

Management response of the Centre for Science and Technology Studies (CWTS) to the main recommendations of the SEP research assessment committee

dd. 10-10-2022

Dear members of the Executive Board of Leiden University,

In May 2022, a committee of highly esteemed international experts visited CWTS to assess the quality and relevance of the research performed by our institute between 2016 and 2021, as well as the future viability of our centre, according to the guidelines specified in the Strategy and Evaluation Protocol (SEP) 2021-2027. The committee has commended our institute for its excellent research, its many collaborations, its policy-relevant and -sensitive work, and its combination of strong leadership and participatory practices. The committee members have also provided several valuable recommendations in their report (p. 15/16). We highly appreciate the committee's feedback and advice and will follow-up on their recommendations as follows.

- 1. Recommendation: Formulate the 'brand' (identity and values) of CWTS as a starting point for the knowledge agenda, and focus on prioritisation in order to maximise impact and prevent scattering of efforts. This strategy can be finetuned by starting with smaller projects, and assessing their actual impact before deciding to make larger efforts in a particular area.*

Response: At the start of the process of developing our knowledge agenda for the period 2023-2028, we collectively defined our values and purpose, which are the fundamentals of the ambitions we are currently developing. We will finalise the knowledge agenda in the upcoming months and plan to present it in January 2023. The knowledge agenda will run for six years. In order to ensure success, our plan is to divide these six years up into three periods of approximately two years each. We plan to develop two-year goals and outcomes and evaluate progress after each period.

Under point 4 and 5, we describe two new initiatives that create room for experimentation in new research areas.

- 2. Recommendation: Proactively work towards using open data sources for CWTS's tools to reduce dependency on proprietary databases that might impose restrictions in the future. This includes additional investments in for instance ICT and data stewardship.*

Response: We appreciate the emphasis put by the committee on this critical issue. Open research information will be one of the main focal areas of our knowledge agenda. We are currently developing a strategic vision on open research information and open infrastructures. Our ambition is that in five years we will (almost) exclusively use open data sources instead of proprietary ones.

Furthermore, we are involved in the development of an Open Knowledge Base, a national initiative to set up a community-governed infrastructure for responsible management of open research information.

A new dedicated data steward has just started at our centre.

- 3. Recommendation: Further invest in PhD candidates: formulate a funding strategy for creating additional PhD positions, and further develop and implement plans for supervising PhD candidates and embedding them within the institute. The BV might provide extra training opportunities for PhD candidates interested in a non-academic career.*

Response: We are currently working on professionalisation of our PhD policies and coordination. We are, for example, considering the installation of a CWTS PhD council to formally represent our PhD candidates in the institute. Implementing our new PhD policies will be one of our priorities next year.

Our new knowledge agenda will present the new strategic ambitions and priorities for our centre. Within the framework of this new knowledge agenda, we will develop targeted strategies for funding acquisition and hiring of new staff members. We expect this will also offer opportunities for investing in new positions for PhD candidates. Furthermore, we will follow the recommendation of the committee to explore the training opportunities that CWTS BV may provide.

- 4. Recommendation: Invest in collaborations with Low- and Middle-Income Countries in order to increase inclusivity and diversity of data sources, and improve representation of many countries and research fields that are currently invisible to quantitative studies, and therefore also to global decision makers and policy makers.*

Response: We very much agree and will make this one of the focal areas of our knowledge agenda. UNESCO granted us a chair in Diversity and Inclusion in Global Science. Around this chair, a new research lab will be developed and a network of partnerships with organizations in Low- and Middle-Income Countries will be established.

- 5. Recommendation: Increase interactions with actors of civic society (citizen science). This could for instance take the shape of pilot projects, which can be expanded if successful.*

Response: In July 2022, CWTS became the new home of the Citizen Science Lab, subsidised by the National Programme Open Science. We look forward to the further development and integration of the Citizen Science Lab in our centre and our new knowledge agenda. Furthermore, Laurens Hessels has recently been appointed as professor by special appointment in Societal Value of Science. This chair is installed and funded by the Rathenau Instituut. Among other things, Hessels focuses on studying transdisciplinary research practices in which scientific and societal actors work closely together. The chair will also be integrated in our new knowledge agenda.

6. *Recommendation: Make all PhD candidates familiar with the mixed methods approach of CWTS, and invest in a network of alumni. They are important ambassadors of CWTS's mission and vision regarding responsible research evaluation and open science.*

Response: This recommendation will be taken into consideration in the professionalisation of our PhD policies mentioned under point 3.

7. *Recommendation: Keep working on finding ways to connect to the BSc and MSc programmes at Leiden University in order to be able to train a new generation of researchers in the field starting at the junior level, and to provide PhD candidates with the opportunity to obtain teaching experience.*

Response: In September 2024, a new bachelor programme in Science for Sustainable Societies will launch. CWTS will provide several courses and thesis projects for this programme. Furthermore, our colleagues will teach a course in the Honours Programme of Leiden University. We are always alert to new opportunities where CWTS expertise meets education. We are for instance exploring possibilities to offer courses in the area of (critical) data science.

We would like to express our gratitude for the dedication of the committee to provide highly valuable feedback and suggestions to strengthen the position and further development of our institute. The committee highlighted one of the main challenges, which is to combine focusing on key strengths with room for experimentation in new research areas. In the process of forming our new knowledge agenda, we are keeping this firmly in mind and trying to put it into practice.

Sincerely,

Prof. dr. Sarah de Rijcke (Scientific Director)
Prof. dr. Ludo Waltman (Deputy Director of Research)
Dr. Ed Noijons (Deputy Director of Projects)