

ANNUAL REPORT

January-July 2021

VeSte 2020-2021

Student Council party Wageningen University



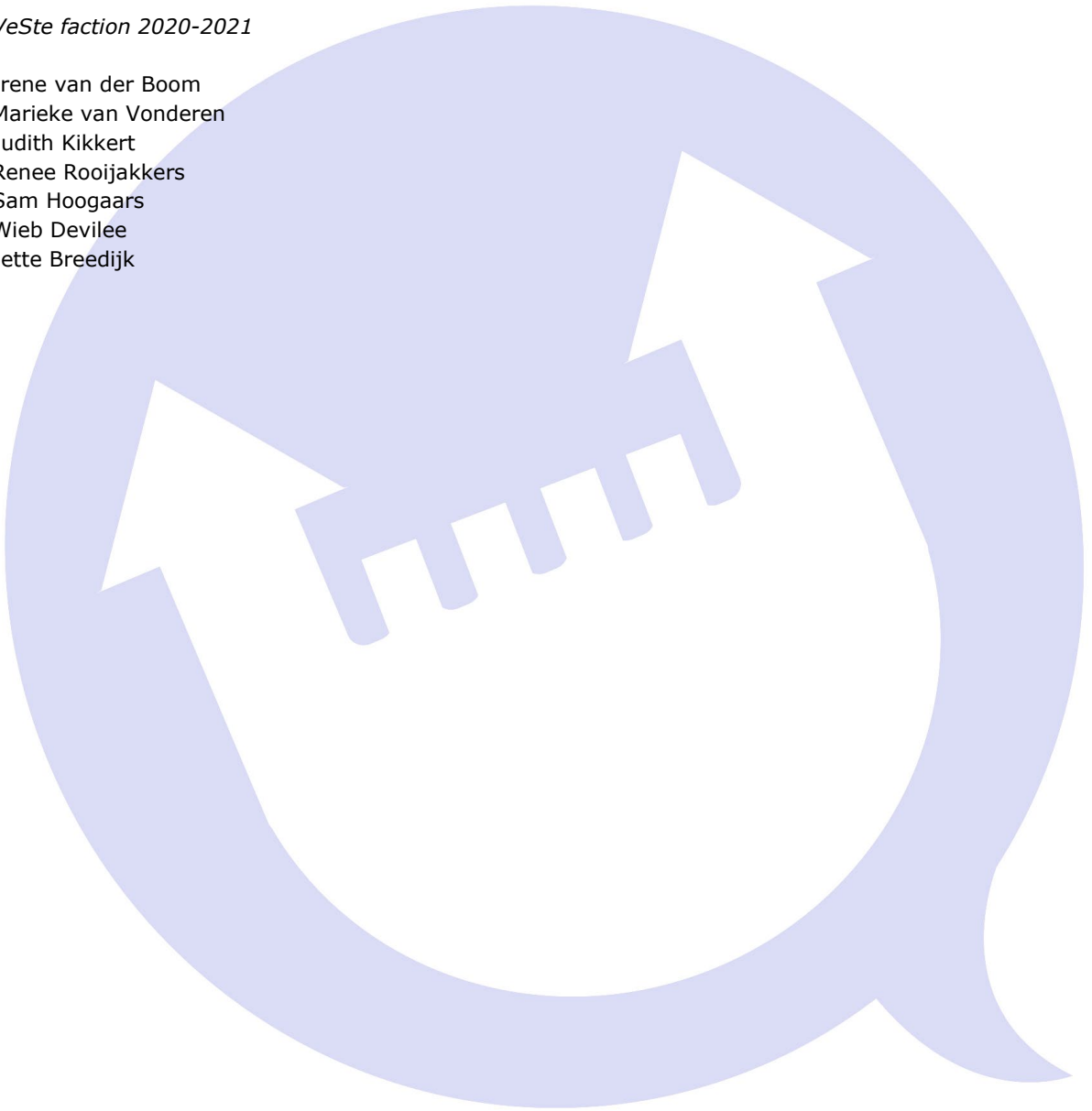
Preface

You are reading the Annual report of the second half year of the VeSte faction 2020-2021. VeSte is a party in the Student Council of Wageningen University & Research and represents all active students of Wageningen. In this report the VeSte policy the calendar year 2020-2021 is evaluated for the first half of the year (January - July) and the main accomplishments are mentioned. With seven seats in the Student Council VeSte was able to reach a lot. We would like to thank all our supporters and staff for the support during the year.

We loved representing you this academic year.

VeSte faction 2020-2021

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Introduction

VeSte ('Verenigde Studenten', or in English 'United Students') is a Student Council party founded in 1997 by members of the Contractus student associations in order to represent these associations and their members in the Student Council of Wageningen University. Over the years, it became apparent that the VeSte vision fits with more associations and organisations. Therefore, VeSte started cooperating with various kinds of organisations, both within Wageningen and on a national and international level. VeSte represents active students, which is at the heart of VeSte's identity.

The VeSte board consists of seven members in 2020-2021



Chair
Irene van der Boom



Vice-Chair
Marieke van Vonderen



Secretary
Judith Kikkert



Treasurer
Renee Rooijakkers



Commissioner Internal Relations
Sam Hoogaars



Commissioner National Affairs
Wieb Devilee



Commissioner Public Relations
Jette Breedijk

Mission

As a Student Council party, VeSte represents and supports active students of Wageningen University & Research (WUR). Active students are students who are motivated to develop themselves both inside and outside the classroom. These students develop themselves by engaging in extracurricular activities in various organisations and associations, and/or by engaging in activities concerning with talent, knowledge and skills development. These students create an atmosphere in which academic and social development can flourish.

Vision

The VeSte vision consists of three pillars: *World Class Education*, *Broad Academic Development* and a *Vibrant Student Life*. By improving the internal and external environment of WUR with a focus on these pillars VeSte aim to support all active students. Hereunder it is explained what each pillar entails:

- I. VeSte should strive for the availability of *World Class Education* for every student of WUR. Therefore, VeSte actively contributes to maintaining and improving the *world-class education* at WUR, which is often seen as one of the foremost excellent institutions within its domain worldwide. This is not only visible in rankings, but also in the experiences of both current students and alumni. According to VeSte, the highest level of education consists of small-scale interactive education, close supervision of courses and theses, an international classroom and atmosphere, flexibility within and between programmes and multidisciplinary education. VeSte will always strive for educational excellence of WUR by engaging with students and staff.
- II. Another essential aspect of being a student at WUR is the opportunity for all students to achieve *Broad Academic Development*. This concept entails participating in the activities that stimulate personal and professional development. Both must be stimulated in courses where skills and knowledge are combined in the classroom. However, much progress is achieved outside the classroom as well, where students take part in training programmes, (international) student exchanges, board tenures, and other activities. It is essential to stimulate students in partaking in these activities since learning takes place both in- and outside the classroom.
- III. In the external environment of WUR, VeSte sees the need to support a *Vibrant Student Life*. WUR should play an active role in facilitating this as well. In this student life, a variety of organisations are embedded, connecting and supporting students, and making Wageningen their home. Student organisations contribute to the *Vibrant Student Life* of Wageningen and create a truly global society within a small Dutch city. As VeSte, we support these organisations in their activities and we value these communities strongly. This is why we contribute to the *vibrant student life* of Wageningen.

VeSte utilizes these three pillars as the basis of their discussions within WUR. Hence, initiatives of the VeSte and decisions made by the Executive Board involving the Student Council should have these pillars at their foundation. The Student Council has various rights to help implement their vision into policies. These rights are the *right of approval*, the *right of advice*, the *right of information* and the *right of initiative*. When external actors are involved, such as the municipality, the faction will be in close contact with them as well, which is especially relevant for the *Vibrant Student Life* in Wageningen.

Focus

The focus of VeSte faction 2020-2021 in the first half of 2021 was similar to last half year. In the first half of 2021, the Student Council had time to work majorly on initiatives for the BSA, the VeSte sustainability fund and the VeSte gender-inclusive language policy. At the end of the academic year, the VeSte sustainability fund has been accepted by the Executive Board and the VeSte gender-inclusive language policy has officially been sent in as initiative. Also, the Education Modification Cycle took place in which the discussions about the EER of WU and the joint degrees were held. Other dossiers discussed, amongst others, were 'Guidelines and procedures courses with a maximum', 'Complaint procedure students' and the 'Pricing policy 2021-2022'. The VeSte faction always strived to applying its vision in the decisions that the Student Council made. Next to the dossiers, the faction kept on focussing on the consequences of the pandemic seen by students' wellbeing and mental health. It has been taken care of to remain the quality of online education and examination, but extra focus still was needed for the personal situations of students. For example, more mental health issues arose and the faction organised an event on Addressing Mental Health. During the first half of 2021, the campus slowly re-opened again and the faction focussed a lot on the decisions made around the relaxation of opening the campus to make sure the university would take the perspective of the student into account in these decisions. The faction is looking forward to have a fully open campus again when the measurements allow this!

In March 2021, the elections of the Dutch House of Representatives took place. The faction focussed on informing and opening the discussion for the students of WUR to think about the standpoints of the political parties electable for the Dutch House of Representatives. The VeSte faction organised a Political Event together with the WKvV in February 2021.

A further elaboration on how the faction implemented our vision, policies and philosophy into our achievements this year is briefly summarised in this yearly report.

VeSte committees

Acquisition

This year acquisition again revolved around the elections. Due to events being organized online, it was not optimal to search for acquisition deals for these events. Therefore, the focus of the acquisition committee was to ensure sufficient and diverse promotion during the election week and thus to lure them to the digital ballot box. With acquisition deals potential voters are reminded of the option to vote in an attractive way, namely by giving them something for free. This goal was reached by making a deal with Kruimig (150 vouchers for the second portion of fries for free), with Cicuto (150 vouchers for the third scoop of ice cream for free) and 150 magazines of the Groene Amsterdammer to give away.

Events

Board market

On the 14th of January VeSte organized the annual Board Market. VeSte considers this online event to be a great success. Using the platform wonder.me participants could roam around like it was an offline Board Market. Together with SWU Thymos, Integrand Wageningen, Green Office Wageningen, WEP (Wageningen Environmental Platform), Stichting De Veluweloop, StartHub Wageningen, Enactus Wageningen, ESN Wageningen, UniPartners Wageningen, Rode Kruis Studentendesk Wageningen, Connect Wageningen, Interstedelijk Studenten Overleg, AIESEC in Wageningen, Studenten voor Morgen and the AID board we had a very interactive lunch break. VeSte believes participating in extracurricular activities such as a (part-time) board year contribute to a students' development and a *Vibrant Student Life* and by organising this event we were able to offer the student population an easy and accessible peak into the opportunities for board years.

Political event

On the 25th of February VeSte organized a political event in cooperation with the Wageningse Kamer van Verenigingen (WKvV). This evening, which was hosted by Isa Vroom and Matthijs Harmsen, turned out to be a great success. 8 political parties attended and presented their view on three very important topics: study finances, sustainability and the job market! Next to hearing the political parties present their view on certain topics, students were able to talk with the parties personally in break-out rooms. The goals of this event have been achieved, namely to stimulate students to vote during the elections for the Dutch parliament and to help them make an informed decision! By organising this event, VeSte tried to inform students about the parties involved in the voting for the Dutch House of Representatives which was very relevant for the educational domain in the Netherlands.

Grand Meeting

This year, the grand meeting was hosted online. VeSte and the BoE tried to organise this as normal, by doing the event in the night with four parallel sessions. However, there were too little sign ups so it was decided to cancel the event. A new format was thought of: Grand Meeting, The Series. This was a series of 4 lunch lectures was held. These were sessions of 45 minutes. There were 4 discussion topics:

- BSA with Arnold Bregt (Dean of Education);
- PC Best Practices with Isa Vroom (Chair PC Biology);
- Digitalisation of Education with Ageeth Lindner and Michiel Kraaij (Education Information managers)
- Flexibilization with Ulrike Wild (Programme Director Online & Open Learning) and Matthijs Harmsen.

Every session a couple of students attended, all being a member of a PC. By organising this event, VeSte tried to inform students about topics which are currently very relevant in the educational domain and tried to involve students with educational policy decision making on key topics.

Addressing mental health

On the 21st of April, VeSte co-hosted the event "Addressing Mental Health". Together with ESN (Erasmus Student Network) Wageningen and the Rode Kruis Studentendesk Wageningen an evening was hosted where three different topics related to mental health were discussed. VeSte opened the evening with a personal talk from a student that has struggled with his mental health. Afterwards, Ghislaine T. M. Regout Msc. a psychologist from CAREDATE, spoke about how to meet new people during the pandemic. The next speaker was Madelon Bronner who spoke about the project "Skipping the Corona Dip" of the Rode Kruis. She gave some scientifically proved tips to reduce stress. The last speaker was, Dr. Martijn van der Spoel, an educational psychologist. He gave a lecture about how to get motivated. By organising this event, VeSte tried to make students aware of mental health problems and tried to open the discussion about these problems.

OWW activity: Scavenger Hunt

For the One World Week there were a lot of restrictions for the activity, because of COVID-19 measures. VeSte came up with a new activity, instead of the traditional pub crawl. The events committee hosted a scavenger hunt throughout Wageningen with a lot of assignments to make pictures. VeSte is proud that besides COVID-19, the annual OWW activity was still a success. By organising this event, VeSte facilitated a fun activity, to ensure that even during COVID-19 times a vibrant student life is accessible to all students.

Promotion & Design

The committee was very focused on the elections. A campaign with the picogrammes of the pillars of VeSte was created and executed. This year for the elections, the committee made use of a lot of personal pictures and themes that would address topics of interest to a wide group of students. Next to that, the committee introduced both the candidates and the list pushers in a new format. The committee is very happy with the interaction of social media this campaign has reached.

Besides this a communication strategy was established to ensure consistency in communication channels.

Trainings

In January all the boards of study and student association were mail about what trainings VeSte has to offer and the prizes. This was done since many committees start and some boards are settled in January. In addition, this general information about the trainings was also uploaded on the VeSte website. Both actions really helped with the promotion of the trainings. In total, during the first half of 2021 four trainings were given online, which resulted in 170 euros income.

Elections

27.55% of all students at WUR voted during the Student Council election week. This is comparable to the amount of students that voted last year, but a lower amount compared to other years. This is probably due to the fact that physical promotion was not possible. During these elections VeSte organised activities, like the Walympics and the silent disco night and hosted a podcast to activate students to vote for VeSte. VeSte managed to acquire the majority of seats in the Student Council, seven out of twelve seats. Next year there will be seven enthusiastic students representing active students.

Ad hoc. VeSte Association

This year a working group with students from different associations was established. The goal of the working group was to hear the opinions of different students of what a VeSte Association should look like. They could pitch their ideas and together with VeSte they give substance to the Association. With their help two committees were established:

- (1) The education committee: Within this committee, students can suggest educational topics to work on. By becoming a member of the Association and the education committee, students can gain an insight into WUR's education policy, and can exert their influence on it if they wish.
- (2) Events committee: Within this committee, students can organise all sorts of activities.

Next year these committees will be further developed. An independent Board was established to keep the overview of these committees and to further establish the Association.

External affairs

Quality of Education

Resits

During the year, the resits working group was started again, after being paused due to COVID-19. This working group will make a proposal for the new resits policy. Two VeSte members are part of this working group. The focus is to maintain resits possibilities for students but also creating more successful attempts. This will create a more favourable resits policy for both students and staff. The working group will finish at the beginning of the new academic year.

During the EER discussions, the topic of flexibility for students and the topic of online/digital education were discussed a lot. With the implementation of OSIRIS some flexibility and opportunities were last for students. VeSte tried to activate the EB to take action within the OSIRIS group of all universities and universities of applied sciences that use OSIRIS. The EB has put some of the actions asked for on the agenda of this group. VeSte also tried to create more rules and regulations and clear procedures for digital exams and digital education in the EER. This was partly taken up.

Quality Agreements

In the first half of the year 2021, the sounding group of the Quality Agreements (QA) consistency remained the same containing three VeSte members. In this half year, the sounding group was involved with writing the annual report, reviewed the impact analysis & dashboards and held a brainstorm about the communication of the QA. In the last cycle, the sounding group got insight in a dossier which will be send to the SSC for approval in September. This is an example of how the SSC is involved in early stages resulting in having more impact and eventually this smoothens the approval procedure.

VeSte in their role as discussion partner of the steering group has strived to contribute to the optimal use of the QA funding to improve the quality of education, which will in turn benefit students, by asking critical questions about the implementation and realisation of this funding and thinking along when budget has to be allocated differently.

Extended Daytime Schedule (EDS)

The Extended Daytime Schedule (EDS) has been evaluated in academic year 2019-2020. According to different evaluations performed by ESA, VeSte and by an independent organisation Panteia, some points for improvement of the EDS were suggested. Due to the unexpected COVID-19 pandemic, the discussion about these improvements has been held in 2021. During the different discussions, it has been agreed to extend the lunchbreaks in the EDS with 20 minutes. The lunchbreak will be from 13:10-14:00h. the breaks in between lecture hours will be 10 minutes. The longer lunchbreaks will be implemented when people no longer have to keep 1.5m distance. Also, a change in the Education Examining Regulations (EER) will be made to state that at a maximum of twice per week the 12th lecture hour can be scheduled for students. This will be added to the EER in academic year 2021-2022. VeSte is satisfied to see longer lunchbreaks so students can participate in extracurricular activities.

Binding Study Advice (BSA)

This year there were a lot of national discussions on BSA. The lowering of the BSA was a topic which VeSte supported, not only for students within WUR, but on a national level. Despite the fact that the BSA does not appear to be a major issue at WUR due to the low BSA, VeSte believes the student population of WUR should be asked for their opinion since the adjustment of the BSA might be on institutional level. VeSte proposed the Student Council do both qualitative research (interviews with coding) as quantitative research (survey). VeSte believes this way we can see how students of WU experience the BSA and investigate whether there are good alternatives or ideas about a change of the current situation.

Since the discussions of BSA are going slowly due to the slow formation of the cabinet in the House of Representatives, the research was paused. When the government decided upon giving universities the mandate to decide about the BSA, we recommend the SC to continue the project. However, VeSte did discuss the topic a lot with ESA, which is looking at the BSA from the perspective of the institution.

Flex studying

This year, VeSte regularly asked the university about an update regarding the participation of WUR in the flex studying pilot of the ministry of OCW. This would offer students the possibility to pay per ECTS they follow. In one of the Consultation meetings, the Rector Magnificus mentioned WUR did not follow through with their application for the national pilot and instead will design their own pilot. VeSte sees this as an opportunity for active students who are e.g. doing a part-time board year, being part of a big committee, being an athlete or an informal caregiver, ensuring Broad Academic Development and a Vibrant Student Life and therefore, will be closely involved with the designing and implementation of the pilot.

Enhance examination preparation

VeSte has worked on the enhancement of the preparation for online proctored exams. A lot of (first year) students experience a lot of stress during online proctored exams, when doing this for the first (couple of) times. Together with Student Training and Support, the VeSte looked into the possibility to offer trainings on preparing for an online proctored exam, focussed on both the technical aspect and stress management during such an exam. However, the committee was not able to create such trainings.

Digital education

Study Anytime Anyplace

In September 2021 the Study Anytime Anyplace policy (formerly known as Bring Your Own Device) will be implemented at WUR. VeSte believes that students should have the freedom to study anytime, anyplace and is therefore very involved in the implementation of this project. A main achievement that was met was that students that had to buy software for a specific course were reimbursed by the university. Next to that these same students will receive a voucher for that software as of next year. Next to that VeSte actively approached students to share their concerns about this project and shared these concerns with the appropriate staff members, so that appropriate action would be taken. Related to this, VeSte was actively involved in determining the laptop offerings of WUR for the academic year 2021-2022. VeSte wants all software to be freely available for students and is therefore very proud of this achievement.

Osiris and TimeEdit

On December 14th OSIRIS replaced SSC online as Student Information System at WUR. In the past half year VeSte was involved in evaluating OSIRIS, by speaking to students and staff of SSC to see whether there were problems experienced. Problems that were experienced were shared at the sounding board group of OSIRIS that could tackle the issues directly. VeSte is satisfied about the implementation of OSIRIS.

Time-Edit is a dual system; on one hand it offers the possibility to reserve study places online, on the other hand it is a scheduling application for course. To ensure a safe campus environment, regarding the COVID-19 measures, it became necessary to reserve a study spot beforehand. The opportunity to reserve study spots has been a wish of VeSte for a long time, since it reduces a lot of the stress students experience hoping they can obtain a study spot in time (especially in the self-study and exam week) and the old room reserving system was still on paper. However, the framework for reserving was not per se something VeSte was happy about (in the beginning only one timeslot of 3 hours). Therefore, VeSte regularly discussed issues regarding room reservation during the taskforce education '20/'21 and tried to influence it with students' best interests in mind. With an eye to the future, VeSte became interested in the opinion of students on the room/study spot reserving system and therefore started a survey within the Student Council, to ensure that next year, once COVID-19 restrictions have been lifted, and the system is still in place, it becomes optimal to students wishes.

Quality and amount online facilities

MS Teams is still offered to all students, which is seen positively by VeSte and advises the next to ensure that this license is maintained for all students, even when we return to the "old normal"; not only does it offer possibilities for education, it also gives active students the possibility to have high quality online meetings and it is therefore, desirable according to VeSte.

Research by ResearchNed, commissioned by ISO, showed that students prefer especially to maintain knowledge clip and short video lectures. Moreover, online lectures and online individual supervision/guidance, were also positively evaluated. VeSte tried to take this information into account, when speaking to policy makers about the future of education and the lessons learned during these times.

Finally, due to the initiative of VeSte, the Excellent Education Prizes had four more categories this year, namely for courses held during corona times. Courses were especially rewarded if they dealt with the corona situation in a creative and innovative way and tried to facilitate as much interaction as possible and a diverse course for their students. This interaction and diversifying was amongst others facilitated by online tools. Two VeSte members took place in the jury and got to present the awards to several teachers. VeSte hereby hopes to stimulate teachers, to try to be innovative, to never lose touch of the personal aspect of teaching and to challenge students to actively engage, even when courses are remote.

COVID-19

Reflecting, the whole academic year was marked by the presence of the COVID-19 pandemic. Till almost the end of the academic year, very strict measures were in place, resulting in that +/- 80% of education was (partly) digital. Especially since the end of December, when more stringent measures were adopted, the room to make decisions as a university were reduced hugely. Most measures were dictated by the ministry. Every aspect of education and student life was impacted heavily by these measures. Through the taskforce education '20/'21 and the taskforce corona, we tried to talk with the university constructively and pragmatically, about problems that arose due to the restrictions and outbreaks and how to ideally and realistically deal with those problems. We noticed that the university was very willing to do their utmost to make the situation as doable as possible for both students and teachers e.g., by making studying in the library possible for students that, for whatever reason, did not feel that they could study properly from home. As VeSte we focused especially on how e.g., the quality of education was influenced, what the effects were on extracurricular activities & student life, but also on student mental wellbeing. We also tried to look at lessons learned e.g., what the opportunities are of digital learning materials for education, but also ways to strengthen community relations and trusting in student capacities to organize things for their community.

Facilities

This year, VeSte continued working on the thesis workplaces investigation which was started last year. All information was summarised in a final report and additional information 'managementrapportage' which was sent by the EB was added. The memo was discussed within committee HAM of the WUR-Council and it was decided upon to discuss this with the Dean of Education and the 'directeuren bedrijfsvoering' of the science units, being the main responsible person.

In 2020, the start of a new vision on Food and Beverages at WUR had been made. This vision has been finalised in the beginning of 2021. The themes of the vision are Healthy, Sustainable and Circular. VeSte thinks it is important to show the image of WUR of a healthy, sustainable and circular university within the vision for Food and Beverages. VeSte thinks especially sustainability can get more attention in the catering present at WUR and is pleased to see this reflected in the vision. WUR wants her cooperation partners to realise positive ecological and social impact as much as possible and to improve where possible. Some highlights of the vision are: plant-based foods are first catch, no plastic disposables and free available hot water. VeSte is satisfied to see more plant-based foods, so all possible diets have access to foods for all students and makes them feel included in the catering. The vending machines will not contain unhealthy sodas and Science-café's will be realised to get a coffee and a small snack. VeSte is positively about the removal of unhealthy products to stimulate better student wellbeing. People with a disadvantage in the labour market will get possibilities to work at distribution points and in the back office of caterers. The vision will be presented to the participatory councils in the second half of 2021.

The VeSte initiative 'quality of catering' has been intertwined in 2021 via the Food and Beverage vision writing process. This initiative has been defined before as: "Throughout the campus there are quite some different caterers that all have a different way of working, but they have one mission: Give students (and staff) the best experience possible. Before this initiative the caterers were always working on continuous improvement themselves, but now a team of all caterers combined has been made, together with the responsible person for procurement from the Facilitair Bedrijf. Topics discussed in the meetings are creating a more visible way of showing their sustainability efforts, how to get informed on what their customers want and organising events like the "Meat free week" and the "Meat free cooking competition". These meetings were not held last year, but the vision has been taken into account via the Food and Beverage vision writing process.

VeSte was also involved with the tender of the furniture for the third educational building Aurora. There have been several tenders for the lounge furniture, the study places (which are fully RSI/CANS proof) and the dining places. VeSte was able to exert its influence in this working group, as one of the seven people official evaluators.

Personal Development

As stated in our policy for 2021 VeSte supports Broad Academic Development and believes that development also takes place outside the classroom. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it has become more difficult for students to participate in extracurricular activities that stimulate personal development such as going on exchange. Among others due to the efforts of VeSte, the university also saw the need for these kinds of activities and facilitated as much as possible for students to develop oneself. For example, by creating online exchange possibilities, more internships within the Netherlands and letting as much activities as possible continue with a digital, interactive alternative.

Besides that, VeSte was also in close contact with team flexibilization this year and presented itself as a constructive conversation partner. Conversations were held about the optimal form of handing out EDU badges to students participating in extracurricular activities, such as a board year. One VeSte member also took place in the student panel of the EWUU alliance. This alliance provides interesting opportunities to students e.g., through the pilot 'student mobility', which enables students to easily follow courses at other universities within the Netherlands. Next to that the alliance also hosts student challenges which cross the borders of one university and therefore gives students the opportunity to broaden their horizons, obtain new skills and thus develop themselves.

Next to this, WUR launched the platform 'Student Training and Support' (STS), which offers a very diverse set of trainings, activities, and mental wellbeing facilities. This provided students with the opportunity to develop themselves on an academic, but also personal level and to maintain their mental wellbeing. VeSte promoted and supported this platform by distributing flyers and posting on social media. Moreover, a VeSte member also took seating in the advisory committee of STS, which provided the opportunity to share the vision of VeSte on what activities should be organized to support personal development.

Student Wellbeing

As per usual VeSte prioritized the theme student wellbeing and specifically paid attention to normalizing speaking about mental health and working towards preventative action. VeSte believes this can be done by starting the dialogue about this topic and that knowledge and concrete tools can be shared to prevent mental wellbeing issues. This goal was partly fulfilled by the 'Surf Your Stress' week and their activities throughout the year, which VeSte co-organized. Another way of providing support for these issues is to make all students aware of the existing wellbeing structure at WUR, by informing students through our social and online network. Inspired by a poster of VeSte, the wellbeing structure of WUR was this year visualized in a route map, made by the university, called "Find Your Way", which was broadly spread within the student community. Moreover, VeSte critically reviewed what is available to support student wellbeing and looked for ways to improve the system e.g., by getting in touch with program committees to discuss what can be done on program level. Besides the usual routes through which VeSte tries to influence student wellbeing facilities, VeSte also came up with new methods to do this. In February VeSte organized a thinktank; a very diverse group of student representatives attended our meeting in which we discussed the fundamentals of student wellbeing issues, the responsibility of the university and what are preferred solutions. This thinktank gave us more insight in the problems students are facing and how VeSte should deal with this knowledge. VeSte also organized an event, in cooperation with the Red Cross student desk and Frisse Gedachtes Wageningen, about mental wellbeing.

Sustainability

Within VeSte, we consider sustainability to be an important concept. That is why we try to keep sustainability in mind in our policy vision. This is reflected, for example, in the Food & Beverage vision (see previous section about facilities), but also in the position paper of the WU budget.

In addition, VeSte 20/21 continued to work on the sustainability funds, initiated by VeSte 18/19. The sustainability fund for study associations has been approved, which offers study associations more opportunities for sustainability and raising awareness among students with regard to the field. For more information go to VeSte initiatives on page 13.

Inclusive environment at WUR

VeSte believes it is important that WUR is a socially safe place for every student and employee. That is why promoting inclusivity is very important. This can be done through policy as well as through VeSte initiatives. For instance, all masculine pronouns in the EER have been broadened to include gender. This also gave rise to the initiative for a gender-inclusive language policy WUR-wide. The reference to only becoming a male first name can cause exclusion. That is why VeSte has initiated a gender-inclusive language use, so that WUR can work on an inclusive written and spoken language.

In addition, work has been done on the VeSte menstrual poverty initiative and VeSte is also looking at how social safety at WUR and the student life involved can be improved.

City and WUR and Students

At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic there was a very clear gap in communication between the municipality, WUR and student associations. Therefore a new meeting was introduced, the students & partners meeting, that was held every other week. VeSte is proud to be one of the founding members of this group, that was mainly used to discuss the governmental measures that were supposed to reduce the spread of COVID-19. The meeting also got another very important goal over time, the sharing of best practices. To have a vibrant student life, the municipality, WUR and students have to collaborate, to make every feel safe to develop themselves in the city of Wageningen.

VeSte is both looking forward to working with the new Mayor of Wageningen, Floor Vermeulen. VeSte had close contact with Geert van Rumund, the previous Mayor of Wageningen and wants to thank Geert for all the work he did for the vibrant student life in Wageningen, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. VeSte hopes that Floor Vermeulen will see the huge impact students have on Wageningen and will remind the new Mayor that he should always take the students into account.

The students & partners meeting was expanded during the third wave of the corona pandemic. More student organisations were invited to join to discuss their activities together. VeSte is very happy with this development and is of the assumption that by sharing best practices the city of Wageningen will integrate all of its citizens with WUR & the municipality in a better way.

VeSte believes that the construction of the Dialogue Centre will help increase the interaction between the city and WUR and aims to activate the university to use this building for that exact purpose as much as possible.

Framework letter

The draft framework letter was presented in June of 2021. VeSte is proud to announce that in the position paper, a document that reports the major topics that should be added to the framework letter, included a vision on adequate IT support & more funds to blended forms of education. During the COVID-19 pandemic the support of IT improved dramatically and since more and more educational methods will be (partly) online, there should be substantial investments in software and support for students. Next to that there are lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic, like a new "style" for education, blended education. VeSte believes that blended education is the future. VeSte does not want to decrease the amount of physical education, but wants education to be given off- and online. This way students have more tools to finish their courses and pass their exams.

VeSte initiatives

Sustainability Fund

In 2021, VeSte started working again on the initiative Sustainability Fund. At first a meeting was held with SOG (Student Council party of the university of Groningen) where a similar fund was set up on the initiative of the University Council of the University of Groningen. Later several orientation meetings were held with ESA and Green Office and eventually the proposal was discussed in a consultation meeting with the Executive Board.

As a result an elaborated initiative proposal was written, analysing the situation and explaining the need of a sustainability. This document has been discussed multiple times within the SC and with Green Office. In addition the initiative was reviewed by the Green Office Advisory board and the initiative was also pitched to ESA. All feedback has been taken into account for the final version.

An inventory was executed via interviewing several board members of study associations (n=5) representing all science units, to gain insight into the potential use of the fund. The document was signed by the study associations of WU and its joint degrees.

During a consultation meeting with the Rector Magnificus the proposal was approved; from now onwards a fund of 10K per year for three years will be made available and Green Office is granted permission to set up an assessment committee.

Knowledge clips

VeSte believes that once a student has enrolled at WUR they should have access to all learning material within the library. That is why VeSte has put forward an initiative to provide all enrolled WUR students with the opportunity to review all knowledge clips in the library, not only when they are enrolled at a specific course. In this way students can better prepare themselves for their course material, if they feel like they lack knowledge for a specific course or could use some refreshment. VeSte hopes that WUR will allow all students access to these clips.

Data exchange agreement

This year VeSte was notified that study associations did not receive the data of what members were graduated, meaning that they were not able to provide these members with gifts and end their membership at their association because of the altered AVG privacy law. Therefore VeSte initiated an agreement between WUR and study associations that this data can once again be shared. In this way study associations can share this data and other similar forms of data with WUR without breaking the law in any way. VeSte is proud to have taken initiative in this project and happy to contribute to the graduation ceremonies of all graduates with a membership at a study association.

Gender inclusive language policy

The gender inclusive language policy has been initiated by VeSte. Increasing an inclusive environment at the WUR is really import and a part of this is the use of language. To this day, it is still often written/spoken in the masculine form. The council considers this outdated and has proposed a language policy that provides guidelines on how to communicate in a gender-inclusive manner. For this initiative, discussions were held with various departments within WUR (communication, SSC, legal services, HR). Finally, the initiative was presented to the Executive Board.

Menstrual poverty

Ensuring that gender equality is obtained and preserved in every aspect of the university is an important objective for VeSte, as one can probably tell by looking at our recent initiatives. One of these initiatives is the menstrual poverty initiative. Period poverty is the limited access to the resources a person needs to get through their period safely and comfortably, due to political/financial/social/cultural constraints and it can have severe implications for a person's mental and physical health. Recent research has coined that this is also a problem in more "Western" countries, while mainly thought of as a problem occurring in developing countries. These researches show that young menstruating people between the ages of 12-25 are in particular affected by this form of poverty. Several neighbouring countries of the Netherlands therefore have started up programmes which enable universities/schools/colleges to hand out free menstrual products to their students/pupils.

VeSte believes menstrual products are a necessity and that all students should have access to menstrual products, especially at the place where they spend most of their times as a student: the university. We are of the opinion that the inability to access menstrual products can affect a student's freedom to study, be healthy, and participate in society with dignity and therefore VeSte would like to see WUR take responsibility for students experiencing this issue, following the example of VU Amsterdam offering free menstrual products in the toilets.

Liaison Community Relations

Especially during this corona year, it became more apparent to the VeSte faction that the ties between the university, student community and the municipality were sometimes lacking or very weak. For example, when a student initiative arose, e.g., with the goal to improve student's mental health during COVID-19, we noticed that the communication between the university, the municipality and these students came about very slow and that getting support for the initiative was very difficult. VeSte obviously would like to see that the support for these active students, with an entrepreneurial mentality, came about easier. To reach this goal, we believe that the relations of trust between these actors in the Wageningen community should be strengthened.

Inspired by a position at TU Delft, the initiative "Liaison Community Relations" was found. This person would connect the students of WUR, the university and the municipality somewhat like a spider in a web; enabling that the right people "find" each other and that communication runs smoothly, but also that these people form a relationship of trust. The initiative was received positively, by staff members of ESA and the Rector Magnificus during informal meetings. The coming VeSte faction has the task to formalize this initiative and make an airtight proposal.



Abbreviations

Abbreviation

BEE
BoE
EB
EDS
EER
ESA
ESN
OCW
PC
PhD
QvsQ
SAA
SC
SSC
WKvV
WU

Explanation

Boekel Education Enhancement
Board of Education
Executive Board
Extended Daytime Schedule
Education and Examination Regulations
Education and Student Affairs
Erasmus Student Network
Ministry of Education, Culture and Research
Programme Committee
Philosophiae Doctor
Quality vs. Quantity
Study Anytime Anyplace
Student Council
Student Staff Council
Wageningse Kamer van Verenigingen
Wageningen University

