

Interim report DARE Project October 2021

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.

Status update

After the official start, building the project and project team took some time and effort. All new teams do, but this team especially. We were in a different composition than we are used to and the perspectives (in daily and in working life) differed a lot. We had to find common ground together and get comfortable with the uncomfortable issues.

Lots of hours are invested by the team leaders, to network, communicate and further integrate. Furthermore, all pillars often must invest significant time into raising awareness with different people and departments within our organization before any changes can be discussed.

Coordinating team is running very well now and is being trained in the theory of racism and discrimination and guiding change together as a team. Staffing and available hours is an issue for people who don't have this in their (primary) job responsibility. To name a few achievements in 2021:

- A communication plan is made in cooperation with Communication Services.
- Our website is functional so we can spread information and build networks.
- We worked on building knowledge about racism, discrimination and diversity in our teams and direct environment.
- We were actively involved in the discussion between UCAS and WUR about the exhibit in Impulse.
- We gave presentations in several meetings and leadership programs for example PLE and LDP to raise awareness.
- During the diversity week we hosted two events: the privilege walk and safe and brave spaces.
- DARE logo developed.
- We will have a soft launch at the end of November or early December, depending on Covid possibilities.

Lately we have also been involved in the conversation surrounding the art exhibit outside the Impulse, engaging UCAS (United Community of African Students) and Corporate Value Creation in ways to move forward. These conversations have proven to be vital for the sense of inclusion and belonging on our campus, both for staff and students.

This helps position the DARE project and the topic within WUR. We experience a need (and necessity) to be present in discussions, meetings et cetera to represent a more inclusive and diverse perspective in day to day issues and in major decision taking. This means more available hours of the team leads, and it also means more integration into (future) agenda setting and decision making. As a coordinating team we keep track of progress in the pillars and of issues and activities within the organization.

The Culture & Awareness pillar developed **training sessions** which will be offered as a pilot in 2021 and rolled out in 2022. A **special event** is planned in November/December 2021, to raise attention to the issues of discrimination and racism and to launch the DARE Project. Probably this has to be postponed due to Covid restrictions. We will concentrate our efforts on a synergy between events, communication and trainings to facilitate the conversation about discrimination and racism within the organization in a constructive way.

The Reporting pillar encountered some resistances in the beginning. It was difficult to come past the defense mechanisms of the current structure. We are now working closely together with the working group "Ongewenst Gedrag" in order to make it easier for people to report issues of racism and discrimination and to make sure that the care system is able and willing to handle the reports. Another aim is to expand the current help- and health team with more representation and diverse people in it. We also need budget for this in 2022.

With the pillar WUR documents & Policies we decided to concentrate our efforts on policies and documents affecting a lot of people and having a lot of impact. So, we are conducting research and awareness raising in the fields of **Tenure Track, employment conditions of PhD** students and the effect it has on their results, **recruitment policies** and **admission policies**. Our first findings are that it is hard to determine who is in charge of these documents and policy and to raise awareness of the biases in these topics. After initial talks, most people are willing to listen and are open to the idea that changes can be made in order to be more inclusive. That is the first step as we defined it for this pillar. After this preparing work in 2021 we will actively propose changes in the system, in 2022.

Research & Education pillar has developed a **workshop** for teachers to be given on October 29th, 2021. After evaluation we will offer it to more groups. Furthermore, we are trying to build a pilot program on decolonizing the curriculum. We cooperate with chair groups who are open to this idea. If successful we can offer this approach to other groups. Further, the pillar connects and supports initiatives from different chair groups/sections.

Overall conclusion

It is good that we started this project, there is certainly a need for it. We have a lot of 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 systematically change the existing structure from within. To get into the conversation and to get the message across that we want to work together. To raise awareness, handle resistances, shake the tree a bit and improve towards an inclusive organization, takes effort. Fortunately, we have two more years to work on this.