

## **Reaction of the Meertens Institute's Scientific Advisory Board (WeCo) to the 2018 institute assessment.**

This is the reaction of the Scientific Advisory Board (WeCo) of the Meertens Institute (MI) to the 2018 assessment of the institute by an independent peer review committee chaired by Prof. Ed Hovy, Carnegie Mellon University. We have read the institute's self-assessment, the "Assessment report. Peer Review 2012-2017", and also the reaction by the MI to the assessment. We are grateful for the careful work of the committee, for its creative recommendations for the years to come, and for the MI's reactions to the assessment.

The WeCo welcomes the idea of appointing a mid-career researcher with proven ability to attract external funding, with a view toward pursuing a more active policy of writing and submitting research proposals. This may, as the committee suggests, address the justified concern that the number of externally funded researchers at the institute, especially graduate students, has been declining. It may also benefit the Committee's recommendation that the MI seek funding for "flagship proposals", in particular "cross-disciplinary and digitally-based projects that illustrate [...] ways of fusing old and new paradigms", where the MI's proven record, we agree, instills confidence, and which the WeCo likewise definitely welcomes. Successfully securing the funding for such projects will, however, prove to be a non-trivial challenge, and we are sure the committee shares our misgivings about the procedural costs, the increasing competitiveness, and the concomitant diminishing returns of the external grant application mechanisms. It remains worthwhile to consider alternative ways of increasing the number of graduate students.

The WeCo is pleased that the committee acknowledges that the MI's mission and status extend well beyond the range one would expect from the comparatively small size of its research groups. While the MI cannot pretend to a mandate "to represent all of Dutch ethnology and language" (as the response of the MI board rightly points out), we share and welcome the committee's recognition that the MI's unique position in ethnology and dialectology is invaluable, influential and therefore accompanied by an important responsibility.