

VeSte Policy 2019



VeSte Wageningen
0317 - 485439
Veste@wur.nl

Droevendaalsesteeg 2
6708 PB Wageningen

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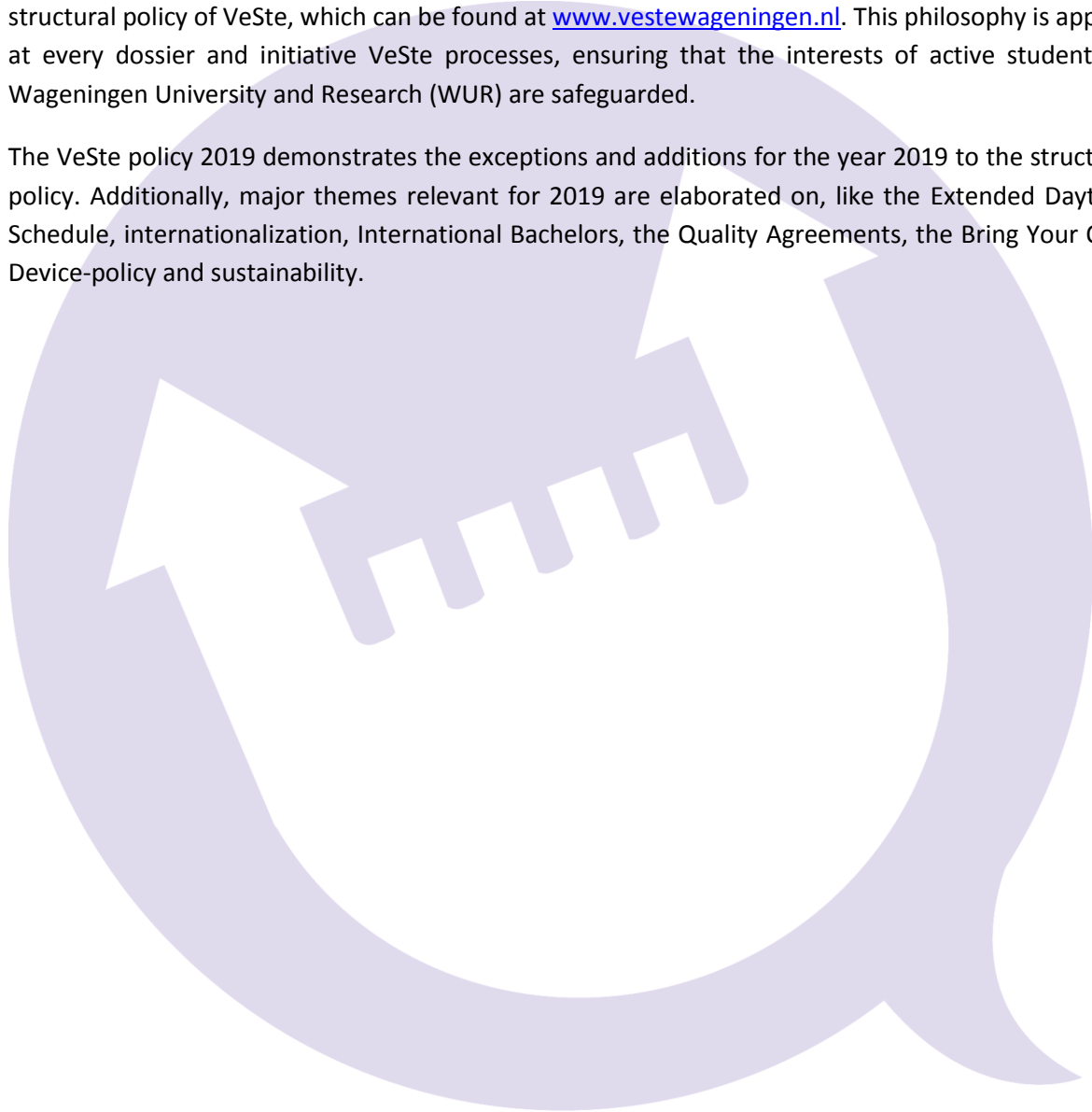
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Introduction

As a party taking place in the Student Council (SC) of Wageningen University (WU) we represent and support active students of WU. In this policy plan, we elaborate on the vision and plan that is at the heart of our efforts. If you have any thoughts, ideas or problems, feel free to contact the VeSte faction.

The policy of VeSte is at all times based on the three core values of VeSte. These are expressed as the three pillars which function as the foundation of the VeSte identity: *World Class Education*, *Broad Academic Development* and a *Vibrant Student Life*. This solid foundation is elaborated on in the structural policy of VeSte, which can be found at www.vestewageningen.nl. This philosophy is applied at every dossier and initiative VeSte processes, ensuring that the interests of active students of Wageningen University and Research (WUR) are safeguarded.

The VeSte policy 2019 demonstrates the exceptions and additions for the year 2019 to the structural policy. Additionally, major themes relevant for 2019 are elaborated on, like the Extended Daytime Schedule, internationalization, International Bachelors, the Quality Agreements, the Bring Your Own Device-policy and sustainability.



Internal affairs

The internal affairs of VeSte relates to the function of VeSte as a party. The elements of this are the different board functions within VeSte and the various committees within VeSte that ensure the continuity and prosperity of VeSte as a party. The responsible party member per function until September 2019 are stated in Appendix 1.

Functions

Chair

Apart from being the Chair of VeSte faction 2018-2019, the VeSte chair 2018-2019 is chairing the SC 2018-2019 as well. In any case where there might be a conflict of interest while carrying out both these functions, the Vice-Chair of VeSte will accompany the Chair to represent the opinion of VeSte. An extra goal of the Chair this year will be that every SC and VeSte member achieves their personal goals. To achieve this, the Chair holds regular individual discussion moments to evaluate their progress. Additionally, the Chair will work on ways to improve the functioning of future SC's. By working on a national and university level with other participatory councils, the Chair will work on achieving this.

Vice-Chair

During the elections students cast their vote on both VeSte, as a party, and on individual VeSte members. Therefore, they do not only vote on the values of VeSte, but on its specific candidates as well. For that reason it is important that decisions made by VeSte are properly balanced between the implementation of VeSte policy and the personal opinion of its individual members. As the Vice-Chair is responsible for the realization of the VeSte policy, it is the responsibility of the Vice-Chair to decide where the balance exactly lies per case. The support organisations can aid in making this distinction.

Secretary

Apart from being the Secretary of VeSte faction 2018-2019, the VeSte Secretary 2018-2019 is the SC Secretary 2018-2019 as well. The VeSte Secretary functions as the primary contact person for small issues addressed via mail or the suggestion box. Additionally, the Secretary is the primary promoter for training courses offered by VeSte.

Treasurer

Up until 2018 the cash book of VeSte did not always show the number of details that was needed to get a clear overview of expenditures and income. Therefore, the Treasurers in 2019 will set up a more structured and detailed cash book, resulting in a clearer overview on VeSte's finances for the current faction and factions to come. Additionally, the Treasurer accompanies the Commissioner National Affairs (NA) during nationally organized meetings.

Commissioner Internal Relations

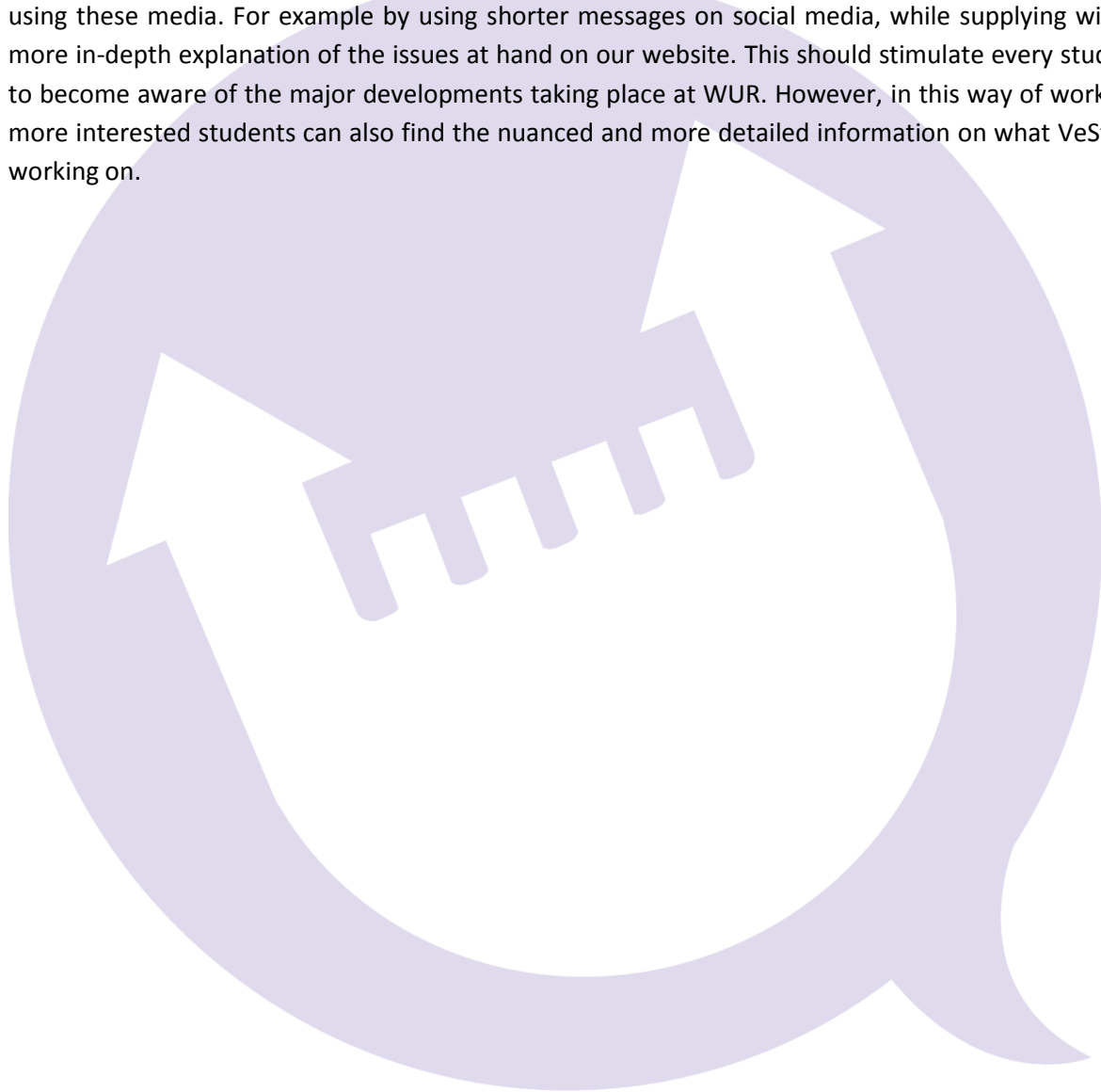
VeSte has an extensive network of study, leisure, sports and cultural organisations. This year the Commissioner Internal Relations (IR) strives to also intensify the relations with other organisations, for example organisations which focus more on organizing internships or career preparation. To achieve this, the Commissioner IR will cooperate to organize joint activities in which, for example, the specific expertise of one organization on acquiring sponsorships for an association is shared with other boards or committees during workshops.

Commissioner National Affairs

In 2016 WUR joined the 4TU, the organization of all four technical universities of the Netherlands. This year the Commissioner NA wishes to strengthen the cooperation with Student Councils from these universities. As these are all technical universities, they encounter similar challenges and opportunities. By close contact with other 4TU Student Council parties these issues can be discussed.

Commissioner Public Relations

In the policy year 2018 a lot of effort has been put in extending the network and reach of the online media of VeSte. In the year 2019 the Commissioner Public Relations (PR) will work on more effectively using these media. For example by using shorter messages on social media, while supplying with a more in-depth explanation of the issues at hand on our website. This should stimulate every student to become aware of the major developments taking place at WUR. However, in this way of working, more interested students can also find the nuanced and more detailed information on what VeSte is working on.



Internal committees

Acquisition

In the year 2018 around €2,000 was acquired via the organization of activities, work actions and training courses. This budget turned out to be sufficient for organizing new activities and promoting VeSte during the year and the elections. Therefore, this year VeSte again strives for a minimum of €2,000 in acquisition. However, we focus on acquisition in terms of tangible items, like snacks and magazines. It is undesirable to link VeSte, as a Student Council party, to a company. Consequently, we do not wish to advertise brands on our social media or website.

Design

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Events

VeSte will again organize a variety of events to promote the values of VeSte, to exchange information with students and to share skills and knowledge. Apart from events organized in cooperation with other organizations, the events planned for this year are: the board market, the grand meeting, the board congress and the study loan system event. Additionally, in cooperation with other organizations we plan to organize a sports activity, an integration activity between Dutch and international students, and we will organize an awesome party to create awareness and visibility for VeSte in a relaxed atmosphere.

Promotion

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Training

This year VeSte continues to give training courses to boards. This year, VeSte will also try to give training courses to large committees to benefit more organizing student bodies. The LinkedIn training will be professionalized in cooperation with other student organizations, as more organizations give a similar training. Other training courses that will be given are the effective meeting and teambuilding courses. To ensure as many student organizations as possible benefit from our training, VeSte will actively promote them during drinks and lunches.

VeSte elections

To ensure that VeSte can represent the rights and interests of active students, it is essential that as many students as possible vote for VeSte. Nevertheless, the elections form a great opportunity to inform students on the content we, as VeSte, work on over the course of the year as well. Therefore, we will focus more on content wise promotion this year.

External affairs

In 2019 many issues will be discussed in the Student Council, the WUR Council and with the municipality. The major (expected) themes are hereunder described.

Student growth

WUR is a growing university, which is beneficial for the financial stability of WUR. Nevertheless, WUR must be able to accommodate this growth without giving in on *world-class education*. It is vital that large-scale education methods, as a solution to this growth, are always combined with small-scale interactive teaching methods. To enable these small-scale interactive teaching methods a sufficient amount of staff is needed. Not only increasing teaching staff aids in compensating for the growth in student numbers, also support staff for teachers taking over managerial tasks already increases the effective time for teachers to really teach and have personal contact with students. The SC Boekel Education Enhancement (BEE), SC Quality versus Quantity (QvsQ), and the WUR Council Education & Research (E&R) committees will take this up in assessing preliminary decisions of the Executive Board (EB) and on their own initiative.

Additionally, bottlenecks due to increasing student numbers occur in the available study space as well. There is a shortage of study and thesis working places. WUR will present their plans in 2019 to solve this shortage on the short- and the long-term. With the SC Facilities and Finance, and the WUR Council Finance committees the feasibility, effectiveness and implementation will be assessed.

Internationalization

WUR strives to be an international university. The vision of the international classroom results in new challenges concerning integration, communication, and differences in initial skills and knowledge at the start of one's study.

One of the practical implementations of the international classroom is the international bachelors (IBs). The IBs result in new challenges for WUR, relating back to all three pillars of VeSte. It is essential that with the translation of courses no concessions are made in the quality of our education. This is closely monitored by the BEE committee this year and adequately acted upon if necessary.

Vital for maintaining our *world-class education* is that every student starting their Bachelors in Wageningen, has at least the same baseline level of skills and knowledge. This entails a sufficient level of English of both international and Dutch students, since integration starts with communication. We will also try to find ways to ensure a similar level of skills for students who are about to start their Masters or exchange semester at WUR.

IBs affect organizations throughout the city of Wageningen as well. Adapting to an increasingly internationalizing student community requires adjustments in language policy, and increases the necessity for proper integration between cultures. These aspects have an effect on the *broad academic development* of students, as communication within organizations will move increasingly to English and students are acquainted in daily life with other cultures advancing their personal development. We can maintain our *vibrant student life* best if we work together as students and WUR for an integrated student population. This can be achieved by cooperating student organizations and they must be supported by WUR in this. VeSte takes up its role in this by connecting as many affected organisations as possible to exchange ideas and information on how to cope with this internationalization.

Additionally, the subject integration on itself instead of internationalisation should become the primary task of the SC Internationalization committee.

Internationalization takes place the other way around as well, with WU students going on exchange to other universities. Information accessibility and experiences of other students with the same exchange destination are valuable parts of the preparation process before going on exchange. Therefore, VeSte founded the VeSte Goes Abroad website. Last calendar year the website has been transferred to WUR website, where it will be maintained by WUR. For that reason, VeSte will monitor the maintenance of VeSte Goes Abroad this year.

Quality Agreements

The Quality Agreements (QA) are a result of the implementation of the loan system for Dutch students. From this, a large budget for government funding came available. Each higher education institution receives part of this funding and is obligated to spend it on the quality of education after approval on the plans by both students and staff. It is important that the plans are correctly implemented with a large involvement of students and that the effect of the QA stimulates all three VeSte pillars. New possibilities for *broad academic development* of students via new extracurricular courses, more career preparation, and availability of coaches to support personal development are great examples of this. *World-class education* should be optimized by increasing interactive small-scale education and creating more time for teachers for training by relieving them from some managerial tasks. For this, hiring additional staff is vital. It is essential that with the implementation of the QA, students are supported to set and achieve their goals in both personal and educational development. From the QA, budget for mental health support must become available as well, for example in the form of a yearly mental health campaign and for hiring additional student councillors. In the QA plans some monitoring parameters are already mentioned which will be quarterly reported on to the WUR Council. Moreover, WU set out some additional monitoring systems as well, which will be evaluated by the E&R and Finance committees of the WUR Council.

Bring Your Own Device

A continuous process taking place at WU is the increasing digitalization. The proposed Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) policy is a clear example of this. It is essential that if this policy is to be implemented, the plans will benefit the students. For this the SC Facilities and IT committees will work closely together with WU to develop the exact policy and implementation plans, for example to ensure RSI prevention and that students with less financial means are taken into account. Furthermore, as a major part of education would become fully dependent on digital facilities, it is crucial that these facilities are always operational and that a policy is swiftly implementable in case of digital malfunctions to ensure upholding our *world-class education*. Protocols must also be available for when student cannot access their learning materials during self-study and examination periods. The SC IT committee will take up this subject to see it developed and implemented this year.

Personal development

Every student graduating from WU should be well prepared for their future career. This career preparation can be subdivided into two different elements: career orientation and development of skills and knowledge.

It is obvious that students need to get the opportunity to see what their future career might look like. For this, excursions and guest lectures of academics 'in the field' are essential. Additionally, study

advisors or coaches must be easily approachable for students to discuss their future and what knowledge and skills are needed for achieving their goals. Expanding the capacity of the Student Career Services centre can be a valuable step in realizing this. Students need to be aware of the (extra)curricular flexibility of their own learning path. Obligatory personal assessment courses, more study advisors and more interactive contact with possible future careers are essential for career preparation. A big portion of the QA budget can be spent on this. This year, the WUR Council E&R and the SC BEE and Finance committees will help develop the specific plans for implementation.

WU graduates should have the skills and knowledge to work in their future careers as well. These are partly supplied by WU within the study programmes. Nonetheless, much of the skills needed for a daily job are best acquired outside the classroom, for example in training courses offered by VeSte. By actively taking part in a job, committee or board, students train themselves in having effective meetings, working independently, and develop social skills. Additionally, students benefit greatly from workshops and courses that help achieving their personal goals, like training in time management or language courses. This extracurricular development of students must, however, never result in too much pressure or stress for students. Therefore, WU should give every student room to work on their personal development. One option is to integrate more opportunities for personal development in the study programmes. This will be taken up in the implementation of the QA and the SC BEE committee. Moreover, financial support from WU aids students as well. A concept of 'flex studying', in which a student pays per credit, is a suitable option. This allows the student to develop soft skills in a job, board or committee without having the burden of paying for unfollowed courses. An option that is simpler to implement is to create a fairer distribution of the financial compensation for students (FOS) looking for personal development outside their curriculum. This year the regulations regarding FOS will be revised, which opens up opportunities for the SC to create a fair system for compensation of students.

Extended Daytime Schedule

The Extended Daytime Schedule (EDS) affects the three pillars in various ways. Shorter lecture hours and longer days result in shorter interaction moments during lectures and in-between breaks with teachers, and a higher workload, which likely decrease our *world-class education*. Additionally, shorter lunch breaks affect the time for students to meet with committees or boards, it decreases the time available for lunch lectures, and it causes less time to spend in the evenings on extracurricular activities, decreasing the opportunities for *broad academic development* for every student. Thirdly, a schedule in which less leisure time is available in the evening requires adjustments for a variety of organizations, hence affecting the *vibrant student life* of Wageningen. It is of essence that students find sufficient time to relax, to uphold high-quality standards of student well-being. Lastly, in practice it has become apparent that students experience large gaps in their schedule, resulting in overflowing canteens and study places.

Rising issues need to be adequately resolved. By acting as a formal and informal link between students and the university, VeSte plays an essential role in this. Individual students can promptly submit their specific remarks about their experiences via the EDS Contact point (www.vestewageningen.nl/edscontactpoint). These remarks are completely documented and, if possible, immediately put into action. Additionally, VeSte strives to maintain warm contact with all student support organizations of VeSte, to forward updates from WUR, as well as gaining input of challenges these organizations face, by face-to-face verbal contact, and in writing in the form of letters and surveys. VeSte sees it as its task to find structural solutions for university-wide problems

concerning the EDS. The specially appointed WUR Council EDS ad-hoc committee functions as the central node for the evaluation of the EDS, in which the consequences for both students and staff are assessed and solutions for arising issues are proposed.

City and WUR

The strategic plan 2019-2024 of WUR advocates for more interaction between WUR and the city of Wageningen. The increasing segregation between students and inhabitants of Wageningen negatively affects the *vibrant student life* of Wageningen. More interaction between both groups can be stimulated in a variety of manners. Examples for stimulating the interaction between Wageningen inhabitants and students which we will work on this year, are study hubs and thesis galleries in the city centre, or extracurricular lectures in the 'Heerenstraat'-theatre. To achieve this, smooth contact with the municipality is important.

Housing

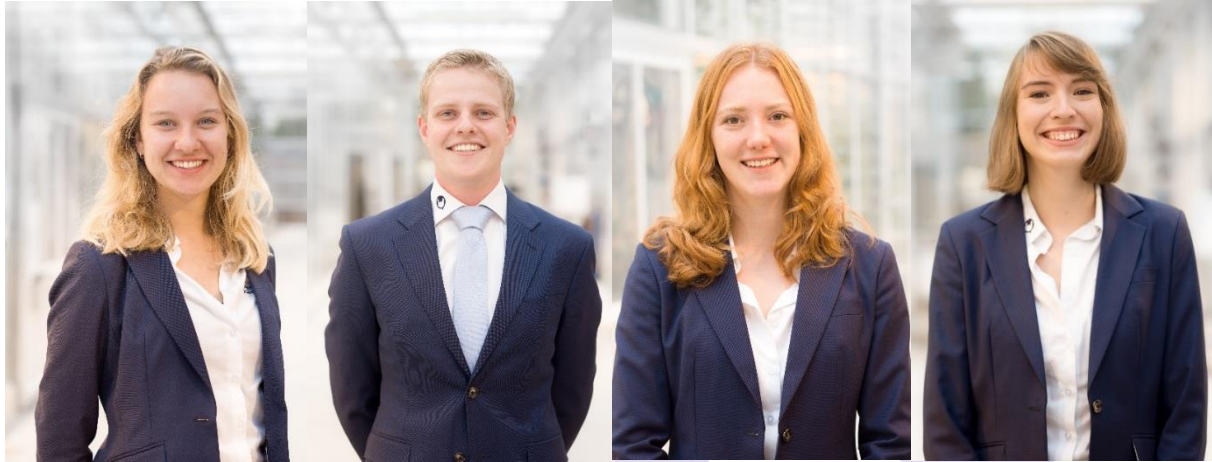
It is preferable that students have a place to live near the WUR. Living further away of WUR results in a longer commuting time. As a result students have less effective study time and, thereby, can suffer from more stress. This is amplified by the fact that students living further away, also have a larger distance to the student life of Wageningen, which decreases their available leisure time with their peer students and forming a bigger step towards doing committee or board work. Nevertheless, it seems inevitable that students will have to live in cities surrounding Wageningen as well. This is still more preferable compared to living outside cycling distance. It is, however, important that in these surrounding cities a close community is developed and facilitated. The SC has no formal rights regarding housing. However, close contact with both the municipality and student housing accommodators should give VeSte and the SC as much influence as possible.

Sustainability

Even though sustainability is not part of the structural policy of VeSte, nor of the core identity of VeSte, it is an important to us this year personally. As WUR is an organization with sustainability intertwined with every study programme and research domain, it should be a leading example of a sustainable organization on itself as well. For that reason, VeSte will work primarily on top-down initiatives, for example via the WUR Council committee 'Huisvesting, Arbo en Milieu' (HAM), where amongst others the traveling policies for staff and building of wind mills is discussed.

Appendices

Appendix 1: party function division until September 2019



Sophie Galema
Chair

Sybren Zondervan
Vice-Chair

Leonie Braks
Secretary

Ida Sinke
Treasurer



Aniek de Winter
*Commissioner Internal
Relations*

Bo Briggeman
*Commissioner National
Affairs*

Roos Verstegen
*Commissioner Public
Relations*