

REPORT FROM THE NETSPAR BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Research Informs New Solutions

Helping Unravel Society's Dilemmas

In 2016, Netspar undertook major new initiatives under its 2015–2019 Action Plan. The focus on the individual, communication, and choice behavior took on greater shape in the research. This meant embarking on innovative studies on behavior and communication, alongside the research into more familiar topics such as pension contracts and investment strategies.

Meanwhile, the debate on reforming the pension system is nearing its end. Netspar has contributed in a variety of ways, including performing short-term studies of specific policy issues, such as those related to implementing the Improved Defined Contribution Scheme Act, the economic and legal aspects of eliminating uniform contributions, and the value of inter-generational risk sharing. As in previous years, Netspar's efforts went a long way toward uniting parties with widely varying visions. Meanwhile, forays were made into new terrain under the themes of "Interrelatedness between housing, healthcare, and retirement," "Fiduciary duty for pension products," and "Confidence and solidarity."

We would like to further reflect on 2016 in light of Netspar's three principal functions:

- Knowledge development
- Knowledge sharing
- Network development

Knowledge Development: Targeted Leadership, Individuals as a Priority, More Disciplines

Over EUR 1.3 million in funding was allocated to new **long-range theme projects** in 2016. The priority theme of "Micro research on retirement income and pension choice" was honored with a grant of EUR 500,000 to the project "Uncertainty over the life cycle: Implications for pensions and savings behavior," led by Marike Knoef (Leiden University). In addition, **eight short-term ("topicality") projects** were launched, targeting some of the more pressing policy and other issues facing the industry, such as reinvesting after retirement, choice architecture, and pension awareness among young people. Under a new initiative, three talent grants (**Individual Research Grants**) were also awarded. The expansion into other disciplines is taking shape through new research in the taxation, legal, and sociological fields.

Knowledge Sharing: Making Research Accessible to Larger Groups of Pension Professionals

It is essential that the knowledge developed with Netspar's support find its way to the industry and academia. A major goal in this is to reach a wider group of managers, policymakers, and experts working on topics related to retirement financing. To this end, we organize mass-appeal events (in conjunction with the Federation of Dutch Pension Funds and Dutch Association of Insurers, for example) and are planning to host an executive dinner meeting. In addition, Netspar researchers routinely appear as guest speakers at conferences in the Netherlands and elsewhere.

The Netspar Brief (summarizing recent research on a topical item, including media promotion) and our updated website have also proven effective (based on partner evaluations) for reaching a wider audience.

Netspar puts on a wide range of events targeted at various audiences. In 2016, 33 industry events were held for a total of 981 attendees (see [Events](#)). The following events were particularly noteworthy:

- **Confidence in Change**

Netspar Anniversary Meeting for special invitees, including an executive dinner for board directors to discuss the role of the social partners in pension reform, public sentiment as a blind spot in pension reform, and the philosophical approach to confidence and certainty. Bernard Ebbinghaus (University of Mannheim) and Hans Alders (Groningen National Coordinator) gave presentations.

- **End Game Toward a New Pension System (June) and Can We Have Our Cake and Eat It Too? (December)**

Two conferences for policymakers and pension fund managers about the latest developments in the pension discourse.

- **New Rules for Pension and Retirement Savings Plans Communication in Effect**

A meeting for pension fund managers and other people involved in implementing the Pension 1-2-3 model.

Targeted Input Related to System Reform

Efforts in 2016 including being part of the SER Committee and various working groups (incl. chairing the transition working group) aimed at reforming the defined benefits agreement. These expanded upon earlier contributions in 2015 to the SER report and the detailed examination of the so-called IV-A and IV-C variants labeled as “interesting but unknown.” Other activities in this vein in 2016, related to the Improved Defined Contribution Scheme Act, included drawing up expert reports at the behest of the Dutch parliament and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment (SZW).

Executive Education Highly Esteemed

Students’ appreciation of the Pension Innovation courses offered by the Netspar TIAS Academy remains high. Participants are encouraged to enroll in the entire program cycle, including doing a final project, to increase the efficacy of the curriculum and interaction.

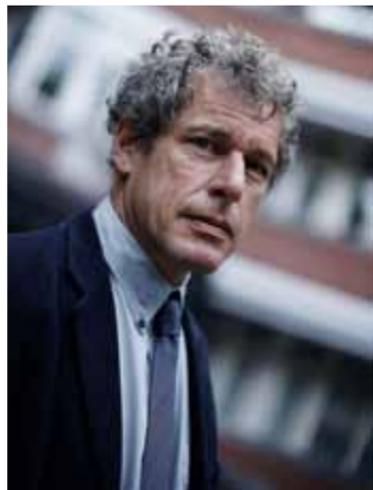
Network: Connection, Strong Relationship Management, Simplicity

The crux of the Netspar network is the sense of connectedness in terms of substance. The idea of having project groups in which to explore diverging opinions, as well as areas of commonality, on pressing, often sensitive, topics with the partners has proven tremendously useful for finding solutions. Last year saw the completion of the Communications and Fiduciary Duty and Pensions, Healthcare, and Housing project groups, along with the longer-term Project on Inter-generational Risk Sharing (accountants’ group) and the start of two new project groups: Survivor’s Pensions and Legitimacy of Change.

In keeping with the results of the partner evaluation, a more personalized approach was taken in the network's relationship management. There are now periodic check-ins with the partners at the board level and with the Netspar teams. Furthermore, partners can sign up for a so-called Netspar Knowledge Seminar to be given at their offices, where the latest findings from recent research are disseminated to their staff or customers. Almost all of the partners took advantage of this in 2016.

Inspiring and Uniting Through the Research

The new direction taken with the 2015–2019 Action Plan was robustly pursued in 2016. In the year ahead, our most important mission continues to be ensuring that the pension debate remains well-informed by providing sound research. We hope to also unite differing visions and multiple disciplines to help bring solutions within reach. This is a role Netspar is only able to fill thanks to years of very active involvement and support on the part of many pension professionals and their organizations, for which we once again express our heartfelt thanks.



Casper van Ewijk, General Director