

The Netherlands: diversity in the physics community steadily increasing

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Current situation in the Netherlands

In the Netherlands, the number of women in physics is growing steadily. Among the first-year bachelor students physics and/or astronomy the percentage women has grown to almost 25%, figure 1 shows the average for all universities in the Netherlands. Remarkably, the differences between universities are large: in 2020 the percentage varies from 13% to 65%. However, it is encouraging that a substantial number of universities score a percentage of about 30%.

Nowadays, most physicists working in the Netherlands consider diversity in the community an important and essential asset. Research institutes and universities developed policy plans with measurable goals, which were implemented successfully to enhance diversity and inclusiveness within the physics community. Gender is still an important topic, but diversity is considered broader than gender only. Increasingly, efforts also target inclusiveness of less represented groups such as first-generation students with different cultural backgrounds or people of colour.

Since the last ICWIP in 2017, several new developments can be mentioned in the Netherlands. In 2017 the Foundation for Fundamental Research (FOM), which was a funding agency dedicated to physics only, merged with the Dutch Research Council NWO. NWO has a more multidisciplinary approach, which means that several national initiatives to enhance the number of women in physics turned into initiatives to enhance the number of women in STEM.

Although, these STEM initiatives are appreciated, the physics community, organised in the Netherlands' Physical Society (NNV) and the Dutch Physics Council (DPC), still feels the need for activities targeting the diversity in the physics field specifically. So besides the STEM initiatives, we started new activities focusing on physics. At the right-hand side of this poster we show some of these activities.

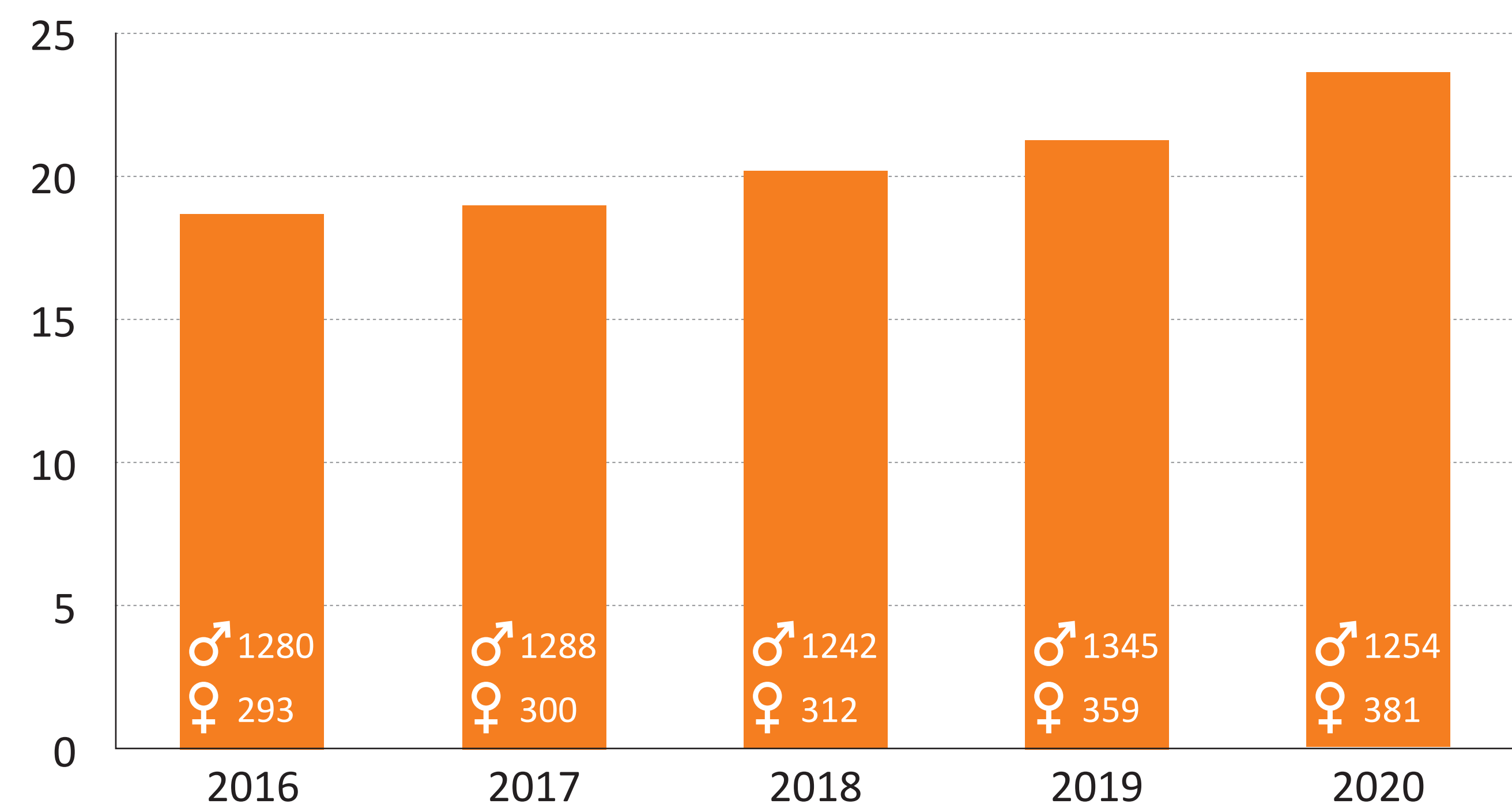


Figure 1. The percentage of women among first year bachelor students physics and/or astronomy in The Netherlands over the last five years.

NNV Diversity Prize

With the biennial Diversity Prize the NNV honours physics institutes judged most successful in realising an open and sustainable diversity policy. The prize has been awarded twice so far: in 2018 to the Faculty of Science and Engineering of University of Groningen; in 2020 to the Department of Applied Physics of Eindhoven University of Technology. In both cases, the deans and staff of the faculties take diversity seriously and realise that reaching equality among staff and students require long-term efforts. The NNV Diversity Prize offers an inspiring example for other institutes and departments. The awarding ceremony of the 2020-edition can be watched online¹.

Guest lectures at secondary schools

As part of the celebration of the centennial of the NNV in 2021, female physicists were invited to give online guest lectures for about 1,000 high-school pupils and their teachers. Lectures were given about e.g. planetary systems, collisions of cold molecules, gravitational waves and quantum fractals. Not always topics inside the standard curriculum. Most pupils were very enthusiastic about the guest lessons, although we were forced to give the lectures virtually due to the Covid-19 pandemic. A comment by a pupil on a lecture at the very beginning of the day: *'This was worth getting out of my bed so early'*.

Brochure best practices

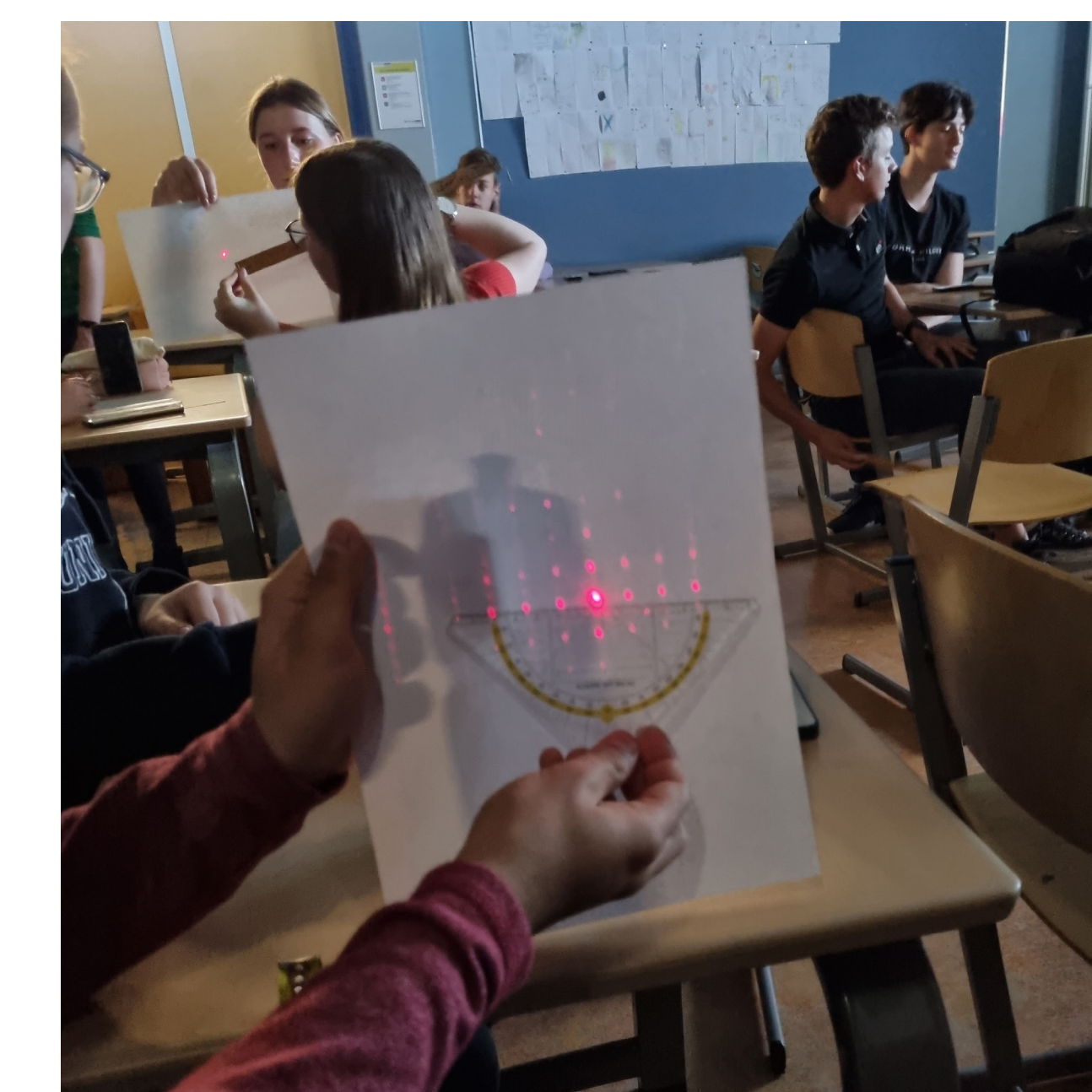
A brochure with best practices for improving diversity can be found on the website of the DPC². The brochure contains information on 'Best practices', 'How to attract diverse candidates and warrant inclusiveness in the hiring procedure', 'Welcoming and onboarding' and 'Continued support for diverse staff'.

Minerva Prize

NNV and DPC adopted from former FOM and NWO the Minerva Prize, a prize that distinguished a young female physicist working in the Netherlands. In 2021 the first edition of the Minerva Prize new style will be awarded. Not only women (cis and trans) will be eligible for the prize, non-binary people will be too.

¹<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ueWB5rYh4e4>

²https://dutchphysicscouncil.nl/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/DutchPhysics_best-practices-diversity-inclusiveness2020.pdf



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