

Word from the Executive Director

Looking back at twenty years of ILSI Europe, one is tempted to evoke a metaphor to describe the development stage of the Institute in 2006. Choosing the human life cycle allows us to conclude that ILSI Europe has successfully concluded puberty and is heading for an even more productive adulthood. As a scientific institute, we are optimistic about the abilities of science to add even more years to life and life to years, so we look forward to productive senior years!

In human history, we have used many approaches as the basis for decision-making. For lack of predictive value, the casting of stones, looking at the heavens, and reading tea leaves have fallen out of grace. Throughout the ages, science has emerged as the best predictor of outcome, and therefore the most solid foundation to build policy on. Science and courage have shown us the way out of the cave, and our mission to improve public health by the advancement of science builds on that heritage.

We pursue our mission by facilitating dialogue between scientists from academia, government and industry in a neutral forum. Scientific data relevant to public health policies are critically reviewed, frameworks for risk and benefit assessment are developed and the results are published and widely disseminated. Extensive peer review ensures high quality and credibility of our work. Our participation in the worldwide ILSI network provides global amplification of our output.

In Europe, especially in the West, we are fortunate to enjoy a food supply of a quality and quantity that compares favourably with most other regions of the world. Yet we face considerable challenges. For instance, the increasing sensitivity of analytical techniques drives the identification of low concentrations of undesired substances in our food and other products we use. These discoveries require considerable investment in risk characterisation, including development of new risk assessment methods and strategies to reduce exposure.

Another example is the interaction of diet with modern lifestyle. Having been selected for energy efficiency during millions of years in an environment that combined an unstable food supply with strenuous physical activity, the human body is ill-adapted to life in industrialised societies where food is abundant and physical exertion no longer required or even inhibited by jobs, education and choice of recreational activity. The resulting rise in obesity and related non-communicable diseases can only be reversed by a concerted and sustained effort by all stakeholders.

Pursuing our mission is only possible thanks to the continuous support of our members, the outstanding intellectual contributions of our scientific collaborators, and the recognition of our work by governmental and supranational organisations in creating their policies. In addition, I'd like to express my gratitude to the Board of Directors for their trust and guidance, to the Scientific Advisory Committee and Publication Committee for their advice, and to my staff for their hard work, professionalism and dedication to quality.

Created to celebrate our 20th anniversary, this brochure provides an overview of our work and history. Reflecting on the success over the last 20 years, ILSI Europe looks forward to extending its successful model for stakeholder dialogue into its third decade.



Dr. Nico van Belzen
Executive Director
ILSI Europe

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nico van Belzen". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish at the end.