



# **NRS Multi-Annual Policy Plan 2025-2030**



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# NRS Multi-Annual Policy Plan 2025-2030

## Summary

The NRS's updated Multi-Annual Policy Plan for 2025-2030 lays out an ambitious vision for the future of respiratory research in the Netherlands. With a focus on strategic goals and actionable steps, we aim to cultivate a dynamic, collaborative, and innovative research community committed to advancing respiratory health outcomes.

## Introduction NRS

The NRS was founded on March 19, 2009, with the aim of creating a platform and providing coordination for respiratory research in the Netherlands. Respiratory research in the Netherlands involves a wide range of disciplines, including clinical researchers (such as pulmonologists, pediatricians, allergologists, pathologists, ENT specialists and general practitioners), basic scientists (such as cell biologists, immunologists, pharmacologists, geneticists and epidemiologists), and researchers specializing in healthcare and human technology assessment.

## Mission and Vision of the NRS

**Mission:** "To foster a vibrant Dutch respiratory research community devoted to improving the lives of patients living with respiratory diseases."

Respiratory diseases include both common diseases such as asthma, COPD and lung cancer, as well as rare diseases such as cystic fibrosis, pulmonary hypertension and interstitial lung diseases. The NRS aims for:

- optimal interaction between researchers in the Netherlands across disciplines
- high-quality training of researchers
- advocacy for research funding

**Vision:** In several research areas excellent lung research is being conducted in the Netherlands, both in the basic and clinical science domains. This is evident from international ratings where several fields of research are highly listed. A good part of the success is based on collaboration, within and between research institutes, hospitals and universities, and this should be extended further. We want to improve the level and output of research even further, optimize collaboration, foster young researchers and spread awareness inside and outside the respiratory community.

Compared with other areas of research, there is only limited funding available for lung research from charities, government, and European research foundations. Lung Research is also insufficiently visible and the attention that it receives does not match the severity of the various lung diseases. The NRS strives to create more attention for lung research from society, politics and finance to counter the serious physical, psychological, social and economic impact of lung disease.

## Current organizational structure

The NRS comprises a board of 10 researchers specialized in respiratory diseases from various hospitals and medical centers across the Netherlands. The board meets monthly to discuss the society's direction and practical matters. They are supported by a secretariat. Additionally, there are 8 committees within the NRS, each focusing on different activities on a voluntary basis. These committees include the Young



Investigator Board, National Lung Course Committee, DLC Program Committee, News Committee, Webinar Committee, Advanced Technologies Symposium Committee, NRS Swierenga Thesis Award Committee, and NRS Swierenga Penning Committee.

The society currently has between 350-375 paying members, with membership renewed annually. The board is appointed by the general assembly of all members of the NRS, which convenes annually, usually during the Dutch Lung Congress.

## What have we achieved

Over the years, the NRS has evolved into a prominent institution in the Netherlands, bringing together a diverse community of scientists dedicated to preventing pulmonary diseases and improving care for patients with chronic lung conditions. This community is marked by its loyalty, stability, and mutual support, evident in the recurring attendance at NRS annual meetings and symposia, the numerous volunteers in NRS committees, and the widespread willingness to contribute to NRS initiatives.

One of the NRS's core values is its commitment to nurturing the younger and future generation of lung scientists. This commitment has materialized into a well-established program that includes the NRS lung course, various young investigator activities at the annual meeting and a dedicated Young Investigator Symposium. This program, organized by and for young investigators, serves as a crucial platform for building networks and for the talented researchers to develop into junior group leaders.

The NRS has successfully organized a series of impactful and translational annual meetings, originally known as the 'Longdagen,' then 'De week van de longen,' and now the 'Dutch Lung Congress (DLC).' These meetings have become a vital platform for showcasing cutting-edge research in related fields, fostering scientific networks among researchers in the Netherlands, and igniting new collaborations for national interdisciplinary consortia, such as the P4O2 initiative that emerged from the National Platform Lung Research.

Furthermore, the NRS has established itself as a key player among national organizations focused on pulmonary diseases, including (pediatric) lung physicians and nurses, patient organizations, pharmaceutical and biotech companies, insurance agencies, and advocacy groups. The NRS has taken a leading role in uniting these various stakeholders and promoting collaboration on shared priorities, resulting in initiatives like the National Platform Lung Research, the 'Vrij Ademen Netwerk,' and an annual meeting that brings together all parties interested in lung care.

## Current activities

### Courses/congresses/symposia/webinars

The NRS is dedicated to organizing and facilitating various events to bring scientists from across the Netherlands together, fostering collaboration and synergy in research.

1. **Dutch Lung Congress:** organized annually by the NRS in collaboration with NVALT (Dutch organization of pulmonary disease and tuberculosis physicians), Dutch Lung Foundation (Longfonds), SKL, and Stichting Astma Bestrijding. The Dutch Lung Congress highlights cutting-edge developments in lung science and aims to foster cross-disciplinary conversations, facilitating novel scientific collaborations.
2. **Bi-monthly webinars:** the NRS webinars showcase state-of-the-art developments in both clinical and basic science. While focusing on Dutch research, the webinars feature a diverse range of speakers, including international experts. Most sessions are comprised of two speakers and each session concludes with an interactive Q&A segment.



3. **National Lung Course:** this course aims to elevate the level of lung research in the Netherlands by training young, talented researchers. Participants gain knowledge of fundamental and advanced topics in (patho)physiology, diagnosis, treatment, methodologies, and career development. Covered disease areas include asthma, allergy, interstitial lung diseases, orphan lung diseases, infectious diseases, COPD, and lung cancer.
4. **Advanced Technologies symposium:** held annually, this symposium explores current developments in lung research with a focus on innovative technologies. The program features lectures from internationally renowned experts and research presentations by advanced PhD students and post-docs. Workshops address how novel technological approaches can enhance scientific creativity and solve specific research questions.
5. **Young Investigator Symposium:** the YIS is specifically organized for early career researchers, including PhD students, post-docs, and physicians-in-training engaged in lung disease research in the Netherlands. This symposium provides young investigators opportunities to build professional networks, improve presentation skills, discuss data, and gain inspiration from seminars led by distinguished national and international experts in lung diseases.
6. **NRS mentoring program:** the NRS mentorship program offers early career researchers the chance to connect with experienced senior researchers. This one-on-one mentorship provides tailored support and guidance on various topics, including career development, project leadership, maintaining focus on your project and career, achieving work-life balance, expanding your network, writing grants, and more.

### Awards and grants

At NRS, we place a strong emphasis on recognizing exceptional achievements in respiratory science. Currently, the NRS provides the following award and grants:

#### Fostering Emerging Investigators

NRS Young Investigator Travel Grants  
NRS Swierenga Thesis Award  
NRS Young Investigator Masterclass Award  
NRS SAB Best Paper Award  
NRS Chiesi Young Investigator Award  
GSK Sparrow award  
Best Impact Statement Award

#### Empowering Mid-career Professionals

NRS Mid-Career Award

#### Honoring Senior Achievements

NRS Swierenga Medal

### Outreach activities promoting respiratory research

7. NRS News Committee, together with Longfonds
8. Vrij Ademen Netwerk (Joint commitment with NVALT, LAN and Longfonds)
9. National Program Lung Research (NPL 2.0): Bringing all players in the field of respiratory medicine together to map the gaps in respiratory research from scientific, clinical, societal, and patient perspectives and to launch new collaborative initiatives (Joint commitment with NVALT, LAN and Longfonds).



## NRS SWOT analysis 2024

(Internal analysis by NRS board early 2024)

### Strengths

1. Strong support for young talent
  - Courses, awards, travel grants
  - Young Investigator Network
2. Clear program of activities
  - Dutch Lung Congress large annual respiratory conference
  - Consistent courses and symposiums
  - Impressive portfolio including DLC, YIS, and online tutorials
  - High-quality meetings increasing NRS visibility
3. Strong support from research leaders in the Netherlands
  - Senior scientists contributing lectures
  - Involvement of a wide spectrum of researchers and clinicians
4. Balanced composition of NRS Board and YIB
  - Multi-disciplinary, geographically diverse
  - Mix of full-time researchers and MDs
  - Representation across various lung diseases
5. Good partnering
  - Financial support and links with Longfonds, LAN, NVALT, ERS
  - Interdisciplinary network connecting research and clinic
6. Good reputation
  - Well-known, trustworthy, not-for-profit
  - Updated Website
  - Strong administrative support despite limited means

### Weaknesses

1. Financial instability
  - Dependence on industry sponsorship
  - Limited budget and funding for new initiatives
2. Dependence on volunteers
  - 0.4 FTE Secretarial help
  - Small, active core of members with limited time
3. Difficulty engaging certain groups
  - Selective community at meetings, difficulty reaching a broader audience
  - Less engagement from mid-career and senior scientists
  - Basic research better represented than clinical research
  - Stronger focus on Asthma and COPD
  - Competition with other specialized societies, national and international
4. Insufficient influence on national and international Grant Themes and Procedures
  - Lack of Organized PR and Professional Image
  - Lack of Patient Participation
5. Unclear function and responsibilities
  - Difference between NRS and other organizations could be clearer
  - Aims and goals may be not clear to members

### Opportunities

1. Strengthen ties with key organizations
  - Unite researchers, clinicians, and patients
  - Develop strategies for collaboration



- Offer help in all research endeavors (making research agendas, awarding grants etc)
- 2. Increase Visibility
  - Augment Dutch Lung Congress
  - Lead Large Initiatives (NPL2.0)
  - Utilize social media, revamp website, and organize a PR committee
- 3. Engage other groups
  - Peripheral Hospitals and research-minded health care workers
  - Direct extra attention to attracting clinicians
  - Foster all young investigators (every new respiratory student and PhD)
- 4. New Partnerships
  - Partner with pharma and organize joint symposia
  - Partnership with other societies (pediatric, pathology, immunology ....)
  - Join forces with NVALT (which is increasing its scientific profile)
  - Become Central Hub for Respiratory Research
- 5. Help interpreting research outcomes for health care workers and patients

### **Threats**

1. Funding Challenges
  - Dependency on few sponsors
  - Some Pharma companies pulling out of respiratory field
2. Volunteer Quality and Continuity
  - Finding young researchers to join and engage actively
3. DLC Dominance; Risk of overshadowing other efforts
4. General risk of losing members in the future (not occurring now)

## **Goals and Strategies 2025-2030**

The Netherlands Respiratory Society (NRS) is dedicated to advancing respiratory research and enhancing patient outcomes. This multi-annual policy plan for 2025-2030 focuses on 8 key strategic areas including being a central starting point for young respiratory researchers, increasing the NRS national relevance, and ensuring financial stability. This plan incorporates lessons learned and successes achieved from activities conducted between 2019 and 2023 and ideas from the SWOT analysis.

### **Strategic Goals:**

1. Focus on the development of young investigators
2. Foster a strong, inclusive community within NRS
3. Increase the diversity and number of NRS members
4. Increase networking opportunities across all levels of the respiratory field
5. Strengthen the Dutch Lung Congress (DLC) as a premier event for respiratory research
6. Enhance national collaboration in respiratory research
7. Improve the number and ranking of respiratory topics on national and international granting lists
8. Ensure sustainable funding for NRS initiatives

### **Strategic Goals and Action Points**

#### ***Goal 1: Focus on the development of young investigators***

Currently the NRS annually organizes various events specifically for young investigators that are highly valued and should be continued. These include the National Lung Course (a 3-day course to get to know the field), the Young Investigator Symposium (at which the young researchers present their own research, network and attend a workshop) and the Advanced Technologies Symposium (offering interaction with internationally leading scientists). At the DLC the Young Investigator Session and the mentorship breakfast are organized. Prizes and awards are dedicated to promising young investigators, including the



Chiesi Young investigator award, the YIS masterclass award, the Swierenga Thesis award and SAB best paper award. The NRS provides travel grants for participation in non-respiratory conferences, encouraging young talents to think 'outside the box' and promote scientific innovation. Most of the current activities and awards are primarily aimed at PhD students, in the early days up to finishing their thesis. It is, however, also very important to enable a future career in the respiratory research field, beyond the PhD thesis research. The mentorship program that NRS recently started is one instrument that can help support the transition into a postdoc position. There is very limited funding for this group in the Netherlands (VENI, Longfonds, Rutgers Kickstart, fellowships need a return guarantee). NRS

**Action Points:**

1. Continue organizing events specifically for young investigators.
2. Expand mentorship programs to support postdoctoral researchers.
3. Provide grant writing workshops and support for securing funding.

should assist promising young post-docs to stay in the respiratory research field. This can be achieved, for instance, by helping them find funding and/or supporting them with grant writing (including setting-up outreach activities), providing a network to find a position, or providing short fellowships to learn a technique. NRS could organize workshops on topics specifically relevant for senior PhD students and junior post-docs. Topics could include reviewing a scientific manuscript, what is expected from a journal editor, how to chair a session at a conference, obtaining international experience, leadership and research data management.

**Goal 2: Foster a strong, inclusive community within NRS**

Founded in 2009, the NRS is the only platform in the Netherlands that brings together all types of scientists working on acute and chronic lung diseases. The NRS is a unique meeting point for multidisciplinary research involving clinical scientists (including pulmonologists, ENT specialists, allergologists, and pediatricians), basic scientists (including cell biologists, immunologists, pharmacologists, geneticists and epidemiologists), and researchers active in health care and human technology assessment. As research funding is increasingly directed towards consortia with involvement of many different players, the NRS community will play a key role in securing funding for respiratory research. The NRS aims to bring together excellent scientists and finds it important to provide a collaborative environment in which people feel welcome and appreciated. People involved in the NRS want to create a healthy and inspiring working space for young and senior scientists, where people feel at home and connected in their efforts to fight lung diseases.

**Action Points:**

1. Create initiatives to enhance the sense of belonging among members.
2. Conduct regular surveys to gather feedback and improve member satisfaction.
3. Promote and augment the many annual activities of the NRS.

**Goal 3: Increase the diversity and number of NRS members**

The NRS believes that embracing diversity and inclusiveness is key for the advancement of science, encourages innovation and creates opportunities for collaboration and information sharing. The NRS is strongly committed to diversity and equity in respiratory research in many aspects. We attract investigators at all career stages, ranging from student interns to established scientists. The NRS welcomes and represents research-minded clinicians and translational and basic scientists from all pulmonary research disciplines working in academic institutions or peripheral hospitals. The NRS believes that achieving scientific excellence requires collaboration between scientists of all different backgrounds and embraces diversity in all forms, including – but not limited to – differences in race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, social class, physical ability or attributes, religious or ethical values system, national origin and political beliefs. Foremost, the NRS fosters high-quality research and innovation for the benefit of patients from all possible backgrounds.





To achieve our goal to be more diverse and increase the number of members, we first need to obtain more insight into the composition of our current (paying and active) members. From this analysis it should become clear how diverse our current membership is and to what degree the NRS represents

**Action Points:**

1. Conduct an analysis of current membership composition to identify underrepresented groups.
2. Actively recruit underrepresented groups by promoting the benefits of NRS membership .
3. Take up members of underrepresented groups in NRS committees and as speakers at NRS activities

scientists from all pulmonary research disciplines, at all career stages, and from academic and non-academic hospitals across the country. Underrepresented groups will be actively approached and encouraged to join NRS by emphasizing the benefits of the membership. An increase in the number of active and paying members will increase the yearly income and should strengthen the position of the NRS and the DLC as its flagship activity.

***Goal 4: Increase networking opportunities across all levels of the respiratory field***

Facilitating networking is a key priority for the NRS. Enabling interactions between members within NRS and providing opportunities for interactions with others within the greater respiratory field will be a focus for this period. To enable networking NRS will maintain the focus on ensuring the continuity and quality of events currently within its portfolio (Goal 1 focus on Young Investigator goal, 2 fostering community, and 5 DLC). In addition, a specific goal to enhance networking possibilities will be to explore opportunities for organizing joint events (1 or 2 day in person or online activities) with neighboring respiratory research based societies (i.e. British Association of Lung Research, the working group “Basic Science” within the Belgian Respiratory Diseases Society) and perhaps with other scientific societies (e.g. immunologists, geneticists, pathologists). Possibilities for organizing combined activities within the framework of existing NRS activities will be investigated.

**Action Points:**

1. Explore new networking activities at existing meetings.
  - Organize joint events with neighboring societies.
2. Expand online platform activities (LinkedIn, Instagram) to facilitate interactions among (young) members.

***Goal 5: Strengthen the Dutch Lung Congress (DLC) as a premier event for respiratory research***

The Dutch Lung Congress (DLC) is organized annually by the NRS, in collaboration with NVALT, Longfonds, SKL and Stichting Astma Bestrijding. At the DLC, cutting-edge developments in lung science are presented to individuals involved in pulmonary research. Within a relatively short time span, the meeting has become the prime opportunity to foster cross-disciplinary conversations on lung research in the Netherlands and to facilitate novel scientific collaborations. The DLC has put the NRS in the spotlight and has proven its value as the primary meeting place for key organizations involved in respiratory research, representation of medical professionals and patient advocacy. We strive for the DLC to become the premier go-to meeting for young Dutch scientists in the respiratory field to present their data and start building their network. To achieve this, the DLC program will contain a right balance of basic, translational and clinical research that covers a broad range of pulmonary disease focus areas, with sufficient time allocated for young scientists presenting their research. There is a large array of prizes awarded to engage researchers and boost careers. We also aim for this multi-day event to be held at an easily accessible central location with excellent facilities. This way, the DLC will continue to be instrumental in creating a welcoming community for all working to improve the lives of patients with lung diseases.

#### **Action Points:**

1. Develop a balanced DLC program that attracts both pre-clinical and clinical researchers.
  - Encourage young scientists to present their research and obtain career forwarding prizes.
  - Ensure continuing funding for the DLC.

### ***Goal 6: Enhance national collaboration in respiratory research***

Research funding is increasingly directed towards large national and international consortia involving various types of scientists, medical professionals, companies (e.g. of public-private partnerships) and patient organizations. The NRS aims to bring together these stakeholders in pulmonary research through leveraging its extensive and diverse network, using the DLC and NPL as a platform to launch initiatives or pitch ideas. Another important role for the NRS in this context is to keep track of and retain influence on the national research agenda, but also to identify as well as support key researchers that can act as catalysts for consortia formation. Through these actions, the NRS will facilitate the long-term securing of funding for respiratory research.

#### **Action Points:**

1. Facilitate the formation of research consortia involving diverse stakeholders through the support of NPL2.0 platform activities.
2. Organize at least 1 workshop or joint event with a neighboring respiratory research society every 2 years.

### ***Goal 7: Improve the number and ranking of respiratory topics on (inter)national granting lists***

The Netherlands has a rich tradition in respiratory research, in the basal and clinical field. In international rankings, we have – despite the relatively small size of the country – consistently shown a strong performance. However, this situation is by no means a given or stable position. Among the issues are decreasing total funding amounts and increasing sizes of the consortia needed to successfully apply within the country and within the EU (European Union). In these larger calls, it has been difficult to ensure that respiratory topics emerge as important themes – both nationally and internationally. More specifically, respiratory research topics are grossly underrepresented.

Given that conducting excellent and relevant respiratory research depends on innovative ideas, excellent and connected people and sufficient funding, this change in the funding landscape and the underrepresentation of respiratory research is an important matter to address. The NRS will strive to increase the number and ranking of respiratory topics on (inter)national research agendas.

#### **Action Points:**

1. Develop strategic partnerships with organizations like Longfonds, NVALT and ERS to strengthen advocacy efforts.
2. Engage with national and international funding bodies (NWO, KNAW, Health RI, EU) to highlight the importance of respiratory research.

### ***Goal 8: Ensure sustainable funding for NRS initiatives***

The NRS is a very lean organization with currently 350-375 members. Its annual budget is around 200.000 Euros. Of this, 60.000 Euro is for overhead costs to cover the salary of a part-time secretary, limited housing and a website. About 70.000 Euro is needed for the Dutch Lung Congress, which has been organized physically in 2024 for the third time. NRS currently receives funding from member contributions, benevolent sources, and commercial sponsors. There has been a significant decline in



contributions from commercial sponsors to NRS overall. On the other hand, specific support for the DLC from sponsors has risen, though not at the level to fully cover DLC costs. Finally, some traditional industrial sponsors are leaving the respiratory field. To ensure the sustainability of all NRS initiatives, including the DLC, it is crucial to secure great commitment from substantial sponsors aligned with NRS's overarching goals. Commercial sponsors have been almost exclusively pharmaceutical companies, but we will also try to engage companies producing devices and those aligned with basic research (e.g. producing key and innovative diagnostics products). Collaboration with key partners like Longfonds and NVALT could booster efforts to advocate for enduring relationships with multiple commercial sponsors. Exploring alternative funding avenues, such as government funding, may also alleviate financial strain. Currently it is mainly the treasurer seeking, motivating, and securing new sponsors, while maintaining existing partnerships, and this is a substantial task. This endeavor should be a more collective responsibility involving all board members and leveraging their respective networks.

The value of an external professional partner in attracting sponsor money and donations will be evaluated as it could lead to more expenses but also significantly increase income. Finally, the current structure of attracting sponsoring for the NRS as a whole and for the annual Dutch Lung Congress separately will be re-evaluated.

#### **Action Points:**

1. Develop a comprehensive sponsorship strategy targeting both existing and potential sponsors.
2. Explore alternative funding avenues such as government grants and private donations.
3. Involve all board members and possibly a professional partner in the task of attracting new potential sponsors.

## **Implementation and Monitoring**

### ***Implementation Plan:***

6. **Responsible Parties:** The NRS board and committees will oversee the implementation of this policy plan. Specific tasks have been assigned to relevant members and working groups to ensure timely and efficient execution.
7. **Timeline:** Each strategic goal will be reformulated SMART-ly, among others thereby agreeing on key milestones and on timelines
8. **Resources:** Responsibly allocate necessary budget and human resources to support the implementation of the strategic goals.

### ***Monitoring and Evaluation:***

- **Annual Reviews:** Conduct annual reviews to assess progress toward strategic goals and adjust actions as necessary.
- **Metrics:** Identify performance indicators for each goal to measure success and impact.
- **Feedback:** Establish feedback mechanisms, including member surveys and focus groups, to continuously gather input and improve strategies.

### ***Reporting:***

- **Progress Reports:** Regular progress reports will be presented at board meetings and shared with members to ensure transparency and accountability.