

Keynote Jet Bussemaker – #EIE2021

The Odd Couple? On the Relationships between Science, Policy and Politics

The keynote

In this keynote, I will focus on the relationship between science and policymaking/politics. Both worlds start from different paradigms and dynamics. Where science is based upon curiosity, doubt and “slow” questions, politics and policymaking require clear opinions, uniform answers and rapid decision making. Despite these differences, both worlds need each other. To take proper decisions, a minister requires knowledge about the background of a problem, the alternative interventions and their possible societal impact. Science on the other hand needs (policy) frameworks and legitimization in order to thrive and be regarded as meaningful.

I will explore this interrelation and elaborate on the impact of science on key issues in society. How can we use scientific knowledge in the best possible way to enable evidence-based decision making, whether in health or social care, education or for the benefit of our environment? What does this demand from scientists – in terms of, e.g., defining problems, collaborating with non-scientific partners, conducting research and creating feedback loops?

I will argue that while there may be different pathways leading to meaningful impact, for a pathway to be successful, it should build on a shared desire for genuine collaboration, respect for complexity, acceptance of uncertainty and a sincere learning attitude.

About Dr Jet Bussemaker

Dr Jet Bussemaker is professor of policy, science and societal impact, in particular in health care, at Leiden University Medical Centre and the Faculty of Governance and Global Affairs at Leiden University. She obtained her PhD (1993) in Political Science at the University of Amsterdam and worked at this University and the VU Amsterdam as researcher and lecturer. In 1997, she was visiting fellow at the Centre for European Studies at Harvard University. Between 2011 and 2012, she served as the Provost of the University of Applied Science in Amsterdam and was a member of the Executive Board of the University of Amsterdam. Dr Bussemaker is also a former Dutch politician. She served as Minister of Education, Culture and Science (2012-2017), Junior Minister of Public Health, Welfare and Sports (2007-2010) and was a member of the Dutch parliament for the Dutch Labour Party for almost ten years.

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