



A collective of specialised investigative
journalists

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Report on 2020

Foreword

Stichting De Onderzoeksredactie (The Investigative Desk Foundation) was established on 16 November 2018.¹ The actual start was in March 2019, thanks to funding from the Dutch Journalism Fund (Stimuleringsfonds voor de Journalistiek). Other funders joined them later.

Because of its international ambitions, De Onderzoeksredactie has used the English name The Investigative Desk since the beginning of 2020. It sees itself as a collective for specialised and cross-border investigative journalism focusing on select areas of interest and publishes its findings in existing media as much as possible. It focuses mainly (but not exclusively) on five major areas: Defence & Security, Energy & Climate, Pharma & Healthcare, Tobacco and Food & Alcohol.

At the start, The Investigative Desk thought it would need three years to achieve sufficient scale, journalistic quality and sustainability. It defined three phases:

- 2019: Start-up, recruitment of a permanent core of freelancers for the core subjects, creation of the first research files.
- 2020: anchor specializations, set up (inter)national cooperation, work towards a sustainable financial basis, (co)-develop a training and work programme.
- 2021: Grow into an international centre and platform for investigative journalism in our specialisations.

As the attached report and the financial report show, the second phase - despite the COVID-19 crisis - went very well, in my opinion. We are now five months into the third, crucial phase on the road to a sustainable organisation and I am optimistic that we will also achieve that.

Marcel Metze

Editor-in-chief and director
14 June 2021

¹ An earlier Stichting De Onderzoeksredactie existed between 2014 and 2016, set up by Marcel Metze and De Groene Amsterdammer. After this cooperation had ended in the summer of 2015, this foundation continued under a different name. The current Stichting De Onderzoeksredactie is therefore legally new.

Report

Executive summary

The Investigative Desk was very productive in 2020. We started around thirty investigations. Half of them resulted in publications, most of the others reached that stage in the first half of 2021. We use our resources efficiently: only 4 to 5 per cent of our investments in investigation projects do not lead to publication. Many productions received wide media coverage. For more details see the section 'Publications' below.

Our goals, as formulated in the 2020 policy plan, were as follows:

- anchoring the specializations
- developing (inter)national partnerships
- providing a sustainable basis
- looking for our own publishing format and new revenue models
- (co)-developing a training and work programme with an emphasis on specialization and internationalisation

Due to the COVID-19 crisis, we have not been able to make as much progress as we had hoped. We have therefore extended our timetable for these targets to two years, i.e., 2020-2021.

What was achieved in 2020? You can find the details below and also in the appendix 'Annual Review', but in a nutshell, it comes down to this:

We have made significant progress on all fronts. Our budget has doubled, our core funding broadened, our income from project grants and honorariums increased, we built up a nice mix of national publishing partners and - together with these partners - we produced several interesting multimedia productions.

We are especially proud of our international collaborations with The British Medical Journal (BMJ), Le Monde and - in several projects - with journalists in Belgium, Germany, France, Greece, Italy, Mali, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland. In the first half of 2021, the number of international collaborations continued to increase. You can read more about this in our 2021 H2 newsletter, which will be published in July 2021.

In 2020, we also cooperated with two scientific institutes: IVO Research Institute and the University of Bath (UK).

Organisation

We were able to continue using our workspaces at De Coöperatie, with the exception of the March-May lockdown period. In the following months, we were often virtually the only users and maintaining sufficient social distance was therefore not a problem. After a staff member contracted an infection outside work in summer 2020, we established our own protocol, according to which staff members would not visit De Coöperatie for at least ten days if a housemate tested positive or if they themselves had been in a high-risk situation. This has worked well and there have been no indications of mutual contamination.

In the course of the year, the need arose for better streamlining the production process and supervision of projects. This was partly because only two of the five themes had their own 'desk leaders', so in practice these tasks fell too heavily on the editor-in-chief. At the end of the year, we decided to form a 'Triangle' with the editor-in-chief and two senior editors. They are now jointly responsible for:

- managing the focus areas (we will drop the term 'desk')
- assessing action plans and deciding whether we should proceed with the proposed projects
- putting together the project teams
- supervision (gap sessions, construction sessions, proofreading drafts, etc.)
- monitoring the projects, up to and including the publication stage

The Triangle has formulated standard criteria for the scope and duration of projects.

Editorial staff

The number of employees grew slightly and by the end of 2020, the organisation employed sixteen people: eight permanent (freelance) employees, one employee in (temporary) employment and seven freelance employees. One employee does not only do journalistic work, but also practical tasks (maintaining the diary, project list, website, etc.).

Two employees left, one because of physical problems and one because he wanted to gain some newspaper experience. This was offset by the arrival of an award-winning, more experienced duo of investigative journalists.

As announced in the policy plan, we were able to carry out the increasing number of projects - in spite of the modest staff growth - by increasing the number of hours worked by existing employees. As anticipated, this has resulted in a doubling of editorial costs.

We did not carry out the plan to recruit a new employee for support tasks such as administration, final editing, marketing (press releases, website, social media), English-language editing and fundraising. To cope with the increasing workload in these tasks, we did the following:

- We increased the hours of the employee who was already doing this.
- For quick translations of summaries, research plans etc. we deployed a regular external translator (EN-NL and NL-EN).
- The editors expressed a desire to divide the more content-related supportive tasks (concerning final editing, press releases and social media) among the editors themselves, partly to strengthen the collective mindset. We started doing this in May 2021.

All that remains is the search for purely administrative assistance.

Diversity

The diversity among our editorial staff is not quite what we would like it to be. Of the sixteen editors and staff members, only two were women at the end of 2020. That was reason enough to give this issue a really high priority. We therefore recruited two new staff members - both female - in the first months of 2021. Mainly female candidates applied for the new edition of the Investigative Lab, which started in spring 2021. We hired three of them. Depending on how well they do, one or more of them may move to our permanent team.

Website

In spring 2020, we launched our new logo and website. Initially, we wanted to keep the site exclusively in English, but later in the year we made it bilingual to increase its visibility to Dutch sponsors and publishing partners.

The site is still basic at present, but as our number of publications increases, the need for a more professional site slowly begins to emerge. We will start preparations for this towards the end of 2021.

Projects

In 2020, we worked on almost thirty projects across all specializations. These are only projects that have reached the preliminary research stage. The minor orientations on tips and ideas that have not yet reached maturity are not included in this number.

Ten projects resulted in publications in 2020. You can find more details in the annual review in the appendix. Four projects were discontinued: two after only a short time, because they turned out to have too little journalistic relevance, two because of disappointing results. Our production process - with several go/no-go decision moments - means that only a relatively small amount of money is involved. A further nine projects have been/will be published in 2021. Four of the studies launched in 2020 are still ongoing at the time of writing.

Focus area Defence & Security

This is not an easy area of investigation, partly due to the inaccessibility of the organisations and companies involved. OSIFE's start-up funding, granted in June 2019, expired at the end of 2020. OSF focused all funding on the COVID-19 crisis in the course of 2020 and could not commit any follow-up as yet. Thanks to increased funding from the Dutch Journalism Fund and project subsidies, we were still able to continue work in this important focus area.

The investigation into procurement by the Dutch Ministry of Defence for supplies and services in mission areas, which started in late 2019, continued throughout the year. One finding led to a separate sub-investigation into a specific problem concerning the UN mission in Mali, in which Dutch soldiers also took part until 2019. This spin-off led to a collaboration with Mo Magazine (Belgium) and Le Monde and to a publication in Le Monde Afrique. A Dutch publication (in NRC) will follow in 2021.

Our investigation into the European Defence Fund lobby was delayed by delays in the relevant decision-making process.

We started a new investigation into the money flows of arms manufacturers that pass through the Netherlands.

Focus area Energy & Climate

We carried out three investigations within this focus area. The first was an investigation that started in 2019 - in collaboration with Follow The Money (FTM) - into the influence of the gas industry on research into 'sustainable energy' at the University of Groningen and Hanze University of Applied Sciences, Groningen. The resulting article was published on 11 January 2020.

This project led to a follow-up investigation into Gazprom's economic and political presence in the Netherlands and to two articles on the subject, both published in early 2021.

Focus area Pharma & Healthcare

We saw our major research on orphan drugs published in both The British Medical Journal and the Dutch Journal of Medicine (Nederlands Tijdschrift voor Geneeskunde). In line with the programme as formulated in our policy plan, we continued to work on investigative projects on value-based pricing (one of the main mechanisms behind the upward trend in prices of orphan medicines), the establishment of a financial database on the pharmaceutical industry, the continuing education of specialists, the position of women in clinical trials, the EMA procedures for the authorisation of new medicines and the Dutch and EU policy on combating COVID-19.

Focus area Food & Alcohol

In 2020, an investigation was carried out in this focus area into the influence of Unilever on the public-private research of Wageningen University & Research. This was published in December (see publications) and led to a follow-up study on FrieslandCampina's influence on livestock research at the same university (published in 2021).

Focus area Tobacco

Our work in this area focused on investigating tax avoidance (a collaboration with the University of Bath), tobacco marketing in supermarkets, influencer marketing of heated-tobacco and vaping products, the regulatory apparatus (Netherlands Food and Consumer Product Safety Authority or NVWA) and a reconstruction of the lobbying concerning the anti-smoking measures in the National Prevention Agreement (a collaboration with the IVO Research Institute). Several of the resulting publications had a significant impact (see impact section).

Special project on COVID-19

Together with De Coöperatie, we set up a project called 'Corona, Internet en Grondrechten' (COVID-19, the Internet and Fundamental Rights), for which we obtained financial support from the SIDN Fund and the Democracy & Media Foundation. The investigation started in November 2020 and has a regional, national and international component. The first publication appeared in May 2021.

Collaborations

National:

- o In 2020, we steadily worked on strengthening our network of regular collaborative partners. That network now consists of Argos (radio and online), Follow the Money (investigative journalism platform, online), NRC Handelsblad (daily newspaper, paper and online), Vrij Nederland (monthly magazine, paper

and online) and the Dutch Journal of Medicine (scientific journal, paper and online).

- In November 2020, we completed an investigation into the tobacco lobby with regard to the implementation of the National Prevention Agreement. IVO Research Institute provides the scientific part, The Investigative Desk the investigative journalistic part with the corresponding journalistic publications. This project was funded by a scientific grant from several health funds. The cooperation went so well that IVO invited us for another project in early 2021.
- In October, NRC Handelsblad published our major investigation into tax avoidance by the tobacco industry (see publications overview).
- The cooperation with Follow the Money became structural in 2020, partly because FTM invited us to make more contributions in particular regarding the pharmaceutical industry.
- Together with De Coöperatie we set up the 'Corona, Internet en Grondrechten' (COVID-19, the Internet and Fundamental Rights) project (see above, special project).

International:

- Our cooperation with The BMJ has started gradually over the course of 2020 and early 2021. Our research into orphan medicines was followed by a publication on remdesivir as part of the international collaborative project 'Behind the Pledge', in which we participated. Furthermore, in spring 2021, The BMJ published a co-production of Le Monde and The Investigative Desk on conflicts of interest of scientists in the reduced-risk movement (advocates of e-cigarettes and heated tobacco products).
- A very fruitful collaboration with Le Monde started in 2020:
 - The project on waste incineration of the MINUSMA mission in Mali, with correspondent Paul Lorgerie and Italian photographer Michele Cattani, resulted in an article in Le Monde Afrique.
 - The nicotine promotion in COVID-19 times with editor Stéphane Horel, resulted in articles in Le Monde and on Argos (Dutch platform for investigative journalism).
 - The Foundation for a Smoke-Free World project (an umbrella organisation of tobacco manufacturer Philip Morris) resulting in a publication in Le Monde, Knack (Belgium) and on FTM.
 - This collaboration continued in 2021 and expanded to other areas. There are three new projects in the pipeline, one of which has already led to publication at the time of writing.
 - It will also be expanded in 2021 to include a project by The Investigative Desk, Le Monde and the Bureau of Investigative Journalism (UK).
- The aforementioned publication in Knack quickly led to increased collaboration with this influential Belgian weekly, which has a circulation of approximately 100,000 copies. We agreed on two new publications in early 2021.
- We already mentioned the Behind the Pledge project, an international study scrutinising the spending of COVID-19 funds in Europe. It involved a team of journalists from Denmark, Germany, France, Italy, the Netherlands and Switzerland. The publications, many of them in major media (see overview), reached millions of people and thus made a fine contribution to our international visibility. The team is considering new projects for 2021.

- o The 'Corona, Internet en Grondrechten' (COVID-19, the Internet and Fundamental Rights) project led to cooperation with Die Zeit (via a freelance collaborator), Le Monde, the Belgian broadcaster VRT. For the Dutch publication, we worked together with NOS.nl, the website of the Dutch Broadcasting Foundation, which specialises in news and sports programmes for Dutch public television channels and public radio services.

Impact:

Collaborations and publication on as wide a scale as possible is The Investigative Desk's main method of achieving social impact. As the publication overview and the section on collaboration above show, we are very successful in doing so. Several of our publications reached an audience of millions, not only in the Netherlands but also in other European countries.

Political impact

Dutch House of Representatives:

- Questions about the influence of gas companies on research into sustainable energy in Groningen
- Questions about influencer marketing
- Request for a response from the government to our reporting on tax evasion by tobacco companies (followed by a response from the relevant state secretary)
- Questions on the tobacco lobby via the VVD (People's Party for Freedom and Democracy) at the time of the National Prevention Agreement

As a result of our reports on stealth marketing, State Secretary Blokhuis of Health, Welfare and Sport promised to expand the NVWA (Netherlands Food and Consumer Product Safety Authority).

Following our coverage of payments from tobacco manufacturers to supermarkets for prominent shelf space, the NVWA imposed fines.

Our coverage of orphan medicines in The BMJ also serves as a basis for the development of a new strategy by the International Association of Mutual Benefit Societies (AIM), an umbrella organisation of not-for-profit health insurers in Europe, Latin America and Africa and the Middle East.

Trainee(s) and the Investigative Lab

During the year, The Investigative Desk supervised two individual trainees and two groups of trainees from the School voor de Journalistiek (School of Journalism) in Utrecht, the Netherlands.

At the end of 2020, we decided to suspend the cooperation with the School of Journalism, as we do not have the ability to select the trainees offered.

In 2020, we supervised two rounds of the Investigative Lab (February - June and November 2020 - April 2021). The first group consisted of five participants and investigated the influence of Unilever on the public-private research of Wageningen University & Research. This article was published in December 2020. The second group consisted of three participants and investigated the monitoring of homeworkers through the software used. This investigation ran until April 2021 and the results will be published in June 2021.

In the autumn of 2020, the Dutch Journalism Fund granted us a subsidy for two more rounds of the Investigative Lab in 2021. This subsidy increases by 42% to €16,800 (The Investigative Desk's share). By increasing the course fee, the total budget for the Investigative Lab increases by 50% to €24,700.

The Investigative Lab also wants to help participants fund their research. They appear to be generally successful in obtaining training and project grants, and thus recouping at least part of their investment (in time and course fees).

Funding and administration

For 2020-2021, we received a structural contribution from the KWF Dutch Cancer Society to the amount of €262,130 (excluding VAT on part of the fees and expenses), i.e., €131,065 per year. This contribution is for our investigation into the tobacco industry. KWF has no influence on the choice of specific projects, on the way we conduct our investigations, and on the manner and timing of publication. An evaluation will take place in mid-2021, which, if positive, will lead to a further allocation of €65,532 for the period January-June 2022.

The Dutch Journalism Fund granted us a subsidy of €85,132.

The Open Society Foundations approved our request for an extension of the term of its contribution, so that we had €36,000 at our disposal. This was earmarked for investigations in our focus areas of Defence & Security and Pharma & Healthcare. The Open Society Foundations has no influence on the choice of specific projects, on the way we conduct our investigations, and on the manner and timing of publication.

The University of Bath supported our investigation into tax evasion by the tobacco industry with a total of €35,000 of which €22,500 was spent in 2020.

The SIDN Fund provided financial support to De Coöperatie and The Investigative Desk for the 'COVID-19, the Internet and Fundamental Rights' project. Our share amounts to €34,500, of which €13,800 has been paid out in 2020. The Democracy & Media Foundation awarded a grant for part of this project, The Investigative Desk's share of this amounts to €26,255 (to be spent in 2021).

We ended 2020 with a total income of €365,000, which represents a doubling compared to 2019. The balance sheet total and the reserve also doubled. A further breakdown can be found in our Annual Report.

The Annual Report illustrates the 'leverage effect', whereby we use structural funding and reserves for our preliminary investigations and acquire project grants on the basis of those preliminary investigations. This leverage is stronger in practice than the report suggests. Part of the acquired subsidies is in fact paid out to individual editors and is therefore not a formal part of the annual accounts of Stichting De Onderzoeksredactie. In 2020, this involved the awarding of approximately €56,000 in individual grants, of which approximately €16,000 was actually spent in 2020. These can actually be seen as additional project budgets.

Furthermore, there is an additional project budget 'in kind', consisting of the personnel contribution of our cooperation partners. They sometimes not only arrange for the publication, but also participate in the investigation. We conducted such investigation collaborations with Follow the Money, Argos and Le Monde.

Sometimes, our partners also put a lot of energy into enriching our publications in the form of podcasts, audio versions, animations and short videos. It is not possible to capitalise this investment, but the amounts involved are considerable.

For the development of our revenue model, it is important to look at the ratio of core funding - project funding - own income. In 2020, this was by and large:

- core funding: €195,000 (50%)
- project funding: €93,000 (plus individual project grants: €16,500) (30%)
- own income: €76,000 (20%)

In the previous management report, we wrote about the administrative complexity of working with multiple funding sources, some of which are earmarked for particular focus areas and also apply different rates in their accountability requirements. The problems described have all been resolved and the Dutch Journalism Fund has approved our final accounts for 2019.

Annual Review 2020

General

January

Funding for our investigation into the tobacco industry receives a boost from three sources: KWF (structural subsidy for 2.5 years), the University of Bath (co-financing of a large research project on tax evasion by the tobacco industry) and a subsidy from the European Journalism Fund (also for research on tax evasion).

We opted for a new logo depicting a fencer and a new illustration for the website showing a view from above of the investigative journalist's desk with a focus on the big, transnational business world (the Twitter version follows below).



February/March

COVID-19 led to some staff members falling ill and to the editorial staff working from home. Another effect was that our publishing partners focused almost entirely on the pandemic. We decided to continue with our ongoing investigations. This worked well, although some of the associated publications were delayed.

Our first Investigative Lab started on 6 February (in cooperation with De Coöperatie). A group of five participants investigated the close relations between Unilever and Wageningen University & Research. It had a slow start because of Covid-19. After a few weeks, the sessions had to be held online (which made team building with this young group more difficult). It was also more difficult to reach interlocutors and reports and visits to the university itself were not possible. Nevertheless, the group - with much effort and ingenuity - managed to bring the investigation to a successful conclusion. The result was published in Vrij Nederland in December.

May

From late May, the editors again met physically one day a week in the De Coöperatie building, which had ample room for social distancing and safe working.

August

We used our structural funding to make good plans, which then served as a basis for applying for project grants. This leverage was used to great effect in the second half of the year. We acquired four project grants in one month.

At the end of August, the leaders of the focus areas and the editor-in-chief held an 'away day' discussing the development of the organisation and the production process during a long walk in the Amsterdamse Bos.

September

Our employee Lucien Hordijk was invited to participate in an international investigation project Behind the Pledge in six countries into the agreements between governments and the pharmaceutical industry regarding the development of COVID-19 vaccines. This led to a series of publications in authoritative media in early 2021.

We acquired several more grants, including a substantial one from the SIDN Fund for the project 'Corona, Internet and Fundamental Rights', which we set up together with De Coöperatie.

October

The second round of the Investigative Lab started at the end of October with a subject that fitted in well with the project 'COVID-19, the Internet and Fundamental Rights'. The result of the investigation was published online on Vrij Nederland in June 2021.

After the publication of our investigation into tax evasion by the tobacco industry in NRC Handelsblad, tobacco manufacturer Philip Morris sent a letter to the NRC editors to question our independence. Editor-in-Chief Metzke and Chairman of the Supervisory Board Van den Bosch gave the NRC editors a detailed verbal explanation of how we ensure our independence.

For transparency purposes, we have included a detailed section on our funding and independence on our website. The cooperation with NRC Handelsblad will continue unabated.

December

For the Dutch part of our investigation project 'COVID-19, the Internet and Fundamental Rights', we have been awarded a substantial grant by the Democracy & Media Foundation.

We were also awarded two smaller project grants.

After the publication of our joint investigation with Argos and Le Monde into how some scientists with ties to the tobacco industry used COVID-19 to promote nicotine, one of them complained on social media and directly to the editors of Le Monde and Argos, and threatened with legal action. We received moral support from fellow organisations The Bureau of Investigative Journalism (UK) and OCCRP (Organised Crime and Corruption Reporting Programme, Central and Eastern Europe), which were also attacked on social media following critical articles on the tobacco industry.

Publications

For our articles, abstracts and links to publications, see www.onderzoeksredactie.nl (in Dutch only) and www.investigativedesk.com (in English).

January

Gasbedrijven domineren Gronings onderzoek naar 'duurzame' energie (Gas companies dominate Groningen's research into 'sustainable' energy) The research agenda of the New Energy Coalition, a public-private partnership in Groningen, the Netherlands, that aims to promote research into sustainable energy, appears to be strongly determined by gas companies.

Published on the investigative reporting web platform Follow the Money. Also published by ANP, NU.nl, RTV Noord, RTV Drenthe. Questions asked in the Provincial Council of Groningen.

English summary

February/March

Our collaborator Lucien Hordijk was nominated for De Loep (prize of the Dutch association of investigative journalists) for his article on the upward trend in prices of lutetium-octeoate (published in the Dutch Journal of Medicine in 2019). He was also nominated for the De Tegel prize in April. Unfortunately, he did not win either prize.

April

Our cooperation with the investigative journalism platform Argos resulted in a publication (radio and online) on stealth marketing by the tobacco industry, including a radio interview with State Secretary Paul Blokhuis. We revealed that the industry - in violation of the advertising and marketing ban - paid supermarkets for optimum visibility of its products. Reprinted in the Trouw newspaper and many other media. Questions were raised in Parliament; the NVWA (Netherlands Food and Consumer Product Safety Authority) started an investigation and issued fines.

That same month, we published - through Argos and Radio 1 - our research into the use of influencers by British American Tobacco (BAT). BAT uses social media such as Facebook and Instagram to promote its heated tobacco product Glo.

English version.

The Dutch Journal of Medicine published our article about the increasing shortages of cheap medicines and the plan to build an 'iron stock' (which is not gaining any traction).

May

The website of monthly magazine Vrij Nederland published our two-part article about the Netherlands Food and Consumer Product Safety Authority (NVWA). Part 1 deals with the (rare) inspections of the NVWA into violations of marketing and advertising bans by the tobacco industry. Part 2 shows how this industry fights the legal battle with the NVWA.

English summary.

July

The British Medical Journal and the Dutch Journal of Medicine published our major study [From blockbuster to “nichebuster”: how a flawed legislation helped create a new profit model for the drug industry](#) into the sales of pharmaceutical giants of so-called 'orphan medicines' (medicines for rare diseases). It analyses the consequences of the EU's market protection for these medicines. They concluded that this market protection is worth billions of euros to the companies.

[See here](#) for the Dutch version.

August

The Dutch Journal of Medicine published our investigation into the continuing education of medical doctors entitled '[As long as it is for free](#)'. Most of these courses still appear to be sponsored by the pharmaceutical industry. The meaningfulness of the educational accreditation is limited.

[English summary](#)

September

Follow the Money published our investigation [Tobacco industry interferes with Dutch anti-smoking agreement](#) of late 2018. The tobacco industry had not been invited to the negotiating table but we show how with the help of main Dutch coalition party, VVD, it could nevertheless exert considerable influence on the National Prevention Agreement. The article was very widely quoted: Teletext 101, Trouw, Argos, NOS Journaal, Oog op Morgen, and so on. A unique aspect of this investigation is that it is part of our cooperation with the IVO Research Institute and was funded by a scientific grant.

[English summary](#)

October

NRC Handelsblad published our major investigation into tax avoidance by the tobacco industry [Tobacco manufacturers channel billions through the Netherlands](#). The publication was accompanied by a podcast and a video animation and was widely covered on Teletext, Radio 1, BNR radio and in the Irish Business Post, among others. It also led to questions in Parliament.

In the context of this investigation, we also reported for NRC on the legal proceedings concerning a [claim](#) of EUR 1.2 billion from the Dutch Tax Authorities on British American Tobacco, due to tax evasion.

[English summary](#)

The Dutch Journal of Medicine published our investigation into the claim by special interest group Women Inc. that women receive worse medical care than men pharmaceutical companies do not sufficiently test their medicines on women. Convincing evidence for this claim appears to be lacking.

[English summary](#)

November

Cross-border publications of the Behind the Pledge project on large purchases by EU countries of anti-viral medicine remdesivir, which is used in the treatment of COVID-19, without proof of effectiveness. It was covered in [EU Observer](#), [Le Monde](#), [Süddeutsche Zeitung](#), [Il Fatto Quotidiano](#), [Geneva Health Files](#).

December

The British Medical Journal published our article (part of the Behind the Pledge project) on [remdesivir](#).

Follow the Money published our investigation into the [clever lobbying strategy](#) of tobacco manufacturer Philip Morris.
[English summary](#)

Vrij Nederland published our investigation into the [influence of Unilever](#) on the research of Wageningen University & Research.
[English summary](#)

Argos and Le Monde published the results of an investigation by The Investigative Desk and Le Monde into how scientists with ties to the tobacco industry [used the COVID-19 crisis to recommend nicotine](#).
[English summary](#)

Le Monde Afrique published an article on the problems surrounding [waste incineration at the UN mission in Mali](#), in which the Netherlands also participated until 2019. This article was the result of a collaboration between the Mali correspondent of Le Monde and The Investigative Desk. Publications in the Netherlands and Belgium are planned for 2021.