

# 'Nothing but the Truth'

## BCN Conference on trust and truth in science

(19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> of October, 2020)

### Call for Submissions

There is growing debate on the truthfulness of science, in both the public and scientific arena. Within the scientific community, there is a growing awareness of problems in the way research is organized. Controversial issues include poor reproducibility of findings, competition between scientists and journals for high impact papers and the race for 'first findings', the importance of the current rating systems for individual research careers, the role of the funding system and the influence of different commercial interests. It is even suggested that these issues are at the basis of scientific fraud. It is broadly recognized that science needs to be trustworthy and transparent. Currently, research and government organizations are adapting policies towards 'open science', reproducibility and scientific integrity. However, systemic change is complex and new dilemmas arise in the transformation process.

Simultaneously, society appears more sceptical towards scientific facts than before. Politicians, opinion makers and the general public may have trouble recognizing fact from fiction, and 'alternative facts' are used to support different agendas. Important issues are, for example, climate change, nature conservation, human migration, food safety, income inequality and medical issues such as child vaccination and the spread of the corona virus. Politicians, administrators and commercial parties can be selective in what they accept as fact, or may even actively manipulate the way results of scientific research are presented. There is also increasing pressure on scientists to adjust reports on sensitive issues to the liking of policy makers.

The conference focuses on two themes that are crucial for the credibility and impact of science in society:

1. *Organization of science. What methodology and criteria does the scientific community accept as yielding valid (trustful) results? What mechanisms play a role in selecting relevant research topics? What mechanisms are, or should be, put in place to prevent the emergence of 'false facts' and abuse? What does that mean for individual careers and funding policies?*
2. *Communication of scientific findings ('the truth') to society, at the levels of international agencies, national and regional governments, and the general public. How can this be done objectively and with impact in a world in which communication and decision-making is often more about sentiments and opinions, than about facts? And on a more fundamental level; does 'the truth' exist at all, or is it time-, place- and person-dependent?*

In a two-day program on the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> of October 2020, these issues will be covered by experts in their fields in plenary lectures as well as interactive workshops and debates. Confirmed speakers are John Ioannidis, Heather Douglas, Erik-Jan Wagenmakers, Kees Schuyt, among others. Additionally, the well-known TV presenter Arjen Lubach will do an interactive 'College Tour'.

The conference takes place in the context of the *Climate Adaptation Week* organised by the University and the city of Groningen, with Nobel Prize winners, former UN secretary prof. Ban Ki-Moon, and members of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) giving lectures and interacting with the public.

### **We would like you to participate, and submit your abstract before April 23!**

'Nothing but the Truth' specifically aims to engage researchers at all stages of their career in these important topics and welcomes all PhD students and academic staff to submit a proposal for a workshop, discussion session, hack-a-thon, or symposium.

A committee will select the abstracts based on their content and relevance to the themes of the conference. We aim to construct a program that represents different aspects about the two main themes, with workshop leaders of varying levels of seniority, from PhD students to full professors.

**Please fill out and submit the form on the next page before April 23, 2020, to [NBTT2020@umcg.nl](mailto:NBTT2020@umcg.nl).**



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