

LEG SOCIETAL IMPACT AWARD – JURY REPORT

7 January 2020

The LEG Societal Impact Award symbolizes our faculty's ambition to be in the forefront of generating societal impact – of linking academic research and education to society, to societal challenges, partners and practices. In that way, our research and educational activities have societal meaning and societal effects.

Although 'de faculteit' as we say ('the LEG faculty') stimulates and supports this, backed by a formal *Strategic Agenda Societal Impact* that was recently formalized (more on this soon), the largest part of impact work is performed by many of our colleagues and students, within and in-between the LEG-disciplines – by individuals and teams who are intrinsically motivated to contribute 'something' to society. The Societal Impact Award aims to highlight this work, and to *showcase* initiatives and projects that are generally unseen, but that nevertheless have become part of ongoing academic processes. The award also wants to *stimulate* promising projects-in-the-making, that is, projects that have taken shape but need additional support. The financial revenues that come with the award (1.000 euros) can be used for this.

This general ambition clarifies why the award is about more than big and prominent projects, despite the fact that big projects might really be impactful in all ways thinkable, and it clarifies why smaller projects might win the award, especially when they generate impact in 'above-average' and surprising ways.

During the past year (2019), we have witnessed a few really big events, which cannot be left unnoticed at this moment. First of all, the high-profile *Festival Europa* that was initiated by colleagues from the Law department, first and foremost Hanneke van Eijken, Pauline Phoa and Babette Berocal, and to

which many colleagues from LEG contributed. This was a major two-day event in Tivoli Vredenburg, linked to the European elections, with over 600 visitors.

Secondly, *Skyscraper* – the plastic Whale that came to Utrecht in January 2019 and that became an eye-catching object, lying (or better, standing) in the water in-between Tivoli Vredenburg and Hoog Catherijne. The Whale generated an impressive amount of academic and public attention for sustainability challenges. It enabled us to organize academic and public activities – such as *Impact nights*, *Impact café's* (together with students) and *Impact connect* – focusing on these challenges and their legal, economic and governance dimensions. Marleen van Rijswick from the Law department and Rebecca van Musscher, LEG project manager, were the driving forces behind this event.

Although these major activities are real symbols – *epitomes* – of how societal impact can be generated, the jury has received many nominations in which less well-known and more ‘under the radar’ projects were suggested as potential award-winning projects. In total the jury received 15 nominations, 5 for student-related projects (and therefore the Student award) and 10 for staff-related projects (and therefore the Staff award). You can find all nominations on the LEG-website.

This year, the jury started to work with more explicit criteria, which were part of the ‘call for nominations’. These criteria can be found on the website as well.*

This year, the jury consisted of representatives from the three LEG-disciplines, namely prof. *Elisabetta Manunza* (Law), dr *Hein Roelfsema* (Economics), and prof. *Maarten van Bottenburg* (Governance), as well as a representative of one of our key partners, Tony Chocolonely, *Anne-Wil Dijkstra*, and a representative from last year’s winners of the student award, *Michelle Kleine Deters*. *Rebecca van Musscher* acted as secretary to the jury, *Rosa Massop* supported the jury, and I, *Mirko Noordegraaf*, chaired the jury. The jury came

together twice, and we had long and intensive but highly inspiring meetings. We unanimously decided who will win this year's student and staff awards.

We will now announce these winners. Before I will announce who will win the Staff award, jury member and Tony's co-captain Anne-Wil Dijkstra, will hand out the Student award. @Anne-Wil, the floor is yours.

As indicated, we received 5 student nominations, all interesting nominations, sometimes carried by individuals and sometimes by teams. In one way or the other, they all link studying at Utrecht University (i.e. our academic education) to a distinctive societal outlook, sometimes *local* (for example: how to integrate foreign students in our academic and social communities, here in Utrecht?), sometimes *national* (e.g., how to change or transform the education of high school pupils?) and sometimes *international* (how to be of value for people elsewhere in the world?).

The jury decided that one of the more internationally oriented projects is the winner of this year's Societal Impact Award for Students. A project in which a Legal Research Master's student, originally an Egyptian student, is developing educational material for law students and young lawyers in countries in the Middle East. He started a You Tube channel, with weekly videos on law, legal career building and legal skills (with 1.000 subscribers), a Facebook page (with 3.500 followers), and a website, with blog and journals. This is all for free, as it is established as an alternative means for gaining knowledge, instead of expensive (and often ineffective) private courses which are widespread in the Middle-east. In this way, young law students and legal experts can be part of a knowledge-sharing and capacity-building platform, which helps them strengthening their skills, professionalism and experiences. This, in turn, enhances relations between all of these experts *and* between the West and the Middle East. All of this is done with great enthusiasm and conviction, if not passion, as professor Janneke Gerards – dean of the legal research master –, stressed when she nominated this project.

This project is called *The Legalist*, and the driving force behind The Legalist is *Waheed Mahmoud*. He is the winner of the LEG Societal Impact Award 2019!

We received 10 staff nominations, all having clear societal impact connotations and narratives. Some were big and visible, others smaller and less well-known; some were one-time events, others more structurally embedded in our academic work. Some already exist for quite some time; others were new and are still being developed. After intense jury deliberations, the jury decided to hand out the staff award to less well-known, yet highly relevant impact work performed by an individual, who opens up his field of expertise to the outside world. He does so for quite some time, adding value to the work he performs within the walls of our university.

This particular staff member is a notary, and as a notary he started to work as a financial detective for the Dutch police, in 2018, in the Eastern police region. In fact, he became the first *citizen detective*, something that was picked up in the press, around that time. Although he performs this work in his spare time, his roles and responsibilities are directly related to his academic expertise. He participates in big investigations into money laundering and fraud, for example, in which his notarial expertise has added value. He specifically analyzes piles of notarial documents, in order to trace suspicious matters. (Note that money laundering in The Netherlands involves 13 billion euros per year, LEG colleagues have discovered.) In addition, he has picket service ('piket dienst'), answering questions coming from policemen, who want or need to know things about transactions, wills or authorizations during house searches. He has taken an oath, and he can access police documents. He also trains detectives, and he links law students to the police, something which implies new expertise for the police and career prospects for our students.

These roles and responsibilities are recognized and supported by the regional police chief, and also by the minister of Justice & Security. Obviously, this impact work might raise questions about academic independence, but the jury of the impact award is convinced of the fact that *'embedded' impact work* can be accompanied by the upholding of academic values, whilst at the same contributing to tackling societal problems, especially when it is consciously and carefully organized and made accountable. This is part of the bigger story behind the winner of this year's impact award – an expert who works *in* an academic institution, but also *for* a public institution, an expert who brings in technical expertise, so that societal problems can be tackled, an expert who does so in his spare time, but with distinctive, well-organized responsibilities. This winner is our colleague from the Law department, Robert Helder!

This was this year's Impact award. We thank all of those involved in generating societal impact. We especially thank the nominated students and colleagues, and the students and colleagues that sent in high-quality nominations. We hope that all of you continue with the impact projects that were initiated before and we hope that you will initiate new impact work. This fits our society-oriented LEG-disciplines, it fits the upcoming era of *'open science'*, and last but not least, it makes our work much richer.

We hope to receive many new nominations later this year. In January 2021, we will announce new winners. See you then!

On behalf of the jury,
Prof. Mirko Noordegraaf (chair),
January 2020.

*Activities, we now formally state, have to have a) a clear *societal profile*, and b) *effects and meaning* in/for society, and they have to be c) *innovative* and/or *original*. In addition, there have to be d) tangible *results*, activities have to e) show that *societal responsibility* is taken, and they f) have to be *seen and supported* by stakeholders.

-//-