



To: University Council
Via: university.council@eur.nl

Date
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Subject
Response to 38710 Redistribution of all-gender toilets

Our reference
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Enclosure
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Department
Executive Board

Visiting address
Burgemeester Oudlaan 50
Erasmus Building
A2-01

Postal address
P.O. Box 1738
3000 DR Rotterdam
The Netherlands

T +31 10 408 1751
E cvb@eur.nl
W www.eur.nl/English

Dear members of the University Council,

The Executive Board received your letter regarding redistribution of all-gender toilets. We reply to you with this letter. As you know, the Erasmus University Rotterdam is committed to inclusivity. It is good to emphasize that we both agree on the importance of inclusivity, and with that, the introduction of all-gender toilets (AGT's). We would like to share our considerations in establishing the AGT's in the educational buildings on the Woudestein campus, before replying to your concerns.

In most buildings, there are only two toilet areas per floor (men's and women's). Adding a third toilet area is not feasible and not a goal in itself. Transgender Network Netherlands states: *"In gender-segregated toilets, someone's gender expression matters more explicitly than outside. This causes transgender individuals to avoid gender-segregated toilets. They deserve to feel safe in the toilet, just like everyone else, without being singled out with a separate toilet. Gender-neutral toilets are the only option where gender matters strictly to no one. Toilets are thereby equated with the space outside the toilets, which is also not gender-segregated, and which we also believe should not be gender-segregated (such as classrooms, workplaces, and hospitality areas)."* So, from an inclusivity standpoint, it is most desirable and feasible to convert existing segregated toilet groups into AGT's. No toilets are taken from anyone; they just can be used by everyone.

That being said, the following considerations led to the choice of the current AGT's:

For visibility and uniformity, it was decided to make the toilet groups on the entrance floors of all educational buildings into AGT's. These areas are the most visited, thus ensuring the highest level of social control.

Urinals in men's toilets contribute to sustainability goals (using less water and necessary for obtaining a sustainability certificate) and therefore are not removed. In future renovations we can put urinals behind doors, but in existing buildings they are often openly placed, and also near the entrance. We recognized that not everyone may feel comfortable with that. Concealing them behind a door is usually not feasible due to the layout of the existing toilet groups. For this reason, we have placed signage on all AGT's indicating whether urinals are present, allowing those who wish to avoid them to do so.

By the start of the academic year 2023-2024, the AGT's were realized. Towards the end of the academic year, we planned to evaluate the implementation. We are now approaching the end of the academic year. We have acknowledged the letter from the University Council expressing certain concerns. We take these concerns seriously, as the need for inclusivity applies to everyone.

In reaction to your concerns:

Feedback suggests a need for a more balanced distribution that accommodates all preferences.

First of all, the distribution is not meant to be balanced on the percentage of non-binary people. An AGT is not meant for only non-binary people as a "third gender" toilet, it is meant to be an accessible toilet for everyone. Let's focus on the feelings of safety and comfort.

You mention specifically the Mandeville Building, where on the third floor all toilets are AGT's. With your feedback in mind, we will reconsider this, since it would be very easy to create both gender-segregated and AGT's on that floor.

You mention that various indications of discomfort regarding the AGT's have been reported, and that students and staff express unease about sharing restrooms facilities with individuals of a different gender, and that mostly women don't feel safe and often prefer toilets without urinals.

Regarding the urinals: we acknowledged this as a problem in advance, therefore we made signing on every AGT on the outside, indicating whether or not there are urinals inside. We will look into this further, maybe the signing or the communication can be approved. It is exactly this unease that you describe that non-binary people experience too when having to choose between the gender-segregated toilets. The concerns are real, for multiple groups of people.

A practical concern you mention is that women who wish to

adjust their headscarves in the restroom may feel uncomfortable doing so in the presence of individuals of a different gender.

We will look into the possibility of making a mirror inside the toilet cubicle itself.

You propose a different distribution of AGT's in the educational buildings.

We will look at your proposal in detail, because the concerns are serious and we take them seriously. This will take a little more time. We want and have to do it thoroughly. With this reply, we want to let you know that the topic is on our list and will be taken into account.

We would welcome a member of the University Council to think along with the AGT's, together with other stakeholders. In addition, adaptation concerning privacy screens with urinals, mirrors, signage, including the financial consequences will be taken on board. Our goal is to be inclusive for all students, staff and visitors.

The Executive Board of Erasmus University Rotterdam,



dr. E.M.A. van Schoten RA
Vice-president