

Q&A - Executive Board decision extra rules for cooperation with WUR

- What conclusion has the EB come to?

The EB has decided to set additional rules regarding cooperation with all its partners. Not just the fossil industry. Not only do we want to assess per project whether it fits our Strategic Plan, but we also want to make sharper choices regarding cooperation with partners in those projects. To do that in a reasoned, repeatable way, we will make an assessment framework for cooperation in the coming months, on top of the existing rules. We will start with cooperation around climate change and specifically for the fossil industry. After this, the EB will look at how this decision framework can be applied to other transitions and other cooperation partners.

In addition, WUR will participate in the national dialogue on cooperation with the fossil industry organised by the Free University.

- When will the additional decision framework be ready and can anyone who wants to have a say in it?

The decision framework should be finalised this autumn, focusing on climate change and more specifically, companies in the fossil industry. In drafting it, we will of course involve experts from our own organization as well as students.

- In the end, won't WUR just keep doing what it always did?

No, that is highly unlikely. We will assess our cooperation partners in a project more strictly, starting with companies in the fossil industry. The additional decision framework we are developing this autumn should help WUR decide which companies we want to work with on which types of projects. We do this by assessing the extent to which the cooperation partners contribute to, or are an obstacle to, the necessary global transitions.

- Why don't you just stop collaborating with the fossil industry?

We feel the need, desire and urgency to make sharper choices around climate change. The dialogue sessions we held on the subject gave us food for thought. There is urgency to move forward. At the same time, however, a simple, one-dimensional answer is not at hand and we need each contributor who is serious about tackling climate change. We are convinced we need to make sharper choices but in a reasoned, repeatable way. To this end, we are creating an additional assessment framework in the coming months, on top of the existing rules for cooperation.

- Isn't making the assessment framework a delaying tactic?

No. We feel and endorse the urgency of climate change. At the same time, we think it is important that if, for example, we curtail cooperation in projects with a fossil industry

partner, it is done in a reasoned and repeatable way. That is what the assessment framework is for.

- Isn't making the assessment framework an excuse to continue working with the fossil industry?

No, that is exactly what we have not yet decided: based on what arguments do we decide and how do we respond to the question regarding sharpening the choices in cooperation with partners.

- Who have been asked to participate in the Advisory Group and why?

The following colleagues will contribute to the Advisory group, considering the impact on all major transitions we face as an organisation and society:

Chair: Carolien Kroeze, Professor Environmental Systems Analysis

Members:

- Vincent Blok, Professor in Philosophy of Technology and Responsible Innovation
- Harry Bitter, Professor Biobased Chemistry and Technology
- Niklas Hoehne, Special Professor Mitigation of Greenhouse Gases
- Harriette Bos, Senior Scientist Fossil free materials and Systems analysis
- Geert Aarts, Researcher Marine Mammals
- Kristina Smieskova, Master Student/Green Office
- Hilde Bos, Corporate Strategy & Accounts

Linking pin with Executive Board: Rens Buchwaldt

- Why doesn't WUR declare a moratorium like other universities?

Because we want to be very cautious in categorically and completely excluding parties - any party - from science. It is the basis of science that you also - and perhaps precisely! - remain in conversation with the parties you do not fully agree with. Moreover, we believe that business can and should have a major and positive contribution to the global transitions needed to halt climate change.

When we curtail cooperation with a fossil industry partner, we do so in a reasoned and repeatable way, using a general assessment framework.

- How will WUR deal with ongoing projects and new applications before the assessment framework is in place?

We will not declare a moratorium. We think that is the wrong order given our decision, as it excludes (temporarily) partners entirely without being based on an assessment framework. In the meantime, researchers and teams will continue to make their own considerations on individual projects and will undoubtedly take the public discussion and today's decision into consideration.