

Preface

There is a Japanese proverb: “Beginning is easy, continuing hard”. The central theme of this book may be that continuing is nevertheless both necessary and rewarding. *Partners in the Polder* is about the future of the life sciences in the Netherlands and the of role public-private partnerships (PPPs). Both are off to a good start. The life sciences are already impacting the food, health, chemicals & energy and agricultural sectors. Life sciences PPPs have been set up and are starting to produce results. Their resources, however, are temporal and will end in the short to medium term. Continuing efforts into a future where the life sciences deliver on their promise will be long and hard work – but it will be worth it.

Likewise, conceiving this book was relatively easy – writing it was not. The life sciences are not a single, coherent field. Rather, the life sciences are a knowledge base that impacts industry sectors which differ in dynamics, size and their application of that base. It is quite something that so many representatives from such diverse parts of the life sciences have come together to produce a joint vision of the future that also does justice to their individual perspectives. I am grateful for their hard work and valuable contributions and proud of the result. It gives me great pleasure to present and introduce the finished product of this unique collaboration.

There are a few things you should keep in mind when reading this book. For one, the life sciences often are and need to be combined with other fields, like ICT, nanotechnology, medical technology and chemistry, to find application and deliver results. Considering each of these in their entirety would take not one but several books. We limit our focus to the life sciences themselves. Also, life sciences innovation is not synonymous with public-private partnership. PPPs are but one means of organizing innovation and can only play a valuable role if they are part of a larger

innovation system. They do not obviate the need for basic research in academia. On the contrary, they underline its continued importance. Nor can PPPs take the place of industrial R&D in developing new products, processes and services. The choice to focus on PPPs here was made because they are one way to address the difficult task of translating our world-class knowledge base into practical applications, and because they are emblematic of the emerging open innovation paradigm. This book tries to provide the broader context but cannot go into the same detail everywhere.

Partners in the Polder is a book in two parts. Part I is called Unity, and presents the field’s joint vision of the future of the life sciences in the Netherlands, and the past, present and future role of public-private partnerships. Part II, Diversity, looks at (the future of) the life sciences and PPPs from the perspectives of the sectors involved (food, health, chemicals & energy and agriculture) and the disciplines linking them (technology, education, valorization and social aspects). The two parts can be read separately, but together illustrate a field united in diversity. Each chapter in Part II can be read on its own.

We hope that you enjoy reading *Partners in the Polder* as much as we enjoyed writing it. The book is written for policymakers, the life sciences field and the general public. We hope this book will help you to enable, drive and benefit from life sciences innovation. We invite you to reflect on these pages, and to join the discussion and continue the work that has begun.

On behalf of the Task Force Life Sciences and the authors,

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