Together with our grantees we work on a positive, lasting change in our society.
Bright Richards (left) of New Dutch Connections is always happy to talk to newcomers: "I ask them: how do you want to present yourself to others?" Page 44
Geert van der Veer, Herenboeren Nederland: “Seeing red cabbage withering away due to the unprecedented tropical temperatures in summer makes you think about the climate.” Page 38
Ella van der Leeden (pictured), buddy at Villa Pinedo: “We, as buddies, all noticed that this coronavirus year has caused more stress for children of divorced parents.” Page 50
A photo from poverty glossy Quiet 500, in which Quiet Nederland makes a noise for silent poverty. “The launch has caused quite the stir.” Page 51
Adessium Foundation aspires to help build a society in which people live in harmony with each other and their environment. A society where actions are taken with the public interest in mind, where we treat nature responsibly and take care of each other.

We support initiatives and organizations in the Netherlands and Europe that are committed to an open and just society, healthy ecosystems and equal opportunities for everyone. We do this by helping our grantees to work on positive, lasting change in our society.
A Lighthouse Reports investigation revealed how at the height of the coronavirus pandemic migrants were exploited on European farms. Page 20
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“Our partners established inspiring connections”

We started off 2021 with good hopes for a ‘new normal’. But unfortunately, society was again marred by the coronavirus crisis. We noticed how the restrictive measures took their toll once more. We witnessed an increase in feelings of loneliness and a rise in psychological problems, especially among young people. People were longing to meet and connect in real-life. Our team experienced these feelings too.

We also saw groups pitted against each other because of the coronavirus, even in families and in circles of friends. Both supporters and opponents of the measures appear to have little sympathy for the opinions of ‘the other’. Each side is convinced of being in the right and has its own view of reality. This sentiment is enhanced by the filter bubbles that are created on social media.

Inspiring connections
Fortunately, we also see heartwarming examples of positive attitudes and how people have continued to look out for each other in these times of uncertainty and division. In this Annual Report, we feature partners who established connections in a remarkable and inspiring manner in 2021.

In each program, we see beautiful examples that illustrate the importance and added value of contact and connection. Take, for example, the successful collaboration in investigative journalism, unexpected alliances between environmental organizations and the power of connection for newcomers to the Netherlands.

Intersection between programs
In our own organization, we started looking for the interfaces between the different programs and themes we are working on. While this way of working is not entirely new to Adessium, we realize that a more integrated approach can be very useful. After all, most social issues are not isolated but are strongly interrelated. Therefore, we prefer to use this approach, for which we also make specific resources available. You can read more about this approach on page 54.

New faces in the team
The past year was a year of changes for Adessium. We utilized this year to further develop the themes within our new strategic framework. We also said goodbye to several colleagues, and welcomed and onboarded new team members. Page 60 shows the new faces in our team. We are extremely pleased with the enthusiasm, energy and fresh ideas our new colleagues bring to the table. It is also very nice to see how, given the short time and despite all the restrictions, we very quickly have become a close team again.

Commitment to learning and development
As of 2022, we have a new role on our team: strategic learning manager. With this new position, we are fulfilling our desire to increase our focus on learning and development, not only within our own organization but also together with our partners. With respect to our partners, we will focus on organizational development and peer learning. Within the team, we will work on specific learning questions. These can be learning questions that help us deepen our knowledge on specific topics, come up with more effective interventions or further hone our methods. For example, in 2022, we will be exploring how to address diversity and inclusion. We are happy to share the lessons learned with our partners and peers at other foundations.
We are looking forward to meeting our partners in person again in the new year. We are immensely proud of the creativity and perseverance they employ each and every day to work on the important issues of our time.

**Distressing times**
At the time this Annual Report was being published, we found out that our partner organizations will face huge challenges in 2022 again. Horrified and with disbelief, we have witnessed the Russian invasion of Ukraine. On our doorstep, millions of civilians are fleeing the atrocities of war. Together with our partners and colleagues at other foundations, we will do our part to give the refugees a warm welcome and to safeguard the important work that journalists are doing in these distressing times. Together, we hope to make a difference.

_Saskia van den Dool_  
Managing director

_Martijn Meijer_  
Director of programs

We were just closing the chapter on the coronavirus pandemic when news reports started flooding in with disturbing images of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The media have followed the response of the West and the rest of the world closely, for instance the sanctions to push Putin’s regime to abandon the fatal war path. The predominant feeling I have is that our freedom is fragile.

I was recently gifted a copy of the book *The Narrow Corridor*, which deals with the development of countries and the interplay between state and society. It aptly describes the preconditions for freedom: ‘To encourage freedom, states must be strong enough to enforce laws and provide public services but also restrained in their actions and checked by a well-organized civil society.’

This definition is the central thread in our thinking: striking a balance in a society that works for everyone. A society where actions are taken with the public interest in mind, where we treat nature responsibly and take care of each other.

This was true during the pandemic when measures were needed to secure public health. And it continues to be true today, to prevent military violence, and to prioritize diplomacy and co-creation.

Freedom is fragile. We have to protect our freedom together. And it all starts with the fundamental precondition of ‘freedom of speech’.

_I wish you all a lot of freedom._

_Rogier van Vliet_  
Chairman
Learning, developing and sharing

Adessium Foundation is a philanthropic foundation that contributes to an open and just society, healthy ecosystems and a level playing field for everyone. We do this by enabling our grantees to work on positive and lasting change in our society.

Through our three programs Public Interest, People & Nature, and Social Initiatives, we support civil society organizations and initiatives. This approach allows us to tackle major and complex social issues. There is no quick fix for these problems. Tackling structural causes of problems and achieving systemic change requires a bold approach, perseverance, and long-term commitment. We actively reach out to potential grantees and, where appropriate, invite them for cooperation. Our support extends to both established organizations and innovative initiatives. We are always looking to strike a balance between providing direct aid and support to target groups, and aiming for structural improvement.

Openness about obstacles
Adessium is an independent and autonomous organization. This gives us the freedom to pick our own partners and choose our own methods. Our approach enables us to support projects, which do not (yet) receive any financial support from the government or from other foundations. We are flexible enough to adapt our strategy and methods to rapidly changing or complicated circumstances when necessary. We therefore ask our partners to be open and honest about any obstacles they encounter, so we can work with them to find suitable solutions.

Organizational capacity building
In most cases, we choose to extend our partnership beyond a specific project and lend them broad institutional or programmatic support, thereby enabling organizations to work on the pursuit of their mission. We conduct a thorough evaluation of an organization’s vision, approach and implementation capacity (including governance). And together with our partners we explore if organizational capacity building is needed to attain their mission. If necessary, we provide additional financial means to bring in external expertise, for instance to hire a consultant. In our view, civil society organizations should be independent and autonomous. In all of our partnerships, we explicitly take a back seat and let our partners remain in control. However, we always strive to offer constructive feedback on how our partners could improve effectiveness in their work and try to facilitate this wherever possible.

From evaluating to learning
For maximum effect, we want to put our resources to use as efficiently as possible. We want to learn from the organizations and interventions we support. That is why we evaluate our strategic premises and our partners’ approach. Together with our partners, we examine the lessons learned in order to enhance their impact. As a learning organization, our goal is to pursue the continued development of our approach. As of 2022, we have a new role on our team for this purpose: strategic learning manager. In the coming period, we will work on a number of learning questions to increase our knowledge on the topics in our programs. With this approach, we seek to achieve more effective interventions and further hone our methods. We are also keen to share lessons learned with other philanthropic foundations.
How we work

- Long-term outlook through multi-year partnerships
- Core support if possible and suitable
- Belief in the power of co-creation and cooperation
- Strategic learning aimed at creating excellent organizations
- Driving innovation, both in new and established organizations

Cooperation

- Working on structural improvements
- Direct support to initiatives at local level

Types of interventions

- Research, sense making and debate
- Advocacy at local, national and EU level
- Strategic communication, campaigns and participation
- Civic education and training
- Creating and enhancing organizational eco-systems
- Engaging in support activities with/for target groups
Public Interest Program

Adessium is committed to an open, democratic and just society. We strive to create a society in which every citizen can participate and stay informed based on independent and reliable reporting, and where freedom, security and privacy can remain guaranteed in a digital world. A society in which government and public bodies function effectively, and act with integrity in the interest of citizens and the community.
Public Interest
A student protesting the government’s coronavirus policy at Museumplein, Amsterdam. Students demanded more in-person education.
“We look for energy in society”

We are heading in a new direction with our Public Interest program. Program Managers Martijn Roos and Ebru Akgün look back on 2021 and tell us about important developments in the program.

What is your impression of 2021?

Martijn: “I started working for Adessium in early 2021. In my view, our excellent partnership with SOMO symbolizes the new direction in which we headed in the course of 2021. SOMO is an organization that investigates multinationals. With our support, SOMO is able to add their expertise on monopoly positions to the digital field. Over a period of several weeks, we introduced SOMO to some of our existing partners in the field, such as Bits of Freedom, the organization that advocates for digital rights in the Netherlands, and BEUC, the European umbrella group for consumer organizations. We also drew up a proposal together with SOMO to some of our existing partners in the field. In short: we took swift action with the team and created added value to the field, as well as to our other partners. Legislation in the area of digitalization is developing rapidly, so it is important to act fast.”

Ebru: “I started in late 2021. My first impression was that it was amazing how much our partner organizations had achieved during the pandemic year. They obtained great results both in the digital domain and in the field of investigative journalism.”

What are the important developments in your program?

Martijn: “In our theme responsible digitalization we emphasize advocacy and strategic litigation, for which we focus on key legislative processes in Europe, such as the Digital Services Act and the Digital Markets Act. Good public governance is a new theme in our program. We have always had partners in our portfolio who focus on transparency, integrity and corruption. Now, we are also specifically looking at who is holding the Dutch government to account. Our journalistic work naturally also plays a major role in this process. We know that too much focus on the role of watchdog can erode trust in the government. Therefore, working on that trust is also an important theme for us. So we’re looking for energy in society, places where citizens unite to develop initiatives to innovate good public governance.”

Ebru: “In our theme availability of quality information, we also started focusing on local journalism. Our analyses show that there is not enough ‘non-profit’ investigative journalism going on at the local level.”

Can you give us an idea of the program activities you will be conducting in 2022?

Ebru: “We’ve only just embarked on our new strategy, and we’re a relatively new program team, so we still have to figure things out to get a good picture of the fields we work in. But we already have several ideas. For instance, given the vulnerable position of journalists in the EU, we will look for partners who can safeguard and strengthen the role of journalism.”

Martijn: “We also believe we should be working on a narrative together with the field. That narrative should shed light on the digital world, the threats it poses and what people can do to counter these threats. We also want to exchange much more with other funders and learn more from each other, for example through the Democracy Network.”
Touching sore spots

‘Journalists talk to people. Investigative journalists talk to people who don’t want to talk.’ Thomas Muntz (Investico) and Klaas van Dijken (Lighthouse Reports) have gotten many people to talk throughout their careers. They also sift through databases and public sources with their colleagues. It is impossible to conduct a large-scale, successful investigation on your own. It requires plenty of connections with specialists and the media.
‘The core of investigative journalism is to uncover matters around which people want to throw up a smoke screen. But it’s important that the public knows about such things.’ In his investigations, Lighthouse Reports Director Klaas van Dijken witnessed numerous examples of cover-ups or parties willfully turning a blind eye. “Journalists focus on the link between a policy choice and the implementation of that policy. To give you a concrete example: refugees are stopped at Europe’s external borders and even sent back before they can apply for asylum. These so-called push-backs are accompanied by extreme violence. These violent actions are a direct consequence of the policy of the European Union. EU member states are collectively turning a blind eye. To put it bluntly: the political climate gives off the message that Europe would rather not have asylum seekers come here. In the media, European governments have even used the imagery of asylum seekers as weapons, which dehumanizes them. All these factors combined have given regional police forces and armed groups considerable latitude to use force.” Push-backs were an open secret for years. There was no concrete evidence, so the EU ‘was unsure whether they really happened’. “EU countries did know that these push-backs actually happened, at a large scale even. It was up to us to find that proof. We secured footage of masked men beating up asylum seekers. It went viral on news outlets and on social media, and society at large was shocked. People could finally see it with their own eyes and the EU could no longer deny it.”

When things are going wrong
Thomas Muntz, Editor-in-Chief of the investigative journalism platform Investico, emphasizes the relevance of journalists calling attention to controversies. “A democracy brings conflict and issues to the heart of our governance system. We choose our elected representatives - which is really important - but that is not the heart of our democracy. Rather, it’s the fact that these representatives discuss problems together, in the public sphere, whether in the House of Representatives or a city council. Investigative journalists uncover problems that are not yet on the political agenda, informing representatives of issues that they need to address. To alert them to things that are going wrong. If they believe that the issues are not problematic, so be it. We journalists will have taken it as far as we can.”

Touching sore spots
Exposing important issues does not happen overnight. Thomas: “As an investigative
journalist, you follow your instincts. You have to have the time and freedom to do that. If you’ve read the newspaper and watched the news, you have to remind yourself to think about what has not been said. That’s where we come in. Then the digging starts: is it justified or unjustified, or are they holding something back? We always touch the sore spots if we do our job well. We talk to dozens of people, analyze data and hold surveys. It’s a time-consuming but rewarding job, which editors sink their teeth into for months on end.”

Klaas: “Only news outlets such as The New York Times have the capabilities to launch investigations for which they deploy specialists, including in the field of data science. European media outlets can only do such projects if they work together. On the other hand, the media in Europe have built a huge audience. It usually takes years before you pull enough readers to your articles.”

Contacts at media platforms
Klaas and fellow journalists Ludo Hekman and Daniel Howden are all seasoned investigative journalists and have published their investigations on their own websites. One of these investigations - all of them shocking in their own right - brought to light the case of illness-causing basmati rice from
For the past few years, thanks to the philanthropic support Adessium and other partners provided, we have been able to create a space at Investico where our staff can explore their curiosity. It’s like a good marriage, because the funds were given to us in good faith. The donation is a way of our partners telling us: we think you can do this. And it comes without any restrictions, such as ‘you have to write at least this number of articles’. This allows us to say to our journalists: listen to your instinct, do follow up on that lead. I believe in Investico’s approach, which in the United States is referred to as investigative non-profit. We are free to follow our intuition.

**Legislative changes**

The persistence of two Investico data journalists landed them the Dutch journalistic award De Tegel for their investigative piece on nitrogen emissions. The report on a turkey farm was picked up by the national media. The farm of this particular farmer emits more nitrogen than the effect achieved with the national speed reduction to 100km/h. Thomas: “Of course, we are pleased to receive these types of awards, but we feel it’s more important that the investigation leads to legislative changes. A good example is that during a lockdown in 2021, our editors discovered a bizarre scheme between the Asian hospitality industry in the Netherlands and the Dutch Immigration and Naturalization Service, the IND. Apparently, there was a shortage of people who wanted to work in Asian restaurants. So these restaurants were allowed to bring over chefs from China and East Asia. As long as the chefs continued to work at the restaurants, they received a residence permit. Well, this is a recipe for exploitation. Our editors looked at the numbers of people arriving in the Netherlands under this scheme during the coronavirus pandemic. It turned out that those numbers were consistently high, despite the temporary closure of the

India, which unfortunately failed to generate the audience and impact it deserved. The three journalists therefore decided to set up Lighthouse Reports, a network that brings together investigative journalists from all over Europe, including journalists from well-known media platforms, ‘digital’ specialists and data analysts. Lighthouse Reports deliberately does not publish the articles under its name, but ensures that the stories are published by established media so as to reach a large audience. Klaas: “Ludo and I are experienced journalists with good contacts in the Dutch media landscape, and Daniel had a network in Great Britain and beyond. After that initial phase, it was a question of building a good reputation. We carried out investigations and pitched our stories to big names in the industry, such as the French daily Libération and the British newspaper The Guardian. All of our investigations have to be extraordinary every time for us to stay relevant for the prominent news outlets in Europe.’

Over the past six years, Investico has worked hard at building a good reputation across the Dutch media landscape, and has initiated collaborations with De Groene Amsterdammer (a topical weekly magazine), Trouw (a Dutch daily), LINDA (a popular magazine) and current affairs TV shows EenVandaag and Nieuwsuur.

“As long as the chefs continued to work at the restaurants, they held their residence permits. It's a recipe for exploitation”
restaurants. Our story resulted in a spread in Dutch daily Trouw. The outcome was that this particular scheme was terminated one month later. Fortunately, we live in a country that is able to respond swiftly to such facts. With the support of Adessium, Investico invests in both a national and local network of journalists and media outlets. “A quarter of our productions is local. In an ideal media landscape, regional journalists have enough leeway to investigate regional issues. If the issue in question occurs in multiple regions, you see the national media picking up the story. But sometimes it is just a regional problem. And if local journalists are unable to address such issues due to a lack of budget, then who will?”

Co-responsible for the stories
Lighthouse Reports uses online newsrooms, where they bring together their in-house experts, such as data analysts and open source intelligence investigators who follow digital leads, with journalists from all over Europe. Klaas: “A newsroom is best described as an online editorial board around a certain topic, organized much like a traditional journalistic editorial office. Everything takes place online, because we are based in different countries. Each newsroom runs several investigations at the same time. For instance, the ‘Borders’ newsroom, which was also responsible for our investigation into violence against asylum seekers, currently conducts six different investigations which are all interlinked. We discuss who investigates what, and agree on angles and deadlines. A newsroom editor is a sort of editor-in-chief. So, Lighthouse Reports does not publish articles under its own name, but is co-responsible for the stories.” It has been a winning formula, considering the controversy the investigations caused throughout Europe, such as the publication on a Danish company that provided arms to the United Arab Emirates, and the one about workers being exploited in Spanish slaughterhouses.

“If local journalism is no longer able to address issues due to a lack of budget, who will?”
Klaas: ‘Two years ago, we never imagined that we would be at the point we are now. The articles are published in countries that have more clout than the Netherlands and that influence decision-making, such as Germany, France, Italy and Spain. An issue receives attention precisely because it is addressed throughout Europe. One example is the investigation into the violent actions against asylum seekers at Europe’s external borders, which Ylva Johansson - the EU Commissioner for Home Affairs - even mentioned twice in the first sentences of her opening speech. An independent investigation into the push-backs has since been launched in Greece and police officers have been suspended in the wake of an investigation in Croatia. The main outcome is that the European Commission is now exerting pressure to acknowledge that these things actually happen. Croatia has admitted for the first time that violent push-backs are a reality.’

Journalism is never ‘done’
Disinformation, fake news, the rabbit hole in which we might get trapped looking for news from various sources: all of these developments are detrimental to public confidence in journalism. Thomas: “People tend to forget that good journalistic products are the result of an extensive decision process. Investico is very transparent about this process; it’s available on our website. However, we are not mirroring reality. As journalists, we make decisions, but we invite scrutiny and can be held accountable.’ Young journalists at Investico and Lighthouse Reports learn these lessons when taking part in the programs for journalistic talents. Thomas: ‘My number one lesson to young journalists is: all data, all laws, all rules - everything has a backstory. Our job is to find out: who created it, who has an interest in it and who uses it? At the end of the process, we explain to our audience how we ended up where we are now and how the problem came into being. That’s what I like about our work: journalism is never ‘done’. Time and time again you can ask yourself the question: what is going on here? If you lose that curiosity, you might as well quit.’
“A global connection”
Gerard Ryle, Director of the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ): “The Pandora Papers are the result of an extensive global connection: over 600 journalists in 117 countries examined documents together. In the Netherlands, we worked with investigative journalists of Investico. In this joint effort, we exposed in 2021 how criminals, politicians, pop stars, top athletes and oligarchs hid their assets, avoided taxes and laundered money in tax havens all over the world.”

“The Netherlands has to create a safe reporting culture”
Louisewies van der Laan, Director of Transparency International Netherlands: “The round-table discussion in the Dutch House of Representatives on the Whistleblower Directive to me symbolizes connection in 2021. The Directive stipulates that companies and government organizations have to have various safe internal reporting channels in place. We talked to a range of parties, including unions, the Dutch Federation of Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises, and experts by experience. Together, we have drawn attention to the fact that the recently proposed Directive is much too complex for people seeking to report abuse. The House of Representatives asked a former whistleblower if she would do it all over again. Her answer was: ‘If I had known that it would go this way, that I would be blamed, certainly not’. This answer shows how important it is for the Netherlands to have a safe reporting culture. Now we have the historic opportunity to make sure that we do, with a better Directive.”
**“A major alliance for the protection of information”**

Evelyn Austin, Director of Bits of Freedom: “Internet users should always be able to rely on the protection of information through encryption, which encodes messages. Therefore we decided in 2021 to set up a wide-ranged group of consumer organizations, media representatives and companies, and called on the minister to cease government plans for weakening encryption. Dutch daily Het Financieele Dagblad described our coalition as ‘a major alliance’. The campaign had a concrete outcome: the minister made it known that the cabinet would not be taking any ‘irreversible steps’. In addition, the ministry has started to regularly consult the signatories of the call and no longer thinks lightly of the use of encryption.”

**“How would you shape the future?”**

Jan van de Venis, Acting Ombudsperson of the Future Generations Lab: “Our goal is to ensure that the well-being of future generations is included in important decisions. How would you shape the future if you lived three or even seven generations from now? And if you think of the many generations before you, your ancestors? Those are the central questions of one of our tools, the empathy exercise that we use in a ‘Future Council’. I saw people, who at the beginning of a session started from positions of seemingly irreconcilable and opposite interests, such as farmers and local policymakers, eventually arriving at a joint vision for a better future; they were amazed themselves. They essentially wanted the same thing: a green environment, social inclusion, peace, and a balance between using high-quality technology and nature.”
People & Nature Program

Adessium aims to create a society that takes a responsible approach to nature and the environment. Part of our work involves the conservation of valuable nature in the Netherlands and Europe. We are committed to healthy ecosystems where nature has the room to regenerate. At the same time, we aspire to achieve a clean environment, free from visible and invisible pollution, also in the interest of our own health.
People & Nature
An underwater picture of an octopus - one of the winners of the MARE photo contest, which was made possible with the support of the Marilles Foundation. Read more about Marilles on page 39.
The partner organizations in our program People & Nature achieved excellent results in 2021. Program Managers Karlijn Steinbusch and Nina Koopman tell us about important developments and the new directions of the program.

What is your impression of 2021?
Nina: "Our partners celebrated several major successes this year, which are the result of years of dedication and perseverance to tackle plastic pollution. The Single-use-Plastic (SUP) Directive entered into force in the summer of 2021, which is the European ban on certain single-use plastic products. And the Netherlands introduced a deposit on small plastic bottles, which is also an impressive result. But generally speaking 2021 was a turbulent year for many organizations, as they awaited the formation of a new cabinet. The caretaker cabinet had deferred many important decisions to the incoming members of government, also in the area of environmental legislation."

Karlijn: "Although online meetings were the name of the game for us and for many of our partners in 2021, several important conferences could fortunately be held in-person again. This included the conference of the GFCM, the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean. At the conference, the EU member states bordering on the Mediterranean took many decisions on waters that will be closed to fishery in order to better protect fishery stocks and vulnerable marine ecosystems."

What are the important developments in your program?
Nina: "In 2021, we reflected on our efforts of previous years and explored new avenues for our program. While in previous years we focused heavily on combatting plastic pollution, in the next few years we will work on the theme 'a healthy living environment.' We will zero in on combating harmful chemical substances in consumer products, packaging and in our food. We will also focus on maintaining the biodiversity in the Netherlands, for instance by exploring how to reduce the pressure on nature by making our food system more sustainable."

Karlijn: "In order to gain more insight into the underlying causes of overfishing and damage to the marine environment, we supported the transparency organization Global Fishing Watch in 2021. It was a year characterized by many great alliances. For example, together with Oceans 5, an international funders’ collaborative, we directed our efforts toward backing a broad alliance of NGOs working on biodiversity recovery in the Mediterranean."

Can you give us an idea of the program activities you will be conducting in 2022?
Nina: "We are investigating how we can make a difference by supporting organizations that are committed to better legislation and regulations on harmful chemical substances. Brussels is the main hotspot of activity and many organizations don’t have enough manpower to influence policy in all domains. Not only do harmful chemical substances cause environmental problems, they also have a huge impact on our health. This is not common knowledge among policymakers, let alone the general public."

Karlijn: "Thanks to the analyses of the transparency organization Global Fishing Watch and the articles of journalists who are supported by the Mediterranean Media Initiative of the Earth Journalism Network, we expect to see more attention for the impact of fisheries on the Mediterranean."
Elizabeth Salter Green and Maria Westerbos neither use plastic sandwich bags nor do they wear synthetic clothes. They also think twice about buying plastic toys. And for good reason. These two experts of our partner organizations CHEM Trust and the Plastic Soup Foundation are fighting for a future without harmful plastics and chemical substances. They seek out connections with the scientific community, policymakers and other campaigners.
“Plastic is in your apple, lettuce, leeks, in animals and our bodies. It’s never going to go away.” Maria Westerbos of the Plastic Soup Foundation (PSF) does not beat around the bush. Over 10 years ago, she took to the barricades to address the plastic issue, which back then was not widely known among the general public and in politics. “We successfully drew attention to this issue thanks to Charles Moore, the oceanographer and captain who had discovered the ‘plastic soup’ in the Pacific in 1997. Dressed in his captain’s uniform, he scooped up plastic from the pond in front of the Dutch parliament buildings with a small fishing net: ‘There’s a lot of plastic soup here, your government must be ashamed!’ That day, his statement was splashed across the front page of all regional newspapers as well as in Dutch daily AD. Our message reached an audience of 9 million people. In that moment I thought: so this is how it works, this is how you draw media attention.”

Safe chemicals
Plastic also forms part of the daily work of Elizabeth Salter Green, Director of CHEM Trust, and particularly the chemicals used in plastics. CHEM Trust mainly works behind the scenes. “We attend technical meetings of the European Commission, the European Council, and the European Parliament. Your average consumer is not interested in the detail of the subjects we discuss and may find it very technical and difficult to understand, but on the other hand they do not want to be exposed to toxic chemicals either.” It is also in the interest of consumers that CHEM Trust produces scientific proof of the harmful effects of certain chemicals. “People have become more and more aware of climate change and its consequences. I’m not saying that climate change is not important, but the problems that chemicals cause have been snowed under while the threat they pose is just as great. We want manufacturers to stop producing certain substances and use less harmful alternatives. There are plenty of safe chemicals.”

Massive production
For decades, manufacturers were able to market chemical substances with sales messages such as ‘this product makes something work better’ or ‘now, with a longer shelf-life’. Elizabeth: “Regulators could only ban a chemical ingredient after it had caused issues. So this meant that the manufacturer didn’t have to prove that a product was safe before putting it on the shelves in markets. The result is that for decades our environment has been inundated with harmful chemicals. Only
after the EU had developed the so-called REACH legislation and implemented it in 2007, things were better organized, though not perfectly. The EU made it clear: if you want to market a chemical substance, you first have to prove that it is safe." Meanwhile, our environment has had to contend with plastics and chemical substances for decades. Maria: "The production of plastic has risen exponentially, starting from the very first products just after WWII until now. Not to mention that we have produced as much plastic since the year 2000 as in the 50 years before. If we continue like this, those numbers will double again in the next 30 years. The world won’t be able to survive this."

**Disruption of the immune system**

More and more, the message of the PSF boils down to human health, both of the current generation and the next. Maria: "We have to present the story, the narrative, differently. The world isn’t going to change because plankton is dying. That is a far-off scenario for most people. You have to bring it closer to home. We have to say, for example, scientists have shown that our immune system is disrupted because it is under stress from the presence of plastic in our body." Elizabeth also emphasizes the major consequences for our children.
‘Adults can have been exposed to harmful chemicals for years, which may or may not have harmful health effects. But a fetus growing in the womb is much more vulnerable to toxic exposure at the wrong moments. A baby is born and may look healthy, but being exposed as a fetus can cause illnesses later in life. If, for instance, the hormone testosterone is unable to peak because the pregnant mother was exposed to endocrine-disrupting chemicals, it may hinder the development of the baby boy, impacting the male reproductive organs and future reproductive health. A lot of things around the house contain these synthetic chemical ingredients, such as PVC floors, cosmetics, toys, toiletries, and furniture. In her book Count Down, respected scientist Shanna Swan predicts that if people continue to be exposed to harmful chemicals, the number of sperm cells in men will have reached the zero mark by 2040. An absolute disaster for humankind.’

**Fast fashion and dangerous fibers**

People are also exposed to harmful substances in clothing. Maria: “We’ve been working on our project Fatal Fashion for about eight years. At first behind the scenes, but we’re now also going public with it. We researched how many fibers are released from synthetic clothes and how you can prevent it from happening. It soon became clear that the figures were much higher than previous research had shown. Instead of the average 1,900 fibers - what had been claimed for years - a pair of acrylic socks contains close to 150,000 fibers. On average, 9 million nanofibers, tiny pieces of plastic, are released during a cycle in the washing machine. The fashion industry has presented different figures, but this is the harsh reality. Fibers are also released when we walk outside. We breathe in those fibers, where they damage our immune system, with fateful consequences. We warned fashion brands years ago: your fast fashion is a health hazard. I always compare it to a snowball: we rolled the ball down the mountain when we opened up discussions with the brands so that they could implement the information we presented. Unfortunately, the brands failed to undertake any concrete action. Meanwhile, the ball is getting bigger and bigger. But we continue to collect scientific evidence and build on our campaign. This spring the snowball will be so big that it will have become unstoppable. We are very vocal about it: people have to know that they are in danger.”

**Shaking up politics**

Science is important to PSF and CHEM Trust. Elizabeth: “Scientists are good at science, but they are less focussed on what their research means for laws and regulations on chemicals. Therefore, it’s important for parties such as CHEM Trust to work on the interface of science and policy development. It’s our job to say: look at the new science, it tells us that these chemicals cause problems. The legislators, such as the European Commission or the member states, have to make decisions to reduce that exposure.” The PSF has also successfully reached politicians. Their campaigns have not only alerted the press but also the Dutch House of Representatives. “I’ll never forget that the chairperson of the Packaging Waste Fund visited us and said: ‘You lost, deposits...”
on large bottles is going to be abolished.’ My response was: But you don’t know which surprises I still have up my sleeve… The week before the deposit would be abolished, we collected 25,000 pieces of litter with 200 volunteers. About 0.5 percent consisted of large deposit bottles, the rest was plastic that had no deposit on it.” In the end, the deposit on large bottles maintained. Changing legislation in the EU is an entirely different matter and requires patience. Elizabeth: “There are now no less than 27 member states, each with their own political agenda. Sweden, Denmark and the Netherlands are strong supporters of reducing the use of and exposure to harmful chemicals. Germany, on the other hand, is the biggest producer of synthetic chemicals in Europe, and has a lot of voting power. Delays are often caused by political and economic motives.” The next few years will see the introduction of crucial legislation. “In 2020, the EU introduced the ‘chemicals strategy for sustainability’, which states that there should be a ban on the exposure of animals and humans to harmful chemicals. It is a tremendous ambition. We are working hard to ensure that that ambition will be incorporated into legislation, so we have our work cut out for us in the next three years.”

The gold standard for the world
How about the rest of the world, once legislation has been set in place in the EU? “The American Captain Charles Moore once said to me in the early days of the PSF: change has to start with you, in northern Europe. It is safe there, you are not poor and you have democracy,” says PSF’s Maria Westerbos. CHEM Trust agrees: “The EU’s chemicals strategy for sustainability is, as we like to call it, the gold standard for the rest of the world. If the EU attends a worldwide, UN meeting on chemicals, they could use it in a type of quid-pro-quo exchange: America, China, India, you have to meet our standards if you want to export products to the EU. In short: if the strategy has been implemented

“On average, 9 million nanofibers, tiny pieces of plastic, are released during a cycle in the washing machine”
and certain substances are indeed banned, those countries will have to stop producing products containing those chemicals."
Not only does CHEM Trust build a bridge between science and policy-makers but the organization also regularly works with other organizations. "We pass on our scientific knowledge and policy proposals to other organizations so that they can lobby their own governments. We simply don’t have the media contacts or campaigning power they have. Take our campaign on Food Contact Materials, for example. We furnish proof of why so-called PFAS chemicals – horrible substances that damage the immune system and can cause cancer – should not be used in food packaging. Other campaign partners, such as Zero Waste Europe, ensure that this important message reaches the general public."

**Better baby clothes and less red meat**
A better health starts with you, also when it comes to chemicals and plastic. Elizabeth has a few tips for consumers: "If you know, roughly, that 80 percent of the synthetic chemical substances found in your body enter through your mouth, I would choose organic food wherever possible. I would also eat food that is lower in the food chain: less red meats, less dairy products. Avoid packaged and processed food such as takeaways and, of course, eat more vegetables." Maria urges parents to minimize their children’s exposure to plastics. "Pay attention to which baby clothes and toys you buy. Buy wood or safe plastic. Don’t go to a discount store that sells toys that fall apart after the first day. Choose glass bottles and reusable diapers. A baby’s blood-brain barrier is not fully developed, so everything they breathe in goes straight to their brain. Think of your children. We have saddled future generations with too many health problems as it is."

*Left: a waste mountain of fast fashion, usually made of synthetic fiber. Right: during wash cycles, fibers are released that are harmful to health.*
**Other connectors from our network**

“**A deposit on small plastic bottles: yes we can!**”

Rob Buurman, Director of Recycling Netwerk Benelux: “The general public wanted a deposit for plastic bottles. Businesses and local councils wanted it. The beverage producers agreed. And politicians showed a great deal of goodwill to turn a deposit scheme into reality. In short, the time was ripe! United in the Deposit Alliance, the local councils, organizations and businesses encouraged politicians to take the final step: to include a deposit on cans and almost all plastic bottles in the law. Our slogan was ‘Deposit, Yes We Can!’ And indeed we could: a deposit on small plastic bottles was implemented in 2021, and this will be followed by a deposit on cans in 2022.”

“**We are connected to our food**”

Geert van der Veer, CEO of Herenboeren Nederland: “Herenboeren Nederland supports citizens to develop nature-driven cooperative farmhouses. We have set up 14 farms and are developing 35 others. It’s been nearly 10 years and it’s time for us to reassess. The year 2021 was when we realized that we had to examine whether or not we wanted to continue our cooperative as a social initiative. Is our idea as social as we think it is? How much pressure do the farms’ management boards experience or the farmers in our employment? These are some of the questions we will delve into this coming period. We have built a community of over 10,000 households. A lot of people have told me that they’ve started living more consciously since they’ve joined us. Seeing red cabbage withering away due to the unprecedented tropical temperatures in summer makes you think about the climate. I always say: if you feel connected to your food, you’ll start thinking about the meaning of life.”
“Rewilding is more than nature restoration”
Frans Schepers, Director of Rewilding Europe: “Our teams are working on large-scale nature restoration throughout Europe. This involves letting natural processes, such as flooding and grazing by wild animals, determine the appearance of a landscape instead of human-controlled nature management. In 2021, we worked on awareness and acceptance of more wild nature, both at the European and local level, and in cooperation with our local partners. The connection and cooperation with local communities and organizations is an essential element, because rewilding revolves to a great extent around the cultural and economic connections with the landscape. However, rewilding is more than just nature restoration. The local communities’ cooperation and support, their trust and commitment are essential. More wild nature offers new economic opportunities, contributes to a healthy living environment and helps to absorb the effects of climate change.”

“Making connections is part of our DNA”
Aniol Esteban, Director of the Marilles Foundation: “Our mission is to turn the Balearic Islands, the Spanish archipelago in the Mediterranean Sea, into a role model of marine protection. Making connections and bringing organizations and groups together is an important part of our DNA. In 2021, we investigated the practice of illegal fishery together, in collaboration with organizations and experts from all islands. We then published the results. It was a bold step because up until that point no one had dared to address this sensitive issue. As part of the investigation, we had talked to all sorts of fishermen, from professionals to recreational fishermen and spearfishers. We don’t blame a particular group for the illegal fishery. It’s a collective responsibility of all sectors, from fishermen to fish merchants and restaurants that serve the illegal catch to consumers. The role of Marilles is to bring attention to the issue, to allow parties to communicate better and find effective solutions. In order to succeed, all our work is based on evidence and solid research.”
Social Initiatives Program

Adessium strives to create a society in which people live together with respect and compassion for one another and in which everyone can participate equally. We are working on a society that is characterized by humanity and solidarity.
Social Initiatives
In the informative class and dialog game of the Respect Foundation, students discuss social themes.
“We want to work based on trust”

It was a turbulent year for the partner organizations of our Social Initiatives program. Program Managers Ria de Jong and Job Rijneveld look back on 2021 and tell us about the most important developments in the program.

What is your impression of 2021?
Job: "The lockdowns and coronavirus measures made people difficult to reach again, just like in 2020. Counselors had a hard time visiting people at home. That is what we heard for example from the foundation Leergeld, our partner organization that keeps an eye on children living in poverty. In addition, the number of women who had to seek refuge at a women’s shelter increased worryingly. Stress and isolation seem to have bred domestic violence. The lockdown was also dramatic for many undocumented migrants, who often lost their jobs."
Ria: "Our program is mainly about meetings and bringing people together. We weren’t able to organize these things in 2021 like we are used to, in part due to the coronavirus measures. It is heartwarming to see the ingenuity of our partner organizations, which enabled them to find ways of reaching their target group, online and offline."

What are the important developments in your program?
Job: "We want to work based on trust. With partners who already support people in vulnerable situations, without too many strings attached. A lot of government assistance revolves around control, which is designed to prevent abuse of such resources. This does raise barriers and often goes wrong. Just think of the disastrous childcare benefits scandal. As a foundation, we want to show through our partners that things can be done differently. If foundations make this known and take a chance, we hope the government will follow suit."
Ria: "One particular strategic direction we want to explore further is our work with people with lived experience. Network DAK has started an initiative in which people with certain lived experience, who live in poverty or are homeless, initiate conversations with civil servants and people in key positions at housing corporations. In short: facilitating listening to people who are far away from the powers."
Job: "In our theme Migration and Asylum, we are also exploring ways to let refugees play an even more prominent role. We want to enable them to formulate their needs themselves, both at the shelter and after they have received a residence permit."

Can you give us an idea of the program activities you will be conducting in 2022?
Ria: "We want to bring even more focus on our theme youth and society, and particularly projects by and for young people. In this particular area, we also see a giant gap between the people it concerns, the youth in this case, and policymakers who have the final say in such matters. We also want to find out how to spark young people into action. What should we be doing to inspire young people to take action and want to be of importance to their community? This could include organizing homework assistance for fellow students or a dinner party for lonely neighbors."
Job: "The year 2021 was the year of new refugees from Afghanistan, the persistent armed chaos in Syria, the full emergency shelters in the Netherlands, and violence on Europe’s borders. Migration and asylum will once again be relevant topics in 2022. The war in Ukraine is causing more people to flee. We plan to intensify our collaboration with fellow foundations, both in the Netherlands and in Europe, to make life easier for refugees."
Newcomers and people who have lived here for a while - it is not always easy to bring these two groups closer together. We talk to three partners, who know from experience how to make this connection. They talk about magical moments, impossibilities and the importance of a cup of coffee. “If we look at newcomers as pitiful, how can they ever participate fully in society?”
‘The people you meet in a new country determine your future. My life could have been very different. For years, I lived a schizophrenic life: during the day I spent my time among artists, outside of reality, and when I got home I was among friends who were dealing drugs, a dark world. In the end, I started spending more time in the acting world, but things could have gone very differently.’ Bright Richards, founder and director of New Dutch Connections (NDC), is a master at making connections. He fled Liberia in 1993, where he was a well-known TV personality. "My connection with the Netherlands started with Gre. I wish everybody could meet someone like Gre. At the asylum seekers’ center, she found out that I was a professional entertainer. She asked if I wanted to volunteer during a world music festival. The first year, I checked tickets at the door. The second year, I was on stage, presenting the festival. It restored my confidence because even with my broken Dutch I was able to do my old job again. It was a magical moment, up on that stage.” Technology can also lend a helping hand in building a network. It helped create the Welcome App, a tool to connect people. It has a chat feature, which newcomers and people from the neighborhood can use to talk to each other. The underlying idea of the app is that it is impossible to make meaningful connections if Dutch people who were born and raised here think: I know what you need. I am going to help you, and you should be thankful. Newcomers are extremely capable of finding their own way. Director Julius Weise of the Welcome App: “If we look at newcomers to the Netherlands as pitiful, how could they ever participate fully in society? Bright’s experience underlines this: a newcomer is a person in their own right, each with their own qualities.”

A small step or chance
Lizebeth Melse is coordinator at the Wereldhuis, a project by Stek (the Foundation for City & Church) in The Hague. It is an information and advisory center for people without a residence permit. She has noticed how important it is for undocumented people to be able to apply their skills: “We offer activities, such as baking cookies or cooking. During these activities, the participants also help each other within their own networks. A participant will announce to everyone in the kitchen: ‘I know someone who is looking for a babysitter for her kids’. The Wereldhuis also runs consultation hours for undocumented migrants. The group we see during the consultation hours has a very diverse background, from North African men who have lived here for more than
30 years to minors. We talk to them: what is your goal, what do you want to achieve? Reality can be harsh sometimes when they find out they won’t make it in the Netherlands. But I have also had encouraging experiences, for instance with young women who had to flee honor killing. I’m so happy for them when after years of despair and problems they get their residence permits and get to start their lives.”

What is the picture you want to paint?
NDC’s Bright also likes to talk to young people: “I’ll ask them things like: the world has formed a picture of you. But what picture do you want to paint? The same applies to adults. For instance, a man who participated in one of our projects told us that he was a successful lawyer in his country of origin. ‘Here, my neighbor won’t even greet me,’ he exclaimed sadly. He was not seen as a person. Social services would keep calling him to say that they had found him a cleaning job at the station. They didn’t see him for who he was and he didn’t show himself either. That is why we at NDC put a refugee on the stage. The audience has no choice but to look at that person. Whether they like it or not, they have to look at you. If that person wants to work in healthcare, we invite our healthcare network. Or a former refugee invites work colleagues. Colleagues who sometimes
Yemen, remembers this well from his days at the asylum seekers’ center. “I was so lonely. At the bus station, I tried to strike up a conversation with people, but they often looked at me funny. The Welcome App saved me. I could start conversations with people from the neighborhood on this platform. I could ask them questions about Dutch culture and I could see where I could go to meet people. The people I met through the app helped me find my way in the Netherlands. I ended up with dozens of friends thanks to the app, including my best friend. But I also found my current job as a coordinator at a university of applied sciences through the app.”

Speaking the language of a carpenter
Newcomers struggle with prejudices, but also with impossibilities. NDC’s Bright:

“Even I caught myself being prejudiced against a carpenter who only spoke Arabic. How could we help him access a network with only that language?”

Social codes
It is more challenging to establish connections if you do not feel welcome as a newcomer. Lizebeth of Wereldhuis has noticed that people are sometimes bothered by the harsh stance in society and politics. “The persistent idea of ‘the migrant as gold digger’ needs to be adjusted. Once they have arrived in the Netherlands, it’s hard to get a work permit, while undocumented people want to work and ‘just’ pay taxes. They want to belong, just like everybody else. Imagine you’ve been trying to get a residence permit for years, but the Immigration and Naturalization Service doesn’t believe your refugee claim. All this while it is impossible to return, or you’re afraid to go back. Or, you’ve been working here illegally for 30 years and have no rights. It is difficult to hear people say things like ‘you can return, go back to your own country.’
If you don’t speak the language yet and don’t know the social codes, people who have lived here longer are not always easy to approach. Hani Al Duias, who fled to the Netherlands from Yemen, remembers this well from his days at the asylum seekers’ center. “I was so lonely. At the bus station, I tried to strike up a conversation with people, but they often looked at me funny. The Welcome App saved me. I could start conversations with people from the neighborhood on this platform. I could ask them questions about Dutch culture and I could see where I could go to meet people. The people I met through the app helped me find my way in the Netherlands. I ended up with dozens of friends thanks to the app, including my best friend. But I also found my current job as a coordinator at a university of applied sciences through the app.”

Left and right: people attending a consultation hour for undocumented migrants at the Wereldhuis. “We talk to them: what is your goal, what do you want to achieve?”
even more activities, such as working with computers, repairing bikes, and information meetings and training by other organizations such as a first aid training of the Red Cross. It’s so important for people to stay busy and talk to other people from The Hague. They have had little to do with them in their daily lives. There are groups of people that find each other and help each other out, such as the Filipino domestic worker who joined a union. The people who come to our consultation hours are struggling, as they don’t have such a network and are more likely to not have a job.”

**Done with being pitiful**

Julius, of the Welcome App, used to volunteer at an emergency shelter in Amsterdam, where he noticed how difficult it is for asylum seekers to really establish contact with Dutch people. “I was one of the few volunteers who would play videogames with young men in their room or drink a cup of coffee with them. Young people in particular were done with being thought of as pitiful, with being a refugee. They wanted to get a job and go. That’s how I came up with the idea for an app, to give them a tool to make contact on their own and thereby get ahead.” The app has been revamped over the past few years, incorporating the newcomers’ experiences.
Julius: “Now, the app is the best portal for integration and citizenship education. We provide users access to useful information, such as organizations that offer language and citizenship lessons as well as activities and workshops in their neighborhood. We have been working on the app with city councils. In short, we have given them tools to find their way in society and make connections.” Newcomers crave connection and a network. Word artist Bright sums it up nicely: “It is important to respect the dignity of new Dutch citizens, to see their value and make a real connection with them. Through connections walls crumble down.”

“I was so lonely. At the bus station, I tried to strike up a conversation with people, but they often looked at me funny. The Welcome App saved me.”
“Young people taking action”
Matthijs de Bruin, Head of Fundraising at Young Impact: “Young Impact wants to stimulate personal initiative in young people through their strong points, talents, areas of interest and values. We reach out to them via schools and other places where they convene. Through our program, young people take action and start as social entrepreneurs. Some have started homework classes in their neighborhood while others have joined existing local civil society organizations. We maintain their involvement in various ways, such as through our new Young Impact Academy. Young Impact ‘alumni’ come into contact with each other and follow an in-depth program with different courses. Alumni are fantastic ambassadors.”

“A unique collaboration”
Eleanne Plaizier, Project Leader at the Association of Health Funds: “For us, the year 2021 was marked by the connection between the domains of health and the prevention of adverse childhood experiences. This link was also expressed in a unique collaboration between 24 health foundations and 12 private foundations focusing on children. With our joint campaigns, we want to raise awareness among parents about the importance of a safe upbringing for the development of their children.

“The coronavirus pandemic caused stress among children”
Ella van der Leeden, buddy at Villa Pinedo: “As a buddy, I am in contact with children of divorced parents. We use the one-on-one chat feature and the forum in our Buddy App. I am linked with children who have experienced more or less the same situations during or after their parents’ divorce. I recognize their situations and can tell them that they are not alone. As buddies, we all noticed that this coronavirus year has caused more stress. Some children had to go from one parent to another, or had to stay with one of their parents if the other had a coronavirus infection or had to follow different rules all of a sudden. As a child, you feel stuck in the middle between your parents. And the coronavirus created an extra hurdle. We tell them that their feelings matter and ask them what they need. Buddies also learn from each other, particularly on how to provide good support to children. Fortunately, we had good contact with each other online.”
“We work on the basis of trust”
Marieke van Bommel, Chief Executive Officer of Quiet Nederland: “The launch of the new Quiet 500, our magazine about silent poverty, caused quite the stir. Members of our Quiet communities, Dutch celebrities, politicians and companies attended the launch. It was a great opportunity for Quiet and our communities to make new connections. Our community members receive a range of free ‘treats’ via a digital platform: from free bike repair to tickets for an event or show, all which are made possible by local companies and organizations. This allows people living in poverty to participate in society. We work on the basis of trust, meaning members don’t have to ‘prove’ how poor they are. Our members also come to us during our drop-in mornings. We take all the time we need to get a good picture of the situation and of a member’s capabilities. We have noticed that the attention for the Quiet 500 magazine has inspired people to establish their own communities. Eight cities have registered with us so far. It’s a great challenge we happily take on for 2022.”

“We inspire future generations”
Femke van der Ster, director at Respect Foundation: “We have noticed that people discussing current issues in society tend to take up two extreme positions instead of coming closer together. This trend worries us. That is why we inspire future generations to make a difference. Because everything you learn early in life lasts for the rest of your life. In 2021, we invited guest speakers to engage with young people in schools all over the country and organized classes which focused on the theme ‘What is real?!’. How do you know what is true, who determines what is true and where can you find information? Students engaged in dialog with each other after being briefed in class. We are proud that more and more schools and local councils have decided to join. Everyone contributes in his or her own way to the same mission, which is to create a society where young people feel at home and to which they actively contribute.”
Flexible funding

In addition to its three programs, Adessium Foundation also created flexibility in its budget. This flexibility allows us to respond to special opportunities or urgent needs in society.
Flexible funding
Undocumented migrants are at risk of falling in the hands of fraudulent employers, people involved in human trafficking and slumlords. Live Journalism addresses this issue in a play (pictured).
Building bridges and making special opportunities possible

In a fast-changing society, philanthropic foundations have to be flexible enough to respond to changes in societal priorities. That is why Adessium has also reserved funding in its budget for activities that fall outside the scope of the three programs. Director of programs, Martijn Meijer, talks about the new approach to using this flexible funding.

These funds allow us to respond to urgent needs in society, such as the consequences of the coronavirus pandemic, or to special opportunities. Martijn Meijer: “This year, for instance, we once again supported the Princess Máxima Center for pediatric oncology to follow up on their biobank project. Thanks to this project, the diagnosis and treatment of all children with cancer is hugely improved: a beautiful and tangible result. We find it important to keep an eye on these types of opportunities and to have the capability to respond to them.”

This funding can also be used to finance cross-programmatic initiatives with high impact. “We are seeing societal issues becoming increasingly intertwined. The state of democracy, for example, has a huge impact on the way we solve environmental or social issues. If civil society organizations never sit at the table with politicians, some solutions in the public interest risk not being considered at all in government policy. And if citizens have no idea what is going on and what problems there are, how can they hold their elected representatives to account?”

In 2021, the team started exploring the interfaces between the programs. “We looked at which opportunities we see and where themes intersect. How can an intervention from one program enhance an issue in another program? Where can the themes of the Public Interest program, such as good public governance or investigative journalism, be of value to the objectives of the other programs?”

Special journalism initiatives

Our exploration found two special journalism initiatives, which make an innovative contribution to the objectives of our partners in the People & Nature and Social Initiatives programs. The Mediterranean Media Initiative of the Earth Journalism Network, for instance, trains and connects journalists in North Africa and southern Europe to carry out joint investigations into the management and protection of the Mediterranean Sea. “We expect to see that higher-quality media attention will lead to better management of the sea, which is currently in very bad shape.”

The Live Journalism initiative of De Balie, a non-profit venue for contemporary arts, politics and culture, works with local journalists to raise awareness on local issues that affect citizens directly. “Topics could include dodgy landlords or mistreatment of undocumented migrants by their employers. De Balie not only writes reports, but also tells the story live on stage. This makes issues very tangible. Various stakeholders, such as aldermen and civil servants, are invited to the play so they can engage in conversation with those directly involved. This absolutely increases the chances of real change.”

Learning from each other

Besides the impact our partners can achieve with such initiatives, this approach also brought unexpected, positive benefits. The program managers of our different programs have started working together more often. By combining different types of expertise, we can engage with our partners in new ways. “For instance, in the Live Journalism project, we have raised awareness specifically for sufficient safeguarding of the interviewees and participants. We
are more familiar with safeguarding in our Social Initiatives program, where it is used in projects involving vulnerable target groups. We are learning from each other. I love seeing that. In the end, it’s all about tearing down the walls around our programs so that the programs can enhance each other. "

**New themes**
The team is going to explore new issues this year. "Take the theme of polarization. It is a topical issue in society and ties in with many facets of our programs. In 2022, we plan to explore what the effect of polarization is on social cohesion and our faith in democracy, and what role social media play."

This approach also offers opportunities to bring together partner organizations as ‘unusual allies’. “This coming year, we will introduce partners from the environmental movement to partners from our Public Interest program. Together, they will explore structural flaws in our democracy that hamper effective environmental policy making."

**Current events**
A part of our flexible budget is reserved for responding to current events. “The horrible events in Ukraine have far-reaching consequences. Not just there but in the Netherlands and the rest of Europe as well. We expect to allocate a large part of our flexible budget for 2022 for this purpose."  

“Flexible funding allows us to respond to special opportunities or urgent needs in society, such as the consequences of the coronavirus pandemic”
A researcher taking patient tissue out of the Biobank at the Princess Máxima Center.
Partners

- Access Info Europe
- African Parks
- Amnesty International
- Are We Europe
- Arista Bee Research
- ASKV/Steunpunt Vluchtelingen
- Bellingcat
- Bits of Freedom
- Blue Marine Foundation
- Bureau Européen des Unions de Consommateurs (BEUC)
- CHEM Trust
- Circle Economy
- Civitates
- ClientEarth
- Commonland
- Corporate Europe Observatory
- CORRECTIV
- Critical Mass
- De Balie
- De Pauluskerk
- De Regenboog Groep
- Defence for Children
- Digital Freedom Fund
- Disclose
- Dokters van de Wereld
- Earth Journalism Network
- Environmental Coalition on Standards (ECOS)
- Enviu
- Erasmus MC
- EUobserver
- European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE)
- European Digital Rights (EDRi)
- European Policy Centre (EPC)
- European Programme for Integration and Migration (EPIM)
- Expertisebureau Online Kindermisbruik (EOKM)
- Fauna & Flora International
- Federation for Innovation in Democracy (FIDE)
- Fier
- Finance Uncovered
- Fonds Bijzondere Noden Rotterdam (FBNR)
- Food Contact Materials Coalition
- Global Fishing Watch
- Herenboeren
- High Seas Alliance (HSA)
- Hostwriter
- House Of Hope
- Human Rights Watch
- Instituut voor Mensenrechten en Medisch Onderzoek (iMMO)
- International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ)
- Investico
- Investigate Europe
- Investigative Reporting Project Italy (IRPI)
- IVN Natuureducatie
- Justice and Peace Netherlands
- Kansfonds
- Lab Toekomstige Generaties (LabTG)
- Leger des Heils
- Lighthouse Reports
- Marilles Foundation
- Marine Stewardship Council
- Media Defense
- MedReAct
- Mercy Ships Holland
- Movisie
- Natuur & Milieu
- Natuur- en Milieufederatie Noord-Holland
- Nederlands Debat Instituut
- Nederlands Juristen Comité voor de Mensenrechten (NJCM)
- Netwerk DAK
- New Dutch Connections (NDC)
- Oceana
- Oceans 5
- OpenUp! Let Youth be Heard
- Oxford University / Oxford Internet Institute
- Plastic Solutions Fund
- Plastic Soup Foundation
- Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants (PICUM)
- Prinses Máxima Centrum
- Protestantse Diaconie Amsterdam
- Quiet Nederland
- Recycling Network Benelux
- Reporters Without Borders (RWB)
- Respect Foundation
- Rewilding Europe
- Rode Kruis
- Schuldhulpmaatje
- Seas At Risk
- Spacebuzz Foundation
- Stek - Stichting voor stad en kerk
- Stem in de Stad
- Sterk Huis
- Stichting de Vrolijkheid
- Stichting de Nationale DenkTank
- Stichting Het Vergeten Kind
- Stichting Life Goals Nederland
- Stichting Onderzoek Multinationale Ondernemingen (SOMO)
- Stichting ONSbank
- Stichting TAAI
- Stichting Urgente Noden Nederland
- Stichting VEEN
- Stichting Zwerfjongeren Nederland
- The Bureau of Investigative Journalism
- Transparency International EU office en NL office
- Universiteit Leiden
- Valente
- Vereniging Leergeld Nederland
- Vereniging Samenwerkende Gezondheidsfondsen (SGF)
- Vier het Leven
- Villa Pinedo
- VluchtelingenWerk Nederland
- Voedselbanken Nederland
- Vrije Universiteit / Cancer Center Amsterdam
- Welcome App
- Wildlife Justice Commission (WJC)
- Young Impact
- Zero Waste Europe

Smaller and one-time gifts are not included in the overview.
Background Adessium Foundation

Adessium Foundation was established in 2005 by the Van Vliet family, which has a background in asset management. The Foundation is recognized as a “public benefit organization” (ANBI) by the Dutch tax authorities.

As stipulated in multi-year agreements, Adessium Foundation periodically receives donations from an affiliated foundation which oversees capital set aside by the Van Vliet family. The allocation of donations by Adessium Foundation meant for public benefit is strictly separated from its asset management. Adessium Foundation does not receive any other resources than what is gifted by the family.

Adessium Foundation is a member of the Association Foundation in the Netherlands (FIN) and the European Foundation Centre (EFC). Adessium Foundation subscribes to the EFC code of conduct and meets the FIN criteria for good governance.
In 2021, Adessium Foundation spent a total of €15.671 million in supporting organizations and projects. 2021 also saw the start of 10 new long-term partnerships, and the renewal of 27 existing partnerships. In total, across 107 organizations, there were 113 active partnerships at the end of the year.*

### Financial summary 2021

**Amounts in thousands of Euros**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>2021</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>2020</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Overall grantmaking</strong>&lt;sup&gt;1&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grants</td>
<td>15,635</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>11,977</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project-related costs + exchange results of grants</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operational expenses&lt;sup&gt;3&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>1,201</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>1,442</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>16,872</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>13,419</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Distribution across programs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>2021</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>2020</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public Interest</td>
<td>4,147</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>3,337</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People &amp; Nature</td>
<td>4,524</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>3,748</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Initiatives</td>
<td>4,313</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>4,892</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexible funding</td>
<td>2,651</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>15,635</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>11,977</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Distribution by type of support

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>2021</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>2020</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Programmatic-institutional&lt;sup&gt;4&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>14,300</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>9,261</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project-related</td>
<td>1,335</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>2,716</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>15,635</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>11,977</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Distribution by region / intended results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>2021</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>2020</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Netherlands</td>
<td>8,256</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>5,452</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rest of the European Union</td>
<td>6,634</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>5,249</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rest of the world</td>
<td>745</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>1,276</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>15,635</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>11,977</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<sup>1</sup> These data have been derived from Adessium Foundation’s 2021 financial statements.  
<sup>2</sup> This concerns the total amount of pledged grants minus cancellations (projects cancelled early).  
<sup>3</sup> Adessium Foundation’s offices and meeting spaces have been made available to the foundation free of charge.  
<sup>4</sup> Programmatic-institutional support focuses on providing beneficiaries with the necessary means to achieve their long-term vision.  
*This number does not take into account any agreements for small and one-off grants.
The state of seagrass (Posidonia) in the Balearic Sea is a key indicator of pollution level.
A Welcome App meeting during International Women’s Day. Read more about the Welcome App on page 44.
Jan van de Venis, Acting Ombudsperson of the Future Generations Lab, addresses young people at a climate protest in front of the Dutch House of Representatives. On page 27, he talks about his work.
Nour (17) wins the Young Impact Awards 2021 in the Equal Opportunities category. She tutors grade school pupils from underprivileged neighborhoods and tries to give them self-confidence. More information on Young Impact is available on page 50.
Together with our grantees we work on a positive, lasting change in our society Caring for each other and our environment
Caring for each other and our environment