The charming city center of Zurich was the meeting place for alumni of the University of Groningen on Friday January 10th, 2014. The start of the New Year was celebrated with about 20 alumni in the Luv Drink & Dine Bar. For many of our Swiss alumni it was a chance to meet their friends from Groningen again, for others it was their first trip down memory lane. Suzan van de Kerk, president of the alumni chapter, and Marjan Kraak, founding member of the chapter, explained the several objectives of the chapter.

the Zurich alumni chapter will adopt an Arctic tern. When the chapter donates 250 euros in total, they will have and name their “own” bird, which will be tracked. After a year, the flying path of this tern will be read out. During the meeting, Swiss alumni donated CHF 70,- to this project. With the crowdfunding campaign of the Ubbo Emmius Foundation more support is given to this project. Dr. Maarten Loonen can now continue his research through support of the crowd and alumni chapter Zurich. For more information about the crowdfunding campaigns, take a look at www.rugsteunt.nl.

Marjan Kraak explained the objectives of the groundbreaking research project of prof.dr. Gerard Koppelman. Up till now, almost all research on asthma has been conducted with asthma patients as research subjects and the research is directed towards care, treatments and methods to make living with this severe disease easier. Prof.dr. Gerard Koppelman and his team, from the Medical Faculty of the RUG, have a different approach. They would like to take a step back and design a model that can predict asthma. Many children who do suffer from respiratory symptoms never develop asthma and they simply outgrow it. Others do develop the disease and need medication from an early age. At this stage, it is impossible knowing what children will develop the disease and what children outgrow their airway problems. All we know is that the causes of asthma are about fifty percent environment-related and fifty percent genetics related.

> Happy New Year <
Suzan van de Kerk kicked off the event by wishing everyone a wonderful and prosperous 2014, followed by toasting to a well-established RUG chapter in Switzerland and a joyful 400th anniversary celebration of the University. Together with Marjan Kraak, she touched upon the wishes and goals for the alumni chapter in 2014. The chapter is formed to build a close relationship with fellow alumni and the Alma Mater in Groningen. The chapter has therefore decided to support two different RUG scientists. In this way, fun and networking is combined with encouraging a good cause and staying up to date of important research conducted at our University. The research projects will be explained in this newsletter.
For those guests that missed parts of the speeches, due to all the chattering in the rest of the bar (we will select a quieter venue next time!) and for all alumni that could not attend the event, the leaflet explaining the aims for 2014 can also be found attached.

> Genetic causes of Asthma <

The first research that the Zurich chapter shows enthusiasm for, is all about the little but sensational bird the Arctic tern. Every year it flies 70,000 km, from the North Pole to the South Pole Artic and back again. Dr. Maarten Loonen, researcher at the Arctic Center of the RUG, maps travel schemes of these birds to see whether the climate change impacts these migration birds. To support his research
Koppelman is comparing genetics and symptoms from children that develop asthma and children that do not and his results suggest that the treatments that are used today for patients might change dramatically in the near future. Institutes and clinics that work with asthma patients might benefit tremendously from the research that is done by prof.dr. Koppelman and his team. A nice link to Swiss based alumni: he has a close connection to colleagues in Basel and will do his upmost best to visit the next chapter meeting and explain his research himself. The Amsterdam alumni chapter also supports this project, so a great international alumni collaboration is born! During the meeting two alumni decided to donate 500 euro in total to this research on the genetic causes of asthma amongst young children.

> University of Groningen 400 years <

Tienke Koning, director of the Ubbo Emmius Foundation (UEF) of the RUG, invited everyone to celebrate the anniversary of the RUG in Groningen this summer during the Alumni Weekend. She advised to check the website www.rug400.nl where you can sign up for specific activities and you can also find out if your friends from the university have subscribed already. It is the event that will take you back to your time in Groningen!

> Important links <

**Read more about the Ubbo Emmius Foundation and the research projects the Swiss alumni chapter supports:**
- [http://www.ubboemmiusfonds.nl/](http://www.ubboemmiusfonds.nl/)
- [http://www.rug.nl/research/arctisch-centrum/](http://www.rug.nl/research/arctisch-centrum/)

**Know what is happening at your Alma Mater! Alumnimagazine Broerstraat 5 and the worldwide newsletter are written for you:**

**Become a member of the Swiss RUG alumni LinkedIn group:**
- [http://www.linkedin.com/groups?home=&gid=4687532&trk=anet_ug_hm&goback=%2Feanb_4687532-_2_*1_*1_*1_*1_*1_%2Egmp_4687532](http://www.linkedin.com/groups?home=&gid=4687532&trk=anet_ug_hm&goback=%2Feanb_4687532-_2_*1_*1_*1_*1_*1_%2Egmp_4687532)

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> Attendees <

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Julia Gerken  
Onno van der Groen  
Marjan van der Haar  
Kathryn Hine  
Jeroen van ’t Hooft  
Suzan van de Kerk  
Isabel Klusman  
Marjan Kraak  
Marian Vanfloorop  
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