

## **Response of the Academic Advisory Board to the Huygens ING assessment**

The Academic Advisory Board of Huygens ING (KNAW) is grateful for the Assessment Report 2012-2017, delivered in May 2018, and feels its main recommendations should be taken to heart by the Board of the KNAW.

As the Assessment Committee acknowledges, 'Huygens ING is in the middle of evolving from an institute that concentrated on the (analogue) research of texts and sources and on producing scholarly editions, into an institute that is increasingly employing digital solutions for text and source editions, while also maintaining a focus on analytical research' (p. 7). What is more, in 2016 Huygens ING, together with the Meertens Institute and IISH, became part of the KNAW Humanities Cluster and moved from The Hague to Amsterdam.

In view of these major changes affecting both its internal organization and the position it occupies within the Dutch research landscape, the Advisory Board of Huygens ING feels the committee's assessment of its research quality (2: very good) and viability (2: very good) are well-deserved.

According to the Assessment Report, however, 'the heterogeneity of the group hampers the formulation of a coherent strategy' (p. 10), and 'the lack of a coherent strategic planning for outreach needs to be addressed' (p. 11). While the first remark concerns the viability of Huygens ING, the second observation is reflected in the committee's judgement of its relevance to society (3: good). This judgement is substantially below the institute's ambition and underscores the need to address this remark quickly and seriously.

According to the Advisory Board both observations are intimately related to the future of the KNAW Humanities Cluster. The committee's recommendation 'to articulate clearer research foci for Dutch history and culture and organize that within an overarching narrative that explains how the different factions fit together' (p. 12) should also be addressed from the broader perspective of the Humanities Cluster as a whole.

By the same token, the committee feels 'the new merger into the HuC is creating some stress, and the absence of a clearly articulated strategic vision adds to that' (p. 13). As far as the Advisory Board is concerned, this strategic vision should be formulated at the level of the Humanities Cluster. This holds true for all recommendations, summarized on pp. 14-15, the more so as the Advisory Board fully agrees both with the praise awarded to the ICT-team of the Institute and its endorsement of the section of History of Science.

It would seem, then, that Huygens ING is indeed best advised to focus on the further development of digital tools enabling it to strengthen its position in the Dutch digital humanities landscape. As a consequence, the main challenge to be met in the near future will be to do so while at the same time securing its research into Dutch history and literature

and the history of science – Huygens ING is the only KNAW Institute in which this history is being studied. Whilst this clearly forms a challenge, combining further development of digital tools and these unique lines of research also holds great promise for the national position of Huygens ING to play a prominent role in advancing the field of (digital) humanities in the Netherlands.

The Advisory Board should like to add, however, that the 40 page Institute Programme 2018-2023 should be regarded as a very serious first step towards identifying the specific part to be played by Huygens ING in the wider context of the Humanities Cluster and future cooperation with the Meertens Institute in particular.<sup>1</sup> So the Board is slightly disappointed by the virtual absence of any reference to this document in the Assessment Report 2012-2017: on p. 7 the future priority awarded by Huygens ING to digital editions is noted, but it would seem the committee has chosen to largely ignore the material gathered in Chapter 4 ('Developments and strategy') and 5 ('Lines of research and key areas'), the outcome of serious and prolonged debate within Huygens ING.

Finally, the Advisory Board is very pleased that the Assessment Report on p. 13 recognizes the particular complications resulting for Huygens ING from 'the impending large number of retirements'. We have been emphasizing for some time now the need for more flexible personnel policies ensuring continuing rejuvenation of staff.

On behalf of the Academic Advisory Board Huygens ING,

Wiep van Bunge

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.huygens.knaw.nl/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Institute-Working-Programme-2018-2023.pdf>