

**Evaluation of the Netherlands Interdisciplinary
Demographic Institute (NIDI)**

March 2008

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1. Introduction

Every six years, all KNAW institutes are evaluated according to the goals and guidelines specified in the Standard Evaluation Protocol 2003-2009 for Public Research Organisations. The assessment system aims to improve the quality of both research and research management. The research is evaluated according to international standards of quality and relevance, which are outlined in section 3. The management is evaluated according to its capacity to develop and pursue effective research strategies, to attract funding and to create a good research environment. Finally, the assessment procedure is a vital element in ensuring accountability of publicly funded research institutes. Eventually, the report, and the policy decisions of the KNAW based on the report, are presented to the Minister of Education and Sciences and are published.

The review of the Netherlands Interdisciplinary Demographic Institute (NIDI) was commissioned by the board of management of the KNAW.

The evaluation has both a prospective and retrospective side. A central question is whether NIDI's current research strategies and capacities can adequately meet the challenges ahead. In retrospect, we look at NIDI's performance over the period 2001-2007. It should be noted however, that NIDI became part of the KNAW only in 2003.

The review committee was appointed in April 2007 and consisted of:

Prof.dr. Anneke van Doorne-Huiskes (chair), Utrecht University.

Prof.dr. Ron J. Lesthaeghe, University of Michigan/University of California Irvine.

Prof. dr. Philip H. Rees, University of Leeds.

Dr. Ties Boerma, Department of Measurement and Health Information Systems, World Health Organization, Geneva.

Dr. Jan Kok (Virtual Knowledge Studio, KNAW) was appointed secretary of the committee.

The site visit took place on January 17th and 18th, 2008. The program of the site visit is outlined in detail in Appendix 1. The material received in advance by the committee is specified in Appendix 2.

2. Review of the Institute

2.1. Mission, policy and strategy

NIDI is the national research institute for demography and is currently the Academy's only social science institute. It was founded in 1970 as an interuniversity institute through a joint initiative of Dutch universities and gained independent status as a foundation in 1987. NIDI became an Academy institute in 2003.

In 2001 NIDI was reviewed by an external panel, that judged its performance to be very good and encouraged it to continue combining applied, policy-oriented research with basic, analytic research. However, NIDI was also advised to strengthen its analytical research and to increase its scientific output. In putting this advice into practice, NIDI encountered some delays. In fact, the period 2001-2004 is described as a transitional period (Self Assessment p.6), caused by a combination of managerial and organizational changes and financial pressures. In 2005, a comprehensive plan – in alignment with the Academy's long-term strategy – to strengthen NIDI's research was adopted, leading to a (small) reorganization in 2006 and a restructuring of the research departments which became effective in April 2007.

NIDI's mission is 'to build and maintain a knowledge infrastructure for population issues to address the population challenge. Our aim is to create and share demographic knowledge and to enhance the use of this knowledge.' (Self Assessment, p. 7). The mission implies that NIDI builds theories to understand population changes and their implications, constructs new analytical methods and invests in high-quality demographic data. Disseminating the results implies reaching out to different target groups: the scientific community, policy makers (in particular civil service) and the general public (p.8). The transfer to the Academy has partially solved NIDI's growing budgetary problems. In the 1990s, funding by Dutch government departments for NIDI's research programs was cut back severely. The Academy's funding provides security, but still about 60% of NIDI's resources have to be acquired externally. The high acquisition pressure is putting constraints on the development of the scientific mission.

Keeping in mind the problems encountered in the transitional stage and the persisting budgetary pressures, the committee praised the way in which NIDI has conceived and implemented its strategic mission in clear and effective policy. NIDI has found the right balance between preserving its core competence and responding flexibly to disciplinary changes, to the acquisition pressure and to the 'ageing' of its own staff.

First, the institute faces increased competition from both social and life sciences, in fields such as migration and health studies. Traditionally, demography is characterized by a combination of own statistical methodologies with theories borrowed from neighboring sciences. How should NIDI preserve this identity as

an interdiscipline in the face of strong competition? NIDI realizes this by focusing on its unique method of multistate demography, which makes it possible to fine-tune models for demographic change on the basis of individual life course experiences. At the same time, the method is flexible enough to incorporate theories and questions from various other sciences. The scientific staff is a good mixture of social scientists and even medical experts, although strengthening of statistical expertise is advisable. Finally, in putting more emphasis on analytic research, NIDI has wisely decided to scale down and partly outsource its data collections activity.

Second, the continuous budgetary pressures meant that NIDI management and staff needed to adopt new approaches to research. This new 'culture' implied more mobility and more acquisition of projects. Indeed, the number of tenured staff has gone down in favor of temporary positions and the management aims to continue this trend. Also, the number of externally funded projects has increased strongly. In particular, the institute was recently successful in attracting relatively long-term EU grants in accordance with its ambitions to become a mayor player in the European Research Area. The management also wisely decided to terminate a number of research projects for which the financial basis was weak and/or which did no longer fit in the more focused research strategy.

Third, the management has recognized that the change of NIDI from policy-driven to more analytic research has put great pressures on a relatively small number of senior staff members. Broadening and rejuvenating the group of staff members that can attract and carry out new projects as well as publish on the new research themes is essential. NIDI has opened its doors to PhD students, has intensified its contacts with universities in order to exchange staff, and increasingly attracts foreign scholars. However, there is still a large gap between junior and senior level that needs to be addressed further. Currently lacking are relatively young post doc researchers who are well-versed in advanced methodology and who can assist the senior staff with grant applications and daily supervision of PhD students.

Given the serious constraints and challenges, the committee notes that NIDI has indeed struck a 'New Balance' (the apt title of its Self Assessment) and found a clear role for itself.

2.2. Leadership

NIDI is led by Director Frans Willekens who is supported by Deputy Director Nico van Nimwegen. A management team supports the Directorate in guiding the Institute and advises on the formulation and implementation of the research program and other NIDI activities. It also monitors and reviews progress. The team consists of the Director and Deputy Director and the heads of departments Joop de Beer, Kène Henkens and Aat Liefbroer. The Management Team is chaired by the Director; the head of the Finance and Human Resource Management unit Wim de Jonge participates in its meetings. To enhance internal

communication and depending on the topics discussed, other staff members may be invited to join (part of) its meetings. After the 2007 restructuring NIDI has two research departments and a support department. The Social Demography Department (SoDem) is headed by Kène Henkens and Aat Liefbroer. The new Projections, Migration and Health Department (PMH) is headed by Joop de Beer. Finally, the Support Department is led by Nico van Nimwegen; this department is responsible for all services and comprises the units Finance & Human Resources Management, Information and Communication Technology, Information and Publications and the Secretariat (Self Assessment p.13).

The committee has sought to assess the Director's overall leadership, the performance of the management team as a whole and the mid-level managers individually, and the quality of the organizational structure. On all scores, the leadership proved to be very effective. As we pointed out in the previous section, the Directorate and Management team have been able to formulate a focused and relevant research policy. Perhaps even more important is that they have been able to build a consensus within the institute that sustains this new policy. The recent reorganization was executed with considerable care. An important element in creating a culture of shared goals is to stimulate bottom-up ideas and input. The flat organization of NIDI ensures that lines of communication remain short. On all levels, the management was appreciated for its openness to bottom-up initiatives. Only occasionally the wish for more clear guidance from the management was expressed.

We noted in particular the advanced project management system of NIDI, which allows comparison of planned to actually spent time per person/per project. It also allows the management to deploy staff more effectively. Noteworthy is also the dedication of the senior researchers to the training of PhD students in realizing publications in top journals.

Finally, the committee was struck by the high level of cohesion within NIDI and the strong solidarity between the departments. The praise for this should go to the entire staff, and the management would do well to preserve this culture.

2.3. Resources and funding policies

The dwindling of semi-structural government funding for NIDI projects posed a serious challenge to the leadership of NIDI. Overall, NIDI has been very successful in finding compensation in the form of external funding. However, the 'price' in terms of additional pressure on the research staff is high, in particular when the funding is related to short-term projects.

The committee would judge as more healthy an equal ratio between KNAW lump sum and external funding. Finding other sponsors to strengthen NIDI's resources will not be accomplished overnight. NIDI is advised to become more prominent in the field of (government) consultancy; this could eventually ease the way to attract sponsors.

In the future, NIDI would like to host many more PhD students. However, the universities tend to keep the fees to themselves. NIDI (aided by the Academy) should work towards a more equal distribution of costs associated with training of PhD students.

Ideally, NIDI would like to add international top researchers to its research team. However, it has to offer them salaries which are in general below those of university professors. The committee agrees that KNAW should try to bring its salary scales to a level equivalent to universities. The committee is not overly enthusiastic about attracting top researchers, as they are known for their propensity to move on to new opportunities. However, temporary appointments for visiting scholars are to be encouraged.

2.4. Facilities

NIDI's facilities fall under the Support Department, that consists of the units Finance & Human resources, Information and Communication Technology, Information and Publication and the Secretariat.

Overall, the facilities are seen by staff and committee alike as highly sufficient. A particularly annoying problem is the lack of access to online journals. The present temporary solutions meet day-to-day needs, but the strong feeling remains that KNAW should supply its researchers with at least the same ease of access as is available to colleagues at universities. NIDI should negotiate, wherever possible, visiting fellowship positions for NIDI staff who supervise PhD students and for NIDI staff who collaborate in research projects with Universities, so that staff can use University libraries and their access to online journals.

The facilities units are currently exploring economies of scale by outsourcing and/or cooperation with KNAW. Facilities that may be shared to some extent with other local KNAW institutes are ICT, human resources, library and documentation, and finance. Several staff members of the Support Department note that the cooperation with KNAW is improving. However, some support will have to remain close at hand, whereas other facilities (e.g. help with specific software) are geared to typical needs of NIDI researchers and should stay at NIDI as well. The committee endorses this re-direction.

The ICT unit is very well up to its task, but the safe storage of data could be handled better. However, together with KNAW NIDI is working at a backup system using the internet that should be operating within a couple of months.

Finally, the management is advised to consider whether information circulating in the NIDI (ranging from demographic databases to funding opportunities) could be stored and approached more integrally. For example, an online internal Newsletter circulated by email and archived by a support staff member could be

used to inform all staff of recent developments and cut down on individual circulations.

2.5. Academic reputation in general

For decades, NIDI's position as the national demographic institute, thus the national leader in its field, has basically gone without saying. However, the shift from applied demographic research, largely funded by government departments to basic, more academic research posed a challenge to NIDI. However, the institute has managed to retain its national leadership by intensifying ties with universities, e.g. through professorships of NIDI researchers and by attracting a growing number of PhD students. Moreover, in the international field it has acquired a leading role as well. In terms of general reputation, publications, funded projects and crucial roles in international organizations – such as European Association for Population Studies (EAPS) and International Union for the Scientific Study of Population (IUSSP) – the SoDem Department of NIDI is considered *very good to excellent*, with most of its work at the forefront internationally.

The committee focused on three issues, related to preserving and further improving this position at the forefront. Firstly, the current success relies rather heavily on a relatively small group of senior researchers. On the one hand, they need to be relieved of some of their (administrative) burdens to pursue their research goals. On the other hand, their skills in terms of analytical methods and producing academic publications need to be disseminated among a larger, and younger, group within NIDI. Second, the key to the success of SoDem lies in the 'lives in contexts' approach that studies the intergenerational effects, embeddedness and interaction of individual life courses with social (historical, institutional) contexts. Life course and contextual data allow for a powerful enrichment of the rational choice approach that is central in the study of demographic behavior. Thus, 'Lives in contexts' has – rightly – been chosen as the central theme of NIDI's research program. However, NIDI needs to make more visible how the other research strands (e.g. migration and health) fit in the overarching theoretical approach. Third, the international 'competition' in demographic and related research is strong and constantly shifting. Thus, NIDI needs to guard its niche carefully. Already, NIDI has good working relations with other big players such as the Institut National d'Études Démographiques (Paris), the Vienna Institute of Demography and the Max Planck Institute for Demographic Research in Rostock. NIDI also collaborates with a wider network of institutes and university departments throughout Europe. NIDI is keenly aware that, in their cooperation on international projects these institutes can exchange their strong points.

2.6. Societal relevance

NIDI aims to address its research to the 'population challenge'. Thus, it wants to understand the backgrounds and societal implications of changes in demographic

behaviour. For the foreseeable future, population ageing will be high on the agenda of policy makers and researchers in many disciplines. How will ageing impact on funding and allocation of health resources, and how will it impact on need and provision of care? Who are the caregivers of the future in a society with a below-replacement fertility and what is the role of immigration in this respect? What does ageing mean for the workforce and can we expect individual flexibility in retirement planning? These questions are relevant for European society as a whole and NIDI has done well in concentrating its efforts on the European Research Area. Although its diminished role in Third World development studies may be regretted, the committee agrees that NIDI's comparative advantages lie particularly within Europe.

Traditionally, NIDI has an explicit goal in providing policy makers and the general public with information on demographic trends. With respect to research for policy, NIDI staff members are, among others, involved in the Working Group for the Periodic Reporting on Population Issues in The Netherlands (WPRB) and the European Observatory on the Social Situation in the European Union. NIDI also contributes (or has done so) to international advisory bodies such as the Commission on Population and Development of the United Nations (CPD), the Council of Europe's European Population Committee, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and the European Commission. In The Netherlands NIDI staff participates in the work of the Social Science Council (Sociaal Wetenschappelijke Raad) of the Academy, the Council of Economic Advisors (Raad van Economische Adviseurs) of Parliament, and the Demography Platform of Statistics Netherlands (Self-Assessment, p45).

NIDI's outreach to the general public is impressive. The freely distributed monthly magazine *Demos* is an excellent means of popularizing the research. Items in *Demos* are often picked up by the media, leading to interviews with staff members and to newspaper articles. *Demos* is also published on the website. This site is quite instructive, and already offers the latest publications of staff members. Nevertheless, the site could be made more attractive to the public by offering more popularized data (apart from the 'Bevolkingsatlas'). The portals of other demographic institutes offer examples of simulations and other ways to serve different types of visitors. Also, the access to the publications should be enhanced with a search tool.

The committee acknowledges that NIDI, apart from a purely academic mission, has a second one of informing society and government. Given the relevance of the life course in contemporary social policy designs, NIDI could play an even more prominent consultancy role than it already does. This calls for a more active outreach in the form of a staff member focused on Public Relations. Possibly, this task can be outsourced. More (pro-) active and professionally organized Public Relations should make NIDI's vital assets more visible to policy makers and should anticipate the media coverage of research topics. Finally, this could support and to some extent relieve staff members in their communication with the public.

2.7. Strengths and weaknesses

According to the committee, the self-assessment of strength and weaknesses provides an accurate and balanced picture. Here, we summarize and comment on this assessment.

Strengths:

(1) Mission. The NIDI mission to ‘serve science and practice, including policy, with mutually reinforcing basic and applied research’ (p.56) has full support of the committee.

(2) Impact. Judging from scientific output and acquired projects, NIDI research has a strong impact both on the academic world and on society at large.

3) Staff. Indeed, the ‘motivated and dedicated scientific and supporting staff’ working in a spirit of cohesion and solidarity is a very valuable asset for NIDI.

Weaknesses:

(1) Financial vulnerability. The fact that NIDI has to provide for a large share of its funding from external sources is not a bad thing in itself; it keeps the institute alert and competitive. However, the committee considers 50% external funding a healthier situation.

(2) Qualitative mismatch. The self-assessment report notes that ‘An unbalanced distribution of competences with a lack of scientific capabilities at midlevel results in an overburdening of leading staff’ (p.56.). According to the committee, this ‘mismatch’ is also visible in the production of a relatively large share of the scientific output by a small group of researchers. A number of midlevel researchers are trained to provide statistics and reports for policy-relevant research. Their skills are still needed, but preferably they should also join the ‘academic’ staff in writing grant proposals and publishing in top academic journals. Is there a way to redress this imbalance? Although it is clear that ready-made solutions are not available, the committee advises NIDI to work on several levels. First, the midlevel staff should receive more guidance in reworking their reports into journal articles. A first step could be to prepare articles in teams. Then, staff members could try their hand at the peer reviewed, but not necessarily top journals. Second, on the level of staffing policy the NIDI should try to attract young, promising scholars, e.g. through the European training programs. Finally, staff not able to meet NIDI’s standards of scientific output should be advised to reconsider their career.

(3) Low mobility. Low mobility of the staff and the predominance of tenured positions are associated with the previous weakness. NIDI hopes to recruit new talents, preferably on a non-tenured basis. As for mobility, the committee advises to arrange more exchanges of skilled mid-level staff with universities. Their

practical expertise and educational skills could be profitably used by universities. Conversely, university staff could spend some time at NIDI, contributing to theory-building, research and publications. The Advisory Board could be helpful in negotiating with universities on this issue. As for attracting new staff, the committee warns against too many temporary positions in relation to tenured staff. Continuity is essential to reach the goal of transferring vital knowledge and skills to a younger generation.

Opportunities:

(1) Population awareness. Policy makers increasingly recognize the relevance and impact of demographic changes.

(2) Strategic fit. The committee agrees with NIDI that the methodological focus on individual life courses data fits in well with current developments in the social sciences as well as social policy which currently strives for more anticipation and adaptation to individual needs.

(3) Attractiveness. NIDI is an attractive partner for national and international scientific collaboration.

Threats:

(1) Harsh climate for research. 'The overall policy interest in population issues does not translate into sufficient and structural financial public means for research' (Self Assessment, p.57).

(2) Competing disciplines. Highly relevant issues such as the sustainability of pension systems, health care financing and integration of migrants attract other disciplines like economics, epidemiology and public health which study similar social issues (p.57). NIDI fears that 'in the resulting competition, demography could be pushed into a limited and supporting role'. NIDI can rise to this challenge by bringing the demographic component of these issues to the fore and by exploiting with even more zeal its unique methodology of multistate demography. This knowledge-base within the institute needs to be strengthened and broadened, e.g. by attracting statisticians or econometricians who can support the development of the multistate models.

(3) Next generation. Competition from larger disciplines and business (e.g. consultancy) has made it more difficult to attract young scholars to a career in demography. Possibly recruiting in the wider European area could help rejuvenate the staff, but that would imply making NIDI more attractive to foreign knowledge workers.

3. Assessment of Research Programs

3.1 Introduction

The different research strands of NIDI have been subsumed explicitly under the theme of 'Lives in contexts'. Demographic changes are the aggregate result of, ultimately, individual behavior. To understand this behavior, individual lives have to be studied, both qualitatively (life histories) and quantitatively (through standardized life courses). This means attention to the (cumulative) processes informing typical transitions (family formation, retirement), to the interdependency of lives, in particular of family members, and to the embeddedness of lives in wider social and historical contexts. Life course data form the building blocks of projection models that can be more accurate than those built on aggregate statistics.

For our assessment we have decided to discuss the Institute's performance as a whole. First, because the obvious question is: what is the potential of the overarching theme of Lives in Contexts to really integrate the various research topics? Second, because the Projections, Migration and Health Department was created very recently (2007) and can only be judged on its coherence and prospects, not (yet) on its output. Before discussing the assessment results, however, we will give our views on the two research departments.

The Social Demography Department clearly provides much of the theoretical and analytical input for the overall 'Lives in contexts' approach. The quality of the researchers and their scientific output are very good. Still, there are three issues the committee would like to raise. First, SoDem relies heavily on panel studies, such as the Netherlands Kinship Panel Study. The committee advises more attention to the representativeness of these panels, because of the selectivity of non-response. Systematic comparison with the registry-based census means further strengthening of cooperation with the Central Bureau of Statistics. Second, the committee suggests that much more use can be made of the censuses, apart from checking quality of panels. In fact, NIDI could play a leading consultancy role on registry-based censuses. Third, the 'contexts' in and the scale on which the life courses are studied are not always clear. Are these contexts households, municipalities, regions or countries and what are the implications for data?

The PMH Department incorporates three research strands. 'Projections' focuses on developing models for demographic projections and for assessing consequences of demographic change. These 'multistate' models (of for instance events such as marriage or having a first child) are fed with life course data, and thus allow for constant changes in the composition of (sub) populations and deal with alternative choices (competing events) as well. NIDI has developed extensive experience in the field of macro-simulation (e.g. Lifestyle Projections or LIPRO) and of micro-simulation (e.g. KINSIM) and is currently involved in a multi-institutional effort to develop MicMac, a multi-state model that combines

macro and micro approaches for demographic projections. The challenge for NIDI will be to maintain a continuous baseline level of investment into model building. The committee also encourages NIDI to be somewhat more imaginative in applying multistate models to diverse topics (such as migration), thus demonstrating its applicability in diverse disciplines.

The Migration strand deals with issues of integration of second generation immigrants (TIES project) as well as with projections of international migration flows and their impact on the composition of the population (MIMOSA project). The position of the migration research within PMH raises some questions, as part of the group's agenda seems more connected to SoDem. However, in concentrating on replacement migration (related to ageing of the work force and increased need of care workers) and the labor force participations of migrants this strand seems to fit in well. There are substantial opportunities for NIDI to build migration models driven by socio-economic and environmental developments that could drive their multistate projection models. The European Commission, for example, wants to understand the impacts of European Union and national policies on both intra-European migration and migration between Europe and the wider world. The European Commission also needs to assess the impact of climate change on European populations.

The Health strand of research focuses on two issues, health systems and health indicators. Both topics are relatively new to NIDI and seem –at first sight – risky ventures given the enormous competition in health research. However, the NIDI plans in this direction are promising and deserve further investment, both in terms of NIDI staffing and strengthening of ties with public health focused institutions. The study of health states and its implications for health systems now and in the future will require a broad array of expertise and research. This includes summary measures of population health (combining fatal and non-fatal health outcomes), risk factors, intervention coverage and effectiveness, and health system inputs (finances, human resources, governance, health information, medical products and service delivery), including measures of efficiency, effectiveness and equity. NIDI's comparative advantage in this complex field lie in the multi-state modelling approach, especially the new MicMac model, analyses of health outcomes (mortality and causes of death), and its work on health resource flows and financing. In several areas, it will be equally important to strengthen (existing) linkages with other institutions. In others, it will be necessary to expand NIDI capabilities.

3.2 Assessment

The Standard Evaluation Protocol 2003-2009 requires the review committee to assess the institute's research on four main aspects: (1) Quality (international recognition and innovative potential); (2) Productivity (scientific output); (3) Relevance (scientific and socio-economic impact); (4) Vitality and feasibility (flexibility, management and leadership).

The ratings used in the Protocol are:

Excellent. The Institute is considered an international leader.
Very good. The Institute is considered international player and a national leader.
Good. The Institute is considered internationally visible and a national player.
Satisfactory. The Institute is only 'visible' at the national level.
Unsatisfactory. The Institute's work is not worthy of pursuing.

The Institute as a whole is judged as **very good to excellent**. The performance of the leadership in refocusing the research strands and repositioning the institute in the academic world is impressive, in particular given the constraints. One of these constraints is related to the resources of the institute, which put a strong acquisition pressure on the staff. Also, the scientific output of the institute is rather skewed towards the small group of academic researchers. NIDI should attract more young –but skilled – researchers to broaden its scientific core group. In terms of academic reputation, NIDI can be considered an international leader, with the qualification that the Health strand still has to prove itself. Societal relevance of research and outreach to the public (in particular through Demos) is excellent as well. The Institute's facilities, apart from access to online journals, are splendid. The research program is coherently built around life courses and multistate models, although it should be made more explicit that NIDI has strong comparative advantages in health and migration research.

The Quality of the research is evaluated as **very good**. The approach and methodology developed here are highly original and have a high degree of technical perfection. In terms of content, the applicability should be demonstrated in more areas and in more original ways. In exploiting its niche, NIDI's contribution to the field of demography is highly significant. As a whole, the research program of both SoDem and PMH is gaining in coherence. As for publications, however, there is still scope for improvement. Researchers should be stimulated and supported to publish in (top) academic journals. The performance of the four program leaders is excellent. Finally, the quality of the other staff researchers varies somewhat. In particular the midlevel should be strengthened.

On Productivity, NIDI's research scores **very good** as well. Apart from publications, the committee notes other important outcomes such as the freely accessible database of the Netherlands Kinship Panel Study. The research groups now assembled in the PMH Department seem to lag behind in terms of attracted PhD projects and publications in SSCI refereed journals. However, in 2007 an encouraging leap forward appears to have been made.

The Relevance of the research is also **very good**. NIDI's unique research methodology advances knowledge considerably but, as already noted, the potential has not been fully explored yet. Multistate demography could, for instance, be demonstrated in different types of simulations. The dissemination of the work is very satisfactory. For instance, The European Commission (Eurostat) has made good use of NIDI's LIPRO model. Nevertheless, more (public relations) work needs to be done to make NIDI the natural centre of demographic expertise

and demographic consultancy. Finally, the research is well-implemented; it finds its way through projections and forecasting into social policy.

Finally, the Vitality and Feasibility of the program are seen as **very good**. Put in a long-term perspective, the research has adapted itself to new challenges related to societal changes, while preserving the unique character that gives NIDI a competitive advantage. The 'qualitative mismatch' (Self-Assessment, p.56; this report p.10) and ageing of the staff may hamper this adaptability, but even within the financial constraints of NIDI there are prospects to bring in young staff members with skills that can supplement the current capabilities. In addition, contacts with universities should be intensified.

4. Recommendations

It has become clear by now that the evaluation committee holds NIDI in high esteem. In this concluding section, we will not summarize all our positive findings, but focus instead on recommendations for improvement of aspects that are still not optimal.

Recommendations for NIDI

1. Currently, the composition of the staff, in particular at midlevel, is not ideally suited to carry out NIDI's scientific ambitions. A small group of senior researchers is burdened with too many tasks: acquisition and management of projects, developing of statistical models, publishing, public relations and training of PhD students. Where possible, this group needs to be relieved, and new scientific staff has to be attracted to help develop statistical tools and models. The roles of administrative staff should be reviewed to release support for public relations and for complex EU projects.
2. The scientific output of the midlevel staff needs to be improved. Even more important is the further development of (a culture of) mobility: staff has to be encouraged to (temporarily) change places with university researchers. Qualified postdocs, possibly recruited internationally, have to be brought in to broaden the group of experts in multistate demography. This presupposes making NIDI a more attractive working place for foreigners. Ultimately, researchers who do not meet NIDI's expectations of staff should be advised to reconsider their careers.
3. The SoDem group should strengthen its empirical base, by addressing issues of representativeness through comparisons with 100% census samples and by making much more use of the material in registry-based censuses.
4. The turn to issues of health is considered a sensible move, but NIDI should make clearer what its competitive advantages are, why its expertise and methods provide for a niche in this field.
5. Multistate demography is NIDI's trump card and NIDI can and must play it better. Multistate models have to be adapted to and applied to more research topics (e.g. replacement migration), and with more imagination. For instance, the use of the multistate approach for simulations could be demonstrated. Finally, the preservation of multistate expertise and its transfer to the next generation should be high on the agenda.
6. NIDI is advised to create a database of its publications and to make it available on the web.

7. Reports should be converted more frequently into academic publications. To achieve this, authors of reports are to be counseled by senior staff and their work schedules have to be adapted accordingly.
8. NIDI should improve its public relations, in order to anticipate media coverage of research results; to relieve the staff, and, eventually, to make NIDI more visible as a centre of expertise and consultation.

Recommendations for KNAW

1. NIDI is housed in a characteristic and stylish building that, through its internal architecture, adds much to open and easy communication across the institute, to the job satisfaction of its staff members and to their group cohesion. The KNAW should take this immaterial value of the building into consideration.
2. Since attracting qualified researchers to NIDI is hampered by the salary system of KNAW, we advise the Academy to reconsider its salary policy.
3. The KNAW should work towards an Academy-wide solution of access to online academic journals.
4. KNAW is invited to stimulate further cooperation of NIDI's Support Department with similar departments at other local institutes. Also, a KNAW specialist on funding opportunities and procedure will be helpful.

Appendix 1. Program of the site visit

<i>Time</i>	<i>Program</i>	<i>Present</i>
9.30 – 10.30	Arrival and welcome. Introductory presentation: “NIDI. A new balance”	Frans Willekens, Director Nico van Nimwegen, Deputy Director Joop de Beer, PMH Kène Henkens, SODEM Aat Liefbroer, SODEM
10.30 – 12.00	The SoDem Department	
10.30 – 11.00	Meeting with heads of department	Kène Henkens & Aat Liefbroer
11.00 – 12.00	Meeting with members of the Department and presentation of representative research strands	Pearl Dykstra, Frans Van Poppel, Harry van Dalen, Gijs Beets
12.00 - 12.15	Visit NIDI premises	Nico van Nimwegen
12.15 – 13.00	Lunch and reflection	At NIDI
13.00 – 14.30	The PMH Department	
13.00 – 13.30	Meeting with head of Department	Joop de Beer
13.30 – 14.30	Meeting with members of the Department and presentation of representative research strands	Nicole van der Gaag, Helga de Valk, Peter Ekamper, Luc Bonneux
14.30 – 15.00	Tea break	
15.00 – 16.00	Meeting with Young Talents (PhDs)	Chantal Goes, Doreen Huschek, Corina Huisman, Renske Keizer, Beate Nowok, Anne van Putten, Mieke Reuser, Niels Schenk, Judith Soons
16.00 - 16.30	Meeting with (Honorary) Fellows	Dirk van de Kaa, Jenny Gierveld, Jeroen van Ginneken
16.30- 17.00	Preparation of report (1)	Committee
17.00 – 18.00	Drinks/ Informal meeting with staff	At NIDI

Friday, 18 January 2008

<i>Time</i>	<i>Programme</i>	<i>Present</i>
9.30 – 10.30 9.30 – 9.45	The Support Department Meeting with head of Department	Nico van Nimwegen
9.45 – 10.30	Meeting with heads of Support Groups	Wim de Jonge, Vera Holman, Jeroen Berkien, Jolande Siebenga
10.30 – 11.30	Meeting with members of the Scientific Advisory Board	Joop Schippers
11.30 – 12.00	Meeting with Staff Representation (OC)	Hanna van Solinge (chair)
12.00 – 13.00	Lunch and reflection	At NIDI
13.00 – 15.00	Preparation of report (2)	Committee
15.00 – 15.30	Tea break	
15.30 – 16.00	Meeting with Management Team: debriefing	
16.00 – 16.30	Meeting with Staff preliminary conclusions	
16.30	End site visit	

Appendix 2 Received material

The NIDI Strategic plan 2005-2008

Nota Personeelsbeleid 2006-2008 (The NIDI Human Resources Policy)

NIDI Annual Report 2006

Werkprogramma 2007 (NIDI Work Program 2007)

Zelfevaluatie KNAW 2001-heden (Self Assessment of the Academy)

Standard Evaluation Protocol

New Balance Self Assessment NIDI 2007. Part I – Report

New Balance Self Assessment NIDI 2007. Part II – Output