

## **Jury Report, Casimir award for teaching excellence, 2008**

Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences (FSW), University of Leiden.

The jury consisted of the following members:

Dr. H.H. Tillema, Institute of Pedagogical Sciences (Chair); Dr. B.A. Barendregt, Institute of Cultural Anthropology and Development Sociology; V.J. Capitein, student, Political Science; J.A. Post, student Public Administration; C.E.M. van Zijderveld, student, Psychology.

The Faculty administration established the Casimir Award committee in November 2008. The committee met in full twice. The candidates nominated by the separate institutes of the Faculty were evaluated according to the ten criteria established by the Faculty administration. The jury received a short-list of five candidates. After extensive deliberation, the jury decided to propose Dr. J.G. Erk from the Department of Political Science as the eventual candidate for the 2008 Casimir Award. The following aspects played an essential role in the evaluation:

Students are very enthusiastic over the education given by Jan Erk in the bachelor programme in Leiden and The Hague campus, as well as in the masters' programme in Political Science. He has an enormous amount of readily dispensable knowledge, not only over institutional systems but also over culture and history, which he disseminates enthusiastically in his lectures. As a result, by the second or third lecture international comparison becomes one of the most normal things in the world for students. He knows how to ignite the curiosity of students through a lot of examples which illustrate his lectures and references to literature, film and art. He encourages students to first seek out things on their own, but he is always available to discuss the results. Teaching evaluations give the utmost positive picture of this teacher.

Jan Erk stimulates the active involvement of his students both inside and outside classroom teaching. This finds expression in the bachelor project where students have to write their bachelor theses, within the thesis seminar where masters' programme students work on their theses. He knows how to drag out the best from students. This has been proven, among others, by the fact that he was the first supervisor of the student who was awarded with the Faculty best thesis award last year. He also incorporates his students as junior researchers into his own research. Among others, this has led to a student co-authoring with the teacher a publication in an international scientific journal.

What is noticeable is that Jan Erk makes his lectures available as podcasts. He thus makes use of the new possibilities of teaching, and in this way, becomes continuously 'available' for students.

He has plentiful international experience as he has previously worked in Budapest, Louvain and Montréal. He uses this international orientation in order to help students see the science of politics as a predominantly international academic activity. He gives his lectures in English.

The union of Political Science students in Leiden (SPIL) is also very enthusiastic about the work of Jan Erk. For example, he has given a guest lecture for their first-year students at their study retreat. On hand were all sorts of historical posters, anecdotes and critical questions to introduce incoming students to political themes. Students praise the enthusiasm he brings to the fore in the lecture room. He is always in a good mood and ready to help students, also before and after lectures.

Jan Erk convincingly fulfils the relevant criteria for the presentation of the Casimir award. He is a worthy candidate for the Faculty of Social Sciences teaching award.

Leiden, 6 January 2009  
H.H. Tillema, Chair