

Student Council 2008-2009 Annual Report



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Dear Reader,

June 2009, time to assess the results of the SC 2008-2009. How did we deal with the decision of the EB to quit the mensa subsidy for SSR-W and KSV? What did we do against the student housing problem? What did we do for Dutch and foreign students to improve internationalization? How did we make sure that students will participate in Wageningen student life? In this report we present you the results of the SC 2008-2009. We did not have much time, because the structure of the SC, as well as the rest of Wageningen UR central co-participation organization changed drastically.

We look back on an exciting year with a lot of serious issues balanced with parties, BBQ's and drinks. We met many interesting people, including each other: students

from Colombia, Costa Rica, China, Russia, NSW, WSV Ceres and KSV St Franciscus Xaverius worked together in the SC, in exploring the potential of Wageningen University, to improve the quality of student life.

We would like to thank many people for their cooperation last year. Marieke van Iterson, Frédéric Linardon, Angela Lewis, Martin Kropff, Pim Brascamp, Ab Groen, Liesbeth van der Linden, Wendela Schlebaum, members of the Student-Staff Council, members of the so called 'Centraal Medezeggenschaps Overleg' and all boards of student and study associations, thank you very much for your cooperation last year!

Harriet Tienstra and Anne Reijbroek
Co-chairs Student Council 2008-2009

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1. Introduction

1.1 What is the Student Council (SC)?

The SC is a group of twelve students that represent students in discussions with the EB of the university. The twelve seats in the SC are divided between two parties, the Progressive Student Fraction (PSF) and United Students (VeSte), by elections. The SC meets the Executive Board (EB) on regular basis formally and on regular and less regular basis informally. The SC has four kinds of rights which can be used to fulfill the students' needs: the right of initiative, the right of advice, the right of approval and the right of information; for example on policy regarding student and study facilities. The SC stays in contact with a lot of different student organizations in Wageningen in order to see what students want.



1.2 The Student-Staff Council (SSC)

The SSC consists of both students and Wageningen University staff. This council deals with subjects that influence both staff and students. Towards Flexibility or the founding of new study programmes are examples of issues that are addressed in this council. The SSC has its own rights, separate from the other co-participation councils.

1.3 Centraal Medezeggenschaps Overleg (CMO)

All central participation councils of Wageningen UR are represented in this body: students of both Wageningen University and Van Hall Larenstein, employees of Van Hall Larenstein, Wageningen University and the research institutes of DLO. The council deals with subjects which influence the whole WUR, such as new education buildings, and the WUR budget.

ACTIVE WITH THEIR FEET UP

Anyone who thinks 'student council' means a group of housewives students of the color-and the type should think again.

Too wrong, the Progressive Student Party (PSP) is known in a villa overlooking the city center, but more it's a typical student office, complete with piles of paper, sofa tables and better clean long around. Four members are holding a meeting with their well-worn notebooks on the table. It looks very relaxed – almost a bit offhand in fact. And yet the subject under discussion – how to make the work of the student council better known – is very important. Because all twelve members will be resigning at the end of the academic year, heading abroad about that. It happens every year. But it does mean that before that, a fresh team of twelve new student needs to be set on the road. And that's why elections are planned for the week of 28 May to 1 June. The elections can only go ahead if more than twelve students stand for election, and these candidates have to be found now. Interested students can contact one of the two parties on the council (either the PSP) by 27 April.

A visit to the offices of the two parties is enough to make their positions clear. The work at the PSP office speaks more of campaigning. Campaigning for independent journalists in literature, campaigning against Shell Oil, campaigning against Apartheid. And visitors here are offered a hot cup of fresh tea. At Van Hall Larenstein, the main theme is an active student life, accompanied of course by plenty of coffee, beer and drinks parties. Helma van der Meer, who makes a point of helping in touch with her subject students who do a lot of extra-curricular activities – by offering plenty of parties given by club associations and student societies.

In spite of the differences between the two parties, they always manage to arrive at a joint statement. They meet the executive council about once a month for a formal consultation, and for some decisions (such as Martin Kruit) needs the approval of the student council. If they don't agree, it doesn't go ahead. For example, the student council brought in a lawyer when the university just stopped funding the cartoons without consulting the students in advance. In a case like that, they think, you shouldn't hesitate to take such steps.

Being a member of the student council is a full-time job. You get a year off for it and the university pays a small sum towards your expenses. You are seriously involved in big things such as plans for a new building. And at the same time, there are lots of light-hearted activities such as debates or graduation parties. That combination is what makes it fun (not to be on the student council), says three PSP's chairperson Henk Thomaas that to be active. Studying is mainly sitting still and listening. Here you can't be passive. You've got to get to work, pick up the phone and create opportunities for yourself. And the nice thing is, you meet a lot of people from different cultures. That's what makes the student council interesting for me.

The student council is indeed very international. The language of communication is English, and there are members from China, Russia, Columbia and Costa Rica. Internationalisation is an important subject for the council, and there is a special committee for it. In Diering, a second year BSc student of Food Quality Management from China, thinks there's a lot of room for improvement in this area. 'Wageningen has a very good name abroad. But when you arrive here as an international student, it's a bit of a disappointment. There is very little information in English. And if it does exist, it's not clear where you can find it. I don't really think Wageningen is an international university.' / A&E



The promotion committee of the student council meets at the PSP office in the Nieuwgebouwen. / photo: J&E

Article from the Resource on the SC (Spring 2009)

2. SC 2008- 2009



From left to right:

Jean Carlo Rodriguez (PSF); Alejandra Vargas (PSF); Harriet Tienstra (PSF); Bas van Rens (VeSte); Fenneke Brascamp (VeSte); Andy Luijben (PSF); Anne Reijbroek (VeSte); Jelmer Hooghiemstra (VeSte); Peter van Kampen (VeSte until April 2009, from May 2009 independent); Edwin Zea (PSF); Li Fucheng (VeSte) and Rustem Gaytkulov (VeSte).

3. Education

3.1 Major/minor plan “Towards flexibility”

Since April 2008 various (co-)participation and executive bodies at Wageningen University (WU) have been working on the major/minor plan ‘Towards Flexibility’. The plan changed a lot over time, but by the time it reached the SC for approval, the plan consisted of the following changes of the BSc studies of WU):

1. Every BSc will be examined by means of a BSc thesis.
2. The so-called ‘major/minor-system’ will be fully integrated into the BSc education of WU.
3. WU will introduce a semester system, although the current five-period system will continue to exist.

This change will mean that the current third period will be split up in two small periods of three weeks

In negotiations with the board of the Educational Institute (OWI) and the EB of the WU, the SC managed to put forward their point of view and to counter the perceived problems:

1. The quality of the majors would be ensured by the fact that the learning outcomes of the majors would remain the same and no majors would be skipped as a result of Towards Flexibility.

2. The possible existence of admission criteria for some minors would make these minors inaccessible to certain students. The SC, EB and OWI agreed that the minors will not have admission criteria, though minors that give an introduction into a particular field of study will not be available to students who are already attending a major in this field of study;
3. The possibility for students to create their own individual minors will not be terminated.

The SC is happy that it could come to an understanding with the EB in the end regarding Towards Flexibility and is convinced that, with the conditions the SC posted for its approval, this plan will change WU's BSc education for the better.

3. 2 Educational project: Towards sustainability

Started by an SC member, the SSC searched together for the current challenges of education at WUR. Revealed was the necessity to add leadership/personal growth in the education curriculum keeping the disciplinary fundament and integrating more a transdisciplinary approach. Students need to take a step to being agents of change in a world

that needs rethinking of existing patterns towards a system that is more environmentally, socially and economically just. Sustainability as a core in the academic curriculum will be developed by different chair groups at the University. Currently there is a minor being developed by students and staff. The aim is to explore the inner and outer components of sustainability in an integral way. The bottom up approach of the SC to develop this minor started when the loud voice of students and staff looking for solutions and new approaches in the curriculum was heard. After towards flexibility was accepted by the SC 2008-2009 external parties are able to propose a minor of 24 credits to the OWI. The future SC's have a big say in the development of this project that just started and proposing minors to the OWI board.

STUDENTENRAAD KRITISCH OVER ONDERWIJSPLAN

De studentenraad heeft stevig twijfels over de veranderingen in de bachelorstructuur die de raad van bestuur wil doorvoeren. Met name de bekostiging en uitvoering van het plan *Towards Flexibility* roepen vragen op.

Voor het plan moet ruim 1,2 miljoen euro uit het huidige onderwijsbudget worden vrijgemaakt. 'Om te bezuinigen moeten er vakken worden samengevoegd en kleine vakken worden afgeschaft. Terwijl die Wageningen juist maken tot wat het is: een kleine universiteit met specifieke vakgebieden', legt Anne Reijbroek van de studentenraad uit. 'Er was veel kritiek op de vorming van brede bachelors, die daardoor niet is doorgegaan. Maar deze bezuinigingen leiden er ook toe dat studies inhoudelijk dichter bij elkaar komen te liggen.' De raad van bestuur wil de bachelorstudies vanaf 2010 voorzien van een semesterstructuur en indelen in majors en minors. Op die manier worden de mogelijkheden voor uitwisseling met andere universiteiten in binnen- en buitenland gro-

ter. De bevordering van flexibiliteit vindt de studentenraad positief, evenals een vaste programmering voor de minoren. 'Zo hoeven studenten niet zelf hun vakken bij elkaar te sprokkelen', zegt Anne. Over de uitvoering heeft de raad echter vragen. Zo wordt de derde periode gesplitst in twee keer vier weken om een extra instroommoment te creëren. Anne: 'We vragen ons af of dat voor alle vakken goed te regelen is. Sommige vakken hebben hun tijd nodig, bijvoorbeeld als studenten een langlopende proef moeten doen of een essay moeten schrijven. Dat kan niet in de heift van de tijd.' Ook de invoering van de bachelorthesis kan niet op eenduidige enthousiasme rekenen. 'De thesis wordt in veel gevallen groter en dat vergt waarschijnlijk meer van de begeleiders. Het is nog niet duidelijk hoe dat wordt aangepakt.' De raad van bestuur heeft de instemming van de studentenraad en de gezamenlijke vergadering (GV) van de universiteit nodig om het plan in te voeren. De GV buigt zich binnenkort over het voorstel. / AB

Article from the Resource on education

4. Student facilities

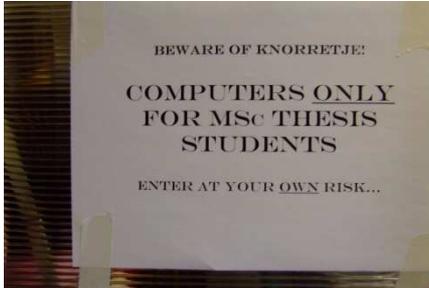
4.1 Thesis workspaces

The SC carried out a research with the aim of identifying with what kind of issues the chair groups have to cope regarding thesis working spaces. Not having enough thesis working spaces is an issue mentioned by 32% of the interviewed chair groups, whereas 12% of the interviewed chair groups do not have a thesis working space at all.

There were three possible problems identified that can arise for chair groups regarding thesis working spaces in the future:

1. The increasing number of students.
2. The moving of most of the science groups to De Born.
3. The introduction of a mandatory Bachelor thesis.

The SC made a report of the research and has sent it to the EB and OWI.



4.2 Mensae

In November 2008 the EB announced that they would not renew the subsidy contract with the mensae of SSR-W and KSV from July 2009 on. The SC was not involved in the final decision making process, although the SC has approval right on all student facilities. After some legal struggling the EB proposed to have a working group that will investigate the needs and requirements for an eating facility in the evening. The SC accepted this proposal and will be represented in the working group. The SC and the EB still do not agree whether or not the SC should have had approval right on the decision not to renew the mensae contract. The SC will keep a close eye on decisions regarding student facilities in the future.

4.3 New educational building: Orion

In the autumn of 2008, the good news reached the SC that a new education building will be built on the campus of Wageningen University. This building will be ready in 2013. The SC was asked to think along with staff members to set up a program of demands for the new building. Our contribution was to put forward the students point of view concerning the educational experiences in current buildings, such as the size of lecture rooms and computer

tables, as well as the use of the canteen and the Grand Cafe in the Forum building.

After the program of demands was completed, the selected architect asked the SC for help to come up with new ideas for the new building. An important session was about the impression of atmosphere in the current buildings. In short, SC input will be used in designing Orion.

4.4 Language centre

The EB decided to cut on the subsidies for the language courses at the Language Services. According to this policy, the course fee for English and Dutch will raise from €22,50 to €100 and for Spanish and French from €22,50 to €400 (not including fees for the Quick Placement Test (QPT) and

materials), figures that in our view the average student will be unable to pay.

After a very hard negotiation with the EB, the SC managed to get the fee for English and Dutch and for students that need French or Spanish for their study to be €90 including the costs for the QPT. Students that would do French or Spanish for hobby had to pay a fee of € 390 including the costs for the QPT. After one year an evaluation with the SC will be carried out through peer review, organized by WU itself, with regard to methodology and didactics.

5. Sustainability



integration of sustainability in research& education and in university internal management practices. A project group sustainability was established in September 2008 to formulate how sustainable students, staff and the general

In the beginning of this academic year, a scan by Price Water House Coopers regarding sustainability motivated the EB to take this subject seriously. The report discovered the gaping hole between the degree of

public expect Wageningen UR to be, and what the consequences would be for daily operations and decision making in energy, catering, mobility, procurement, waste and construction. The EB has decided to aim for becoming a leader in sustainability. In order to fulfill this ambition with support of the whole WUR, workshops were organized in which several sustainability issues were discussed. For each issue, a sub-working group, consisting of students and staff will be established and responsible for achievable sustainability measures on their subject. These documents will be used for the grand 'over-all' implementation plan, scheduled to be finished by the start of 2010. A SC deputy had a seat in the project group Sustainability.

6. Active student life

Active student life is the key to keep Wageningen attractive for opcoming first year students. To stimulate an active student life, the different organizations in Wageningen have to be supported in the search for not only new members, but potential board and committee members as well. To stimulate extracurricular activities, the SC introduced board certificates which will give board and committee members a tangible proof of their experience next to their study. On top of that, to ensure a good division of financial compensation provided by the university, the SC composed a survey to collect information regarding the current FOS facility. This information will be used when the facility will be evaluated in 2011.

The SC sent a proposal to the EB in which was asked for integrating support and attention for extracurricular activities in study advice and other communication to students and their parents. The EB accepted the proposal and next year this will be worked out further.

Coming Christmas holidays (2009-2010) will be one week. The SC is of the opnion that Christmas holidays should be two weeks, because this is the only moment of rest during the year. Moreover, international students who want to go home during Christmas need two weeks. The academic

calendar for this year could not be adapted anymore, but the SC discussed the issue with the EB and stressed that there were solutions to avoid this problem in the coming years when Christmas and New Year are in one week again.



7. Student housing

Last years, the number of students increased very rapidly with about 15 percent per year. Unfortunately, the number of rooms did not increase with the same percentage. Every year in September, this problem became clear: students had to live on campsites and in Landal GreenParks. Also, many students had to travel to their parents every day, while they actually wanted to live in Wageningen. The SC addressed this problem at the university over and over again. The SC was also actively involved in discussions with the municipality. Due to this effort students are now an important target group in the residential policy of the municipality.

Moreover, the SC made clear to the municipality that students should be able to buy their own house, with a guarantee from the municipality for the mortgage. This was possible fifteen years ago and the SC made sure that this possibility will be on the agenda of the municipality again.



8. Internationalisation

8.1 IND booklet

Many international students, particularly those who are non-EU citizens, may face different Immigration and Nationality Service (IND) related problems next to their study at Wageningen University. As a result, to make the different services to international students regarding IND more visible, the internationalization committee of the SC prepared an IND-Booklet. In the IND-Booklet, the international students can read useful information related to IND issues (e.g. how the residence permit can be extended, to which extent the students need to change the purpose of the residence permit, what the IND organization is etc.). This booklet is published digitally and will be updated when the related regulations change. The students can download the IND-Booklet www.sc.wur.nl.

8.2 Student perspective advice on internationalisation

The SC wrote a paper presenting student perspective on internationalization of Wageningen University (WU). It is divided in two parts. The first part is focusing on theoretical, organizational and practical issues related to internationalization within WU and outside. Showing how different actors can shape the internationalization process. Part two is focusing on internationalization within education and intercultural integration. At the end of each part specific recommendations on how internationalization within WU can be improved from a students perspective are given.

The mainline is that WU is presenting the organization as an international university. However, the internationalization policies are mostly focused on recruitment of foreign students (e.g. into Europe) and research projects abroad (e.g. giving shape to the Africa policy). Internationalization policies are not aimed at assisting students in living in an international environment in Wageningen. In order to achieve significant improvement in the internationalization process we advocate for an integrated approach.



8.3 International resource for an international university

The internationalisation committee of the Student Council has been working throughout the year on improvement of information provision for international students. Among

other actions, we participated in meetings with the Resource board in order to represent the opinion of international students on different publications. As a result of our input, Resource will show next year a friendlier international face.

From September on, the Resource, will provide articles in Dutch, as well as in English. Each article will include an English summary with a link to the complete article in English on the website.

9. Promotion

9.1 SC activities



With the move of most educational buildings to the campus the SC tried to be more visible at the campus. We also tried to focus on providing general information regarding the SC. The following activities were organized:

Sinterklaas wishes action

At the beginning of December the SC collected wishes for a better university from students. Almost 250 students expressed their wishes.

New Years Drink

To celebrate the New Year and honour an excellent teacher, the SC organized an evening with a guest speaker and afterwards a party at Unitas. Due to several circumstances, the event was not so well attended.

SC information lunches

To inform students on what the SC does in general, the SC organized two information lunches to inform students about our work.

Next to these activities we also tried to be more recognizable by having promotion lectures to first year students, brochures and flyering for every activity. Also, we kept our website up to date and invited Resource to write a piece on SC life. On top of that, we wrote pieces about SC developments in the Resource on a weekly basis.

9.2 PSF activities

PSF organized activities this year to create awareness among students on developments in education and at WU. Through various debates and promotion activities PSF tried to enter into discussion with students.

Debates:

- Debate on Sustainability within the Wageningen University.
- Debate on the right of education of WU students and the recent developments in the Netherlands deteriorating rights to education.
- Debate evening in collaboration with Studium Generale on the role of the scientist in promoting human rights.

Forum activities: Women's day action and lunches

Harde Knip: The WSO and PSF undertook actions against the hard cut (harde knip). On December 2nd, local actions were organized at universities throughout the Netherlands. On December 8th, student unions and student parties from throughout the Netherlands went to the meeting of the educational representatives of the Dutch parliament, where the hard cut was discussed. There a nice, playful protest was organized, which was even attended by the minister

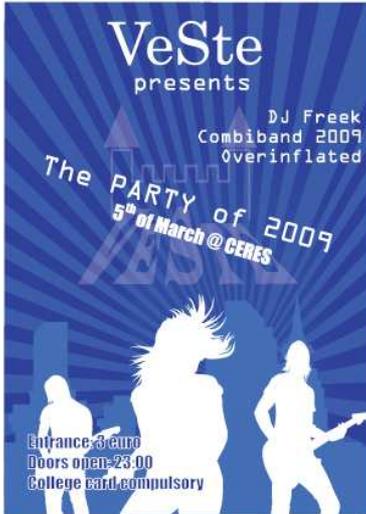
himself. Outcome of the meeting was that the ministry of Education would rewrite the proposal, and consult among others the LSVb and LOF. We are eagerly awaiting the minister's new proposal.



Hier: The PSF together with WSO, Happy JMA and Morgen, carried out a campaign based on the dutch campaign Hier, to make students aware of ways in which they can start saving energy in campus and student buildings.

Housing: The PSF collaborated with the WSO in the demonstration in front of the Forum Building.

9.2 VeSte activities



VeSte organized several activities this year to narrow the bridge between students and the party. While VeSte was founded by the large student associations in Wageningen, they consider it important to collaborate closely with them to be known among active students. The activities were the optimal possibility for

collaboration and resulted in following activities:

Open party at Ceres

In order to get our name more known among students, VeSte organized an open party at Ceres together with the CAID. The AID theme was presented, the party was attended by almost 1000 students and 1400 litres of beer were consumed.

Board congress at KSV St. Franciscus

To support the boards of student and study associations VeSte organized a board congress. Workshops in leadership, volunteer recruitment and communication were attended by around 90 Wageningen board members. The most experienced boardmember present, Martin Kropff, shared his experiences and discussed how to improve participation in boards. This input was used in a proposal to support active student life (Chapter 6).

'Voor studenten maakt het weinig uit'

Anne Reijbroek, voorzitter Veste, in LA13 aan de Lawickse Allee

'Wij vinden het jammer dat de universiteit zich steeds meer centraliseert op de campus. Het gaat namelijk ten koste van het studentenleven in het centrum. Voor studenten zal het verder weinig uitmaken of het bestuurscentrum ook naar de campus gaat; studenten komen daar niet vaak.'

Debate at Ceres

Two major topics were discussed during this debate; internationalization at WU and the European elections. The internationalization debate displayed different opinions and

viewpoints and during the debate about the European elections different parties gave their opinion.

Placemats

During the year VeSte distributed placemats through the mensae at KSV and SSR-W and the Albron canteen, to keep students informed about the VeStitative activities, opinions and actions in the SC.

Harde Knip

On national level through ISO (Interstedelijk Studenten Overleg) VeSte participated in writing an alternative proposal for the Harde Knip. The minister took the most important points and changed his plans.

10. Next year's Student Council (2008/2009)

VeSte



Anouk Platteel



Yi Bingqing (Apple)



Eva Helmus



Judith van Niekerk



Susan van Aalst



Julie-Anne Tangena



Kees van der Ark

PSF



Wen Zhang



Ian Perry



Antonio Chamorro



Arnold Weiqin Tang



Suzanna van der Meer

SC technical Chair: Angela Lewis

SC Secretary: Marieke van Iterson

11. List of abbreviations

BBR	Administrative and Management Regulations (Bestuurs- en Beheersreglement)
CMO	Centraal Medezeggenschaps Overleg (Central Participation meeting)
EB	Executive Board Wageningen UR (Raad van Bestuur Wageningen UR)
FOS	Financial Support Students (Financiële Ondersteuning Studenten)
GMR	Joint Participatory Council of VHL (Gezamenlijke Medezeggenschapraad)
ISO	Interstedelijk Studenten Overleg (Meeting of students from different universities)
LOF	Landelijk Overleg Fracties (National meeting of Parties)
LSVb	National Student Union
O&O	Education and Research Department
OpCie	Programme Committee (Opleidingscommissie)
OWI	Educational Institute (Onderwijs Instituut)

PSF	Progressive Student Party (Progressieve Studenten Fractie)
SC	Student Council (Studentenraad)
SSC	Student Staff Council (Gezamenlijke Vergadering)
SSC	Student Service Center
VeSte	United Students (Verenigde Studenten)
VHL	Van Hall Larenstein university for Professional Education (Hogeschool Van Hall Larenstein)
WSO	Wageningen Student Union (Wageningse Studenten Organisatie)
WUR	Wageningen University and Research Centre