

**University Council
Consultation Meeting
Erasmus University Rotterdam**

Date and Time: 30/01/2023, 13:30 – 16:00

Location: Polak 1-20

Present in the Meeting: Annelien Bredenoord (Rector), Ed Brinksma (Chair EB), Ellen van Schoten (Vice-chair EB), Ann O'Brien, Pedro van Gessel, Ernst Hulst, Sebastiaan Kamp, Joseph Ayinla, Timo Zandvliet, Cagla Altin, Yasin Demir, Nawin Ramcharan, Rami Elorabi, Linqendo van der Klooster, Emre Ulusoy, Linda Dekker, Emese von Bone, Aleid Fokkema, Tom van Dijken, Achraf Taouil, Wesley Hennep, Katarzyna Lasak, Rosita Boedhai-Jansen, Natascha Kraal, Max Wagenaar, Roxanne Austin (Clerk), Ellie Cercel (Minutes), Sophie Luck (M&C), Hanna Barkoczi (M&C).

Absent: Ivonne Cune-Noten (chair), Albert Wagelmans, Aki Negate.

Waiver: Anthony van der Linden.

01 Opening

01.01 Setting of the agenda

The agenda item *02.02 EUR campaign budget rules for the student elections of the University Council 2024* was interchanged with item *02.04 EUR Leadership Policy*. With this adjustment, the agenda of the Consultation Meeting was set.

01.02 Minutes Previous Consultation Meeting

The minutes and the action points of the previous Consultation Meeting were approved.

1.03 Announcements

- Absence Chair

Unfortunately, Ivonne is absent due to sick leave. In the meantime, the Presidium decided to rotate the Chair role amongst the Presidium members for each meeting. Therefore, councillor Pedro is chairing today's Consultation meeting.

- Waiver

Councillor Anthony received a waiver for this meeting and is participating online.

02 Agenda items Consultation Meeting

02.01 Additional budget request Convergence

The UC engaged in fruitful discussions with the Convergence and CPC policymakers. In addition to that, the UC would like to elaborate on some strategic questions with the Executive Board. The UC received the request from the EB for a 1.6M euro budget increase for the Convergence project. Although the UC is supporting the potential of the Convergence, there are some concerns regarding this investment, especially in light of the recently discussed measurements aimed at reducing costs, as well as the soon-to-be-expected EUR strategy.

One concern of the UC is regarding the 5% organic growth project portfolio; as the submitted document does not give information on which aspects of the project the portfolio encompasses, it is unclear to the council what will be funded with the requested money (e.g., staff, equipment, research, etc.). Further, the council wishes to discuss how the EB plans to manage the expected increase in funding needs in the future of the project.

The EB informed the UC that the CFO's of the three educational institutions involved in the Convergence project engage in regular meetings about the budget. The financial strategy of the project is based on growth; thus, they regard this requested investment as seed money that allows the project to develop and attract external funding, without which the Convergence project cannot succeed. Further, the EB recognized that the confusion of the UC is based on an unclear framework, which they agreed to modify. It was explained that the breakdown of the cost involves staff and material expenses; any additional necessities requiring an increase in the budget will not be supported by internal funding. The additional financial framework for the Convergence project will provide more clear information on the internal versus expected external funding which will also be shared with the UC later this year.

The council requested more information on the nature of the expected external funding. According to the EB, EUR did not rely on 2nd and 3rd money streams for educational funding in the past; however, as governmental funding is becoming more volatile, the EB sees the strategic advantage in strengthening these underused funding streams. For this purpose, the Convergence project plays an important role. Some funding streams include public funding, as well as the European Union Horizon Europe funding program, for which a delegation to Brussels is planned for March. Depending on the success of these funding programs, private collaborations may also be considered.

Finally, the council inquired about the difference in the reporting on the underspending of the project (i.e., a difference of 0.2M euros between the EUR cover note and the Convergence reporting). The EB was able to clarify the misunderstanding. For 2024, the financial framework was established for a total of 21.8M euros, and all programs were asked for their budget, which added up to 21.6M euros instead. Thus, the amount is not underspending nor reserved, but a difference in reporting. However, the EB expects underspending next to this amount but expects the amount to reduce as the program continues to grow. The exact amount will be monitored throughout the upcoming year.

Action point: the EB will share the financial framework for the internal and external projected funding for the Convergence project with the UC in 2024.

02.02 EUR Leadership Policy

The UC members engaged in plentiful discussions regarding the Leadership policy. Therefore, the council shared several questions and remarks with the EB regarding the new Leadership policy and how it will be implemented at different levels of the University.

Firstly, the UC is concerned about how the Leadership policy will reach existing leaders, for whom the training is not part of the mandatory onboarding process, thus excluding them from a beneficiary skill development opportunity. The EB understood the concerns and explained that several opportunities exist for current leaders, such as community activities, leadership in academic, or inspiration groups. These will be made clearer in the policy document. While the council shared the concern that some of these activities are optional, disincentivizing leaders from partaking in them due to high workload or scheduling pressures, the EB believed the culture at EUR encourages employees in leadership positions to understand their responsibilities, such as engagement in skill development opportunities. They also plan on monitoring absentees at trainings; however, the UC advised the EB to develop positive incentive methods besides this. The EB will take this input to the steering committee.

The UC linked the discussion to the Recognition and Rewards program. Although the UC sees the potential of the program, it is unclear how it will be implemented across all EUR faculties, as well as how it will be evaluated. These concerns are deepened by the pilot at ESSB which has ended and not been evaluated yet. According to the EB, a committee is set up and currently tackling the program in order to be developed EUR-wide by the end of 2024. This timeline has been agreed upon at the start

of the ESSB pilot and is in line with the plans of other Dutch universities. Further, the EB agreed to discuss the suggestion of the UC on conducting an evaluation of the pilot and suggested organizing an information session to update the UC on the state of affairs of the entire Recognition and Rewards program.

In addition, the UC appreciates the development of the 360 feedback and sees it as an improvement compared to the traditional hierarchical feedback system. However, the UC believes it is a vulnerable process, for example, if employees are afraid to talk back to their leaders if it can be traced back. The EB shared the same concern and wished to tackle it by conducting and then evaluating a pilot program in a smaller group setting. The UC requested a follow-up of this pilot program.

Finally, the UC appreciates that students in employment positions at EUR can benefit from the leadership training yet believes that students who hold leadership positions in student associations can also benefit from this program. The UC thus asked the EB to reconsider these groups in the policy. The EB appreciated the advice and will discuss it further with the steering committee. However, they noted that the students in these roles occupy a leadership position for a maximum of one year, thus the program must be adapted to their special needs, refraining from seeing it implemented in the first year of the program.

The EB appreciated the advice of the UC and will discuss it with the steering committee. Further, the EB emphasized that the leadership program will continue to be refined and developed in the upcoming 5 years.

Action points:

- The EB will discuss the advice regarding the development of positive incentive methods for participation in the Leadership programme with the steering committee
- The EB will give the UC an update on the Recognition and Rewards program during an information session in June or September.
- The EB will update the UC on the outcomes of the 360-feedback pilot.
- The EB will discuss the possibility of including students with leadership positions in study associations in the Leadership Programme with the steering committee.

02.03 Code of conduct for elections EUR

The UC shared some questions with the EB about the Code of conduct for elections.

Firstly, the EB were asked whether they experience a responsibility to respond proportionately to violations of the code of conduct. The EB shared they are aware of a singular case in the previous election whereby a complaint about the proceedings with the code of conduct was made, noting that the case was dealt with per procedure.

They also noted that decisions made by the Election Office can be appealed in case of complaints. They further explained their view that the Code of conduct should be worn as a badge of honor by everyone involved in the process. They thus do not see the role of the EB in this specific process.

The UC found this answer confusing, as the Central Election Office policymaker indicated they also do not have any rights to act on violations of the Code, referring to the EB as the responsible party to act on them. The EB clarified the confusion, stating that the Code is based on a WHW law, which regulates the affairs of higher education, and elements of the General Election Act regarding specifically the election process (as there is no legal basis in the WHW regarding election).

Thus, candidates in campus elections are treated similarly to a normal elective process. For example, if there is a request for a candidate's removal from the election process, this can only be achieved by

going to court and not through a decision taken by the EB. The EB also later noted that the bandwidth of freedom of expression in an electoral process differs from civil situations, and thus, if for such situations one invokes a judge to question it, the risk is losing the basis of an electoral process, falling victim to having an appeal procedure for all elections. The EB further explained that appeal cases are difficult, and one has to accept the final decisions, as well as use political debates to dispute arguments of political opponents instead of making appeals.

The UC members pointed to a discrepancy in the legal document. Specifically, in WHW, article 9.35, the EB is recognized as responsible for holding elections and how candidates are chosen; further, the election law states it is applicable for national elections, local elections, etc., but there is no mention of University elections. This discrepancy was clarified by the EB, stating that the Dutch law for higher education states the responsibility of the EB in organizing elections. The General Election law indeed does not specify this specific election, but the Code of Conduct takes inspiration from it in order to treat campus elections similarly to regular election processes.

The EB emphasized the importance of requesting an external and well-qualified party to decide on matters taking place in the electoral process, to ensure fairness. However, if there are circumstances of substantial influence, e.g., weather or an accident, that are deemed to interfere with the election results, then the Central Election Office can decide to cancel the elections, a decision which can be appealed to internally.

A UC member disagreed that a situation of significant influence can be reacted upon, as the voting procedure is anonymous and cannot be traced back to candidates. The EB reiterated the examples given earlier to support their claim.

Furthermore, the UC observed that the new KRUR will not be adapted in time for the new elections while the previous rules do not indicate measures for violations of elections. When asked how the EB plans on dealing with a situation in which the code of conduct is violated, they answered that, similarly to parliamentary situations where laws are not always present to support proceedings, they will deal with situations as best as possible when issues arise.

Finally, the EB was asked how they plan to ensure that digital campaigns are held in the right way. To this, the EB stated that there is a limited amount of oversight on the part of EUR over the use of digital media in the campaign, but they will ensure that the portion they have access to will comply with the decided rules. Thus, the EB has no influence over the use of general social media by candidates, and the good functioning of those mediums is the responsibility of the candidates themselves in following the Code of conduct.

02.04 EUR campaign budget rules for the student elections of the UC 2024

The UC shared some questions with the EB regarding the change in the campaign subsidy rules for student elections.

According to the EB, the procedure was changed from the previous year because it was assessed that the previous campaign subsidy rules proportionally created a budget discrepancy between small and large parties. With the new instrument, they ensure that every list, regardless of size, receives access to basic funding, and on top of that respect the proportionality by dividing the remaining budget by half per candidate. When asked how they plan to ensure that there will be no conflicts regarding budget divisions within the parties, the EB responded by stating it is not the responsibility of the EB nor the Central Elections Office to regulate this division and it should be done internally by each list.

Further, a member of the UC argued that the new division allegedly stimulates smaller lists and thus disadvantages larger lists. To this allegation, the EB replied stating that a policy for stimulating diversity is in place to prevent unfairness. Also, with this new rule, the EB wishes to allow lists that do not have support in terms of representative members to still participate in elections and be selected on grounds

of a fair distribution of representation. This view is based on the Erasmian Value of making all voices heard.

In addition, a member of the UC inquired whether the EB will consider increasing the campaign budget and adapting it to the inflation rate, especially seeing as the EUR is struggling with low voting turnout. The EB answered by stating that they are open to discussing improvements in the budget, however, this has not yet been considered.

Also, a suggestion was made by the UC of using a maximum of 12 students for each list to calculate the division of the spare budget, as there are only 12 seats in the UC. The EB appreciated the suggestion which will be considered if the current policy requires future refinement.

02.05 Ethic Considerations University Collaborations

The UC would like to discuss the grounds on which EUR forms university collaborations, especially from an ethical standpoint. By collaborations, the UC refers to projects beyond the University's boundaries, so within other countries, e.g., involving other universities.

Firstly, the members of the UC inquired if a current policy is in place governing collaborations. According to the EB, a global engagement document was established last summer, consisting of a set of guidelines to check different aspects relevant to engaging in collaborations, especially abroad, both in the EU and internationally. The guidelines have to do with aspects such as finances, Erasmian values, strategic fit, etc. However, the EB pointed out that the government is not static and is being refined as needed. The UC then inquired how the referenced document elaborates on collaborations with other universities when they do not align with the Erasmian values. According to the EB, the document uses the Erasmian values within a larger framework that carefully considers all aspects, e.g., financial ones. They further explained that, in cases in which a collaboration does not align fully with the Erasmian values, they do not wish to treat it as a black-or-white decision, but rather weigh it against all the other elements of the framework. Moreover, they emphasized the preference of engaging rather than disengaging with partners from countries in which the values are not fully aligned with ours, as through a collaboration one can influence a partner by inspiring them to adopt the values EUR possesses.

The members of the UC further inquired how the EB reflects on the current collaborations, and whether they discuss them when signals of value-incongruence appear. In their answer, the EB referred to a separate policy document, Knowledge Safety, which is being currently refined and elaborates on collaborations with countries, e.g., China, where certain universities are blacklisted for technological information issues. In these cases, they carefully assess if the collaborations are directly related to the issue at hand, for instance, in this case, if a collaboration involves tech, it should be avoided, but if it involves the humanities, then the issues may not be as large, and it should be weighted. Another example mentioned by the EB was regarding universities in Iran, where they make a distinction between the academic community and the political climate in which the university is embedded; by maintaining academic ties, one can see the collaboration as an example of overcoming political difficulties through a "back door".

The members of the UC wished to explore a contemporary world issue, specifically the university collaborations in the context of the Israel-Palestine conflict. Therefore, the UC inquired how the EB reflects on ties with the universities in Israel, as it is becoming clear they are implicated with military regimes. According to the EB, they are constantly reflecting on current issues that are constantly changing to assess their choices responsibly. The EB shared they believe the soft diplomacy of science can be a part of providing solutions to encourage a nuanced approach to world issues. The EB Chair compared the situation to the apartheid regime in South Africa when many academicians were fighting against collaborations with South African universities, only to later reflect on how beneficial

the maintaining of the ties had been for the South African academic community to be resilient against the regime. However, the UC argued that maintaining ties can also serve the opposite interpretation, by allegedly legitimizing the efforts of the regime to suppress others. When asked about a response to a recent related news article, the EB responded saying they are planning on assessing the situation with the boards of fellow Dutch universities and wished to not elaborate further before coordinating a collaborative response.

Furthermore, the UC inquired how the EB reflects on the fact that some exchange programs may exclude participants because they take place in countries that discriminate against certain groups, e.g., women, Muslim religion, or LGBTQ+. According to the EB, accessibility is one of the criteria in the earlier mentioned framework, and, ideally, they would rather have accessibility present in exchange collaborations. However, when this is not the case, a decision on collaborations needs to be taken in the context of the other aspects of the framework, for example, some countries might have different rules. They also made a distinction between institutional responsibility and individual freedoms, meaning that some decisions have to be weighted between the benefits they bring to the institution as a whole or to individual students. In a situation in which collaborating with a university from a country does not allow access to a certain group of students, the decision on maintaining ties needs to be made within a context, as many collaborations fail to meet some standards from the framework but are continued because of the context. Taking the criteria out of context and making it absolute will lead, in the opinion of the EB, to collaborations that were not previously deemed problematic to become so.

03 Any other business

03.01 Update Ministry of Education ‘versterking medezeggenschap hoger onderwijs’

On December 22nd, the Minister of Education shared a letter regarding the strengthening of participation. In this letter, the Minister responds to five motions aimed to further strengthen participation, including remuneration of participation members, schooling, support and communication of participation, involvement of participation in crisis decision-making, tuition-free for members, and involvement of participation in the student loan funds. The UC wishes to know the opinion of the EB regarding these themes and whether they see opportunities for further strengthening participation within these themes at EUR.

The EB generally supports the update given by the Minister. Although they have faced difficulties on this topic, for example when the negotiations with the student unions collapsed due to lack of agreement or because the update has not been passed in a tangible law, the EB has integrated these suggestions into their proposal regarding participatory bodies to accommodate the different needs of the EUR faculties.

Action point: The EB will share with the UC a written elaboration of their answer to the agenda item *Update Ministry of Education ‘versterking medezeggenschap hoger onderwijs’*. The EB will share an action plan for the proposal *strengthening participation* with the UC in early February.

03.02 Engagement and Enablement scan

While some schools and services have communicated the outcomes of the Engagement and Enablement Scan 2023 with all their employees and also presented action plans in response to these outcomes, other schools and services have not done so (yet). The UC wishes to discuss with the EB how they expect the schools and services to deal with the outcomes. Also, has this been communicated clearly to the schools and services and will it be checked that expected actions have indeed been taken?

According to the EB, 2023 marked the first year when the scan was performed, thus there was some leniency in how the outcomes were addressed. One issue presented was that some teams presented in low numbers, making it impossible to discuss the results. In this situation, the EB wishes to discuss ways of increasing the results in the future. Also, the Human Resource Business Partners of each faculty were involved in the process of discussing the results with the employees, however, no concrete action plan was followed.

03.03 National Motion to Reduce English Programs

The UC would like to discuss how the EB will tackle the national motion aimed at reducing English programs in Dutch institutions of higher education.

The EB supports the proposed change in the law allowing different *numerus fixus* requirements on separate language tracks within an educational program, thus ensuring better control over the influx of students in English programs. The EB also shared that the situation at EUR is not as extreme as in other universities, as most English programs have a Dutch-taught alternative track. Further, the EB shared they do not wish to reduce the number of international students too greatly, but they need to be sensitive to the effects it has on housing, to ensure that housing access for students in large Bachelor programs is always guaranteed.