

Interim report DARE Project 2022

The DARE project started in February 2021 and is aimed at tackling and minimizing racism and discrimination in WUR. Supported and installed by the Executive Board, DARE is a three-year project coordinated by a special team with representations of the Anti-Racist Association Wageningen, students, PhD's and staff such as Diversity & Inclusion team members and Education and Student Affairs.

In three years we focus on four pillars to make systemic and structural improvements surrounding racism and discrimination in a broader sense:

- Reporting
- Culture & awareness
- WUR Documents & Policies
- Education & Research.

All the activities are coordinated by the coordinating team.

Looking back on 2021

In 2021 we reached to a consensus to start the DARE project as there was certainly the need to address issues around racism and discrimination within WUR.

There are many issues to tackle and awareness to raise before sorting the effect we aim for: minimizing racism and discrimination.

Part of this is because we want to work along with the system and systemically change the existing structure, including its policies, routines and practices from within. In addition, to start the dialogue and to get the message across for collaboration.

Raising awareness, managing resistances and getting buy-in, challenging the status quo by "shaking the tree a bit" and pushing for improvement towards an inclusive organization, takes effort. Fortunately, in 2021 we had two more years to work on this.

Activities and changes in 2022

After a first year of finding our role as coordinating team of DARE, we decided to function more like a stimulating support and capacity building force inside in the organization. Partly because the members of the CT and working groups do not have enough capacity to do all the work themselves. And partly because it is way better to build capacity within the organization so that a solid network of allies is built. This is a more sustainable approach since after the ending of the project in April 2024, the challenges to address racism and discrimination will remain, given the pace of organizational change.

Focus in 2022

We continued to focused on the following pillars in 2022.

The Culture & Awareness pillar rolled out **training sessions** and organized a **special event** to raise attention to the issues of discrimination and racism. Several chair groups and other management teams reached out for trainings on raising awareness, for example by having privilege walks. We were fortunate to give most of these trainings ourselves. Other trainings were offered by ECHO, a expertise center on diversity policy (see [link](#)) with a lot of experience in our field of work. We have engaged in a partnership for trainings and workshops with them.

During the Diversity week, DARE organized and hosted several sessions on the topic of racism and discrimination, varying from workshops making a new style music from two different backgrounds, to A Holding Spaces workshop with Aminata Cairo, a so-called Uncomfortable dinner conversations and a panel discussion about stories and experiences with racism and discrimination.

The *Reporting pillar* first tried to counter resistances in the current help structure. After many consultations, collaborations and a proposal, DARE decided to move forward with recruiting **Social Safety Guides** as brought up as significant sources in both WUR discussions and international pilots. A social safety guide is a peer (student or staff) who is low threshold approachable to speak with about experienced unwanted behaviour and harassment, including racism and discrimination. They are trained volunteers, in skills as well as knowledge of our help structure, so that they are capable of listening and guiding people to the appropriate help or reporting address. The trainings will be given by the same organization that also trained the student-equivalent of the social safety guide.

Within the pillar *WUR documents & Policies* we decided to concentrate on **raising awareness** by talking to people and groups who are in charge of policy making or decisions making bodies, and offering **assistance** to institutional bodies working on the fields of tenure track, employment conditions of PhD, recruitment policies and admission policies. By engaging in **conversations**, we sensitize policy makers to how the content of policies and documents, the way it is written and to whom it is addressed, can lead to exclusion of marginalized groups. And we offer that we can be consulted in addressing possible exclusionary wordings, articles or outcome and impact, especially when policies are under review for being implemented, renewed or adjusted. Advantage is that if this approach is successful, the people involved are aware and capable of making future adaptations themselves. Disadvantage is that change is dependent on the willingness of people involved and progress is slow if when there is no long-lasting support or encouragement.

The *Research & Education* pillar delivered anti-racism **workshops** for teachers in September and November, 2022. These workshops were well-attended and positively evaluated, and we are now exploring avenues through which to extend this training.

We are working on the **online repository**, a DAREtabase through which teachers, researchers and students can be inspired for their courses or research by providing guidance and examples of research on decoloniality, racism, discrimination, and intersectionality in the WUR domains. Here, the working group is connected to the Gender-SMART initiatives and supports various other initiatives focused on decolonizing the curriculum.

A **Critical Friend Service**, which seeks to connect teachers with the goal of promoting professional learning and development around the above themes is under development. Furthermore, conversations have been started around the revision of the **Rewards and Recognition** system.

A member of the coordinating team of DARE is part of a consortium that was recently awarded a 3-year NWO "**Advancing Equity** in Academia through Innovation" grant. This project will comprise educational research and implement interventions focused on promoting inclusive teaching and disrupting "the reproduction of sameness" in education relationships.

Activities and changes in 2023

DARE experienced its own internal changes, a couple of key members left the coordinating team for various reasons including the lack of time to combine the role with their daily work, the project leader left to explore other opportunities outside WUR.

As a result, DARE recruited new CT members, today the CT is formed by Esha Shah, Melina Czymoniewicz-Klippel, Sharlynn Kimani, Joshua Wambugu, Fernando Gabriel Garcia Teruel and Joyce van der Velde.

A vacancy for the position of Representative DARE is now published to be filled for the remainder of the project.

Focus and Challenges 2023 – 2024

Although we achieved progress with little capacity in people and hours, we have a long way to go to attain the culture and policies at WUR that effectively prevent and ban racism and discrimination, where these become mainstreamed in the organization, safeguarded and structurally embedded within WUR. At the end of 2023, we will come up with an advice on how it can best be structurally addressed, preferably well connected to and embedded in existing structures at WUR.

To achieve this we will closely work together with the D&I team and include a DARE representative in the implementation process of the Gender+ Equality Plan. Together we will evaluate the diversity paragraph in the **BAC nominations** with the aim of improving our recruitment and selection procedures in this regard.

As far as the **pillars** are concerned, we will keep working on activities carried over from 2022 with an extra focus in 2023 on admission policies and publicity and networking throughout WUR.

The EB and WMB support the following issues:

- To constantly be aware of possible unconscious biases, inequalities and racism and discrimination throughout the organization, keep raising questions and attention to it and promote the expert team of DARE to guide and support this important work.
- To ensure that policies are checked on (in)equity and (in) equality, every time policies have to be approved. This can also be done by having the check box "checked on inclusive languages" added with and for discriminatory effects.
- Safeguarding diversity (and inclusion and equity) in management and staff positions is key. Therefore we propose to extend the articulation in the coaching of the BAC's on gender to include an intersectional approach with special attention for exclusion and inclusion processes based on other social dimensions of inequality.

This report is discussed with our sponsors Arthur Mol and Arnold Bregt and will help push forward this topic within WUR. We share this report, raise publicity about the importance and existence of the social safety guides and making sure that the Wageningen Management Board supports the work of DARE and the integration and retention of the Social Safety Guides by advocacy and recognition throughout the organization.

Kind regards, coordinating team of DARE,

Melina Czymoniewicz-Klippel, Sharlynn Kimani, Esha Shah, Fernando Gabriel Garcia Teruel, Joyce van der Velde and Joshua Wambugu.