

University Council
Consultation Meeting UC/EB
Erasmus University Rotterdam

Date and Time: 16/03/2023, 15:00 – 17:00h

Location: 2-22 Langeveld

Present in the Meeting: **Ivonne Cune-Noten (chair)**, Prof. dr. H. Brinksma (Chair EB), Prof. dr. A. L. Bredenoord (Rector, EB), Ellen van Schoten (VP EB), Ann O'Brien (Secretary EB), Sebastiaan Kamp, Max Wagenaar, Nikita Schoenmaker, Jaap Cornelese, Natascha Kraal, Patryk Jarmakowicz, Aleid Fokkema, Ernst Hulst, Simo Azzarhouni, Emese von Bóné, Tom van Dijken, Luuk van Tol, Nawin Ramcharan, Wesley Hennep, Wincey Randoe, Veerle Bakker, Friso Roos, Cagla Altin, Lobke van Steenberghe (Clerk), Ellie Cercel (Minutes).

Digital:

Absent: Albert Wagelmans, Sandra Constantinou Juhasz, Erin van Gestel, Irena Boskovic.

01 Opening

01.01 Setting of the agenda

The agenda was set without any adjustments.

01.02 Setting of the minutes of the previous meeting/action points

The minutes of the previous meeting were set without any adjustments.

01.03 Announcements

– OccupyEUR

The report regarding OccupyEUR is expected to be finalised and available for the UC in May. Thus, it was decided to postpone part of the discussion on OccupyEUR until the report arrives. However, because it will be late in the academic year, the Presidium decided to table part of the discussion for the third Plenary meeting in which it will be decided how to proceed with the topic.

– BSA

The Ministry of Education recently made the informal announcement that the BSA norm is expected to be changed and limited to 30 ECTS. Although formal decision-making is pending, EUR recognizes this as a dramatic change for our university; the department of academic affairs is already making plans for curricula changes. Additionally, EUR is currently working on the SAY project which is starting its second phase. Both of these developments will contribute to curricula changes. The EB shared they are unhappy with the decision of the Ministry regarding the BSA limitation and believe that the reasons for the decision are not right (e.g., increasing student well-being) seeing that, in the past, having a lower BSA threshold also hindered the study progress of students that repeated courses many years in a row. Also, the EB is lobbying for the change to be implemented as late as possible, hopefully, earliest in the academic year 2025-2026. Also, the BSA decision will not be taken into account retroactively.

– International Students

The discussion on internationalisation at Dutch universities continues in the Parliament; EUR has had talks with the Ministry on how to deal with these issues. However, the EB reassured us that the EUR strategic value of internationalisation is not at stake, but they are lobbying to obtain the approval to implement certain instruments, such as *numerus fixus* specifically for non-EEA students, and emergency procedures for unexpected amounts of incoming international students. These changes, however, have an impact on the finances of EUR, expecting fewer funds; the EB foresees discussions on the future of EUR funding as well. Next to that, there is a debate in the Parliament on the language of instruction at Dutch universities; EUR has only 5 exclusively English-taught programmes and considers the possibility of being required to always provide a Dutch-taught option. Nonetheless, these topics are in their incipient stages and there are no conclusive decisions.

– *Political debate at EUR*

Last Monday, a political debate was hosted at EUR; these debates are happening again following Covid. The EB believes the debate provided food exposure; however, the discussions were not innovative. The EB wishes to evaluate the debate seriously, as they believe there is a need for substantial investments in security, to ensure the safety of such events. This is an unavoidable part of the political process. The UC remarked that a bigger investment could be a bottleneck in the organisation of such debates in the future. Also, as one councillor remarked, there was an anti-protest at the same time, which created some noise in the background. The EB stated that the demonstrations were registered, peaceful, and thus allowed, and they did not create any further incidents.

02 Agenda items consultation meeting

02.01 CLI budget

The HeQa TF of the UC is currently requested consent for the CLI budget; within the budget, an important change was made, of which the UC is quite critical. CLI is wishing to commence a large new project, EU_online, made to increase the availability of online supplements to education. CLI is willing to use its budget reserves from the previous years to finance the first year of the project, after which they foresee the need to request additional funding for the remaining years were the project to continue. The UC is critical of giving consent to a project whose continuation may not be consented to in the future, seeing as the extra funds might be better spent on the subprojects of other HeQa initiatives, which are yet unknown. The UC also believes that consenting to the current reserve allocation to the project may create pressure on the future council to continue funding the project from the HeQa funds in the future. Thus, we have a counterproposal: if the UC gives consent to the allocation of the reserves for EU_online, will there be a possibility to continue the project with funds from outside of HeQa, from a more central budget? Based on this request, two issues were identified in the meeting. Firstly, the UC is not comfortable with prioritising the funding of the project EU_online over future HeQa projects without knowing the other plans. Secondly, the UC is not clear on how the money is spent on the project, and whether it is beneficial for the current student population as required by the HeQa guidelines.

The EB recognised that, once a project begins, it is difficult to not continue funding it. However, as EB pointed out, if a project does not start, one cannot know whether it will be feasible or useful for the students, thus they cannot foresee whether funding can continue from a central budget. Also, the EB advised against not approving the project, as it would lead to underspending of the CLI reserves.

Regarding the first issue, the EB advised the UC to consent to the implementation of the project from the CLI budget reserves, and immediately begin collaborating with the CLI project team in order to evaluate the usefulness of the project; based on the evaluation, the UC

and the EB will be better informed for the new approval expected in 2024. The EB reassured the UC that consenting to the 2023 plans will not imply consent to the 2024 funding of the project. Consequently, if in 2024 the UC is not satisfied with the impact and development of EU_online, we can either disagree and request certain changes or completely not give consent to the continuation of the project.

Regarding the second issue, the EB suggested having a conversation with the CLI and Erasmus X project teams on the topic of improving the performance of innovation for the current requirements of the quality of education. Also, while the UC believes that improving online resources is not a necessity for the current EUR students, the EB believes that improving the expertise and professionalisation of teachers regarding online behaviours is very important currently, as education is currently dependent on online tools even if taught on campus.

Also, regarding Erasmus X, the EB believes that many of their projects are running well, despite the slow progress during the commencement of the HeQa projects. Thus, we were advised to continue collaborating with the project teams and also give the projects space to run in order to see their progress.

In conclusion, the UC decided to continue the discussion internally to outline the conditions we require in order to give consent to the CLI funding of EU_online while ensuring a close evaluation of their progress.

Action point: the UC will provide the letter of consent to the CLI budgets with an elaboration of the conditions regarding the funding of EU_online.

02.02 Starter Grants

The UC has studied the original Bestuursakkoord policy documents thoroughly and compared them with the EUR policy documents, for both short-term and long-term developments. Several issues were communicated with the EB that need to be improved in the process of giving consent.

Regarding the start grants for short-term development, two issues were concretely missing in the EUR policy. Firstly, the policy is not clear on the specifics of the spending of 20% of the funds. Secondly, the policy regarding the division of the educational activities of professors who wish to increase the amount of time spent on research is not clear in the EUR document. The EB has understood the requests of the UC and is willing to adjust the policy documents to include these additions. For the first issue, the EB will increase the transparency of the spending as much as possible, although it will continue to be in more general terms and not for specific professors. For the second issue, the EB will clarify that the professors who wish to do more research will be allowed to do so, but they do not wish that staff stop teaching altogether with the use of the grants; this is why a minimum of 0.2 FTE of teaching is required.

Also, in the long-term, the UC has observed that the faculties have different interpretations of the Bestuursakkoord; although this is understandable to some extent, the UC believes that we are missing a clear vision shared between faculties. The UC wanted to know how the EB sees their leadership role as well as the roles of the Deans. The EB decided to form a committee for the long-term plans, formed of representatives of all the schools working on a proposal. In April, the EB expects to receive the advice of this committee. In terms of leadership, the EB believes that this is a case of bottom-up democratic decision-making, thus the decision on

how to spend the money is not made at the central level. The EB is encouraging joint leadership within the committee.

Lastly, there has been confusion on the formal rights of the participatory bodies on the Bestuursakkoord; the UC Chair already discussed this informally with the EB Chair, but it was shared for the record in the CM. The EB wishes to commence the short-term spending very soon because underspending would be an issue and not much time is left. However, in the long term, they were advised by the Legal Department to copy the HeQa framework. The EB is aware that the context is not identical, but it should thus be adapted based on evaluations. The UC can expect the policy on the adapted HeQa framework in the next CM.

Action point: The UC will share the consent letter on the Starter Grants after the requested adjustments are made. The EB will share the long-term HeQa-adapted funding framework of the Bestuursakkoord with the UC in the next CM.

02.03 Educational Vision

The EB wished to know the opinion of the UC regarding the Educational Vision (EV). Most councillors liked the format and the length of the document believing it to be a clear process. However, the point was raised that, as this would be implemented in the Faculties, the UC would like to know how we can monitor this implementation as a council.

The EB is happy with the D&I and Sustainability in the EV; after discussing the topics with the Deans in April, the EV will be adopted. However, the EB made it clear that the EV is an appealing narrative about how teaching at EUR should look like, thus it is not a description of our current reality. The document is purposefully short, as different faculties have different teaching models and will therefore make use of it in different ways. Nonetheless, the process didn't start yet, and they are now concentrating on creating the model itself. The model, which is called the ABC method, will be a way of operationalising the vision within the upcoming month. The EB believes that the differences between the faculties are acceptable. Nonetheless, the UC wants to clearly see the activities of the faculties, as well as how they make implementation changes in their education, with actual content and not superficiality.

Also, it was discussed what the role of the FCs is and how the leadership will be communicated and maintained. According to the EB, the FCs maintain a main role in the adaption of the EV within their respective schools. The UC shared their worry that the responsibility will not be exercised properly within the FCs and might be diffused at the PC or UC level. However, the EB reassured the council that they will continue to exercise their supervisory role to ensure that the EV gets implemented, as well as reminded the council to maintain our level of supervision by checking in on the FCs on the EV.

02.04 Smoking on campus

The UC observed an increase in smoking on campus, specifically at the entrances to buildings. This has been bothersome for the students and staff on campus. The UC proposed two concrete proposals to the EB in order to improve the situation.

1. Clear communication towards students and staff to remind them that EUR is a non-smoking campus, through a clear email on behalf of the board, anti-smoking posters at the entrances of buildings, and media materials on the panels on campus.

2. Increase the number of checks that security makes, especially around the entrances to buildings.

The EB agreed to increase the communication of this matter with the staff and students of EUR, and they will ask the Communications department to prepare the best options for this goal. However, the EB cannot increase the number of security guards for this purpose, but they could reinforce the making more regular checks of the smokers.

Action point: The EB will request increased communication of the smoking issue with the Communications department to relieve the issue of campus smoking. The EB will request the RE&F department to increase their checking activity specifically around building entrances.

02.05 State of affairs advice UC to EB

- Midterm review Strategy 2024

The EB shared an update regarding the midterm review Strategy 2024. The Strategy Office has regular quarterly meetings with the UC TF Strategy; the next meeting is scheduled for March 21st. The EB will inform the UC of the procedure once it will be discussed in the meetings.

The UC shared that the invitation to the meeting was last minute and would like to see that change. Also, with regards to the communication plan, it was very high level and seemed to be targeting the leadership and not the community. The UC will address these points with the Strategy Office as well.

Action point: The EB will table more updates regarding Strategy 2024 in the upcoming CM.

03 Any other business

03.01 Energy costs students

The Municipality of Rotterdam decided against reimbursing students for the high energy costs. The UC wished to know if the EB has insight into this issue and whether there is any discussion about the energy costs for students. The EB is aware of the issue, and although is not the responsibility of the board, they were made aware of the fact that Rotterdam will provide an energy allowance from the summer of 2023 for students. The EB will share the detailed information with the Clerk.

Action point: The EB will share detailed information on obtaining an energy cost allowance for students with the UC Clerk.