

## Minerva Prize 2021: two laureates

With great pleasure we announce the winners of the Minerva Prize 2021. This year, not one but two excellent physicists win the prize: Wiebke Albrecht and Natalia Chepiga. The Minerva Prize is awarded to an outstanding young female or non-binary physicist in the Netherlands with an overall performance that scientifically excels in any subfield of physics. Both experimental and theoretical scientific physics research are taken into account. In 2021, Wiebke Albrecht (AMOLF) and Natalia Chepiga (Kavli Institute of Nanoscience Delft) share the prize and the prize money of € 5000.

Both candidates have excellent track records, and are warmly and enthusiastically promoted by the writers of their respective recommendation letters. In both cases, the candidates have opened up, with their results, new areas of research and have been trailblazing in their efforts. Both candidates lead research groups with equal research output of excellent quality.

Natalia is an expert in computational quantum many-body physics. She designs new algorithms and numerically solves quantum many-body problems that cannot be handled analytically or with the mean-field approximation. One of her new algorithms allowed her to solve longstanding problems. Wiebke investigates the interaction between light and matter all the way down to the atomic level. She saw an opportunity to combine several recent developments to finally drill down to single atomic defects and understand their effect on material properties.

Both prize winners are active in fields outside their research. Wiebke Albrecht gives great importance to outreach and informing the general public on the results of her work, Natalia Chepiga promotes diversity in a field where participation of minorities is extraordinarily scarce.

In the past, the Minerva Prize was awarded by FOM and later by NWO. Since 2021, the Minerva Prize is a joint award by the Dutch Physics Council (DPC) and the Netherlands' Physical Society (NNV). The aim is to support gender diversity in the Dutch physics community. The award ceremony of the first NNV/DPC Minerva Prize, takes place at Physics@Veldhoven 2022.



Wiebke Albrecht (left) and Natalia Chepiga (right).

Picture Wiebke Albrecht: Julia Trauer.

Picture Natalia Chepiga: Lionel Windels, MaNEP Switzerland Network.