

Tentative NFA Work Plan 2025-2028

Aims

The NIAS Fellows' Association seeks to:

- cherish the shared memory and experience of a NIAS fellowship;
- inspire a community of support for blue sky research and for NIAS.

Organization

The NFA is overseen by a Board of 7; it is operated by this Board, together with Committees; it is supported by the NIAS staff for communication and for production of events at the NIAS premises. NFA Committees work regionally (see Program below), or thematically (such as towards crowd funding, benchmarking with other Fellows Associations, strategy development, ...)

2025-2028 targets

In 2025-2028 the NFA strategizes towards:

- more new members registering per annum;
- funding an NFA blue sky fellowship at NIAS.

Crowd-funding

As anti-democratic populism holds sway in Europe and beyond, and neoliberalist targets dominate academic practices worldwide, the “blue sky” is under pressure. “Curiosity-driven” research, “slow science”, academic freedom, and critical communities of exchange are all not self-evident characteristics of present-day scholarship. At NIAS this is translating into more and more co-sponsored fellowships, for which NIAS is very grateful, but that at the same time come with thematic strings attached. Thus, the more partners NIAS secures for reasons of institutional continuity, the less room it has left for the Open Call that invites autonomously drafted proposals – that are in turn the core business of an IAS.

Given this, the NFA aims to work towards funding a full-year blue sky fellowship in the name of the NIAS Fellows Association, by crowd-funding among our members, and increasing their numbers.

More members

Each of the recent academic years, the NFA welcomed some 20 new members, whereas NIAS hosts some 50 new fellows per annum (plus a variety of guests during semester and in the summer). From 2025, the NFA strives to welcome at least 40 new members per annum. Towards this, NIAS and the NFA will also investigate the legal possibility (under Dutch law) of changing the opting-in policy for membership into an opting-out policy (applicable to new cohorts only).

The NFA currently has around 1,300 members, and seeks to increase its membership as follows:

- 2025: 1,345
- 2026: 1,390
- 2027: 1,435
- 2028: 1,480

Additional numbers

The NFA furthermore aims to increase its one-time membership fee to €100,- for a lifetime.

The integral costs of a full-year fellowship are € 100,000.- per annum. NIAS cannot accept funds for a one-off fellowship, but it will be very grateful for a (growing) contribution of alumni to a continuous NFA fellowship. Proposed are the following funding targets:

- 2025: € 25,000.-
- 2026: € 45,000.-
- 2027: € 70,000.-
- 2028: € 100,000.-

If, as per 2028, each year 200 alumni will donate € 500.- each, the NFA will be able to fund its fellowship in full. But.

Costs of operation

The operation of the NFA will need funding too. 45 new members per annum will yield € 4,500.-. Let's say this covers out of pocket costs for events. Next to this, however, the maintenance of the NFA community and its engagement in the NFA aims, requires personnel investments, which in turn request an annual budget of € 15,000.-. NIAS is enthusiastically ready to cover 50% of these costs until 2028, considering it their responsibility for the essay of involving the NIAS alumni in one solution for the predicament of the blue sky. The other 50% would have to be added to the financial targets listed above. This means that for 2025-2028 15 more members would be needed annually to pledge € 500.- each.

Program

In 2025-2028 the NFA will realize an inspirational annual program for members.

Spring: a hybrid regional event with a live guest speaker on site, next to hybrid thematic meetings on NFA policies and strategies; publication of the crow-funding yield of the previous year

June: NFA Day (Uhlenbeck Lecture, next to the hybrid annual meeting of the Association's members: evaluation of the realization of the past academic year, and strategizing for the next)

Summer: Alumni Stays at NIAS, Amsterdam (NIAS opens its Fellows' House and Offices for a three-weeks stay to a subsidized, but still supportive rate)

September: Opening of the NIAS Academic Year (advocacy program on Academic Freedoms, staging a Current NIAS Fellow and an Alumnus/a/x)

Fall: a hybrid regional event with a live guest speaker on site, next to hybrid thematic meetings on NFA policies and strategies

New Year's: a complimentary copy of the latest volume in the NIAS Book Series is sent to all NFA members who have made a donation in the past year