

Resource

MARCH 2023 VOLUME 17

The journalism platform for all at Wageningen University & Research

Internationals
still welcome

New housing
for 264 students

Tackling intimidation
of diversity staff

Vote for
Teacher of
the Year

**Sustainable
behaviour**
can be encouraged

New course
Doing research
underwater | p.22

**Recognition
& rewards
revolution**
with Academic
Career Framework
p.12



Contents

NO 13 VOLUME 17



18

Opportunities and threats
CRISPR-Cas for crop breeding



21

No ENKA pipeline
but still concerns



26

Six tips for
sustainable clothing

6 AID ignites

28 The side job:
student in army gear

11 Column: Guido on
'quiet quitting'

30 Out of your bubble
with *Hear Me Out*

16 Dissecting 'for fun'

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background stories at
resource-online.nl



FOREWORD

Revolution

The then spokesperson for WUR phoned, somewhat irritated. It was January 2020 and we had talked to various people affected about the tenure track career path. The article headline was 'Overhauling Tenure Track'. That hit a nerve, and a rectification was demanded. Why? Weren't they overhauling the system after all? Well, 'discussing' would be better. The journalist who wrote the report shrugged his shoulders and recommended leaving the headline as it was. Which turned out to be the right decision. Firstly, people on the tenure track responded on social media saying how pleased and relieved they were to read changes were on the way. Secondly, we see now, three years later, that the tenure track system has indeed been overhauled. The people who drew up the plans for the new recognition and rewards system even call it a revolution (page 12). However, at the moment WUR Council still has reservations. To be continued, in other words, including in *Resource*.

Incidentally, another revolution has also taken place, if invisible from dry land: it is now possible to take a course in Scientific Diving at WUR. Take the plunge with the students on page 22.

Willem Andréé
Editor-in-chief





HOLI

On Saturday 4 March, the grey Haarweg containers served as the backdrop for a colourful Holi party. More than 100 students celebrated this springtime Indian festival with dancing, games and of course by throwing coloured powder. The camp fire symbolizes burning the negative stuff and welcoming a promising future. Our photographer was there (and had to clean his camera particularly thoroughly afterwards). [CU](#)

Photo Guy Ackermans

Evaluation of academics overhauled

University researchers and lecturers will henceforth be measured against a new yardstick to assess their efforts and achievements. With social impact given its rightful place.

This plan is the result of more than two years of work on a new system of 'recognition and rewards'. The new system applies to all university researchers and lecturers at Wageningen University and is intended to replace the tenure track and the Education Career Path. See also *Measuring Up* (page 12).

These systems will be replaced by three career paths for all academic staff: lecturer, researcher or academic on the path towards a personal chair. These three categories are not new in themselves. What is radically different, however, is the uniform framework for assessing staff on these paths.

Besides research and teaching, social impact and what are dubbed academic services (admin, peer reviewing and so on) will be recognized and rewarded from now on.

One-sided incentive

The new framework is the university's implementation of the national agreement to bring more flexibility and diversity to academic careers, while

Social impact and academic services will count too from now on

judged primarily on the number of publications they've written and the number of PhD students they supervise. The unbalanced incentive that creates makes for high work pressure, while

work that benefits the wider society goes unrewarded.

For the new evaluation system, 27 indicators have been drawn up for scoring staff. Which score is desirable or required in which area and at which point in one's career has yet to be determined: guidelines for that are still under development. The new system is scheduled to come into force in September, with a transition period of three years during which evaluation under the current system will still be possible.

The draft Academic Career Framework, as the plan is called, has been approved by the Executive Board. The WUR Council will study the plan in the coming period. Detailed guidelines for evaluation will then be released in May. The plan is the product of a broad committee, led by Dean of Education Arnold Bregt. ^{RK}

New Costerweg accommodation ready this month

The new Idealis housing complex at Costerweg 65 will be handed over on Friday, 24 March. The first students will get their keys the next day.

The new complex is made up of three buildings, with room for 264 students. There are 144 studios and 12 student houses with 10 rooms each. Key issues in the design were sustainability and communal areas for getting together. There is a collective heat pump with thermal energy storage in the ground. Solar panels on the roof generate electricity. And there are social spaces, such as a butterfly garden. The rooms in the student houses measure approximately 13 square metres and will cost about 385 euros a month, including service charges. The studios measure

between 20 and 25 square metres and will cost 650 euros plus an additional 155 euros in service charges. Studio tenants who are aged 23 and older may be entitled to rent rebates of between 250 and 350 euros a month.

Interviews

Idealis director Bart van As says there is plenty of interest in the rooms: 'Almost all of the rooms are taken.' The studios are allocated based on how long the applicant has been on the waiting list. For the student houses, students could sign up in groups of ten. Van As: 'A total of 46 groups applied. The 12 groups with the longest combined waiting time will move in at the end of the month.'

Rooms that are vacated in the student



Photo Guy Ackermans

houses in future will be assigned through a new approach to interviews by house occupants, Van As explains. 'Vacant rooms will be published on www.room.nl, and the 10 people with the longest waiting time will be invited for an interview evening. That gives the occupants a say in the matter.' ^{LZ}

10k

Soil film *Onder het Maaiveld* ('Under Ground Level') is playing to packed cinemas. Some 10,000 people saw the film in the first weekend after the premiere. That achievement gets it the Crystal Film accolade, an award specifically for Dutch documentaries and short films. The film about soil life is showing in 60 cinemas. RK

Vote for Teacher of the Year

In the week of 20 March, students will once again be able to vote for their favourite teacher. In previous editions they were only able to vote for the 200 or so teachers who had been preselected based on the course evaluations, but now they can choose any WUR teacher.

All eligible students (regular Bachelor's and Master's students who started at WUR in or before September 2021) will get an email at the start of that week inviting them to vote. Students who started this academic year and exchange and pre-Master's students aren't allowed to vote.

The 10 or 11 teachers with the most votes will be interviewed by a student jury, which will select the top five. The winner will be announced on 20 June. LZ

Minister wants to tackle intimidation of diversity staff

Education minister Robbert Dijkgraaf says threats and intimidation of university diversity officers is completely unacceptable. He plans a new approach later this year.

Universities hire diversity officers to prevent discrimination and remove barriers at their institution. Some people,

Diversity officers suffer verbal abuse, threats and intimidation

including some MPs, think they are going too far in the changes they are trying to introduce and dismiss them as 'woke'.

This criticism has gone beyond mere words. A journalistic investigation by various higher education media outlets, including *Resource*, revealed last year that these employees are verbally abused, threatened and intimidated, both online and offline. Their personal details are also circulated online without their permission. After their details became public knowledge, even family members were the target of harassment.

Worrying

The liberal democrat party D66 asked questions in parliament about the problem. Dijkgraaf replied that the reports were worrying and 'completely unacceptable'. Recently, Dijkgraaf announced a new government plan to tackle 'online

intimidation, racism and hate speech', to be presented later this year. He did not give any details on what the plan would look like.

Incident

In addition, he will talk to diversity officers about their personal safety. He also pointed to the SafeScience hotline that was set up last November for reporting incidents. He stressed that even employees who are not involved in research can get support and advice from the SafeScience centre. HOP

AID theme announced

The theme for the Annual Introduction Days (AID) next summer is 'Ignite'. The student committee in charge of organizing AID announced the new theme in a video clip on Instagram.

'AID is really important for new students coming to Wageningen,' says Rosa Knol, chair of the AID committee. 'It's like firing the starter gun to start your student life. That's where the idea for the theme came from.'

The broad outline of the programme for the introduction week has already been decided, says Knol. The week will include various classic AID events, such as the final party on campus and the Sing-along (formerly known as the Cantus). 'The Cantus got renamed the Sing-along last AID as we didn't want to give the impression you had to drink alcohol,' explains Knol. 'New students and internationals sometimes found that quite intense. Of course people can still have a beer, but we won't push it.'

Personal safety is a priority for the AID committee. 'We are looking at how we can organize this AID in a way that is safe for everyone. If you do feel unsafe, there should always be somewhere you can go.' LZ



Outdoor games

Spring is approaching, which means W-play is due to start again. As of 21 March, you can take a short active break between 12:00 and 14:00, Mondays to Thursdays, to play games on the field between Forum and Atlas. The activities change regularly. In the first week, they include Frisbee, racing on a space hopper and skipping. The schedule can be found on the social media channels of De Bongerd Sports Centre. There is no charge to take part. cJ

Photo De Bongerd Sports Centre

Wageningen's Got Talent?



If you can play music, dance, write poems or juggle crockery while standing on someone else's shoulders, why not show off your talents to the rest of Wageningen?!

Student party S&I, Popcultuur Wageningen and *Uitwaaien* magazine are organizing a Wageningen's Got Talent event on 20 April in the evening. Anyone can sign up to perform, including non-students.

'Sometimes it feels like the university and the town of Wageningen are two different worlds,' says Wenjiao Song of S&I. 'We hope this event will bring the two sides closer together.'

Song emphasizes that there is room for all kinds of acts, provided you can perform the act inside Café Loburg.

If you are interested in taking part, scan the QR code to register. The evening will be free of charge. cJ



International students still welcome at WUR

The international student bastion Wageningen is to 'cease actively recruiting' international students, read a recent headline in the regional newspaper *de Gelderlander*. Some international students are no longer feeling welcome at WUR. That's an unintended side-effect of an instruction from the Minister of Education, explain Education Dean Arnold Bregt and Rector Magnificus Arthur Mol.

Neither director expected that the news in *de Gelderlander* and *Resource* – that WUR would stop recruiting international students – would spark off discussion on campus too.

In mid-February, WUR heeded Education minister Robbert Dijkgraaf's call to temporarily suspend the active recruitment

of international students in order to relieve the pressure on teaching staff, housing and learning facilities. The minister's call resulted

'No one is questioning the need for international Master's students in Wageningen'

from pressure from Parliament, which is concerned about the growing numbers of international students in the Netherlands. Mol: 'We said, we can agree to this request, partly because we don't do much large-scale recruiting. But we are continuing to provide individual international students with information, and we are still running online open days for them. In that respect, the newspaper report was factually incorrect.'

This didn't stop a growing unease among international students in Wageningen. Are we still welcome, they wondered? Bregt and Mol state that the ratio of international to Dutch students has remained the same for decades and is balanced:



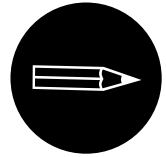
Photo Guy Ackermans

between 20 and 25 per cent are international students (currently 23 per cent). Bregt: 'International students are always welcome. WUR monitors the balance annually; we aim to have at least 25 per cent international students from various different countries in our international classrooms for the Master's programmes.'

Not like the big cities

So was it a bit foolish of WUR to say: we will stop recruiting too? And what would be wrong with being the stubborn exception? Mol: 'It's complicated. If you are the only institute to refuse, you get a different kind of discussion. I felt that was not a discussion we wanted to have. I said, let's wait and see what the minister comes up with – his framework letter – and talk to MPs about the situation in Wageningen. We have made a factsheet for them pointing out that only 7 per cent of the students on our Bachelor's programmes are international students. I asked them if they thought that was a lot. The answer was no. We explained that the housing

shortage here cannot be compared to that in the larger cities.' Bregt: 'Such nuances get lost in the debate. There has been a big influx in Bachelor's programmes in particular of international students doing social sciences - psychology and economics. But no one is questioning the need for international students in the Wageningen Master's programmes focusing on biodiversity, climate, and food safety and security at a global level. It is part of our profile, it benefits the Netherlands, and it is essential for the world that we educate these international Wageningen experts.' Bregt continues: 'Ceasing large-scale recruitment activities does neither our international students nor us any harm. It was a gesture of goodwill towards the minister. There is no problem in Wageningen. Not in terms of housing, nor in terms of funding and accessibility.' ^{WA}



A failed experiment, a rejected article: these things are soon labelled failures in academia. As for talking about it – not the done thing! But that is just what WUR scientists do in this column. Because failure has its uses. This time we hear from Mireille van Damme, a postdoctoral researcher in Plant Breeding. Text and illustration Stijn Schreven

I submitted my first application for a Veni grant in 2011. I wanted to do research on using small RNAs to make plants resistant to fungal infections. When I defended my proposal in Utrecht, one committee member kept asking the same question – and whatever answer I gave, it was obviously not what he wanted to hear. I didn't get the grant. But I didn't actually see it as too disastrous, because I knew I could try again. What could I improve on before then? My proposal was good, and I had made it through all the preliminary rounds. I was heavily pregnant, so maybe that worked against me. People look at you differently, you stand differently. So I took a course on presentation skills with a theatre maker, who taught me that how you tell something is much more important than what you tell. I tried again two years later. I was more confident, I wasn't pregnant, and there was a different jury. I had practised with some of my colleagues beforehand, but they had been so critical that I

felt like giving up. On the morning of the interview, I lay on the floor in despair. I couldn't do anything. I decided to go for a walk in Utrecht. On the bus to Utrecht, I realized I looked awful, so instead of walking, I went shopping in the Hoog Catharijne mall.

'The morning of the interview, I lay on the floor in despair. I couldn't do anything'

Once the interview started, I was in complete control. As I answered one question, I already knew what the next question would be. I had the grant in the bag. I don't see it as a failure that I didn't get that first Veni grant, but as a lesson: it all depends on a combination of circumstances – who you are facing and how you feel that day. The only thing you can do is to give yourself a second chance. I was quite literally floored, but you can pick yourself up.'



'Don't just protect beautiful areas'

The UN's High Seas Treaty protects 30 per cent of the world's oceans at a stroke. We need to look at the broad ecological picture, says professor of Marine Animal Ecology Tinka Murk.

What exactly does the treaty involve?

'A set of legal instruments has been agreed by 167 countries and the EU with which biodiversity in the oceans can be protected. The treaty still has to be ratified. At present, it is just a document saying that these arrangements will be made. Even so, it is a major advance and it shows people feel the urgency. It's also quite something to get China on board.'

What are the criteria for designating protected areas?

'There is a lot of biodiversity in areas with considerable variation in depth, temperature and nutrients. Having interconnected protected areas is also important. You can compare it to our Dutch Nature Network. If whales feed in one place and raise their young in another place, they need to be able to swim safely between those areas. You shouldn't just protect the beautiful spots but also the ecologically important areas.'

This treaty is about oceans beyond the 200-mile zone. But isn't most biodiversity within that zone?

'Agreements were made last December in Montreal for that zone, stipulating that 30 per cent of a country's land and sea must be protected by 2030. The agreements for the high seas tie in with that. Which is a good thing, because there is interdependence between what happens inside and outside the 200-mile zone. Biodiversity does not recognize country borders.'

Who will enforce all this?

'That is a good question. At least now there is an agreement, including a set of instruments for the protection of areas, which makes it easier to hold countries and people to account for their actions. Some of the proceeds from the issue of permits can be invested in the organization and enforcement.' RK

You can encourage sustainable behaviour

Environmentally friendly behaviour doesn't happen of its own accord, but you can encourage such behaviour. That is the message from the research that got Lieke Dreijerink her PhD last week. She studied the classic gap between what people think and what they do, focusing on the environment.

Why do we want to do what's best for the environment and nature, but find it so difficult to put that into practice? Dreijerink specifically studied what is termed behavioural spillover.

A spillover is when one behaviour has a knock-on effect on other behaviours. Dreijerink: 'There is positive spillover if one sustainable behaviour leads to another one. Negative spillover is if doing something environmentally friendly is followed by something that is not good for the environment. As if people think: I just did something good so now it's OK to lapse a bit.'

Gift

Dreijerink demonstrated the existence of negative spillover in an experiment where the participants had to assess images of unsafe cycling situations. 'In one group, the environmental benefits of possible solutions were underlined, while in the other group the financial advantages were emphasized. That was the first behaviour. As a reward, the participants got vouchers to spend on a gift — the second behaviour.'

The gifts varied in their environmental impact. Most people chose gifts with a negative environmental impact. 'That's negative spillover,' explains Dreijerink. But the experiment also had a positive finding. 'If information was given about the environmental impact of the gifts, people made greener choices, especially if they had been in the "environmental group" for the cycling task. So you can combat negative spillover, and information plays a role in this.'

You can also influence behaviour by



Photo Shutterstock

taking people's motivation into account. In a survey of over 1500 people, Dreijerink presented 17 examples of environmentally friendly behaviour — from recycling glass to buying a heat pump — and asked

'One behaviour can be a springboard for the next environmentally friendly step'

a certain behaviour is and the associated level of motivation required.' If you plot the behaviours in a chart, you get a kind of ladder.

The ladder has practical uses. Dreijerink: 'At each level of motivation, you see what kind of things people do in terms of sustainable behaviour and what the next step is.' Everyone finds it easy to recycle glass, so not much motivation is required. But a lot of motivation is needed to become

whether they did that. 'You can use a "Rasch analysis" to determine how difficult

vegetarian or buy a heat pump. 'This ladder helps you come up with specific measures to encourage people to go one step further.'

Springboard

It is even possible to quantify the relationship between different kinds of behaviour. For example, if someone travels by public transport, they are 10 per cent more likely to buy products from ecological stores. Dreijerink: 'So one behaviour can be a springboard for the next environmentally friendly step.' But that does require policy-makers to take action. 'You can't assume one environmentally friendly behaviour will automatically lead to the next one. You need to offer targeted support for both behaviours.' ^{RK}

New network for assistant professors

It is not easy for assistant professors to find their way through the maze of rules and grants, especially if they are not Dutch. APNet, a new national network, has been set up to support and represent them.

Groningen biophysicist Rifka Vlijm is the network's secretary.

Why is this nationwide network for assistant professors needed?

'There are already networks for scientists, but assistant professors are a special group. The universities differ in how they treat this position and there is a lack of clarity about research funding and what employers expect from you.

That is particularly the case for the large numbers of international assistant professors. They have to learn about all the regulations and working in the Netherlands in general. Now APNet wants to help them.'

How do you intend to represent the members?

'We want to act as a sounding board for the universities, the Ministry of Education and the Dutch Research Council (NWO). At the moment there is no proper representation. We aren't a trade union and we don't negotiate the collective labour agreements. We look at the relevant differences in the working conditions of assistant professors at

different universities, or at the funding conditions set by NWO.'

How will you help the members?

'We can support them with funding applications, for example, or sharing experiences. This is often the career stage when you first have to manage a project or group of lecturers. We also want to build a database that will make it easier to find researchers in a certain field of expertise for consortiums. In addition, we organize information events where we might explain how the collective labour agreement for assistant professors works, for instance.'

More info: ap-net.nl

THE PROPOSITION

For PhD candidates, their thesis propositions are an opportunity to publicly express their professional and personal convictions about science and society. In this feature, they explain their most thought-provoking proposition. This time it's Loekie Schreefel, who graduated with a PhD in Farming Systems Ecology on 7 March.



'Birth control is the most effective strategy to respect planetary boundaries'

'My thesis is about regenerative agriculture, a form of sustainable agriculture that takes the soil as the starting point. So my focus was on food production, not consumption. But a lot goes wrong on the consumption side too. We have overeating in some parts of the world and malnourishment in other parts. We also throw a lot of food away. We need to increase the sustainability of our production and consumption, but time is running out. It is not clear whether we will be able to feed everyone in 2100, when the global population will be 10 billion. And if so, can we still remain within the planetary boundaries?

Perhaps there are simply too many of us. Birth control is one way to curb population growth and therefore reduce consumption. Of course this proposi-

tion is deliberately provocative. It's a complex topic. Birth control can be very effective for the environment but it has major socio-economic implications. I am no social scientist and I wouldn't like to say what the best solution would be. Options are making contraception free and investing in education about having babies. Logically you would start with the wealthiest one per cent of the world, as they account for 20 per cent of global emissions.

The fact is that we have already exceeded several planetary boundaries and most countries are not keeping to the agreements they made, for instance the Paris Climate Agreement. Population control is a controversial but effective addition to other measures.'

Quiet quitting



Guido Camps

A colleague pointed me to an article in *Nature* about quiet quitting: workers who opt to do less and less undervalued or unpaid work in the working week. I say working week, but this work is often done in the evening or weekends. About three quarters of scientists said in a *Nature* poll that they have scaled down their work in certain areas (see figure from the article).

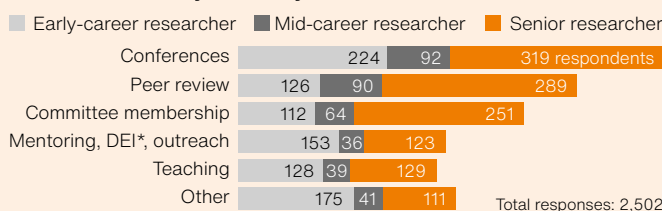
First, I think quiet quitting is a grossly misleading term. How dare those academics only do the work they are paid to do and not put in all those additional hours uncomplainingly? Besides, the term suggests a certain passivity, when it could equally be called 'self-care', 'healthy work-life balance' or 'setting priorities'. Let us hope that the new recognition and rewards system, in which academic services will count in evaluations, will help, and that government funding for extra staffing will take a bit of the pressure off too.

'Desperate editors try to get me to review manuscripts on work well outside my field of expertise'

But another task that adds to the workload and that many academics are scaling down, according to the poll, is reviewing manuscripts. I notice this myself: not only are my own manuscripts under review for longer and longer and coming back with fewer reviewer reports, but more and more desperate editors are trying to get me to review manuscripts on work that is well outside my field of expertise.

It can't go on like this much longer if you ask me, especially given the increasing number of scientific publications. We need a different review model that takes into account the time overworked scientists spend on this. Can that be done? Is there money for it? The largest academic publishers are Elsevier (18.1 per cent), Springer Nature (13 per cent) and Wiley (9.5 per cent). At Elsevier, the profit margin last year was 37.9 per cent and at Wiley 27.9 per cent. Those are better margins than Apple, Google or Amazon have! And Springer Nature? No idea how much profit they made, but they published an article about those pathetic quiet quitting scientists as if it was none of their doing at all...

Q. What activities did you reduce your efforts in?



*Diversity, equality and inclusion. Many respondents reported that they cut back the scale or number of research projects and limited their working hours.

Guido Camps (39) is a vet and a researcher at Human Nutrition and OnePlanet. He also enjoys baking, beekeeping and unusual animals.

Recognition and rewards: the Academic Career Framework is ready

MEASURING UP

The new yardstick by which researchers and teachers are to be assessed is nothing short of a revolution, according to its creators. *Resource* spoke to two of the architects, Arnold Bregt (Education Dean) and Theo Jetten (Secretary of the PE&RC graduate school/WUR library). Illustration Valerie Geelen



Text Roelof Kleis

The ink on the new Academic Career Framework is barely dry. And no, they don't want to give themselves a grade. The WUR Council has yet to give its verdict on the paper. And the detailed elaboration of the evaluation in terms of precise guidelines is not yet finished. Nevertheless, Education Dean Arnold Bregt ventures to say that he is proud of the result so far. 'The Recognition and Rewards Committee has been working hard over the past few years. We started back in 2020, just before the first lockdown. We gathered a lot of information from the organization and held discussions on all fronts. In the process, it once again became obvious how much this change was needed. I think we have managed to deliver a proposal that does justice to the culture we have, and yet starts off a shift towards broader recognition and rewarding of our academics.'

The new yardstick looks at performance in research, teaching, social impact and academic services. Does everyone have to shine in all these areas?

Bregt: 'Not necessarily, but you are expected to make conscious choices. In your personal profile, you have to state what your vision and ambition are in those four areas. But how much time you devote to the various

components is tailored to the individual, in consultation with the manager, the possibilities within the group and your personal interests.'

So are you also expected to have social impact?

Jetten: 'You are expected to at least reflect on what your social impact is, how society benefits from your research, and to make that explicit. That you have a strategy on this matter.'

Bregt: 'Ideally, as an organization, we want you to consider all these areas important. WUR believes in science for impact. If you're not into impact, all you've got left is science. But there is some flexibility about the extent of that impact. There could be a trade-off: do a little less in one area and compensate with a little more in another.'

'IN YOUR FIELD YOU DEVELOP FROM TEAM PLAYER TO LEADER'



Jetten: 'For example, you can dedicate a substantial amount of your time to socially relevant activities. That is a choice you can make, within the context of your group. Currently, the evaluation of research output is still strongly focused on publications in journals and books. But other kinds of activities could take their place.'

The focus of the evaluation process is shifting from quantity to quality. Will the points system for publications be called into question?

Jetten: 'Yes. The current scoring system with a classification of journals based on impact factor is stringent and rigid. Most of that is going to go. The quality of the article will come first, rather than where you publish it. And the judgement on quality will be more in the hands of the evaluation committee. But of course it still matters where you publish your article or database, because it does have a certain status in your

world. And the research portfolio must be of a certain size. We are trying to translate the current system into a measure of research output volume in the new system. And that output is allowed to be more diverse than it is now. It won't be just articles that count, for instance, but also databases, book chapters and designs that meet specific quality criteria.'

There will be no quantification for social impact. So how will that be evaluated?

Jetten: 'We try to categorize it, depending on the career path you are on. That means for instance: as an assistant professor, this is roughly what we expect from you in terms of activities and products; as an associate professor, roughly this... And so on. The same goes for academic services. To put it simply, your responsibilities increase over the course of your career, and with them, the breadth of activities you're involved in. You start out in your field as a team player,





making a contribution, and you end up as a leader. It is up to the evaluation committee to assess that, based on supporting evidence provided by you.'

Bregt: 'An example. As Dean of Education, I am on the evaluation committee for personal professors. One of the criteria for appointment is whether you are a leading light in your domain. If that domain has social impact, you are expected to play a leading role in the public debate and to help steer that debate – being asked to appear on the talk show *OPI*, for example. We are going to include a description of those expectations in the guidelines, but it is up to the individual to demonstrate with supporting evidence what level you have reached.'

One of the sore points in the current system is the large numbers of PhD students that associate professors and personal professors have to supervise. Will that number go down?

Jetten: 'In the current system, supervising PhD students is a measure of earning capacity and of skill as a supervisor. Those two things will be separated out. PhDs are a money-maker and your line of research

'THIS PLAN FACILITATES SWITCHING BETWEEN CAREER PATHS'

'THE QUALITY OF THE ARTICLE WILL COME FIRST, RATHER THAN WHERE YOU PUBLISH IT'

has to be funded. But that revenue can be obtained in more ways than through the PhD bonus. Competence as a supervisor will become a separate indicator in the evaluation.'

Bregt: 'And yes, the lower limit will be lower, thereby removing the financial incentive to attract a lot of PhDs. You need to have some, of course, but not so much for financial reasons to prove your earning capacity.'

New-style evaluation

A mandatory evaluation will take place every five years. It can be done earlier if there is good reason to do so. The evaluation relates to promotion or is advisory in nature. Depending on what rung of the ladder you're on, a formal committee may be called for or a lighter form is chosen, with the chair holder involved. The personal profile is central to the evaluation. In it, the 'candidate' describes their current situation, plans and wishes regarding their achievements in research, teaching, social impact and academic service. To structure this, 27 indicators have been proposed, many of which are already used to assess teachers and researchers. But many are also new. For instance, for researchers now things will count such as awards, the use of databases created by others or the editorship of scientific journals. A completely new feature is the evaluation of social impact: blogs, columns, lectures, interviews, and so on. Scoring on academic services can be done by looking at things like being active in committees or working groups (including internal ones) or as a peer reviewer. Not all the indicators are of equal importance to everyone. And as a general rule, the higher up the ladder you go, the higher the expectations of you.

Won't the greater focus on quality rather than demonstrable quantity make the evaluation process more subjective?

Bregt: 'My first answer is: yes. But we think we can cover that by clearly defining what you have to provide in terms of supporting evidence.'

Jetten: 'We try to guarantee an objective assessment by drawing up guidelines for evaluation, so you are not at the mercy of the whims of a particular committee.'

Bregt: 'And attention will also be paid to the composition and training of evaluation committees. The same members will sit on several committees. This is already the case in the evaluation at the final step to becoming a personal professor. There are a lot of permanent members of that committee, and in my experience, its evaluations are very fair and consistent. This is because it includes many experienced evaluators who do it for all the science groups.'

The new system promises more flexibility within and between career paths. But that path has to tie in with the plans of the chair holder. Doesn't that curtail your freedom considerably?

Bregt: 'It might do. Each chair group has a strategic personnel plan and new developments have to fit into that. Still, if you're on tenure track now and it doesn't suit you, you're stuck too, actually. This plan offers the possibility of switching to teaching. It will be easier to do that from now on. And that applies to all the paths.'

Time

How much time are you expected or allowed to spend on social impact, for example? That is not stated, but there are limits. Teachers must devote at least 70 per cent of their time to teaching. The rest is available for other things. Researchers must spend at least 70 per cent of their time on research. On the professorial path, at least 70 per cent of the time must be spent on research and teaching, both roughly equally. Exceptions are possible, especially for part-timers. So everyone creates their own profile.

As things stand, quite a lot of people are not on a tenure track and they are not very happy about it. There are no evaluation moments and few development opportunities. In this system, all that will soon be in place.'

Jetten: 'The new system also pays attention to post-docs, i.e. young researchers with a temporary (four-year) employment contract. We shall also try to give them supervision and advice. Postdocs are now an undervalued group.'

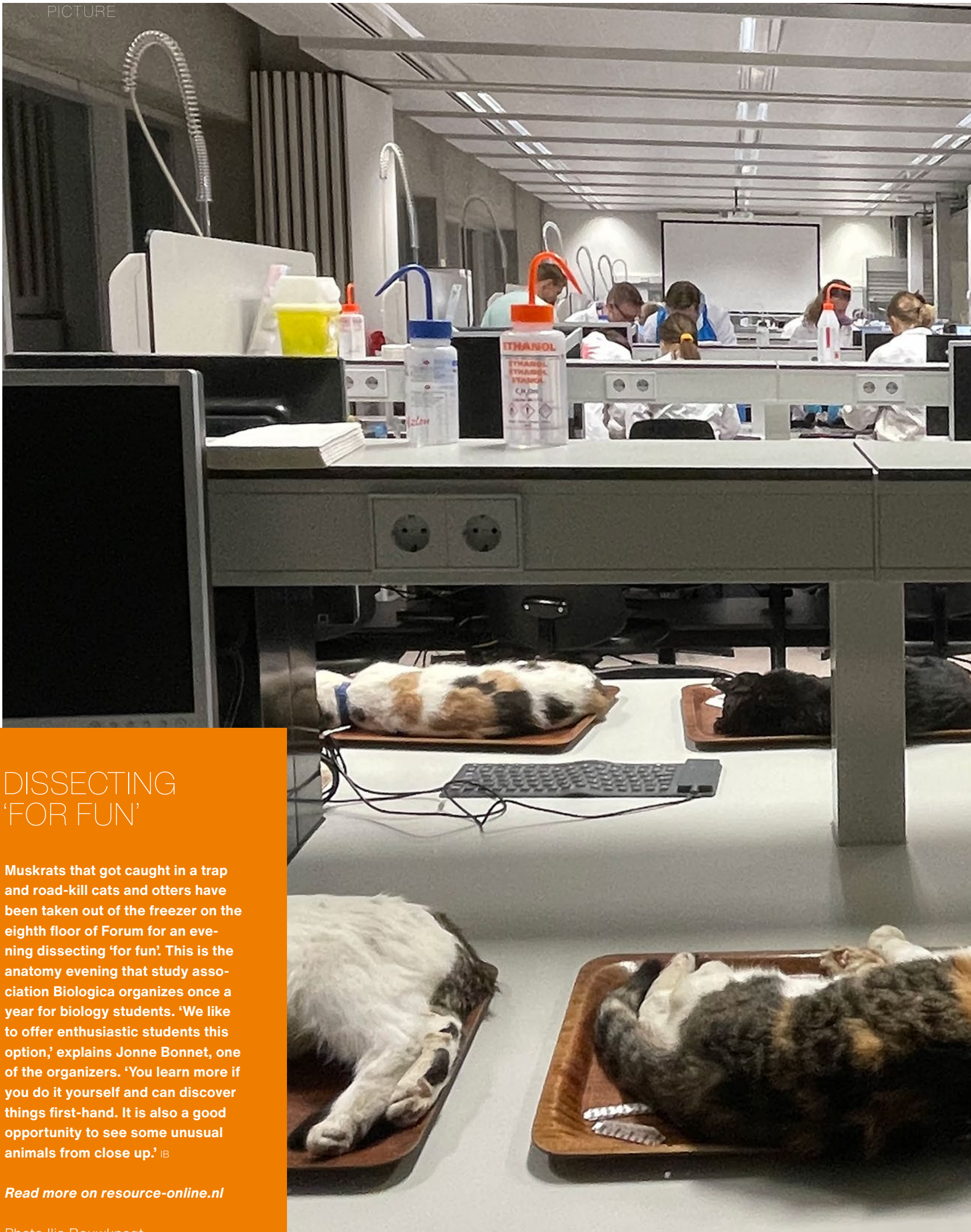
Bregt: 'And often these are young researchers with a lot of potential who have just completed a PhD. If you can offer them prospects, that's worth a lot to them and to the organization.'

Job done, then. What is the biggest challenge now?

Bregt: 'That is working out the plan to arrive at precise evaluation guidelines. The devil is always in the details.'

Jetten: 'This framework is part of a major culture change and that sort of thing always takes years.' ■





DISSECTING 'FOR FUN'

Muskrats that got caught in a trap and road-kill cats and otters have been taken out of the freezer on the eighth floor of Forum for an evening dissecting 'for fun'. This is the anatomy evening that study association Biologica organizes once a year for biology students. 'We like to offer enthusiastic students this option,' explains Jonne Bonnet, one of the organizers. 'You learn more if you do it yourself and can discover things first-hand. It is also a good opportunity to see some unusual animals from close up.' ^{IB}

Read more on resource-online.nl



Four WUR scientists on the question:

Should the EU allow CRISPR-Cas?

In June this year, the European Commission will issue a new directive on the authorization of the use of CRISPR-Cas, a genetic modification (GMO) technique, in crop breeding. In 2018, the EU was still voting against authorizing its use. *Resource* consulted four WUR experts on the opportunities and bottlenecks for CRISPR-Cas in crop breeding. Text Tanja Speek



John van der Oost
Professor of Microbiology,
CRISPR-Cas pioneer

‘That CRISPR-Cas techniques are at least as safe as older techniques is now widely accepted by researchers. Mutagenesis, the alteration of DNA by radiation or chemicals, produces far more undesirable changes to DNA than CRISPR-Cas. And the EU allows that. I often compare them to a scalpel and a chainsaw: CRISPR is the scalpel. But I’ve realized over the past few years that opposition stems partly from fear of the power of big companies – a fear of multinationals trying to control the entire food market. And that is certainly undesirable: we must use the technique

for the common good. So in Norway it was decided that minor DNA modifications are acceptable, provided they benefit society and the planet. I think

‘Opposition stems partly from fear of the power of big companies’

that approach is worth trying. We agreed a year and a half ago to release our patents on CRISPR-Cas to non-profit organizations. At the same time, it proved difficult to find paid collaborations in the plant world with those patents. In Europe, the rules are too strict and outside Europe, collaborations have already been established. Now we are working with WUR colleagues and IRRI, a rice research insti-

tute in the Philippines. We are going to look at how to adapt rice plants so that they will survive rising temperatures by developing resistance to drought and salt. We feel rather ambivalent about taking this overseas: we are using a solution that is not allowed here. But luckily this enables us to use our expertise in a good cause somewhere else. Incidentally, the products now coming onto the market with modifications using CRISPR techniques are a bit disappointing. Apples that do not brown quickly, for example, or extra healthy tomatoes. Are these things we are all waiting for? But the potential is great, and therefore so are my expectations. I hope the authorization procedure for CRISPR-Cas will now be made easier; it’s high time it was. I am cautiously optimistic. But then again, I was optimistic in 2018 too, and that didn’t go the way I expected and hoped it would.’



Bernice Bovenkerk

Animal and environmental ethicist

‘Although I personally have less of a problem with modifying plants than animals, I am still critical of solving problems with technology. Once something is on the market, you lose control over it. I am afraid that the gap between rich and poor will only widen: even more power will fall into the hands of big corporations, and poor farmers will yet again draw the short straw. So we will remain stuck in the capitalist sys-

tem. Moreover, this technique will produce fields of monocultures yet again. So I am not at all optimistic. Let’s first see how far we get with more different varieties, including old ones.

We should conduct this debate with the general public; this is not just a topic

‘Let’s see how far we get with old varieties’

for technologists, scientists and politicians. What is more, authorizing the use of CRISPR-Cas for crops is a first step towards more widespread use of the technique. We should take a broader look from the start than just at plant

applications. Trials are already under way with the genetic modification of pigs for xenotransplantation, the use of animals as organ donors for humans. Someone has already been given a pig’s heart. In agriculture, the animal has always been considered a thing, a production unit. Cows have to produce a lot of milk and as a result, they contract more udder infections or are more likely to become lame. As an ethicist, I have serious doubts as to whether it is in the animal’s interest to be genetically modified.’



Professor of Microbiology John van der Oost is collaborating with IRRI, a rice research institute in the Philippines, on the use of CRISPR-Cas techniques to modify rice plants so that they can survive rising temperatures. ‘We feel rather ambivalent about taking this overseas as we are using a solution that is not allowed here. But luckily this enables us to use our expertise in a good cause somewhere else.’ • Photo Shutterstock



Richard Visser
Professor of Plant Genetics

‘When people stress that free choice is so important in Europe, I sometimes say that I would like the freedom of choice to buy GMO products. But then I’m exaggerating of course.

In Europe, policy focuses on the process: how and with which tools was a change to DNA brought about? But

‘It is only a matter of time before the European approach becomes untenable’

with techniques like CRISPR-Cas, that cannot be checked afterwards. In fact, CRISPR-Cas produces fewer changes in the genome than natural cross-breeding. So you can’t keep up that process approach. What you want to know is whether the end product is safe; how it was made matters less.

But the fact is that the EU has taken the line that GMO should be very tightly controlled. And it’s hard to change course now. Europe is becoming a kind of island, trying to close all the borders. But the rest of the world is moving on. It

is only a matter of time before the European approach becomes untenable. The extra-healthy tomato and the non-browning apple are examples of easy-to-apply CRISPR-Cas techniques: a minor mutation knocks out a single, well-known gene within a known genome. For traits like high yield, drought resistance, or multiple resistance, we are just starting to get an idea of which genes can make a difference. CRISPR-Cas is not a blanket solution to everything.

However, I do see opportunities for smaller farms in particular. CRISPR-Cas seems pre-eminently a method for minor ‘smaller’ crops, which large companies often ignore. The entire genome sequence of more and more species is known, and research into suitable new properties is becoming affordable. What will the European Commission decide in June? It’s anyone’s guess. It’s like planning an outing with 30 family members. I’ll wait and see.’



Paul van Helvert
Patent expert at WUR

‘A patent is a good way of protecting your innovation. I am against the idea that patents are only meant for big companies; that’s not true at all. If you apply for a patent as WUR, you look at the potential users. Who would it be of interest to collaborate with? It might be a big player like Bayer, but it could also be IRRI, the rice institute John van der Oost is working with now. It is not about making a fast buck; the first priority is to make sure your invention is used. Some-

times that works out well with a Bayer, and sometimes with a smaller company. You can then also make different price agreements with them.

By choosing the party you cooperate with smartly, you can also develop an invention further. Because additional research is often needed before something is suitable as an application on the market.

‘Make sure your invention is used’

Because the use of GMO techniques is restricted in Europe, you see that licences in that area are not of interest to Dutch or European companies. As long as there is no certainty about admitting GMO techniques to the European market, companies do not want to invest in them. That makes these techniques no more than a very expensive hobby for them.

What will the European Commission advise? I’ll wait and see, that’s the most sensible thing I can say about it. I’ve often thought before that we were heading in the direction of an authorization.’



NO ENKA PIPELINE, BUT CONCERNS REMAIN

You submit a petition against the discharge of dirty wastewater into the Rhine, and an hour later it's sorted. That happened to WUR ecologist Bert Lotz last Monday.

Lotz was one of the initiators of the petition No to Toxic Discharge in the Lower Rhine. You'll find posters about it in WUR buildings. And they'll stay there for a while longer, Lotz says. The pipeline may have been scrapped, but that doesn't make the problem go away.

The problem is the contaminated groundwater from the former ENKA factory next to the railway station in Ede. The factory closed in 2002 and now there is housing on the decontaminated site. But there is still contaminated groundwater in the soil which, according to research from 2012, is moving south-westwards towards the Binnenveld at about 30 to 40 metres per year. It must not be allowed to end up in the Bennekomse Meent nature reserve, so a pipeline to the Rhine near Wageningen harbour was decided on to prevent that. This solution was chosen back in 2014 by Vallei and Veluwe Water Board, Ede municipality and the province of Gelderland.

'We want to review the report with a group of experts from Wageningen'

But that pipe – popularly called the 'dirt pipe' – won't be laid down. Quite unexpectedly, the plan was ditched. 'We are pleased that this absurd idea has been abandoned,' says Lotz. And it wasn't at all future-proof: all surface water has to comply with the European Water Framework Directive by 2027. After that, these kinds of discharges won't be allowed at all.

Underlying the U-turn are recent measurements by engineering firm TAUW that showed that the sulphate pollution is on a much smaller scale than was believed, and is therefore acceptable. Also, the polluted water was found to be moving much more slowly than previously calculated and won't reach the Binnenveld for



Illustration Henk Ruitenbeek

another 200 years. So the pipeline is no longer needed, but the report the decision is based on is not yet available to the public.

Where has the pollution gone?

Lotz and his WUR colleague, professor of Chemical Stress Ecology Paul van den Brink, are eagerly awaiting that report. 'We want to review it with a group of experts from Wageningen,' says Lotz, 'because there are still plenty of questions.' For example: where has the pollution gone? And the province's press release only mentions sulphate, but what about pentachlorophenol, which is in the water too?

Pentachlorophenol is a substance of very high concern (SVHC), to use the EU term, says Van den Brink. Sometimes it breaks down quickly in the environment, and sometimes it doesn't. It accumulates in organisms. We don't know what the environmental impact of the breakdown products is. The highest concentration measured at the time is toxic to half of the aquatic species. And to six per cent of species even after dilution to below the permitted discharge limit.

The ENKA pollution is one of the cases that ACT (Academic Consultancy Training) students can sink their teeth into. Lotz says that's still so, even now that the pipeline plan has been scrapped. It is an ideal case study, thinks Van den Brink, with loads of management, technical and social aspects to it. HK

Learning to do research underwater

Underwater scientific research is a specialization in its own right. And now there's a dedicated module on the subject, as this year WUR has become the first university in the Netherlands to offer a Scientific Diving course.

So there you are, shivering away in Croatia. After yet another dive, you want to clean your equipment, but the buckets of water have frozen again. Normally it is between 13 and 18 degrees here in February, but the students taking the first practical Scientific Diving course are out of luck: this year it is freezing. Besides being cold, this also causes extra work: the equipment has to be thawed out in the morning before the first dive, for instance. But the bleak conditions haven't stopped the students from getting into the water several times a day.

And they don't have much choice: they have 10 days to master the ins and outs of underwater research. Doing scientific research is often more difficult underwater than above it. The students practise a range of different techniques

and research methods: from biodiversity analyses to archaeological excavations, and from underwater drilling to navigating. For example, if you need to apply force while drilling underwater, you have to hold yourself to a rock and use your flippers actively. And navigating underwater is difficult because GPS doesn't work there.

Strange

Scientific diving is so complex that it is really a bit strange that there 'wasn't a course on it already, says course coordinator Rosa van der Ven, a researcher in the Marine Animal Ecology Group. 'If you are going to do an internship or thesis, you often have to take all sorts of preparatory courses on laboratory techniques, fieldwork techniques and so on. But there was nothing for students who want to do underwater research, whereas there are very precise requirements for scientific work underwater. By undergoing training, students learn to work more safely and efficiently and the scientific output improves.'

This gap in the curriculum had long vexed Tinka Murk, professor of Marine Animal Ecology and a sports diving instructor herself. 'The only require-

ment we were allowed to impose on students was that they had a sport diving certificate and had done a minimum number of dives,' Murk says. 'That doesn't give nearly as much of a guarantee that they can dive safely and competently as a European Scientific Diving certificate. And more and more European countries are already requiring this of students arriving for internships.' With her colleagues' support, Murk went into action and the first theoretical course in Scientific Diving started last

'It's not a diving course; it's about underwater research techniques'



Text Luuk Zegers



Using a tape measure to check whether the grid on the sea floor is the right size. ♦ Photo Erik Wurz

September. Van der Ven: 'But practice is also needed: this isn't dry theory – literally.' So in February, she left for Croatia for the first edition of the practical course, together with Erik Wurz, a researcher at the Marine Animal Ecology Group and Dive Safety Officer at the Animal Sciences Group, and four students.

Not a diving course

Both the theory and practical courses are available to a wide range of participants, says Diede Maas, researcher at the Marine Animal Ecology Group, who coordinates the course together with Van der Ven. 'Everyone is welcome, from undergraduates to Master's students and from PhD students to professionals. We do this because this is the only course on scientific diving on offer in the Netherlands.' But course applicants are expected to have the necessary diving experience, says Maas. 'It is not a diving course; it is explicitly about underwater research techniques.'

Over 10 days, students learn to apply the most common underwater research techniques. Van der Ven: 'Laying a transect (a path along which you count and record occurrences of the objects of study, ed.), using a baseline to see where different items are found on the seabed, making biodiversity analyses, taking samples, determining positions, and so on. We offer a wide range of techniques that can be important for different aspects of underwater research. Students need to learn to use these techniques in a way that is scientifically sound.'

Playbook

Back to chilly Croatia, where Erik Wurz – the lecturer with the most scientific diving experience – is in charge. Much

of the Scientific Diving course takes place on dry land, he explains. 'You cannot talk under water. This meant that we needed to do proper field drills on land before we would go under water. During these drills, you do everything exactly the way you do it underwater, but then on the land, so everybody knows what to do. This is also the time to ask questions and to make sure everyone knows the playbook. Under water you can only communicate certain details, like "stick to the sequence" or "write this down".'



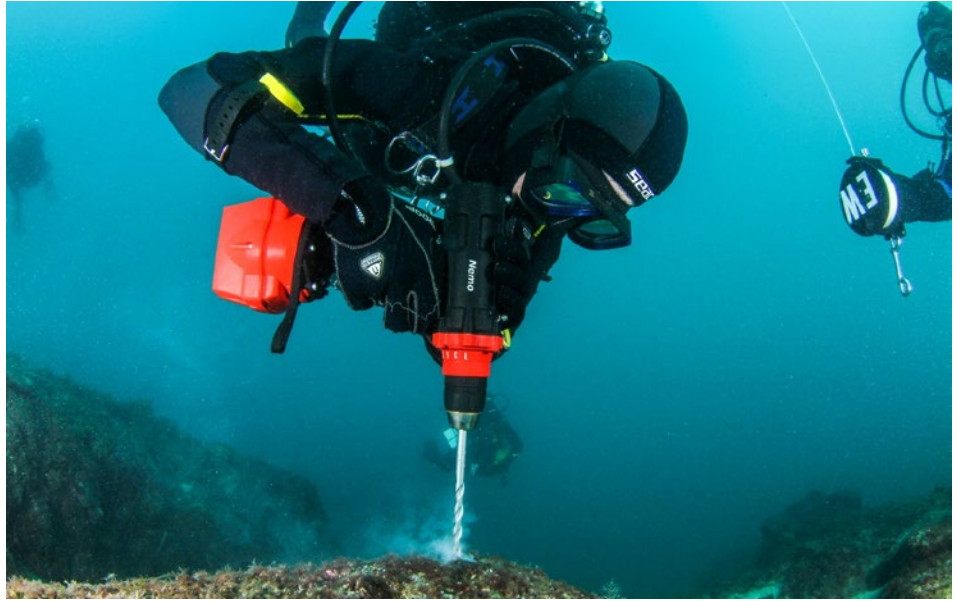


Wurz got a Master's degree in Marine Biology at the University of Rostock in Germany. 'I chose that university because they offered a scientific diving course. It was a really extensive programme: all participants had to do 70 dives.' Wurz used the scientific skills he acquired there for his thesis research on cold-water coral in Patagonia (Chile). After graduating, he worked for an organization specializing in technical diving, where he developed his skills in teaching scientific diving. In Wageningen, Wurz obtained his PhD for research into deep-sea sponges.

Treasure trove

'On the second day in Croatia, we had to use lines to mark out a grid on the seabed,' says Master's student Anouk Langerak (Aquaculture and Marine Resource Management and Biology). 'We had an extra gas tank with us that we used as a kind of vacuum cleaner: a PVC tube was attached to the gas tank via a hose. If you let air into the tube through that hose, you vacuum up sediment. So we vacuumed the seabed prior to doing excavations. Suddenly, jars turned up – a Roman treasure trove, which happened to be right where we were doing research! Later it turned out that the teachers had hidden them there.'

Langerak had quite a bit of diving experience before she started the Scientific Diving course, she says. 'I started out as a recreational diver – so mainly looking at fish. Later I got certified as a rescue



Drilling underwater (above) and discovering Roman remains (below). ♦ Photos Erik Wurz

'Suddenly jars turned up – a Roman treasure trove'

diver. When I saw that this course was being taught for the first time, I knew I had to do it, because it will help me when I want to dive during my internship abroad and also later in my career as a marine biologist.'

Putting research techniques into practice makes you a better diver, says Langerak. 'It improves your diving technique as well: having constant control over your posture and buoyancy. If you

are working at a considerable depth and just shoot up to the surface, it can be dangerous. You have to trust your team and maintain good communication underwater. Unexpected things can always take you by surprise.'

Lionfish

Fellow student Davide Bottacini recently became a PhD student in the Behavioural Ecology chair group. He is researching the lionfish as an invasive predator. 'In different parts of the world, people try to control the invasive lion-

fish population.’ In field work in Cyprus and Greece, Bottacini wants to look at the impact of the lionfish on the local biodiversity. ‘That’s done by diving and surveying the fish biodiversity.’ He also wants to study how lionfish hunt. ‘The lionfish is a slow-moving fish with venomous spines. As they swim slowly, it is a mystery how they catch their prey. One hypothesis is camouflaging, but it is not really clear yet. I want to put lionfish and their prey in a cage under water, to study how they interact.’ The Scientific Diving course came just at the right time for Bottacini, who started his PhD project in January. ‘I was already a relatively experienced diver, but almost everything I learnt on this course was new to me. Erik has a lot of knowledge and experience and knows how to convey it to students. Thanks to this course, I now have the practical experience to carry out the underwater research I’ll be doing soon safely.’

Sleep, dive, eat, repeat

Due to the full course programme, the students didn’t get to see much of Croatia. Langerak: ‘We only saw the diving shop and the house where we slept. The

‘Everyone got chilblains; it was tough going’

routine was the same every day: sleep, dive, eat, sleep, dive, eat.’ The first days were particularly tough because of the cold. ‘Everyone got chilblains, and it was tough going. But we were also selected for that: the students who went along had to have experience of diving in cold water. Fortunately, it did warm up a bit later that week.’ Bottacini: ‘Because of the cold, we had to wear gloves underwater. That does make it a bit trickier than underwater research in the tropics. But it still went fantastically.’

The teachers too look back on the first course with satisfaction. ‘When we announced this course, many students showed interest, but we can only take four at a time,’ says Van der Ven. ‘The supervision is very intensive and the programme is tough, with long days. The students who ended up joining us were very motivated.’ Wurz: ‘It was unusually cold for the time of year, which

made everything a lot harder. Still, the students held up well - they were indomitable. Fortunately, the weather improved after four or five days. If you can warm up in the sun after a dive and walk around in a T-shirt, it makes everything easier, like doing two dives a day, for example.’ ■

The Scientific Diving practical course will be run for the second and third time in May and June. Because of the intense supervision, only four students can take part in each course.

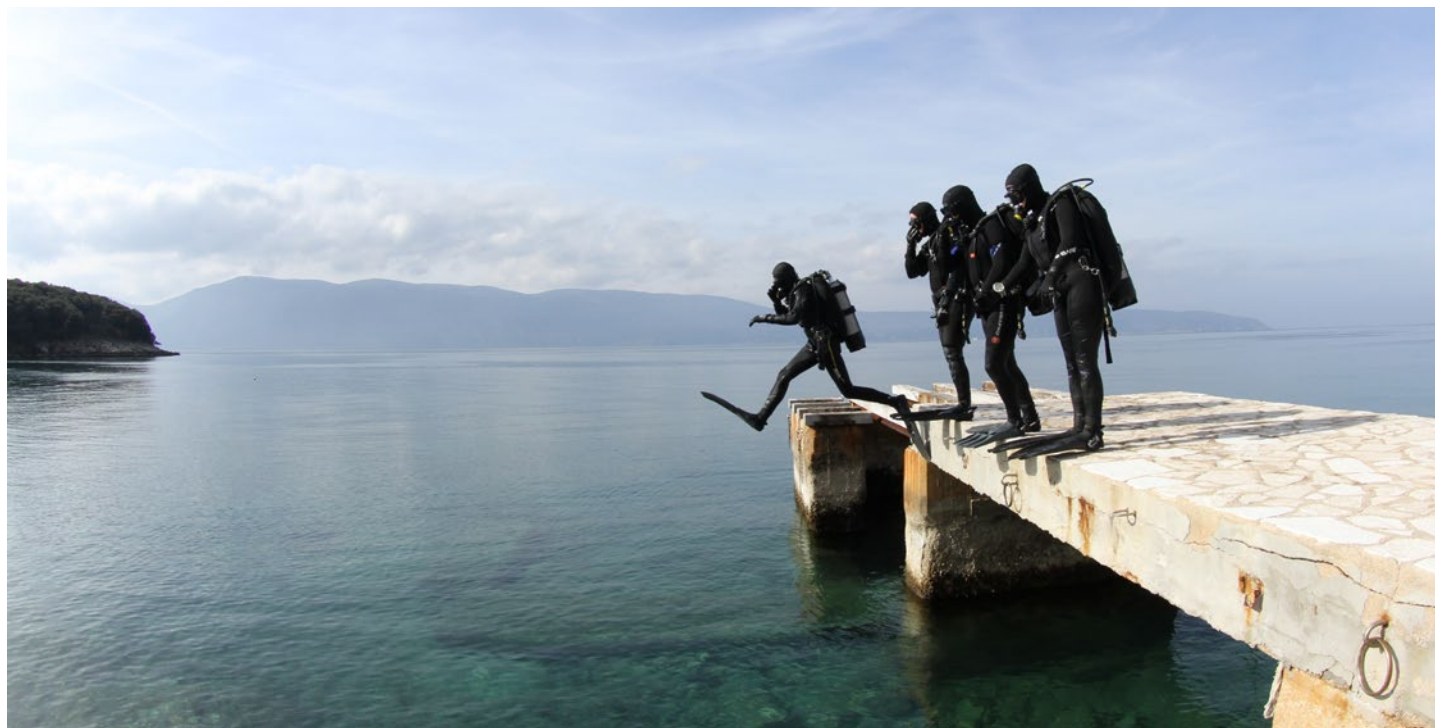
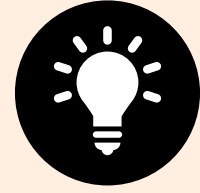


Photo Rosa van der Ven



SIX TIPS FOR A SUSTAINABLE SPRING OUTFIT

Spring is just around the corner. Time to clear out your wardrobe and swap your woolly jumpers for something lighter. Can you do that ethically? How do you make your wardrobe sustainable? *Resource* asked Dieuwertje de Wagenaar, who works as a researcher for the Circular Fashion Lab. Text Coretta Jongeling • Illustration Ilja Bouwknecht

1

What do you need?

‘This is where there is the most to be gained,’ says De Wagenaar. ‘Before buying something new, ask yourself: Why do I want this? What’s behind it? Can I satisfy this need in another way?’ Research by the Circular Fashion Lab

shows that people have an average of 132 garments in their closets, a full quarter of which they never wear. ‘What about you? Before you buy something, think: Do I need it? How often am I going to wear it? How long will I go on liking it?’

2

Don't buy anything

It's a no-brainer, of course, but buying nothing is the most sustainable. If you still feel the need for something new to wear, swap your unused garments at a clothing swap. The Superette and Thuis Wageningen have a permanent swap shop. You can also borrow clothes from a clothes library. For a small sum, you have something new for a while. You can do this in Arnhem and Amersfoort for example, or online at Lena Library. So you can still wear new trousers every month or shine at that wedding you're going to without having to buy a new dress. That's sustainable for your bank balance too.

‘SECOND-HAND IS SUSTAINABLE IF YOU BUY IT *INSTEAD OF* SOMETHING NEW’

3

Mend it

Hole in your jumper? Repair it! ‘Most people don't know how to repair torn clothes, but think the tailor is too expensive,’ says De Wagenaar.

‘There is a lot to be gained there. Actually, I think everyone should learn how to mend clothes at school.’ An easy way to learn is to take your garment to a Repair Café. There are two locations in Wageningen, open twice a month. Here you can watch your clothes being mended and learn how to do it for free. ‘If you don't want to do it yourself, you can go to the tailor. Then you pay labour costs, but we've got to kick the habit of buying something new instead of mending things just because it is cheaper. We have to learn to see things differently.’

4

Buy second-hand

If you do want to buy clothes, buy second-hand. In Wageningen, you can do well at the Emmaus, 2nd Heaven, 't Herenzaakje – or at Lauras70slife for a funky outfit. Of course, you can also shop online: locally at Second Hand Clothing Wageningen on Facebook, or via Vinted. Then your clothes do get shipped (sometimes from far away), but the production and dyeing of textiles are a lot more polluting than the transport. Again, De Wagenaar suggests some reflection: 'Second-hand is sustainable if you buy it instead of something new, not as an extra addition to an already full wardrobe. And look at the quality of the item. If it costs two euros on Vinted, it probably won't last long.'

5

Choose your material

If you go for new, there are a few points to consider. De Wagenaar: 'Synthetic fabrics come from the fossil industry and produce microplastics, in the air, in water and in other waste streams.

Synthetic materials are very useful for some garments, such as outdoor wear, raincoats and sportswear. There are no good alternatives for those yet either. So I think it's permissible at times.'

Pay attention to the composition of the fabric too. 'If there are multiple fibres in a fabric, so-called textile blends, it is almost impossible to recycle. For example, jeans often contain polyester to make the fabric stronger, or there is elastane in the fabric for stretch.' Cotton is easy to recycle, but not if it's contaminated with another fabric. Currently, less than one per cent of our clothes are recycled into new clothes. That could be improved on.



6

Check the brand

How sustainable is your favourite brand? And what about working conditions in the factories? Do the check on the Fair Wear or Good on You website. Their data comes not only use from the brands themselves, but also from third-party reports. Because sadly, research shows that the claims made by companies themselves are often false. A report by Changing Markets Foundation shows that 59 per cent of claims such as 'sustainable', 'eco' and 'recyclable' are incorrect. De Wagenaar therefore recommends always double-checking. 'You cannot assume that what is on the label is correct. The greenwashing factor is massive.' An example: polyester clothes made from PET bottles sounds sustainable. But PET bottles can be efficiently recycled into new PET bottles, while clothes made from them cannot be recycled. Depressing? 'You can't get it 100 per cent right. But remember: we don't all have to be perfect. Every little helps.'

Want to learn more about sustainable fashion? The Circular Fashion Lab has an open-access MOOC on topics like clothing recycling, biobased materials and accelerating the transition to sustainable fashion.



THE SIDE JOB

You've got to make ends meet somehow. We can all borrow from Uncle Duo, but there are also students who earn money from unusual side jobs, like Alisha Teerink (25), a second-year Master's student in Health and Nutrition. She works as a student military worker for the Ministry of Defence. Text Steven Snijders

'I am part of a unit called Defensity College, which has 250 college and university students. We want to get to 450. I do the work in uniform, at a Ministry office, and sometimes at home. A student reservist works 8 to 16 hours a week. You work on something you

'I was a fanatical competitive rower; I see that mentality in the armed forces'

know about, in my case nutrition. My first assignment was in the 'operational rations' department. That means food for during military exercises and deployments, where one ration provides you with enough calories for 24 hours. One of those packets you add water too. I updated a survey on that in line with the latest methods and investigated whether the food could be improved. Now I'm working for another department: I help produce the podcast *Stronger Together*, in which various speakers talk about the theme of 'adaptability' – being successful in a changing environment. Assignments like that make up two-thirds of the work. The

rest consists of military training. Then we go to a mountainous area, for example, to do boundary-pushing activities, such as rock-climbing on a via ferrata, and mental exercises. I've also eaten live insects – it's no picnic! I like the fact that with my knowledge of nutrition I can help military personnel perform better. I could also have chosen to use my knowledge for top athletes. But then I think: there are so many CO₂ emissions at major sporting events, they are incredibly unsustainable. Just so we can watch them. With the armed forces, I can contribute to more important things: peace and security. I think it's a really cool side job in which I can learn a lot myself. I used to be a fanatical competitive rower; I rowed every day. I see that kind of mentality in the armed forces. I'm in a group of enterprising and active students, and I get a lot of energy from that. Military training involves cool activities and you get paid for it as well.'

Alisha joins the march

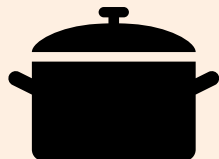
Who: Alisha Teerink (25)
What: Student military worker in the armed forces
Why? It is instructive and you can make a real contribution
Hourly wage: 16 euros per hour (range: 12-20 euros)



Alisha Teerink, centre right. • Photo Ministry of Defence

Do you have an unusual side job or know someone else who does? Send an email to steven.snijders@wur.nl

You encounter all the flavours of the world in the WUR community. Sarah-Maria Scheid (24), a Climate Studies MSc student from Germany, shares a recipe for Reibekuchen.



Flavours of WUR

Reibekuchen



Sarah-Maria Scheid
MSc student of Climate
Studies

Reibekuchen are also known as 'Krebelche', 'Kartoffelpuffer' or 'Rievkooche'. They are a classic dish from the Rhineland region and are served on various occasions, especially at village fairs, Christmas markets or special Reibekuchen festivals in the autumn. A portion typically consists of three Reibekuchen served with a portion of apple sauce.

- 1 Peel and grate the raw potatoes.
- 2 Drain the potatoes in a sieve or towel, pressing out as much liquid as possible.
- 3 Peel and chop the onions and mix them with the eggs and grated potato.

- 4 Season the mixture with salt, pepper, and nutmeg and bind it with the cornflour.
- 5 Heat the frying pan with plenty of oil, so the potato cakes will swim in oil.
- 6 Create small potato pancakes and fry them on both sides until they are golden-brown.
- 7 Keep adding oil to the pan, because the Reibekuchen soak it up.
- 8 Keep the fried Reibekuchen warm in the oven (50-80°C) until they are all done.
- 9 Serve with apple sauce.

Ingredients (for approximately 15 Reibekuchen, 4-5 servings):

- 1kg large potatoes
- 2 onions
- 2 eggs
- 1 tablespoon cornflour
- Oil for frying
- Seasoning: salt, pepper and nutmeg

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WUR from within: straight, sharp, transparent

OUT OF YOUR BUBBLE AT *HEAR ME OUT*

Time seems to stand still for a moment. As people pass by on all sides in the busy Forum foyer, I'm standing with my headphones on listening to someone talking about what it was like to experience the Covid-19 pandemic as a Chinese student.

The headphones are attached to a bright pink 'audio pole', where various pictograms offer a glimpse of someone else's life. The four poles – two in Forum and two in Aurora – are the product of a collaboration between the university and Fun Times Wageningen, who have been organizing Storytelling Nights together for a while now.

'By listening to personal stories you can experience for a moment what life is like for someone else,' says Diversity and Inclusion Officer Heather ten Ham, the initiator of *Hear Me Out*. 'I thought it would be great to have an exhibition of stories. You can reach a lot more people with them than you can with only live events.' Another advantage of listening through headphones is that you don't have to react immediately. 'When you

listen to someone else during a conversation, you are often already thinking about how to respond or what your opinion is on the subject. Here you don't have to do that.'

The six stories come from Wageningen students, who read them out loud themselves. 'The stories are about being different, but also about belonging, and finding your place in the world. These are experiences of people you might not normally speak to in your day-to-day life. They can give you a different perspective.' ^{CU}

Curious? You can listen to the stories until 30 April. Several live storytelling events on the theme A Mile In My Shoes will be run over the coming months as well. Scan the QR code for more info:

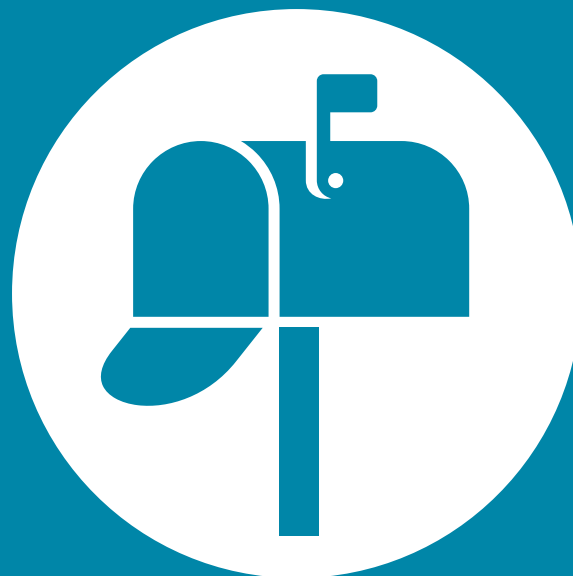


Photo Coretta Jongeling

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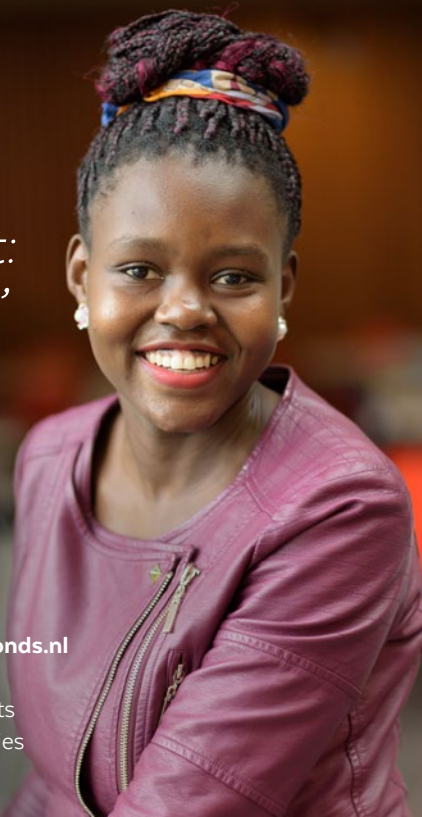
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SUPPORT FOR DISAPPOINTED VOTERS

First-year students disappointed in the results of the recent election for the provincial council and water board will get support.

And that is badly needed, as the student psychologists found. 'It started on the actual election day,' says social worker Inge van de Laan. 'The first student turned up at eight thirty in the morning. He was disappointed with his choice, and basically with the whole process.'

Anna (Health & Society) also felt let down. 'I had prepared really thoroughly. I watched all the election debates and did the voting app questionnaire. I thought that Jesse Klaver had a nice green profile, but he wasn't even on the list. Things like that don't exactly help bridge the gap between politicians and ordinary people. Also, why are you forced to use a red pencil when you want to vote for a green party?'

Thierry (Agrotechnology) thinks he was swindled. 'I voted BBB. I saw all these signs in the fields saying BBBeter. I have a bbbit of a stammer myself so I thought that would be a decent party. Plus they want to help the countryside. Bbbut it turns out they're not quite what I thought. Stupid of me really — I should have known bbbetter.'

Van de Laan says she has seen many similar cases. 'Mainly young people who are voting for the first time.

And for two things at once, when they already have so many choices to make. The system is also impossible to explain. You vote for the Provincial Council, which somehow affects the Upper House of Parliament, even though you can't vote for those members directly. What's democratic about that?'

Jesse (Forest & Nature Conservation) had been excited about the election. 'It's a kind of exam, multiple choice, which is my strong point. But there were so many options! And I was only allowed to colour in one square. So I coloured in all the squares except for one, which comes down to the same thing. Turns out that's not allowed. A real bummer. Now my vote won't count. I'm never going to vote again. No wonder young people are rejecting politics.' On Monday, there will be a lunchtime meeting in Impulse for all the disappointed students. 'People need to share their story,' says Van de Laan. 'That's the key thing now. Then we can look at how to process this going forward. Perhaps WUR can give voting advice to prevent such disappointments. Oh... and there will also be bread rolls.'