

University Council
Consultation meeting
Erasmus University Rotterdam

Date and Time: 01-07-2025, 14:00-16:00

Location: Polak 2.09

Present in the meeting: Annelien Bredenoord (EB Chair), Jantine Schuit (EB, Rector Magnificus), Ellen van Schoten (EB, Vice-Chair), Ann O'Brien (EB, secretary), Luca Hellings (Chair UC), Roxanne Austin (Clerk), Floortje Dekker (Minutes), Hugo Speelman, Sebastiaan Kamp, Achraf Taouil, Aleid Fokkema, Esra Kahramanoglu, Deniz Alican, Linda Dekker, Nawin Ramcharan, Reinier van Woerden, Federica Violi, Timo Zandvliet, Bachar Farousi, Luna Becirspahic, Sara Ouljour, Max Wagenaar, Albert Wagelmans, Katarzyna Lasak, Rosita Boedhai, Jasper Klasen, Bachar Farousi, Jaron Buitelaar

Waiver: Jaap Cornelese, Clara Egger

Absent: Daan de Boer

01 Opening consultation meeting UC

01.01 Setting of the agenda

There were no remarks, therefore the agenda was set.

01.02 Setting of the minutes of the previous meeting

There were no remarks, therefore the minutes were set.

01.03 Announcements

Location drinks

The Chair

remarked that the drinks will take place in the Van der Goot building today instead of the Pavillion.

Fall cabinet and consequences for university

The EB

provided a brief reflection on the fall of the cabinet, noting that it is generally good news due to the historic budget cuts the cabinet had proposed. However, the EB emphasized that this development does not affect the self-governance proposals. The UNL has an agreement to limit the number of international students to a certain amount, so the EB has informed the deans to continue as planned. While some adjustments may occur, nothing is certain at this point. The EB stated that the proposed discontinuation of the international psychology program will only be brought to the UC once an agreement has been reached with the minister. A UC member remarked that the cancellation had previously seemed definite, but it now appears that agreement from the minister is still required. The EB clarified that this was a UNL proposal and will not be implemented without prior contact with both the minister and parliament. A UC member asked about the impact of a potential new cabinet on the proposed budget cuts. The EB responded that they will proceed as planned, as they do not expect major changes. When asked whether more initiatives could be restored next year, the EB said this is very unlikely. Not only due to budget limitations but also because of a decline in student numbers.

Camera surveillance

In response to a UC letter pointing out the absence of signs indicating camera surveillance on campus, the EB confirmed that signs have now been placed.

02 Agenda items

02.01 Erasmus Perspectives 2026–2030

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UC member from the taskforce began by stating that the UC will give consent to the Erasmus Perspectives. However, the taskforce did have some questions for the EB. The UC member first inquired about how the EB will set priorities given the current context, and what criteria will guide these decisions moving forward. The EB responded that there is a difference between the 2026 and the 2027-onwards perspectives. The budget for 2026 will be spent in alignment with the new strategy, and no major structural shifts are expected. However, from 2027 onwards, discussions are taking place with the Deans, as the EB anticipates that different decisions may need to be made due to governance structures. This is a separate process, and the EB aims to have it completed before the next set of perspectives. The EB also remarked that it is not only about expenses, but also about income, which is another building block of the strategy.

02.02 Consent Strategic Framework Strategy 2025–2030

A UC member asked how the EB's vision and stance on academic freedom are reflected in the framework. The EB responded that academic freedom and the independence of education and research are embedded in the framework. They emphasized that freedom of speech is distinct from academic freedom. Therefore, freedom of speech is not mentioned in the document, as it is not directly related to academic matters. Academic freedom, however, is embedded in the strategy, which is reflected in the use of terms such as "independent research" and "research curiosity."

The UC then asked a question about "open innovation networks," and its meaning, the role it would play, and how it would work. The EB explained that these are sustainable partnerships the university already has and is actively building. These partnerships aim to be equal and bottom-up, involving companies, citizens, and other stakeholders to jointly address challenges. The EB emphasized that the partners should be true collaborators, not just parties the university works for. These partnerships are about co-creation, where all parties can learn from each other rather than only receiving knowledge. The EB sees this as a new form of engagement and noted that such partners should also co-finance these initiatives. The concept is still being developed. A UC member remarked that this explanation was clear.

Lastly, the UC member inquired whether the EB is considering drafting a protocol for responsible engagement. The EB responded that an engagement policy already exists and was developed a few years ago. In recent years, they have experimented with committees to handle sensitive partnerships, and the Committee for Sensitive Collaborations has now been made permanent. Furthermore, the Strategic Dean of Impact and Engagement will begin a reflection process on the rules of engagement this fall. A UC member noted that the

committee mainly reviews cases submitted to it and asked when a human rights policy would be developed, as this is a structural element of the strategy. The EB replied that the committee follows a risk-based approach and is not an ethics committee. Additionally, the dean will explore how to balance academic freedom with the rules of engagement. The EB also noted that it will take several years before the university fully complies with the 'Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD)'.

02.03 Vision, mission and roadmap on Services & Operations

A UC member noted that the document states the EB has already decided on this matter and asked for clarification on the current status, given that this point is still up for advice. The EB responded that a working group had previously been active and that an expert group is currently working on an implementation plan. The UC remarked that the issue is still subject to advice and questioned how much room for advice remains. The EB confirmed that there is always room for advice and added that it would be useful for the UC to receive the implementation plan as well.

02.04 Social Annual Report 2024

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UC member asked about the report's identification of different reasons why conflicts escalate, specifically noting that one reason mentioned is that managers fail to address conflicts at an early stage. They asked what the EB's solution is to this issue and whether the EB believes leadership courses adequately address it. The EB responded that the leadership training does not work perfectly for everyone, but they still see it as an important measure. A steering board is currently looking into leadership, and there are also discussions about making these trainings mandatory. The EB is also exploring the use of mediators to help de-escalate conflicts as well. They acknowledged that some managers are simply unable to handle escalation and that leadership is particularly difficult in uncertain times. The EB also mentioned they have been in contact with HR to explore ways to work together. A UC member remarked that they are happy to hear additional measures are being taken.

The UC member also asked how the EB will prioritize the recommended measures, especially given the upcoming budget cuts that could negatively impact employee wellbeing. The EB responded that investments are needed for things like the leadership programme, but not all recommendations can be implemented due to financial constraints. They emphasized the need to prioritize, though it is too early to say exactly what will be prioritized. However, the leadership programme will likely be one of the priorities. A UC member remarked that there is a lack of awareness about feelings of social safety among students and asked whether the EB is considering how to measure this. The EB responded that they are currently in discussions with student associations to address the issue, as they typically work together with these groups. The UC member urged the EB to put this on the agenda and look into it further.

02.05 End Report Strategy 2024

A UC member inquired how the Executive Board evaluates the previous strategic process and what lessons learned have been incorporated into the new strategic period. The EB responded that they are quite proud of the end report, describing it as an extensive evaluation that will serve as input for the new strategy. Key takeaways from both the midterm evaluation and the end report include the importance of continuing the impact strategy, simplifying the focus, and strengthening interdisciplinarity within the mission-based approach. A UC member then inquired about what the governance structure would look like. The EB responded that they will introduce KPIs and have defined five impact domains, each of which will have associated KPIs. They also plan to identify critical success factors. For some KPIs, deans will have ownership and for others ownership will be shared. The EB noted that not all faculties will have the same KPIs. They emphasized that the governance framework is still under development and is expected to be finalized by October.

02.06 Strengthening Faculty Council Democracy through the Introduction of a Party-Based Electoral System

A UC member gave some context on the initiative and then asked how the EB assesses the current voter turnout rates at the faculty level. The EB responded that faculty councils fall under the responsibility of the deans. They acknowledged that turnout rates vary between faculties and stated that, while they are in favour of high turnout, it cannot be said that a party-based electoral system will result in a higher turnout. Also, it is ultimately up to the faculty councils themselves to make changes to their own rules and regulations. The EB added that they would be interested in researching why such differences in turnout exist across schools. The UC member asked whether it would be possible for faculties that wish to transition to a list-based voting system to do so, and whether the EB could provide assistance in this process. The UC member also inquired about the EB's view on the introduction of a faculty party system. The EB responded that this decision is up to the schools themselves. When asked whether the EB is willing to take on a facilitating and coordinating role at the central level to support faculty councils interested in adopting this system, the EB remarked that the initiative should come from the faculty councils themselves. The EB reiterated their interest in identifying which faculties are experiencing turnout issues and understanding the reasons behind them.

02.07 Review and assessment framework for collaboration with the fossil fuel sector

A UC member inquired about the use of the term "negative" in relation to impact, noting that it is very vague. They asked how the EB intends to articulate this in the implementation protocol. The EB responded that they agree there is no clear definition at the moment, as the committee worked from a moral minimum perspective rather than a negative impact perspective. The EB stated that they do not plan to define "negative impact" explicitly but will work with the current framework for one year, after which an evaluation will take place to assess whether any adjustments are needed. They emphasized that this is a learning process, as the framework is new for the university.

A UC member then asked about how stakeholders from the student community were involved in the process. The EB responded that students played an important role in the dialogues and that a UC member was involved. They added that for expert committees, a student member is usually not required. A UC member inquired whether, if such committees are established in the future, the EB could consider reserving a seat for a student. The EB responded that there are formal compositions for committees, and depending on the specific topic or question, they will consider which additional members are needed. A UC member noted that student associations are currently facing many uncertainties and urged the EB to reach out to them as well. The EB responded that the framework is focused on formal institutional collaborations and that individual collaborations do not fall under the university's official partnerships. However, the UC member pointed out that student associations do receive university funding and often lack clarity on what is allowed.

A UC member also inquired about the EB's position on collaborations with the Ministry of Defense. The EB responded that collaborations with Defense already exist and that they see this as part of the university's societal impact. A UC member remarked that there may be opportunities to collaborate with other universities on research for Defense, given the university's involvement in the Convergence alliance. The EB responded that they are currently exploring this with the LDE alliance and are also in discussions with the province. They emphasized that the focus is not only on defense but also on broader issues such as societal resilience.

02.08 Recognition for full-time board positions in Study Associations

A UC member inquired whether the EB acknowledges the role study associations play in students their academic, social, and professional development. The EB responded that they truly acknowledge the valuable contribution of study associations to students their development. A UC member then asked whether the EB is aware that many study associations are currently struggling to fill their full-time board positions, which threatens the continuity and future of these associations. The EB confirmed they are aware of this issue and noted that they see similar challenges within the university itself, such as difficulties in finding members for programme committees.

The UC member also asked whether the EB is aware that the University of Twente and Leiden University already structurally award ECTS credits to students who undertake a board year, and whether there is a reason Erasmus University has not implemented a similar system. The EB responded that they were not familiar with Twente's system but welcomed the suggestion and expressed interest in learning more about the initiative, stating they will look into it. Furthermore, the UC member asked whether the EB considers it part of its responsibility to actively encourage faculties to take measures that ensure the continuity of student associations. The EB responded that they are unsure whether they have a formal role in this, as it may fall more under the responsibility of the faculties. However, they acknowledged it is a broader issue and expressed willingness to explore what can be done. A UC member added that they had been in contact with E&S, who were enthusiastic about the idea of implementing a system similar to that of other universities.

02.09 Diversity Travel

A UC member thanked the EB for the documents they had shared. The UC member then inquired whether the EB could provide an update, given that they had previously stated they would take action. The EB responded that they had sent a letter stating the university's concerns and requesting a response, as well as a meeting with Diversity Travel. The EB also provided an update on long-stay accommodation, noting that Diversity Travel does not currently offer accommodations for longer stays. As an exception, Diversity Travel will share an online form for those who have longer stays. A UC member additionally remarked that some invoices are being sent twice, which can only be corrected with a credit invoice. This is creating delays and an administrative burden. The EB replied that they have asked Legal Affairs to contact the Finance Department and noted that one of the main concerns with Diversity Travel is the amount of time their processes demand from the organization. A UC member asked whether the EB needed anything further from the UC on this matter. The EB responded that they did not.

03 AOB

UNL statement on academic freedom

A UC

member inquired about the recent statement by the rectors of UNL on academic freedom and the upcoming town hall meetings, asking the EB to clarify the intention of these meetings and how the UC will be involved in the process. The EB responded that the letter mentioned the organization of dialogue sessions, although it did not explicitly state UC involvement. However, they would welcome participation from the UC. One topic the Rector would like to address in these sessions is self-censorship. In addition to these dialogue sessions, the EB emphasized the importance of protecting employees and students, and noted they are looking into improving internal processes while fostering dialogue with the broader university community. They added that it would be beneficial to have both an employee and student member from the UC present during these sessions.

Sports faculties

A UC

member expressed interest in the EB's stance following news that the Minister intends to continue exploring possibilities regarding sports facilities in higher education. The Chair added that the director of Erasmus Sport has invited the taskforce for a discussion and remains available to answer any questions, and that this invitation is still open. The UC member reiterated their question about the EB's position. The EB responded that while the Minister currently tolerates the existing arrangements, the EB is not satisfied with this as they would like more than tolerance and prefer that this is formally incorporated into the legal framework. Considering sport faculties are important for the mental health and well-being of students and staff. When asked if this discussion is only for sports faculties, the EB clarified it also includes culture, not just sports.