

University Council
Second Plenary Meeting
Erasmus University Rotterdam

Date and Time: 31/10/2023, 14:00 – 17:00

Location: Polak 2-20

Present in the Meeting: Ivonne Cune-Noten (chair), Ernst Hulst, Katarzyna Lasak, Sebastiaan Kamp, Pedro van Gessel, Joseph Ayinla, Timo Zandvliet, Cagla Altin, Yasin Demir, Nawin Ramcharan, Linquendo van der Klooster, Emre Ulusoy, Rami Elorabi, Aki Negate, Linda Dekker, Natascha Kraal, Emese von Bone, Rosita Boedhai-Jansen, Aleid Fokkema, Tom van Dijken, Achraf Taouil, Anthony van der Linden, Max Wagenaar, Roxanne Austin (Clerk).

Absent: Albert Wagelmans, Ellie Cercel (Minutes).

01 Opening

01.01 Setting of the agenda

The agenda was set.

01.02 Minutes first plenary meeting

The agenda and the minutes of the previous meeting were set.

01.03 Announcements

- *Group picture after the meeting*

The initial UC group picture could not be used due to the low quality. The Chair invited the members of the UC to retake the group picture after the Second Plenary Meeting.

- *Teams channel information leak*

A draft letter posted in the Teams environment by a member of the UC was shared with people outside of the UC without the consent of the councillors. The Chair reminded the UC members that the Teams channel is intended for sharing work-in-progress information which is not to be shared with other parties. The Chair requested the councillor who shared the information to come forth during the meeting break. However, if no one would recognize the action, the Chair will investigate the matter.

- *Convergence*

The updates from the Convergence meeting will be shared as AOB in this meeting.

02 Agenda items plenary meeting UC

02.01 BBR EUR 2024

The Task Force under this agenda point reviewed the documents including the changes and did not identify any points of concern. No further questions were shared regarding this agenda point.

Action point: The UC Clerk will table the agenda point *BBR EUR 2024* to the Third Plenary Meeting for the consenting procedure.

02.02 Starting and Incentive grants

Recently, the Finance Task Force participated in a meeting with the CPC and Academic Affairs policymakers. The members of the TF shared their content with the course of the discussion in this meeting. Based on the research and discussions with the policymakers, the TF advised the members of the UC to consent to the Starting and Incentive grants policy, and several points of advice will be emphasized in the letter of consent.

Also, the TF members agreed with the explanation of the 20% grant division, i.e., 50% to be shared centrally and 50% at the decentral level. This information is transparently explained on the cover note of the policy document. However, the UC would like to request the EB for clear parameters for the evaluation and monitoring of the grants, as we expect to see different influences depending on the faculties.

Furthermore, the UC discussed the status of Erasmus Medical Center (EMC) within these grants. Initially, the EMC committee advised that the faculty be allowed a different policy, as the academic activity taking place at EMC is different from that of the other EUR faculties. The EB did not agree to this request, deciding that, to ensure fairness, EMC would receive the same policy as other EUR faculties.

Although the TF shared that they are sufficiently informed on this subject and there are no urgent remarks to be shared with the EB, the members of the UC maintained the wish to table this agenda point at the CM to express our opinion on the degree of societal impact that can result from research conducted with the help of this grant.

Action point: the UC Clerk will table the agenda point *for Starter and Incentive grants* at the CM. The UC Clerk will table the agenda point *Starter and Incentive grants* at the Third Plenary Meeting for the consenting procedure.

02.03 Application for accreditation UNIC joint master's programme RePIC (ESSB)

The policymakers of this agenda point shared a written explanation of the rights of the UC. The UC was asked for consent on the section pertaining to the BBR (2025), as well as advice regarding the course initiatives as they relate to the Strategy 2024 goals.

The members of the UC disagreed with the request for consent, as the BBR pertains to the year 2025, which is outside the scope of the current UC. Therefore, the UC will share a letter of positive advice without additional comments with the policymakers. The UC will review the consent request at the appropriate moment in time for 2025.

Action point: The UC Clerk will share the letter of positive advice on *the Application for accreditation UNIC joint master's programme RePIC (ESSB)* with the EB.

02.04 NVAO-application for accreditation ('Toets Nieuwe Opleiding') E-Master

The same procedure as above will be followed for this agenda point.

Action point: the UC Clerk will share the letter of positive advice on NVAO-application for accreditation ('Toets Nieuwe Opleiding') E-Master with the EB.

02.05 Employee survey (Engagement & Enablement Scan 2023)

The TF shared the technical questions of the UC with the policymakers. However, the UC was not sufficiently informed by the received answers. As a result, the UC requested to ask both the technical and the political questions to the EB at the upcoming CM. Specifically, the UC will inquire about the follow-up on the improvement plan, the turnout rate, the content of the survey itself, and the reactions to the open-ended questions.

Further, the councillors would like to explore how the EB reflects on the result from the survey indicating that, for most EUR employees, the EUR mission is perceived as vague. Also, the UC discussed how this result might be related to the “island” culture at EUR, wherein employees are more likely to identify culturally with their own faculties and not with EUR as a whole. The members of the UC also discussed the large amount of support staff present at EUR (i.e., approximately 1:1 ratio with academic staff), and how it is different from other Universities. Specifically, it was discussed whether the funding required to support these positions contributes to the availability of fewer resources for academic staff, which in turn leads to increased workload as experienced by the academic staff. However, a member of the UC remarked that 8 years prior, EUR underwent efforts to reduce the number of support staff as the same issue surfaced. Therefore, it was surprising that this is still an issue, and he requested quantitative data to support this claim. The UC will request the policymaker an answer to this inquiry.

In order to avoid steering the discussion with the EB, these and other detailed general questions will only be shared with the Clerk. The Clerk will inform the EB of the broad themes of discussion only.

Action points: The UC Clerk will table the topic *Employee survey* at the upcoming CM. The UC Clerk will share the discussion themes on the *Employee survey* agenda item with the EB. The TF will prepare their questions for the discussion next week.

02.06 Draft letter “Clean air on Campus”

The draft letter was shared in Teams. The UC agreed to share it with the EB. The UC discussed tabling the discussion at the CM to emphasize the importance of this subject and perhaps receive an update on their view on this topic. However, by not tabling the discussion, we reserve the option of receiving a written reply from the EB, which we can further discuss in the upcoming cycle. The UC agreed not to table the discussion at the upcoming CM.

Action point: the UC Clerk will format the draft letter *Clean air on Campus* and share it with the EB.

02.07 Draft letter Policy framework for events (with external speakers)

The draft letter was shared in Teams. The concerns of the TF were well-addressed in the meeting with the policymakers and are well-reflected in the letter. Although a councillor suggested improving a section of the letter, following a voting procedure, the UC decided on sending the letter without the suggested adjustment.

Action point: the UC Clerk will format the letter *Policy framework for events* and share it with the EB.

02.08 Preparation Consultation Meeting

- Budget LDE. Due to missing data on this topic, the UC agreed not to table the discussion at the upcoming CM. However, the UC Clerk will include *Budget LDE* in the action points for upcoming meetings.
- Student loan interest rates. The UC would like to ask the EB about their opinion on the topic as well as what steps could be taken to address the issue at a national level.
- Demonstration the previous Friday. A UC member would like to ask the EB what the criteria for allowing demonstrations on campus are.
- Update EB Convergence/ Arts Institute/ Culture Campus. The UC would like to ask the EB about updates on the Convergence, Art Institute, and Culture Campus.
- Update traffic Woudestein. The UC would like to inform the EB of the answers we received to the letter on *Traffic around Woudestein*.

03 Incoming documents

03.01 Invitation knowledge sharing session Smarter Academic Year

The members of the UC were invited to the session about the Smarter Academic Year. This will take place on Thursday, November 9th from 12:00-17:30 on Tuesday in Rotterdam. The session will be in Dutch. Next to the invitation for the event, a student member of the UC was invited to join the panel discussion, which will last approximately 20 minutes. The panel discussion will focus on the first period and how the pilot went. Councillor Cagla agreed to the panel invitation.

03.02 Response EMC 38675 Letter regarding incidents at EMC

There will be no response on behalf of the UC.

03.03 Response letter Traffic around Woudestein

The UC received a response to the letter about the traffic around the Woudestein campus. Councillor Ernst will contact the policymaker to address the response. The letter will first be discussed at the CM. Councillor Sebastiaan will join the TF working on this agenda point.

04 Any other business

04.01 Pilot Extending Opening Hours Library 2023

Last week, the Task Force met with the policymakers who agreed with the remarks of the councillors that the library opening hours during the weekends are not sufficiently long. The policymakers requested the support of the councillors for a new proposal in which the request for longer opening hours (i.e., 9:00-23:00) on weekend days is highlighted.

There was a discussion regarding the climate impact of this proposal. Specifically, several councillors indicated that the request for extending the opening hours of buildings goes against the sustainability goals that the UC members hold. The TF had already discussed this issue with the policymakers; however, no data exists indicating the impact of a certain number of students on the climate footprint of the extended hours policy.

In conclusion, the UC members were in favor of the proposal.

04.02 Israel and Palestine conflict

When considering the recent conflict between Israel and Palestine, several council members urged the UC to consider the next steps we should be taking. One of the opinions shared in the meeting was that EUR must foster an environment of open discussion and debate on the issue of the EUR's involvement in this conflict. Within this view, it was mentioned that the EUR should freeze ties with Israel and show support to Palestine students affected by the attacks. Also, EUR should not ignore the fact that students from the EUR community chose to return to Israel and commit war crimes against Palestinians, for example, by not allowing their return to the EUR campus. In this view, Palestinian students would not be safe at EUR if these students returned to campus. Additionally, it was mentioned that the EUR should show consistency in their response to the conflict, by comparing the current situation to the Taliban or Russian situation, when EUR took a stance against the oppressors. Also, it was shared that not taking a stance puts one on the side of the oppressor, and thus being neutral would not be a favourable solution. Finally, some councillors argued that it is in the EUR core values to react to this situation.

However, during the discussion, other opinions were shared. Several councillors were not in agreement with EUR taking a stance against Israel. They argued that this would lead to increased polarization, as well as create an unsafe space for Israeli or even Jewish students. Furthermore, several councillors do not consider it to be the duty of a university to take a stance without support from the national level. Also, researching ties at this high level will be a lengthy topic, as was the experience with similar topics in the past (e.g., ties with the fossil fuel industry). Also, they asked where we would draw a line, for example, when it comes to ties to other countries that do not respect human rights.

Furthermore, several councillors argued that striking the right balance is important, as well as searching for practical solutions, such as acting at a faculty level to ensure there is no conflict or discrimination in the classrooms.

Finally, the UC discussed that EUR should set an example by engaging with sensitive topics constructively, as done in past conflicts. In doing so, the members of the UC established a task force that will work on drafting a letter summarising the views of the council and establishing an opinion on what the role of the UC and EUR should be. The TF will address the issue of creating a sense of safety for all students on campus and specifically for the Palestine-Israel situation. Also, the TF will look at the affiliations EUR has, for example with Israeli institutions. Councillors Cagla (TF Lead), Yasin, Emre, Tom, Aki, Joseph, Rami, Achraf, and Sebastiaan will join the task force. As a final note, it should be stated that none of the opinions shared in the meeting were meant as allegations against EUR or the UC.

04.03 AOB

- Reaction EB on Afghan students – the EB Chair informed the UC Chair that when addressing students affected by the events in Afghanistan, the EB researched the impact the events had on the EUR community and based on that decided whether to take action.
- Convergence meeting – In a recent meeting, the action points and future plans of the Convergence were discussed. More information will be shared in the CM by the EB Chair.

More notably, the participating bodies of all involved institutions suggested joining efforts in a joint informal task force which will help in overseeing the matters of the Convergence. It was suggested that each institution would provide a delegation of 4 members, 2 staff and 2 students. The members of the UC agreed, and, in the future, it will be decided who will join this informal task force.

- ISS invitation for Saturday, the 25th of November. The UC Clerk will inform the M&C Officers about possibly responding to the invitation.