

First external evaluation of HiiL completed: Commission concludes that HiiL start-up was successful and that funding should be continued after 2010

The Evaluation Commission that was set up in May to conduct an external evaluation of HiiL after the first three programmatic years in the existence of the Institute has concluded that the first years have been a very good start-up and that great efforts have been devoted to creating a sound basis for the development of a top programme and institute. The Commission advises a continuation of funding after 2009 and expresses the trust that the Institute will acquire the status of "Maatschappelijk Top Instituut (MTI)" (Societal Top Institute).

Given the relatively short period under review the objective of this first evaluation (as set by the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO)) was to assess whether, and if so, how the foundations have been laid to build a high level research programme and an internationally visible institute.

A key element of the work of the Institute over the past three years has been to substantively develop and build the research agenda in the most innovative way possible and to define a role that gives the Institute a clear added-value in the academic and societal landscape. The Commission concludes that that goal has been achieved. More particularly, the Commission finds that the process of developing research questions has been successful.

Looking at the **scientific relevance** of the Institute, the Commission finds that "The HiiL Forum has proven itself," agreeing with HiiL that a serious evaluation of the scientific output and relevance can only be done in about another two years but adding that "the process (...) is promising." In this context, the Commission does recommend a limited growth of the scientific staff at the post-doc level to enhance the further development of the Research Programme, to manage the completion of projects, and to engage in dissemination activities. The Institute intends to take up this recommendation. As regards the **societal relevance** of our work, the Commission has marked this as being "very good". It is further concluded that the **national and international relevance** of the Institute has been successfully developed and the Commission expresses the expectation that the relations which have been built will broaden and deepen. As regards **knowledge transfer** the Commission classifies the foundations which have been laid as "very good". Regarding the **organisation**, the Commission reiterates that while a good foundation has been laid, the limited capacity within the Institute makes it vulnerable, for which reason it is advised to enhance the staffing level.

HiiL is very pleased with the conclusions that were reached, while recognizing that there is no room for complacency. Significant challenges lie ahead. "We are grateful to the Commission in helping us define these challenges," says Sam Muller, HiiL's Director.

In the coming two years the first final results of the research projects that have been set up will start to emerge. HiiL will have to ensure that top-level results meet the criteria that are central to HiiL: top-level academic quality (innovative and multi-disciplinary), work that is relevant for society and that is truly international. The Institute will also have to ensure effective knowledge transfer back to academia and practice.

"Our vigour and commitment to deal with the challenges that lie before us is hugely enhanced by the fact that the Commission has so clearly expressed confidence in what has been done thus far," continues Sam Muller.

A significant part of the HiiL research funds have already been allocated to specific projects. HiiL is pleased to be able to say that by the end of 2009 all research funds will have been committed. By



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that time, the Institute will have 10 projects under its wings, of which 7 will have been tendered based on an open call, 2 will have been put together with interested parties based on an open and inclusive process, and 1 will have been allocated based on specifically available expertise. Once all funds have been committed, the Institute intends to conduct an evaluation all processes that were used to connect innovative research questions developed within the Hiil Forum with research groups in the Hiil Academy.

The principal challenge facing Hiil now is to secure a continuation of funding after 31 December 2009, as recommended by the Commission. Concrete in this regard will be taken shortly.

The Institute is very grateful to the members of the Evaluation Commission - Mr. Peter Wakkie (Chairman), Professor Hanna Sevenster, and Professor Jan Wouters - and to the Secretary of the Commission, Mr. Anton Nijssen, for the work that was done.

"We attach great value to open debate and discussion; it is what makes us learn and grow as an institution," ends Sam Muller, "This report is an important contribution to that. I hope that those with questions and comments will know how to find me."