

EXECUTIVE BOARD

OMNIA DIALOGUE CENTRE OPENS

Louise Fresco says farewell

On 1 June, Louise Fresco, President of the Executive Board, opened the new dialogue centre Omnia, on the Wageningen campus, as part of her farewell ceremony. She was personally involved in the plans for this new building, which will be a centre for dialogue on issues affecting society in the agri-food sector and the life sciences.

When she took on the job eight years ago, Fresco stressed the importance of making connections, not just between different scientific fields but also with a wide range of groups in society. Dialogue leads to better scientific insights that are of genuine value to society at large, said Fresco in 2014.

Omnia is intended above all to facilitate contacts and the exchange of knowledge. The new building has a café and restaurant for informal encounters and will host symposiums, conferences, workshops, debates and press conferences. Academic ceremonies such as PhD defences and inaugurations will also be held here from now on, rather than the Aula (see also page 47).

Two 'dialogue benches' have been installed at the entrance to Omnia. They were designed by metal artist Arthur Dreissen and are a gift on behalf of all WUR staff. The benches are intended to encourage people to spend a moment discussing their ideas.

The dialogue centre is surrounded by a wet nature garden, designed to increase biodiversity on the Wageningen campus. Fresco received two honours during her farewell event in the new building. The minister for Education, Culture and



PHOTO GUY ACKERMANS

Minister Robbert Dijkgraaf bestows the royal honour on Louise Fresco.

Science Robbert Dijkgraaf announced that she has been appointed a Commander of the Order of the Netherlands Lion. 'WUR's position in society has become stronger and it has been more visible in the public debate under her leadership,' said Dijkgraaf.

Fresco also received the Norman E. Borlaug Medallion from Barbara Stinson, the chair of the World Food Prize Foundation. This medallion was awarded

in 'recognition for the exceptional innovations in life sciences research by Wageningen University & Research and the enormous impact of Louise Fresco's concern for global food security,' said Stinson. 'Few leaders and higher education institutions have meant so much for healthy, robust, sustainable food systems.'

Louise Fresco was succeeded by Sjoukje Heimovaara on 1 July (see also page 16).



PHOTO PETRA APPELHOF

LOUISE O. FRESCO FUND

To mark her departure as President, WUR has set up the Louise O. Fresco Fund. The fund will support students who get into financial difficulties through no fault of their own. University-educated refugees who are waiting for a residence permit will also get support that will allow them to take courses at WUR. This will let them keep their knowledge up to date and also feel like a student or researcher again rather than just an asylum seeker. Donations have been made to the fund by Louise Fresco herself, by WUR, by employees and alumni and by various external business relations. The fund has now reached 100,000 euros. *Info: www.wur.eu/Louise-O-Fresco-Fund*