

Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen,

My name is Pavel Kabat. I am member of the Wadden Academy's Supervisory Board. I am delighted to be here and to have the honour of appointing the first five members of The Young Wadden Academy.

In eighteen hundred and eight, King Louis Napoleon established the Royal Institute, the forerunner of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences. In two thousand and five, the Royal Academy took the momentous step of setting up The Young Academy.

The Young Academy operates independently within the Royal Academy. It has its own working plan, organises its own events and is responsible for its own viewpoints. In addition to being outstanding researchers, members of The Young Academy must also have a broad interest in science and in science policy.

Now, more than ten years later, The Young Academy is a clear success. Membership is an honour, and The Young Academy plays a serious role in helping to shape Dutch research policy.

The Wadden Academy was founded in two thousand and eight with the aim of improving our knowledge of the Wadden Sea Region. And in two thousand and fifteen, the Wadden Academy decided to establish The Young Wadden Academy. It has taken this step to encourage researchers to study the Wadden Sea Region, preferably in multidisciplinary

teams. It also wants to inspire young researchers to involve themselves more explicitly in policy that affects the Wadden Sea Region – policy that is sometimes of a politically sensitive nature.

The Young Wadden Academy also represents the next step in the Wadden Academy's plan to rejuvenate research on the Wadden Sea. Thanks to its efforts, many dozens of young researchers – ranging from ecologists, economists, and public administration specialists to historians, geophysicists and so on – are now involved in Wadden-related research. The Wadden Academy believes that it is important for disciplines to work together now. New scientific breakthroughs must encourage and guarantee that we preserve and properly manage the Wadden Sea as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

For all these reasons, the Wadden Academy issued an open call for applications for the first five appointments to The Young Wadden Academy. We received a total of ten applications. At its fifteen April meeting, the Board made an initial selection and subsequently invited seven candidates for an interview with the selection committee, consisting of Professor Jouke van Dijk (chairman of the Board of the Wadden Academy), Professor Suzanne Hulscher (chairwoman of the Wadden Academy's Research Advisory Council) and Klaas Deen, Wadden Academy executive secretary.

The selection committee decided to submit the names of five candidates to the Supervisory Board for appointment to the Young Wadden Academy. Each of the candidates is not only an excellent researcher, but also willing and able to look

beyond the boundaries of their own discipline. The five candidates cover the Wadden Academy's entire spectrum of interests. The Supervisory Board is confident that the appointment of these five candidates will get The Young Wadden Academy off to a flying start.

I will now introduce the five members of The Young Wadden Academy in alphabetical order. Once I have introduced them all, I would like them to come up to the stage to receive your standing ovation, and for a group photograph.

### **1. Dr Bas Borsje, University of Twente**

Bas has an MSc in Civil Engineering (*cum laude*) and a PhD for his research at the interface of ecology and sediment transport (*cum laude*). He has also received a prestigious VENI grant for designing nature-friendly floodplains as an innovative coastal defence measure. Bas combines three jobs: he is an assistant professor at the University of Twente, a researcher at Deltares, and an expert at Boskalis. Right now he is involved in innovative dike reinforcement projects along the Frisian coast (POV Waddenzeedijken) and in planned mega sand suppletion measures in the outer delta of the Wadden Islands (Kustgenese2). As an expert in hydraulics and climate change, he is working closely on these projects with ecologists, policymakers, physical geographers and dozens of users, site managers and interest groups.

## **2. Dr Eelke Folmer, Royal Netherlands Institute for Sea Research**

After studying biology and majoring in ecology, Eelke did his PhD research at the University of Groningen in the Animal Ecology group. His research concerned the behavioural ecology of shorebirds in the Wadden Sea, the Banc d'Arguin in Mauritania, and in Roebuck Bay, Australia. After he received his PhD, he worked as a post-doctoral researcher for the Royal Netherlands Institute for Sea Research and as an independent researcher with Ecospace. Eelke conducts both basic and applied research on current ecological problems in the Wadden Sea. He combines fieldwork with mathematical, statistical and GIS methods and collaborates with scientists in other disciplines.

## **3. Dr Stefan Hartman, Stenden University of Applied Sciences**

Stefan recently completed his PhD in spatial planning and environment. In his research, he studies the tension between preserving and developing the environment and the quest for balance and synergy. In terms of theory, he is interested in how we can build the adaptive capacity and resilience of socio-ecological systems. As a senior researcher for the European Tourism Futures Institute (ETFI), Stefan is involved in various projects in the Wadden Sea Region and in studies of relevance to that region, either as a project coordinator or as a researcher. He is also linked to the Wadden Sea Region as a senior lecturer at the School of Leisure & Tourism,

Stenden University of Applied Sciences, for example in student projects, graduation research and in research assignments for the Master's in International Leisure & Tourism Studies.

#### **4. Dr Nora Mehnen, University of Oldenburg**

Nora received her PhD in cultural geography from the University of Groningen in 2013. From 2013 to 2015, she was a post-doctoral researcher at the same university, where she participated in the WaLTER project, focusing on the socio-economic aspects of the trilateral Wadden Sea Region. Nora is currently working at the University of Oldenburg, where she has just launched a three-year project on population decline in four tourist communities in the German part of the Wadden Sea Region. She is also interested in protected areas, rural development and regional economy. Thanks to her German background, she is excellently placed to take the lead in achieving The Young Wadden Academy's trilateral ambitions.

#### **5. Dr Mans Schepers, University of Groningen**

Mans received his PhD in 2014, graduating *cum laude* with his research on vegetation reconstruction along the coast of the northern Netherlands, in particular in the salt marshes surrounding the terps in Groningen and Friesland. In his current research project, made possible by a VENI grant from the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research, he is studying how terp inhabitants managed to grow crops in the exposed salt marshes. His project involves experimental crop cultivation in the northern Frisian mud flats, in cooperation

with It Fryske Gea and ecologists from the University of Groningen. In his research, Mans explores the interface between people and the natural environment. That relationship is an extremely close one in the Netherlands, especially in the Wadden Sea Region. To understand the Wadden Sea Region, then, we must study both human beings and nature. We can only do that by working together.