In the summer of 2009 I went to the lab of Thomas Nevian at the University of Bern, Switzerland, to learn a specialised electrophysiology technique called dendritic patch-clamp. This technique allows you to measure the activity of the neuronal dendrite directly instead of indirectly through a somatic patch. This technique was previously not available in my lab, as well as in the Netherlands. Enrique Perez-Garcia, a postdoc of Matthew Larkum, taught me the technique with lots of patience. The technique requires both fine motor skills and perfect conditions of both tissue and optics. Within the two months of my internship I was able to successfully patch dendrites and experience the difficulties of the techniques. Although a high success rate of patching will require practice for a long period of time, my stay in Bern was sufficient to show me how to do it and gave me a kick start for continuing at my own lab.

Besides this acquired skill, this NENS stipend stay also allowed me to meet new friends, be in a different inspiring scientific environment, and start new collaborations. It was a great success!

Martine Groen, Integrative Neurophysiology, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, the Netherlands