

Plenary Meeting - University Council
Erasmus University
February 9th, 2021

Present in the Meeting: Ana Uribe Sandoval, Ben Bode, Ferry Blom, John Piarelal, John van Wel, Natascha Kraal, Sebastiaan Kamp, Albert Wagelmans, Yogi Hendlin, Afrodita Dobрева, Armand Gozé, Bram Heesen, Jasper Klasen, Joep Schoenmakers, Luca Kriese, Philip van Moll, Wouter van Dam, Younes Assou, Hans van den Berg, Helen Gubby, Dian van Toor, Bianca Jadoenath, Marjan Gorgievski, Diederik Mosch, Machteld Harmsen.

Absent in the Meeting: Olaf Hornes

Teams Meeting: 15:00

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01 Opening

01.01 Setting of the agenda

01.02 Setting of the minutes of the previous meeting

01.03 Announcements

Chair announcements

- Chair Evaluation

The evaluation of the Chair will be communicated soon. Ana will be taking charge of this and further inform UC members about it.

- Chair's Schedule

In the upcoming 2 cycles, the Chair's teaching schedule will be busier.

Presidium announcements

- Extra Meetings Finance Task Force

The extra meetings for the Finance task force have been planned with Pieter Jellema. If members wish to attend, they should contact Ben or John van Wel. The schedule of the meeting is as follows:

1. Duisenberg method: Monday 15 February, 14:30-16:00
2. Risk management: Monday 1 March, 10:30-12:00
3. Right of consent main elements budget: Tuesday 23 March, 14:00-15:30

- Agenda 5th Cycle

The UC has a very full agenda this cycle. However, some points are just to write letters or to discuss processes; other points are to establish a task force. UC members should critically review their points of initiative in relation to the current agenda and the ongoing affairs.

02 Agenda items plenary meeting UC

02.01 Framework convergence

In the next plenary meeting, there will be a discussion about this topic. Some guests will come to the meeting to talk about the convergence. A form will be open for a week to submit questions to the policy makers before the meeting.

Tomorrow, the Chair will meet with the chairs of the institutions involved. They would like to formalize the informal meetings that they have. Therefore, it would be positive to have regular meetings on the convergence, and a draft proposal will be made for the institutionalization of these meetings. Furthermore, the chairs would like to make a clear document on the rights of the participatory bodies regarding the Convergence. Legal help will be needed for this, and it may take some time to be drafted. It would be ideal if this document could have a statement giving equal rights to each council. On this point, the Chair will briefly meet with Jasper for a discussion.

Action Point: The Chair will briefly meet with Jasper to discuss the statement on giving equal rights to each participatory body on the Convergence.

02.02 Annual Report confidential counselors 2019

This morning, there was a meeting about the annual report of the confidential counselors 2019. It was agreed that it would be a good idea to give unsolicited advice about the report. The task

force sent some questions to the policy maker which have been responded to. The task force will therefore draft a letter with unsolicited advice to the EB.

A member asked if there was any clarification on why there is a different number of confidential counsellors for students and employees. This has not been clarified yet, but the taskforce will forward the question to the policy makers.

02.03 Communications Approach for Diversity and Inclusion at EUR

The task force will send a letter of unsolicited advice on this topic. They have assessed the issue and it seems that D&I has similar issues to sustainability. It is part of the strategic values of the UC, but at the same time, there is limited personnel working on it.

The communications approach is written from a perspective of D&I and the communication office, which makes it difficult to address. This is part of the feedback that will go into the letter for the EB.

Lastly, this letter will approach the communication of D&I. However, there are other pressing issues related to D&I, such as its inclusion in the university curriculum and education. This point will also be addressed in the letter.

02.04 EUR Internationalization policy 2021-2024

Taskforce: Younes, Ana.

Vice-chair: John (W)

This policy is up on the EUR website. The reason why this is on the agenda is to inform the council. A task force could be established for drafting unsolicited advice about it if they deem it necessary.

02.05 Professorial policy

Taskforce: Ferry, Albert, Marjan.

Vice-chair: Bianca

This policy needs to be reviewed. A member of the council pointed out that it may be interesting to fill the gap on the tracks between senior lecturers and professors at the university, as there is a missing link between the two at the moment.

02.06 Integral security policy

Taskforce: Wouter, John (W), Ben, Ana, Sebastiaan, Marjan, Natascha.

Vice-chair: Wouter

Following the COVID-19 situation, the EB realized that a clear security policy is needed for the university. This way, the community knows where to meet and at what time, and there is clarity on who are the buddies in the university.

02.07 EUR Regulations of the Advisory Committee Complaints and Objections 2021

Taskforce: Ana, Wouter, Helen, Dian, Ferry.

Vice-chair: Wouter

There was already a team that met with the legal department to review this policy. The same group could discuss the regulations with the policy makers.

02.08 Decision on BSA by EB (soft cut)

There is a letter ready to be sent about this topic. This letter is a proposal to extend the soft cut between bachelor and master's degrees for one year. The soft cut was originally established to prevent students from having a gap year because they failed to get all their

credits in the last year of their bachelor during COVID-19. However, COVID-19 has been affecting the community in this academic year as well. This point is being discussed at a national level, and the VSNU will publish a statement on the topic this week. The Ministry has no authority on this soft cut.

In general, there is support in the council for the extension of the soft cut. However, the council will wait to hear from the VSNU to react. The idea would be to send the EB a letter reacting to this statement.

02.09 EUR carbon neutrality by 2024

The sustainability task force had a meeting with the sustainability officer in response to the carbon neutrality letter they sent at the beginning of the academic year. The university had pledged to be carbon neutral by 2024. They signed a climate agreement in Rotterdam. However, the task force is very worried about the situation they were presented to in regard to the accomplishment of this goal. The university claims to be committed to this goal, but their actions speak differently.

The reports on the CO2 carbon emissions of EUR from the last two years are missing. They had promised to publish yearly data on this matter, but this has not happened. The last report, from 2018, shows a 22% increase in CO2 emissions from EUR. Additionally, in their definition of carbon neutrality, the university compensates from CO2 emissions on campus by buying gas from African countries. Furthermore, the numbers in the report could be questionable. The largest emissions of the university come from transportation, but the calculations are missing to back-up this claim. Finally, there is only one person in the university guiding the university to accomplish carbon neutrality by 2024. All these facts and numbers are worrying for the sustainability taskforce.

It is important to mention that the meeting also had positive points. The two people working on the plan are committed to it and they only started working in October. Nevertheless, the university needs clear statements from the EB on this topic. Additionally, it could be an idea to reach other stakeholders besides the EB to implement ideas that reduce the carbon-footprint of the university.

There will be a letter drafted by the UC asking for a clear overview with a timeline from the EB in how they will take actions for reaching the carbon neutrality goal by 2024. For drafting this letter, UC members can send input to the sustainability taskforce. Furthermore, the taskforce will continue pressing for information with subject-specific letters. Additionally, the taskforce could make some statements in social media or reach out to Erasmus Magazine to pressure the EB to take action. Lastly, the taskforce expressed that they have the integration of ECOSIA in the university as part of their agenda.

02.10 Student assessors

Taskforce: Luca, Jasper, Bianca, Diederik, John (P)

Vice-chair: Bram

This is a proposal from the Student Body of the UC. They would like to look at the possibility of including a student member in faculty boards and the Executive Board. These assessors would not have voting rights. Their purpose would be to join board meetings to give a student input on their decisions. This position is different from participatory bodies, as they would be present in the meetings of the board and would give their input before decisions are taken. These assessors are present in some faculties at EUR, and at other universities in the Netherlands.

Depending on the legal structure of the board, some boards are legally required to have a student member. On the other hand, some top-down structures do not require this by law. The task force could look into this, explain the possible benefits of having student assessors, and draft a way of selecting student assessors at the university. The idea is to create a standard procedure at the university for student assessors.

02.11 Model-OER

Taskforce: Wouter, Bram, John (P), Jasper

Vice-chair: Wouter

At some universities, there is a Model OER. This model is consented by the UC and is the same at all faculties. EUR does not have a Model OER established in all faculties, but rather, an OER template recommendation that faculties can decide to use if they want to.

One of the advantages of establishing a model OER is that it would give faculties the room to spend more time discussing faculty- and programme-related aspects of the OER instead of discussing general clauses. The central OER would focus on the general clauses. Faculties could opt to make an exception in regards to these clauses if they wish to do so.

Establishing a Model OER would be a difficult task, but a task force could work on it. The taskforce would have to explain what the current issue with the OER system is, what can be improved, and draft tangible goals.

02.12 Centralizing information streams participation (medezeggenschap)

Taskforce: Luca, Afrodita, Ben.

Vice-chair: Bram

It is difficult for the UC to find information and documentation about the policies of the university. It would be helpful for students and participatory bodies to have a central website of participation. This would be similar to the participation hub proposal on campus, but online. This possibility was also discussed in the HoKa workgroup to facilitate HoKa documentation. This proposal would not only help participatory bodies with their duties, but also increase transparency in the university as the community would be able to access this centralized stream of information.

02.13 LifeVersity

There is a very important role of soft-skills in the development of students. Students deserve a well-balanced curriculum between academic and soft skills. Some years ago, an ESSB student founded the Erasmus Public Speaking Academy. The idea behind this academy was to help students to overcome their fear of public speaking. This academy became LifeVersity, a hub that now offers 13 free courses for EUR students related to soft skills. Some of these courses align with the Strategy 2024, and student wellbeing. In 2020, LifeVersity had more than 650 applicants, more than 200 students involved, a completion rate of 60-70%, and an average rating of 8-9 in its courses. The project has also been adapting during the COVID-19 situation.

The issue at hand is that LifeVersity will cease to exist if there is no financial support from the university. CLI will no longer give financial help to the project as of September 2021 as it would not count as an innovation anymore. LifeVersity has a different structure than student organizations or associations, and it needs a place in the university. The project does not have commercial interests.

The project could be linked with the provision of soft skills for employees, which are now provided by TOP. Additionally, it could provide training to UC members. This could also

increase its necessity in the university, as external training sessions are more expensive than training provided by LifeVersity. Furthermore, it is important to use LifeVersity as an example of the issues of discontinuation of project funding with HoKa means.

Action Point: Afrodita will send a letter to the EB explaining the importance of LifeVersity. The letter will ask for the institutionalization of LifeVersity, and possible advice to the organization to embed it at EUR.

02.14 Caring Universities

The Wellbeing task force of the UC has come up with an initiative to boost the wellbeing of students at EUR. The initiative comes from the premise of providing more comparable data of issues related to wellbeing, and providing concrete solutions to the problem. To fulfill these points, Armand explained how EUR could engage in an interuniversity approach for tackling student wellbeing: Caring Universities.

Caring Universities is a consortium of four different universities that tackle issues of student wellbeing as their first pillar. Utrecht University, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, Leiden University, and Maastricht University are part of it. They use annual questionnaires developed by Harvard and the World Health Organization to gather data on student wellbeing. Their second pillar is online interventions. Some of the advantages of joining Caring Universities include the benchmarking with other universities on wellbeing issues, and the shared data that could be available for EUR researchers on the topic.

The costs of joining this consortium are from 25,000€ to 30,000€, yet they explained that they are willing to negotiate this price. This initiative is less expensive than the HoKa Wellbeing projects on mental health. Hence, it would be interesting for the UC to see the advantages that Caring Universities could provide on wellbeing for EUR students.

The Wellbeing task force will write a letter asking the EB if they consider joining Caring Universities a viable option. The draft letter will be shared on Teams for all the UC members.

Action Point: The Wellbeing task force will write a letter asking the EB if they consider joining Caring Universities a viable option.

02.15 More housing on campus

The students working on the Housing Committee want to draft a letter to the EB to request possibilities for more housing. Originally, they wanted to inquire about the options of building more housing on campus. They have been in contact with members of last year's UC who worked on the topic, as well as stakeholders that could provide information on housing.

It was pointed out that the EB cannot build housing on campus. The reason is that they cannot make housing for profit at the university. They work with the municipality to make more student housing available. To facilitate communication on this point, the Chair will contact the public relations officer of the university so they can discuss this point with the task force.

Besides the lack of housing availability for students, there are other issues related. For instance, international students are not very familiar with Dutch law regarding housing. Students can get into difficult situations with housing owners and agencies as they have limited legal capacities. A good proposal would be to make a Housing Desk on campus providing students with legal help, and more facilitation, in regards to student housing. Other proposals include the creation of a "housing chat bot", or the communication with national associations working on housing.

Action Point: the Chair will contact the public relations officer of the university so they can discuss this point with the task force.

02.16 Position and current circumstances of invigilators

The Chair of the UC was approached by a surveillant (also known as invigilator) in relation to their contract and payment in COVID-19 times. The Dutch Government had offered compensation for employees that were affected in COVID-19 times. These employees did not receive the compensation and they claim they could have received it. They don't understand why the EB did not apply for the compensation. They asked EURFLEX (their formal employer) about this situation and they did not respond. A similar discussion had emerged in the past with Library employees, but the outcome of this discussion was unknown.

During the meeting, there was no clarity on whether the university could have applied for the compensation in COVID-19 times, as EURFLEX would have had to present a loss of at least 20% for this compensation to be available. Furthermore, there was a discussion on whether the University Council is the correct representative body for these workers. It is not clear whether these employees vote for the council or not. However, it is likely that both EUROPA and the UC are the representatives of these workers.

Both the points of the compensation of invigilators, as well as the inquiry on their voting rights in participatory bodies, will be asked in the next consultation meeting. If further questions arise on this point, Ana will send a letter to the EB about it.

02.17 Clarification role and rights of the participatory bodies and employees in re-organisations

The service councils made a request to make a clarification of the roles of participatory bodies and employees. The reason for this request is that there was a change in the university from public to private law.

During the consultation meeting, the UC will ask the EB whether it is possible to provide a clear overview of these rights. If further questions arise on this point, Ana will send a letter to the EB about it.

02.18 Update Taskforce employee work pressure + outgoing letters

There are three letters related to employee work pressure to be sent:

1. Plan on Improving Work Pressure

Roos Schelvis worked on a work pressure plan that was put for consent to the UC. This plan did not receive consent. However, the task force has been working on drafting a plan with Roos Schelvis, which they want to share with the EB through this letter. There were no objections to send this letter. Therefore, the UC will send it.

2. Declaration of a Work Pressure Emergency

Beyond the Work Pressure plan, the task force wants to follow-up on a letter that was drafted by the UC before the COVID-19 situation. This letter aimed at declaring a work pressure emergency. However, it was not sent because of the uncertainty caused by COVID-19 last Spring. Considering that work pressure has risen since the COVID-19 situation started to affect the university, it is a good moment to send this letter.

There were two points of discussion on this letter. Firstly, members of the UC asked if it was reasonable to declare a nation-wide *numerus fixus* as that would be problematic for students' university applications. As a response, it was explained that one of the reasons for work pressure in the university is the high student-staff ratio. This also affects the quality of education for students. It is possible that the university will continue growing, but there are concerns when it comes to the capacities of the staff. The *numerus-fixus* could become a programme-specific policy, and be tailored to the capacity of each programme.

However, there are some issues with a *numerus fixus*, as the university receives money depending on the number of students it receives. Furthermore, some students are fundamentally against a *numerus fixus* as it would make it more difficult for students to choose their preferred program of study. However, students support the fact that a better staff/student ratio is desired.

To close the discussion on the first point, it was decided that the letter would be edited to say “*all universities could have a numerus fixus that fits with their capacity*”. The UC agrees that there is a problem of funding for universities, and that the institution deserves a better influx of money to decrease staff work pressure and increase the quality of education.

The second point of discussion related to the inclusion of a workload assessment in the policies of the university. In the letter, this point seems to reject any point that increases the workload of staff, which could translate to less projects being implemented. However, the task force responded to this point by stating that the workload assessment aims at creating awareness on the workload created by each policy. It is not meant to block any initiative by the university due to workload.

EUROPA is willing to sign the letter as a whole. Few adjustments will be made to this letter, and then the Chair will send a poll to see if it is possible to send it to the EB this week.

3. Co-signed National Letter on Work Pressure

A letter on Work Pressure has been signed by some universities at a national level. The UC could co-sign this letter on behalf of EUR. Considering that there was no opposition on signing the letter, the council will co-sign it.

2.19 White Week Letter

The letter for the White Week is ready to be sent. It was approved by the UC. The few adjustments made to the letter contained the encouragement of faculties to arrange their own white week, as well as the recommendation to harmonize academic calendars at EUR. This harmonization of calendars will be discussed more in-depth in the future.

2.20 Open letter second camera

The Open Letter on the second-camera decision will be sent to the EB. A poll took place on whether to send this letter or not. The letter got support from 12 council members, whilst it was rejected by 10 council members.

02.21 Incoming letters

There are three incoming letters. The taskforce of each letter will take a closer look at the letters to see if it is necessary to respond to them. The themes of the letters are: Whistleblower Regulations, Response to Student Related Advice from the Covid-19 Taskforce, and Response to BBR letter.

03 Any other business

04 Closing