

**University Council
Consultation meeting
Erasmus University Rotterdam**

Date and Time: 11-03-2025, 14:00-16:30

Location: EMC - OWR 40

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), Hugo Speelman, Sara Ouljour, Sebastiaan Kamp, Achraf Taouil, Bachar Farousi, Jaap Cornelese, Albert Wagelmans, Luna Becirspahic, Ernst Hulst, Aleid Fokkema, Esra Kahramanoglu, Deniz Alican, Max Wagenaar, Roxanne Austin (Clerk), Floortje Dekker (Minutes), Linda Dekker, Rosita Boedhai-Jansen, Daan de boer, Jasper Klasen, Clara Egger

Absent: Katarzyna Lasak, Nawin Ramcharan, Timo Zandvliet, Reinier van Woerden, Jaron Buitelaar, Federica Violi

01 Opening consultation meeting

01.01 Setting of the agenda

There were no remarks, therefore the agenda was set.

1.02 Setting of the minutes

There were no remarks, therefore the minutes were set.

01.03 Announcements

Thanking EMC and Drinks

The Chair expressed gratitude to the EMC for hosting the UC today and providing a tour. Drinks will be available after the consultation meeting.

Final Consultation Meeting for Ernst and new UC member

This will be Ernst's final consultation meeting after four years in the UC. The Chair also welcomed the new UC member Clara Egger.

Leadership changes

The EB announced that Martine van Selm will be the new academic lead of recognition of rewards replacing Victor Bekkers. Furthermore, Hub Zwart who is currently on sabbatical, will not return as Dean of the School of Philosophy. An interim dean is in place, and the recruitment process for a new dean is starting.

Flat fee reparations

Due to government budget cuts, the flat fee compensation for the university fell through. However, there is now a deal within the Universities of the Netherlands (UNL) that will provide some reparations. Instead of the initially anticipated €11 million, the university will now receive €16 million.

New strategy

A new operational strategy is currently in development. The UC will receive updates as progress is made.

02 Agenda items consultation meeting

02.01 Action plan report labor authority

A UC member asked a question about whether work pressure is not an issue for professional staff as this is not implied in the document. The EB addressed the concerns from the taskforce about work pressure for professional services staff, stating that the action plan aims to improve conditions for all employees, although some points specifically address academic staff. The EB agreed to review the wording in the document. When asked whether relying on internal HR staff instead of external hires would increase the workload, the EB responded that, due to financial constraints, they try to avoid external hires and encourage teams to do what they can with the people they have. As a result, internal staff have been asked to take on these additional tasks. The UC inquired whether there have been any signals from HR that this would lead to increased work pressure. To which the EB responded that they have not received any signals thus far. The UC member responded that the UC will monitor the impact and discuss it with HR.

Regarding participatory rights, a UC member asked why the UC is rarely mentioned in policy plans and whether they will have the opportunity to review them. The EB assured the UC that HR reports will be shared, but the UC argued that quarterly updates are insufficient, and that the UC should have consent or advisory rights. The UC member cited the universal workload scheme as an example where the UC should have been involved. Furthermore, the UC member inquired about how it is ensured that those who need Active Bystander training attend. The EB replied that they cannot make participation mandatory but will emphasize its importance for everyone. A UC member questioned how a universal workload scheme would reduce overwork. The EB responded that while the scheme may not directly reduce workload, it provides insight into how employees allocate their time. Another UC member countered that workload perception varies and specifically mentioned that, in their case, educational hours have been reduced over time without consent. They now have the same tasks on but less time to complete them. The UC member commented that the universal workload scheme could be a flawed measurement instrument. The EB maintained that the goal is transparency and process improvement. As an example, the EB explained that if employees are spending a significant amount of time reading theses, the process could be examined to identify ways to make it more efficient. The UC emphasized that the universal scheme should remain adaptable to different roles and that other tasks should also be measured.

02.02 Research strategy

A UC member remarked that they had expected the document to outline specific strategic decisions and inquired about the key priorities of the strategy. The EB responded that the strategy was developed by the vice deans of research, who deliberately chose not to focus on specific themes in order to make it more inclusive. The EB explained that the strategy outlines EUR's contributions to the community under its vision section, while more concrete discussions take place at different levels. The strategy primarily focuses on the types of research EUR aims to pursue. The EB noted that the strategy resulted from discussions among the deans, with some schools advocating for a more ambitious approach while others preferred a less detailed one. The EB advised the UC member to view the strategy more as a vision. The UC member responded that this was their main criticism, as the document indeed seemed more like a vision statement rather than a concrete strategy. On the topic of engagement with various educational institutions, especially vocational schools (MBOs), a UC member referenced a guest speaker who was interested in understanding how the research strategy creates societal impact. The EB responded that, to remain relevant as a

university, fundamental research is necessary alongside research with direct societal impact. They emphasized the importance of clarifying the value of scientific research to society, as this is sometimes questioned. The UC member further commented that universities are sometimes perceived as isolated "ivory towers" with little connection to external institutions. The EB countered that they maintain strong connections with HBO institutions and have close collaborations with MBOs in Rotterdam. They acknowledged the importance of these initiatives and emphasized that such partnerships should be further developed.

02.03 Employer vision EUR

A UC member remarked that it is good that the vision is in place. However, they noted that the vision was written with an older strategy in mind, and since a new strategy is now being developed, they asked whether a new vision would also be written. The EB responded that the new strategy will still share many of the same core values, so they see no need for a new vision to be written. Furthermore, the UC member pointed out that the vision states that employees at EUR biggest reason to work here is to create societal impact. A UC member commented that is not really the case in reality. The EB responded that mission statements often differ from reality but that they do believe this is part of the reason people work at EUR. They explained that the vision is written from the perspective that all employees contribute to creating societal impact. A UC member remarked that this could deter employees who do not care as much about societal impact. The EB responded that the vision is meant to be inclusive and did not agree with this concern. Additionally, the UC member noted that the vision refers to a "competitive salary," is not the case in reality. The EB clarified that in the Dutch version, the wording is "conform to market rate" rather than "competitive." Another UC member argued that it could also not be seen as conforming, as it does not match international standards. The EB asked what the UC's suggestion would be. A UC member suggested that the EB should highlight the secondary conditions more. The EB agreed to pass this feedback to HR. Furthermore, the UC member commented on the terms of employment, stating that the vision should be included in them. The EB responded that the vision is an inspirational document representing the culture of EUR, while the terms of employment is a legal document. The EB did note that while they are different, they should not be inconsistent with each other.

Lastly, a UC member asked about how the cutting down on external hires within EUR show up on the employee vision. The EB answered it doesn't speak about external hires as they are not employees of the EUR. Furthermore, a UC member inquired about the hiring staff who have BVs and whether this practice would be reduced in line with the policy of limiting external hires. The EB responded that it depends. "External" is typically viewed as someone completely outside of the university, such as a consultant. The EB prefers staff with BVs over external consultants, as the money paid to them returns to the university through dividends.

02.04 PhD council

A UC member raised concerns about the lack of PhD representation following the disbandment of EPAR, which previously served as a participatory body for PhD students. They inquired about the EB's institutional responsibility in ensuring the continued existence of such bodies. The EB responded that EPAR disbanded due to the lack of successors but stated that they do not see it as their responsibility to maintain its existence, as it was initiated by PhD students themselves. However, they acknowledged the importance of this

type of representation and viewed it as a positive development. The UC also asked whether the university could offer support to a new PhD council at EUR. The EB responded that if a concrete plan and budget were presented, they would be open to considering support. The EB did note that the UC is the formal participatory body at EUR, meaning a new PhD council would not have an official status. However, they emphasized the importance of discussing the establishment of a PhD council with the graduate schools.

02.05 Eurekaweek duration

A UC member raised several questions regarding the shortening of the Eurekaweek. Firstly, a UC member asked why no major event sector partnerships were established for Eurekaweek 2024, despite their potential to reduce costs and generate revenue. The EB responded that there were indeed a number of external partners involved, with a budget of 140,000 euros. However, the UC member was referring to event sector partners who have their own venues. The EB clarified that Eurekaweek aims to find broad partnerships, but if the UC meant specific partners, then they would need to look into those specifically to see what the reason was. The UC member clarified that they were talking about 'partygroup'. The EB agreed to look into this and follow up with the UC.

A second question concerned the overlapping of International Day and Campus Day, and how this might affect international students' introduction to the university and student life. The EB responded that the goal was to combine both activities to introduce national and international students to university life. The UC member raised concerns that this overlap might result in international students feeling less connected to the university, given that they are newer to the environment. The EB did not believe this would be the case and an evaluation will take place after the Eurekaweek. When asked whether the events might be separated again in the future, the EB stated that they would consider this at a later time. The UC also inquired about the impact of a condensed schedule on study and student associations' opportunities to engage with new students. The EB responded that student organizations still have the same opportunities as before, and a new association day will be introduced. Additionally, Eurekaweek emphasizes that student associations should hold their events outside of Eurekaweek events to ensure broader participation.

Another concern was raised about whether the shortened schedule still maintains the overall value of Eurekaweek. The EB responded that there was a decline in participation last year. The EB stated that they want to keep the program interesting and ensure students have opportunities to get to know each other. With more activities taking place on campus, they hope to increase engagement and make the experience more appealing. While keeping costs under control as well. An evaluation will be conducted to assess whether the shortened week was successful, and the results will be shared with the UC. A UC member also asked whether the EB would be willing to return to a longer schedule if the financial situation improves. The EB responded that they do not foresee improvements in the financial situation in the coming years and noted that the declining number of students attending Eurekaweek is also a big reason for shorter week. Finally, a UC member commented that there used to be a fee for smaller organizations to attend Eurekaweek, which is no longer the case. They encouraged the EB to revisit this decision to make it more accessible for smaller organizations.

Action points:

- The EB will look into the absence of 'Partygroup' as a partner for Eurekaweek and provide a follow-up to the UC.
- The EB will share the evaluation of the Eurekaweek with the UC

02.06 Diversity travel

The UC inquired about the financial impact of Diversity Travel on the budget and whether it aligns with expectations. The EB responded that there were three main reasons for implementing this system: (1) EUR was not compliant with EU regulations, as faculties were spending too much on travel; (2) the university has a duty of care to its employees, and a central system is necessary to track employee locations while traveling; and (3) Diversity Travel supports EUR's sustainability goals. The EB confirmed that these reasons remain valid. A UC member suggested that other options, such as Airbnb, could also be considered. The EB responded that Airbnb does not meet EUR's requirements. Another UC member remarked that the current system itself does not fully meet requirements, as many employees feel uncomfortable using it. The EB stated that discussions are taking place with faculties to gather all the concerns. Additionally, they noted that the situation is evolving, and a dedicated team is actively reviewing complaints.

Regarding the sustainability of Diversity Travel, a UC member asked whether it is possible to travel by train instead of flying. The UC also asked about the communication surrounding the contracting of Diversity Travel and the mandatory use of its services. The EB responded that a pilot was conducted before the system was fully implemented but acknowledged that communication needs improvement, which they will address. When asked whether this was done in partnership with LDE, the EB clarified that EUR implemented the system independently. They also confirmed that an evaluation of the system is planned and that EUR remains in regular contact with Diversity Travel. A UC member acknowledged the need to comply with regulations but raised concerns about the high costs, which could negatively impact staff who cannot afford the prices. The EB agreed and stated that they will investigate this issue. Another UC member commented that if the EB aims to encourage sustainable travel, Diversity Travel sometimes offers limited options for doing so. The Chair suggested that sharing the evaluation with the UC could be beneficial. The EB confirmed that they will provide the evaluation once it becomes available.

Action point:

- *The EB will share the evaluation of diversity travel*

03 Any other Business

03.01 Potential new strikes regarding budget cuts

The UC inquired about the EB's stance on relay strikes against government budget cuts or other actions. The EB responded by distinguishing between a strike and a demonstration, emphasizing that they support certain actions such as the action taken by UNL on March 25th. They also believe it is important to ensure student's right to education. When asked whether there would be consequences for staff participating in strikes, the EB confirmed that there would be none. However, they stressed that actions should be taken in a constructive manner, and they do not believe that preventing students from attending classes through strikes would effectively persuade the government.

3.02 Lambers Student Excellence Awards

A requirement for the Lambers Student Excellence Awards is that a student must have graduated their masters cum laude. A UC member questioned how this aligns with EUR's broader educational vision, which looks beyond study success. Furthermore, the UC member noted that some faculties have abolished the cum laude title entirely.

The EB responded that the prize is awarded by the Erasmus Trust Fund, making it their decision. They emphasized that excellence remains part of EUR's vision and noted that the trust fund also grants other awards that focus more on impact. The EB stated that they would

be willing to discuss the award criteria with the Erasmus Trust Fund but also agreed that high grades are still an important aspect of excellence. However, they also acknowledged that excellence is not solely defined by grades and encouraged the UC to talk with the Erasmus Trust Fund as well. Additionally, the UC member raised concerns about students from faculties that have abolished cum laude, as they are now ineligible for the award. The EB took note of this concern.

Action point:

- The EB will get back to the UC regarding the '*Lambers Student Excellence Awards*'

03.03 Smoking on campus

A UC member remarked that smoking is still prevalent on campus and expressed hope for stricter measures. The EB agreed that they would like the campus to be smoke-free and emphasized the importance of raising awareness. However, they noted that behavioral change is necessary, as they do not want to take on an enforcement role. To address this, the EB plans to launch another awareness initiative and is open to suggestions from the UC. A UC member suggested increasing the number of signs prohibiting smoking. Another UC member proposed consulting the psychology department for insights on encouraging behavioral change.

04 Closing