

To: The Executive Board

Date

By email

Subject

HOVO – right of initiative

Our reference

UR/LvS/38517

Your reference

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Enclosure

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Department

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Dear members of the Executive Board,

In the University Council meeting 7 December 2021, the council discussed the higher education for the elderly (HOVO). We would like to draw attention to the preservation of HOVO within Erasmus Academy.

Extract from reporting: 'HOVO must stop'.

After more than 30 years, higher education for the elderly in Rotterdam will come to an end. Every year, between 1500 and 2000 private individuals - mostly seniors - follow a course at an academic level. The age limit of 50 had been lifted for a few years and the courses were also accessible to other, broad groups of society. However, it is no longer financially responsible for Erasmus Academy to offer these specific courses without structural support.

Many tens of thousands of inhabitants of Rotterdam and people from outside the region have participated in the courses of HOVO Rotterdam over the years. Later, the age limit of 50 was dropped to introduce academic education to interested parties from other groups in society. And with the introduction of online education because of the Covid-19 pandemic, the participants literally came from all over the world. Every year the number of registrations fluctuated between two and three thousand and many participants also register for more than one course.

However, the Covid-19 pandemic also made it painfully clear that without structural financial support it is not even possible to organise this type of education in a cost-effective way. Online education attracted fewer students than usual, and apart from the fact that the shortages are structural, there is currently no sustainable prospect of profitable exploitation. In the interest of the entire company, it has therefore been decided to shutdown HOVO Rotterdam and their courses.

Plea 'HOVO must continue to exist!'

We are aware that the University Council cannot really be involved in EUR's private sector. Despite this fact, from a social point of view, we would like to draw the attention of the Executive Board to the announcement that HOVO Rotterdam will have to close its doors. We make an urgent appeal to the Board to put every effort to structurally financially support or find support for HOVO. It cannot be the case that a fantastic range of courses for the elderly has to stop for purely financial reasons. The Erasmus University, where 'Making Minds Matter', 'Long Life Learning' and 'Social Engagement' are of huge importance, must be deeply saddened when it comes to closing such a wonderful institute.

Our strategy states: "Social impact also means connection, movement towards each other and collaboration". It means building bridges between different disciplines, in collaboration with society." The elderly is also part of this society! 'Minds' of the elderly also matter! Closing HOVO weakens the social image of Erasmus University and strengthens the image of purely business! This cannot be the intention.

So, dear College, please consider the above plea and keep HOVO open!

Kind regards,

On behalf of the University Council,

H. B. van den Berg
University Council Chair

L.H. van Steenberghe
University Council Clerk