulties and misunderstandings about money transfer for the first year.

The progress report on project 2018-E3 raised several questions with the SAC and it was decided that we will request an extended progress report after which we may consider accepting a second-year extension by next year.

The second-year research grant extensions, on projects 2018-E1, 2018-E10 and 2018-E11 were all rejected for this year's round, but the investigators may apply for a second-year extension in next year's round.

Based on this year's conclusions on several progress reports, the SAC felt the need to propose a modification in the payment conditions and hold back a significant amount of budget for a second-year grant extension budget until a final report is received including both scientific and financial details. The SAC wished this to be discussed with the Board during the Joint Meeting.

4. International Training Fellowships (ITF)

For the first time this year, we are also offering shorter duration ITF's. This resulted in a total number of 6 requests for an ITF, 2 of which short duration (2-3 months), 1 medium duration (6 months) and 3 regular duration (12 months).

Applications 2018-T1 was accepted as it was fully in line with the "short-duration-ITF" objective and will enable the applicant from Madrid, Spain to develop and deepen collaboration with an expert partner in Auckland, New Zealand.

The ITF application 2018-T3 was accepted and although it had a clear link with project 2016-10/2018-E9, the SAC was confident that the applicant from Madagascar will be able to enlarge her expertise and network going to the Pasteur Institute in Paris.

The other ITF applications 2018-T2, 2018-T4, 2018-T5, and 2018-T6 were rejected because of being outside the scope of the NRF aiming to provide ITF to young investigators allowing them to perform a good quality research project at another institute, preferably abroad.

5. Research Grants

Because of the very high number of 71 applications for new Research Grants, the Chairman requested the SAB members in advance to make a preselection on the basis of perceived arbitrary individual priority score (from 10: excellent to 1: very poor) of the assigned projects to the "first reviewer". Thus, at the start of the meeting, 20 projects could be identified with a rating of 8 or higher. Next, to calibrate individual reference frames a brief discussion on all applications took place which resulted in the identification of 4 additional applications for the short list on further considerations.

These 24 project applications with a clear potential to be selected for funding were, 2018-05, -10, -11, -15, -18, -19, -20, -21, -25, -27, -28, -29, -40, -43, -44, -45, -47, -48, -52, -54, -55, -60, -65, and -67.

In further discussions, the following 9 projects were finally selected and a clear quote by the first reviewer is given.

2018-15: “Modulation of enteric and central gliosis by casein-derived bioactive peptides”; 2018-18: “Systemic bioavailability of enteral protein-bound versus free amino acid nutrition for intestinal malabsorption in critical illness; 2018-20: “The interplay between nutritional, social and economic trajectories during adolescence among girls in Ghana” (Ten2Twenty-Ghana; 2018-21: “Maintaining a strong stomach barrier: key to a healthy life?”; 2018-25: “Effects of diet-induced microbiota changes on gut health: It’s time to prove causality”; 2018-29: “Defining immune and microbiome changes Elicited by a ketogenic diet in children with intractable seizures”; 2018-54: “Malnutrition in chronic liver disease: targeting the muscle to protect the brain”; 2018-55: “Role of TGR5 in the effect of dietary resistant starch to improve glucose regulation”; 2018-67: “Effect of growth on wheezing phenotypes in children”.

Because of this conclusion, the SAC decided to propose for funding in 2019:

- 9 selected Research Grant applications,
- 2 selected International Training Fellowship and
- 7 2nd year Research Grant extensions: 6 of which fully and 1 partially.

The total 2018 budget request for these projects amounts to € 389 426.--

Considering that 6 of the selected research grant applications are 2-year project proposals and that this year 4 research grant 2nd year extensions were fully or partially postponed till 2019, this also means that a funding amount of maximally € 293 767.-- can be expected for the 2019-round or maximally 13 2nd year Research Grant extensions, although it will be unlikely that next year all extension requests will be approved. Moreover, these figures do not take a potential holding back of 10% yet into account. This is to be discussed at the Joint Meeting.

Joint meeting of the Board and the Scientific Advisory Committee

1. Welcome

The Chairman welcomed the members of the Sci Adv Committee. He also acknowledged Prof Dechalotte who participated in the SAC for the first time.

2. Brief info to the Sci Adv Comm about NRF Africa project

Prof. Hautvast gave a very brief introduction to the SAC members on Phase 2 of the Africa project including the kick-off symposium for phase 2 recently held in Ghana. The SAC members were all very supportive to this project as the number of regular adequate quality applications from this region has been very limited.

3. Report from the Scientific Advisory Committee

Prof. Kuipers reported that the number of applications this year was very and that there was an interesting heterogeneity in both the topics but also quality of the applications. Within the SAC there was a unanimous view that we should particularly support researchers in the early phase of their career. Although this is not explicitly listed as a criterion, the SAC members expressed a positive bias toward applications from researchers in their early career or for projects where it was clear that the actual

research was done by PhD students or post docs. For being more explicit in our website communication to potential applicants, we may specify that the primary investigator/applicant (PI) should have a PhD and if not she/he should seek support from her/his supervisor to function as co-PI. Early career can be defined as the first 10 years after obtaining the PhD.

The SAC decided not to recommend 4 out of the 11 applications for this year's second-year extension while on another application they decided to only recommend providing a part of the requested funding and postponing the remainder to next year. The SAC proposed to adjust the current payment conditions and withhold 10% of the budget from the first year in case of a 1-year project or 10% from the second year in case of a 2-yr project until a satisfactory final report + financial breakdown is presented. The Board accepted this proposal for immediate implementation already in this year's round. For next year's round the conditions posted on the website should also be modified accordingly.

In conclusion, the SAC recommended:

- 9 selected Research Grant applications,
- 2 selected International Training Fellowship and
- 7 2nd year Research Grant extensions: 6 of which fully and 1 partially

Prof Hautvast asked to Prof Kuipers on whether he felt that there should be more attention to Public Health Nutrition when communicating about our grant possibilities and/or when reviewing the applications. Prof Kuipers responded that he was happy with the selection for Research Grants of the 9 projects out of 24 projects that were all fundable which originated from 71 applications in total: "*a nice bouquet of diversity*". He also remarked that in the current population of applications the number of realistic project with Public Health Nutrition relevance was very low and that these projects would be easily identified and probably selected for recommendation. The Chairman and the other Board Members expressed their great appreciation to the SAC and its Chairman for the excellent work done by dealing with so many applications in a limited time. The Board happily approved the SAC recommendation for funding.

4. Dates for the 2018 meetings

Because some SAC members needed to leave early and Mr van Veen was also not able to be present, no decision was taken on next year's meeting dates. This will be investigated and decided upon via e-mail in due time.

5. Closure

The chairman closed the joint meeting at 18:20 hr, thanking all participants and invited them for an informal dinner at the Hilton Hotel.