

An exercise with ambition

JAN MENGELERS,
CHAIRMAN OF THE TNO BOARD OF MANAGEMENT



Photo: Jaap Oldenkamp

‘Work that adds value for society’

As in the previous edition of the TNO Magazine, I return to the question of our new strategy and the matter of positioning. A vital question that demands a constant focus. What is the role that TNO sees for itself in the years ahead? Where must we stand in the coming decade with respect to the European knowledge infrastructure? What are the most relevant research themes for industry and government, the themes on which we should concentrate? And what is it that we can offer society in real, concrete terms? I make no apologies for reiterating the fact that our Strategic Plan 2011-2014 focuses on these and other such issues. My purpose here is to stress how much clearer the contours are now becoming through having considered these questions and issues so intensively over recent months.

Again, at the risk of repetition (though at the same time taking the opportunity to drive home the notion), the new plan is founded on making an internationally visible impact in a select number of key themes and strengthening our profile through innovation and knowledge valorisation, for instance, and acquiring a highly distinctive position in the (inter)national knowledge infrastructure.

Our work has to generate added value for society. And the impact of this, we believe, has to be more visible, more demonstrative. In short, more explicit. This is what our new Strategic Plan does. It focuses on our contribution in tangible terms to matters like security and safety, sustainability, economic vitality and social renewal. Knowledge for a better world.

Our new strategy will ensure that our comprehensive strength and quality are used as effectively and efficiently as possible to achieve that goal. For instance, by ensuring that we have top talent at our disposal (home-grown or otherwise) in a number of carefully selected knowledge fields. And by ensuring that our organisation is fully geared to cooperation, a key aim in our new plan.

Indeed, cooperation has two components: internal and external. Internally we will ensure that our multidisciplinary – needed to solve complex issues – is not hindered in any way by the organisational structure (that we do, of course, need from an operational point of view); we will therefore be increasingly employing a matrix model approach. Externally that means an effort by all of us to network our organisation with other domestic and foreign knowledge organisations in key focal areas.

We are convinced that this is the right way to go about our business, and that ‘our’ governmental secretary will take receipt of a well founded draft Strategic Plan that is cut to suit the cloth of society’s requirements.

Yet that is not the aim of the whole process. No, it is about creating a TNO organisation whose specific kind of contribution will be able to serve society, both nationally and internationally, over the next decade. Now that is where the ambition lies in this exercise!

jan.mengelers@tno.nl