

Biography



Prof. Willekens (born in 1946) is director of the Netherlands Interdisciplinary Demographic Institute (NIDI) (www.nidi.nl) and professor of Population Studies, University of Groningen, The Netherlands. He is a member of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Sciences (KNAW), and has been elected to the Cream of Science, which consists of about 200 top scientists in The Netherlands (<http://www.creamofscience.org>).

He studied agricultural sciences and economics at the University of Leuven, Belgium, and holds a PhD in Urban Systems Engineering and Policy Planning from Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois, USA (1976). His main research interest is the development of simulation models to describe the life courses of individuals and groups. These *biographic models* are state-space models that integrate insights from demography, epidemiology and actuarial sciences, and use longitudinal data. The research produces biographies of synthetic individuals that provide the detailed information on changing lives that is needed for designing sustainable pension systems and health care systems (www.micmac-projections.org).

Frans Willekens and some colleagues took the initiative to establish the European Doctoral School of Demography (EDSD; <http://www.eds-demography.org>). Currently more than 20 universities and research institutes participate in the EDSD. The aim is a solid knowledge base to confront the demographic challenges Europe faces in the 21st century.