

## **Short notes from the Annual Board Meeting of the Nutricia Research Foundation**

Held via Zoom-videoconference, 11 December 2020, 14:00 hrs

### Board of Trustees

Prof. J. Ruitenbergh (chairman)  
Prof. J. Hautvast (secretary /vice chairman)  
Mr. W. Tijhaar (treasurer)  
Prof. P. Sauer  
Prof P. Soeters

### Project Secretariat

Dr. F Pepping

### Scientific Secretariat

Dr. J. Bindels (minutes)

### Guests

Prof F. Kuipers (chairman Sci. Adv. Committee)  
Prof. E. Feskens (proposed new chairperson Board)

### **1. Opening & Welcome**

At the request of the Chairman, Prof. Hautvast welcomed the participants including Prof Feskens who informally accepted the invitation to join the new Board as of Jan 2021 as Chair person. The draft agenda was accepted.

### **2. Minutes Annual Meeting 20 November, 2019**

The minutes from the previous annual meeting (20 Nov. 2019) were accepted. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, no spring meeting was held in 2020.

### **3. Status Request for Donation to Danone**

A request to the responsible officer at of Danone Specialised Nutrition made by Prof Hautvast with help from Drs Pepping and Bindels was submitted in the week of 18 Sep. After submission, there were several contacts with Dr. Bindels for additional information, but no final decision was made by Danone. Prof Hautvast regretted that there was no decision on one hand, but was happy that there is no rejection (yet) on the other hand. Moreover, we still have finances for 2-3 years.

### **4. Finances**

Before the meeting, Mr Tijhaar already circulated the Annex 2 to the invitation. The other Board members appreciated the concise information and the following further remarks by Mr Tijhaar were made: 1: An invoice for the final donation from Danone on the Africa-II project amounting to EUR 250 000,- was sent recently. 2. To avoid negative interest charges on our remaining capital, we should try to pay open commitments as soon as possible, once the conditions for payment have been fulfilled. 3. On financial reporting from our partners at NWU, Mr. Tijhaar informed the Board that there is now good communication and it is definitely meeting his expectations.

### **5. Report from the Sci Adv Committee meeting 15 Oct. 2020**

Because a face-to-face meeting was not possible, the Sci Adv Committee had its meeting to review and select the grant applications via a Zoom-videoconference. Despite of no longer offering research grants longer than 1 year, we had the largest number of applications ever: 87 applications for a research grant and 6 for an international training fellowship grant. Because of this high number, the chair of the Sci Adv Comm urged his members to make a strict pre-selection so that it would need little time to check on whether projects initially rated low needed to be upgraded. Doing so, 36 research grant applications out

of 87 were rated as 7 or higher and were discussed in more detail. In a further round, 10 applications were selected as being fundable. Among the 6 International Training Fellowship applications, the Sci Adv Com selected 3 applications for funding, although for some with a reduction of the budget to be committed. This year, 9 research grants provided in previous years would be up for extension into the second year. However, mainly based on interruptions due to the Covid-19 pandemic, only 3 projects have progressed in such a way that the investigators were able to request for the second year funding. All 3 requests for second year extensions were accepted. Because of the potential financial burden next year if most of the 6 remaining second year extensions needed to be funded, the Sci Adv Comm followed Dr. Bindels suggestion to only select 8 new Research Grants for this year. Thus, after a final discussion round 2 out of the initially 10 selected projects were identified for being placed on a "reserves list" in case the Board would insist in sponsoring more. In conclusion, the Sci Adv Committee agreed to recommend 8 new Research Grants, 3 International Training Fellowships and 3 second year Research Grant extensions. The total amount of newly committed money amounted to EUR 329 595.- Prof. Kuipers emphasised that the quality of all selected projects was very good and that the grants-programme of the NRF clearly met a need. This was also illustrated by the final internship report of the MSc student from WUR with beautiful testimonials by grant recipients in how our grant helped them in their (early) career.

#### **6. Progress Africa Project**

The Covid-19 pandemic also caused that most of the activities in the Africa project were frozen, except for the MSc activities. Mr Pepping indicates that by mid Jan, there will be a new assessment on whether the postponed PhD support course could be rescheduled for the second half of 2021. He also indicated that the 6<sup>th</sup> progress report will be issued soon. Prof Sauer shared on his experience from supporting research in Indonesia and recommended to visit our partners again as soon as it would be reasonably possible. This is the best way to keep things going and motivate the local partners.

#### **7. Changes in the Composition of the Board as of 1 Jan 2021**

Earlier this year, it became clear that according to the bylaws of the NRF Board members Profs. Ruitenberg and Hautvast were due for retirement. In further e-mail and telephone communications, also Prof Soeters and Mr Tijhaar expressed the desire to retire from the NRF-Board as of 31-12-2020. In additional communications between the Board members, Prof Hautvast proposed the name of Prof Edith Feskens as new chairperson of the Board, which the other Board members were very happy with. In further communication with her, she accepted the request. Moreover, the proposal to bring Drs Pepping and Bindels (currently special secretariat and scientific secretariat) into the new Board was also accepted. As long as the Scientific Advisory Committee is in function, its chairman (Prof. Kuipers) will be invited for all Board meetings and activities. The proposed new composition of the Board was already circulated to the participants of the meeting in annex 7 to the invitation.

#### **8. Closing Round**

The chair of the meeting, Prof Hautvast wished the members of the new Board lots of success for their work on the coming years. In due time, if the situation around Covid-19 allows, we should have a nice social get-together between the old and the new Board members to celebrate the success of the NRF. Prof Hautvast also recommended to the new Board to present the NRF to Senior Management of Danone as soon as this would be possible. He is still optimistic that the great work by the NRF can be continues also after our current finances have dried up. Prof Ruitenberg joined Prof Hautvast in well wishings to the new Board members. He also thanked his co-Board Members for the commitment and friendship during all the years he was the Chairman. Prof. Soeters and Mr Tijhaar joined the former speakers by thanking their colleagues and congratulating the new Board members. Finally, Prof Feskens thanked the retiring members of the Board for all the good work that has been done. Although it is not clear whether there will be new finances, she looks forwards to the coming years where the NRF can still play a significant role in stimulating Research in Human Nutrition and support Nutrition Capacity Building activities in Africa.

The meeting was closed at 15:50 hrs.