



VESTE 2018-2019

STUDENT COUNCIL PARTY  
WAGENINGEN UNIVERSITY

# ANNUAL REPORT

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# VeSte Wageningen

Student Council Party Wageningen University

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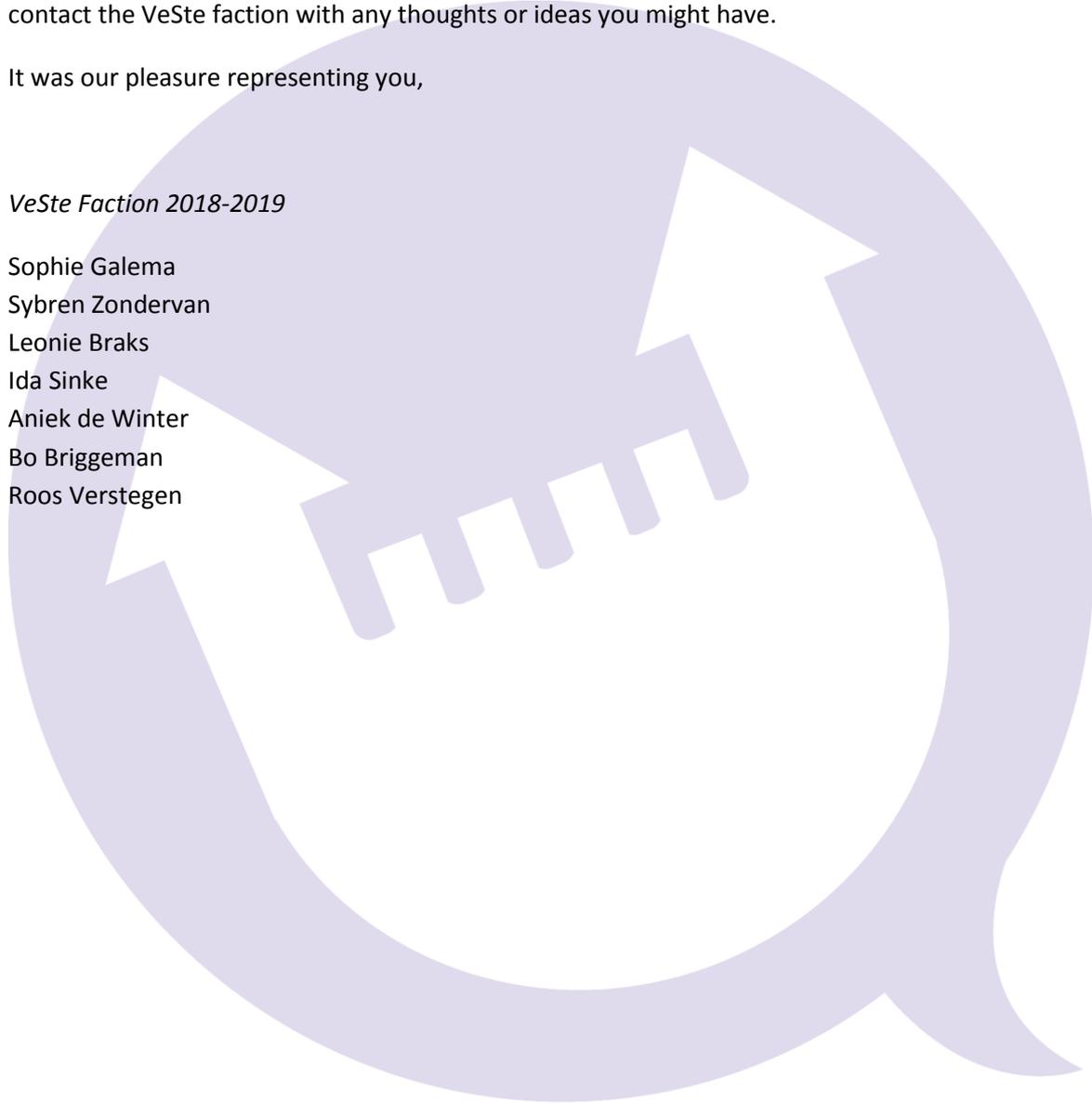
## Foreword

Before you lies the Annual Report of the VeSte faction for the year 2018-2019. As a party of the Student Council of Wageningen University, VeSte represents and supports active students of Wageningen University. With seven seats in the Student Council, VeSte was able to accomplish a lot. This Annual Report elaborates the vision and the focus of our faction and summarizes the main accomplishments, new successful initiatives and the main events of this year. We would like to thank all our supporters and the Student Council staff for their tremendous support through the year and please feel free to contact the VeSte faction with any thoughts or ideas you might have.

It was our pleasure representing you,

*VeSte Faction 2018-2019*

Sophie Galema  
Sybren Zondervan  
Leonie Braks  
Ida Sinke  
Aniek de Winter  
Bo Briggeman  
Roos Verstegen



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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 fit with more associations and organizations. Therefore, VeSte started cooperations with various kinds of organizations, 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 consisted of seven members in 2018-2019 as depicted in Table 1.

Table 1 VeSte Board functions 2018-2019

Chair	<i>Sophie Galema</i>	Commissioner Internal Relations	<i>Aniek de Winter</i>
Vice-Chair	<i>Sybren Zondervan</i>	Commissioner National Affairs	<i>Bo Briggeman</i>
Secretary	<i>Leonie Braks</i>	Commissioner Public Relations	<i>Roos Verstegen</i>
Treasurer	<i>Ida Sinke</i>		

## Mission

As a Student Council party, VeSte represents and supports active students of Wageningen University (WU). This includes students who are motivated to develop themselves both inside and outside the classroom. These students develop themselves by engaging in extracurricular activities in various organizations 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 thrive.

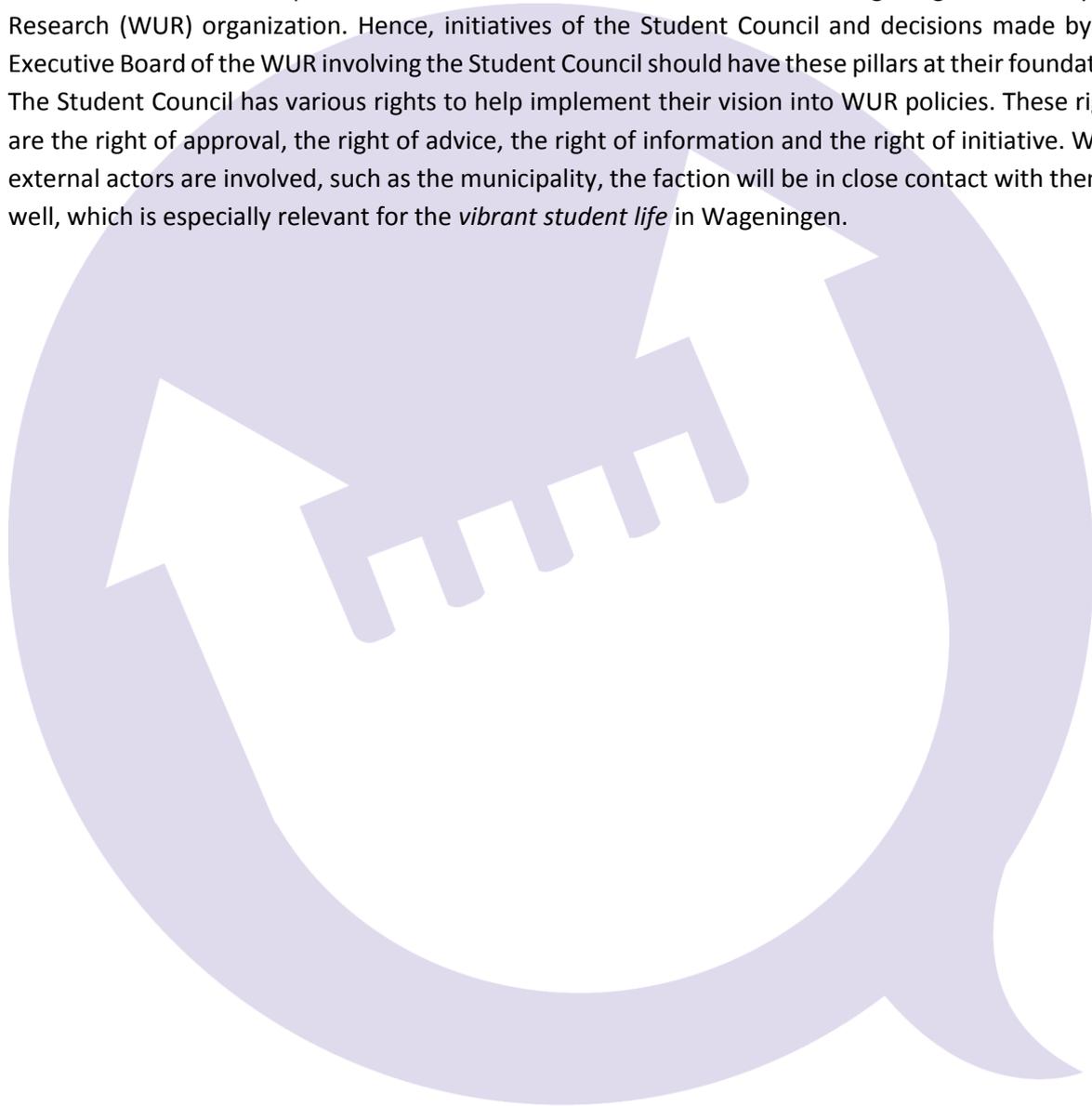
## Vision

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 Wageningen UR with a focus on these pillars we aim to support all active students. Hereunder, we will elaborate more on what each pillar entails:

- I. *World Class Education* should be strived for, for every student at Wageningen University. Therefore, VeSte actively contributes to maintaining and improving the *world-class education* at Wageningen University, which is often seen as one of the foremost excellent institutions within its domain worldwide. That is not only visible in rankings, but also from the experiences of both current students and alumni. The highest level of education, consists of the following aspects according to VeSte: small-scale interactive education, close supervision of courses and theses, an international classroom and atmosphere, flexibility within and between programmes and multidisciplinary education. These are merely a few of the aspects of education contributing to the impeccable transfer of skills and knowledge. VeSte will always strive for educational excellence of WU by engaging with students and staff.
- II. Another essential aspect of being a WU student 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 Wageningen University, VeSte sees the need to support a *Vibrant Student Life*. Wageningen University should play an active role in facilitating this as well. In this student life, a variety of organizations are embedded, connecting and supporting students, and making Wageningen their home. Student organizations contribute to the *vibrant student life* of Wageningen and create a truly global society within a small Dutch city. As VeSte, we support these organizations 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 the Wageningen University and Research (WUR) organization. Hence, initiatives of the Student Council and decisions made by the Executive Board of the WUR involving the Student Council should have these pillars at their foundation. The Student Council has various rights to help implement their vision into WUR 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

As the Student Council was requested for her approval on many irregular large dossiers, also the focus of the VeSte faction 2018-2019 mainly directed towards these Student Council matters. VeSte always strived to apply their vision in these decisions the Student Council made. Amongst these decisions entailed the Bring Your Own Device-policy and the rescheduling of resits.

To formulate the specific vision of VeSte on these matters, it was essential to be aware of the opinion of all different organizations and students within our constituency. Therefore, the VeSte faction put additional energy in involving her constituency as much as possible in the content of these decisions, For example, VeSte discussed these matters at general member meetings of student organizations and organized input moments. Not only visibility of the faction was important in that regard, but primarily getting valuable input from the students on the content of the decision and ensuring that they feel their voice was being heard.

Aside from these dossiers, integration was an important focus of VeSte this year. VeSte shifted the focus of the Student Council from internationalization towards integration. A good example for this is VeSte's initiative for intercultural communication courses within study programmes. Another key element in our vision this year was tackling university-wide sustainability challenges. VeSte members were very active in discussing the new mobility vision of the WUR, in which now every employee is stimulated to take sustainable transport. A vision which also extended towards the new educational building and projects like the sustainability fund.

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

## Main achievements

### *Quality Agreements*

With the abolishment of the student loan system, new funds became available at the government which must be invested in the quality of education. This academic year it was decided in cooperation with the WU and the Student Staff Council what these newly available funds should be spent on. VeSte members took the lead in these discussions. Therefore, the VeSte vision was incorporated well in the plans. These funds will largely be used for increasing small-scale education at our university, which is very beneficial for our World Class Education. Moreover, teachers will receive more time for following trainings and doing peer-reviews of other courses. Secondly, more extracurricular training offers for students will be developed and more skills training will be included in the study programmes. In these programmes also more focus will lay on personal development. For instance, a course on exploring strengths and weaknesses, and exploring your ambitions for the future is being developed. Moreover, it was agreed with the Executive Board that career preparation should take place on average each year at least 5 times in every study programme. These measures ensure a larger focus on the Broad Academic Development of students. Finally, in cooperation with the Interstedelijk Studenten Overleg (ISO) and WU the development of monitoring system is being developed.

### *Workplaces*

VeSte sees and hears around her that there is a lack of thesis, group work and study places for students. This shortage has a negative effect on the quality of education, one of the three pillars, therefore VeSte took the lead in the various discussions with the Executive Board on workplaces for students. This resulted in more insight in the current situation and where the problems lie. On the short term solutions have to be found, but in September 2021 the first and the second phase of the third educational building should be ready to use. Next to that, there are many changes within the buildings of the WUR to use them more efficiently. VeSte will continue contributing to the discussions on this matter next academic year.

### *Extended Daytime Schedule*

This academic year the Extended Daytime Schedule (EDS) was implemented. VeSte gathered as much input and opinions from students as possible. The EDS contact point was already launched in the previous academic year. At the start of the academic year quite some reactions came, especially after a Resource article about EDS was published. VeSte managed to already solve some complaints of students right away. During contact moments with the supporters they were asked to share their experiences with EDS with VeSte by writing a letter. As a response to this, many different organisations sent their letters. Another way in which VeSte tried to collect experiences was by sending a survey to part-time student boards and committees. Over 200 boards and committees responded. Currently VeSte is working on combining these different forms of input into a report about the influence of EDS on the active student life.

### *Academic Calendar*

One of the changes in the Education and Examination Regulations (EER) that was proposed by the Executive Board was the change of the Academic Calendar. This would mean the summer resits of next year would take place in July instead of August. Since this change would have large consequences for all active students, VeSte deemed it necessary to consult her constituency even more actively than she normally does for this decision. At two student associations the topic has been discussed with the Advisory Committees of the associations. At three student associations input was asked via social

media on the internal page of the student associations. On top of that VeSte issued a survey via Mentimeter on her own social media to collect opinions. Over 200 students shared their opinion with us in this way. After hearing all opinions VeSte was confident about her opinion in the discussions within the Student Council. VeSte had a leading role in these discussions. A lot of our suggestions were used in the final decision of the Student Council to conditionally approve the decision. For now, however, the decision of the Executive Board is postponed, partly due to the fact that the conditions that were put forward by the Student Council as a result of the input of the constituency could not be met. Our successors will take all collected opinions of our constituency into account when making a decision in the future about this matter.

### *Thesis*

VeSte worked on problems surrounding the thesis together with the rest of the Student Council. To prevent thesis delay VeSte thought of different solutions like promoting thesis rings and including an introduction presentation at the beginning. Also VeSte initiated the idea to have an university wide PACE evaluation at the end of the thesis. These recommendations were summarized in a position pitch by the Student Council that has been send to the dean of education and a working group that is revising thesis at the WU. Next to this VeSte launched a [Thesis Contact Point](#) where students can file a complaint or ask for help when problems arise during their thesis.

### *Strategic Plan 2019-2022*

At the beginning of the academic year, multiple VeSte members were involved in committee of the Student-Staff Council that treated the Strategic Plan 2019-2022. As a result of this, some parts of the vision of VeSte can be found in the Strategic Plan “Finding Answers Together”. In this regard an example is the addition that the WUR will actively stimulate students to develop their talents and to acquire skills like leadership or entrepreneurial skills.

### *Bring Your Own Device (BYOD)*

When treating the Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) policy, VeSte put a strong emphasis on the importance of CANS-prevention. This resulted in the university offering a spectrum of CANS sets with a financial incentive which is planned to be financed with funds of the Quality Agreements. Something that is greatly valued, as can be seen in our work within our RSI Prevention initiative. Additionally, in order to make sure that the opinion of the active student would be taken up in the University’s vision on BYOD, VeSte held an input evening for Study Committees of student associations and study association boards.

## VeSte Initiatives

### *Sustainability Fund*

This year VeSte proposed setting up a Sustainability Fund, this fund should make investing in sustainability more accessible for student organisations related to the WUR. Student organisations can apply for that fund to receive financial support for investing in becoming more sustainable. VeSte is in close contact with multiple student and study associations from which VeSte heard that investments in sustainability can be quite a big part of their budget. Next to becoming more sustainable, the student organisations will also create more awareness among the members of the association.

### *Course guide*

VeSte initiated to have more structured course guides, so students can easily find what they have to know for their course. Because of the implementation of the new Student Information System (SIS), the university is looking into the course guides. VeSte members gave input about what the course guide should look like to make it clearer for students.

### *Sustainable traveling*

VeSte initiated the idea to promote traveling for students by train and bus instead of flying. The university sometimes offers reimbursement for travel costs when these are necessary for your study. This is, for example, stipulated in the Vaccination and Travel Funding Regulations. This year VeSte arranged within these regulations that students can receive a refund of 100% of the costs when they travel in a sustainable way, opposite to a refund of 75% for taking an airplane.

### *Intercultural communication course*

To improve the quality of the international classroom it is essential that students are open to learn about and from different cultures. This is why VeSte proposed to introduce an intercultural communication course as part of the study programme. This way all students learn to cooperate with students from different backgrounds. Another goal of this course is that students learn to understand that different students have different capabilities and how this can be beneficial when working together. We are currently still having conversations with different stakeholders at the university to look at the possibilities for implementing this course.

### *Reviewing digital exams*

VeSte heard a lot of students complaining that they could only review their digitally made exams directly after the exam. Often only a supervisor, that was not the teacher was present to answer questions, and next to that students often had problems focusing on the results after making an exam. According to the Education and Examination Regulations it was allowed for teachers to work this way. VeSte therefore initiated to change the regulations and make it possible for students to review their (digital) exam after the grade is put into the Student Information System. This change was accepted by the university and can be found back in the Education and Examination Regulations 2019-2020.

### *Mandatory answer model*

To prevent that different teachers at one course grade students in a different way, VeSte initiated to make it mandatory for courses with written exams to have an answer model for the exam. This could also help teachers to ask e.g. PhD-candidates for help when checking exams, to relieve work pressure. The initiative is taken up by the Student Charter committee of the Student Council and is still under discussion with different stakeholders.

### *Digital safety*

During the first period of this academic year, there were quite some difficulties with digital means. During the self-study and exam week, both WURTV and Blackboard did not work for different amounts of time. In an university that embraces digitalisation and therefore has quite some education materials only available online, it is essential that all digital means function properly. This initiative is about working towards a new article in the EER by which students can be protected if they cannot fulfil their education duties as is expected of them due to digital failure.



## Major Events

### *Board Market (16-01-2018)*

Each year VeSte organizes the Board Market, this year nineteen student organisations were present at the market. Unfortunately, due to a power blackout, most students had already left university. Despite the power blackout, the organisations had some interesting conversations with students about their organisations.

### *Grand Meeting (09-04-2019)*

Together with the students from the Board of Education VeSte organized the yearly Grand Meeting on education, which is an open meeting for all students. This year 46 students from programme committees and study associations joined discussions about the international classroom, mental health and flipped classroom and exchanged best practices. After the event a [report](#) was made and sent to all participants.

### *VeSte-Thymos Ball tournament (16-04-2019)*

Next to informative events, VeSte also organises some fun events. Annually, in co-operation with SWU Thymos, VeSte organises the VeSte-Thymos Ball Tournament. During this event over 20 teams try different ball sports and compete against each other. A great way to put the importance of sports in the spotlight in a fun way!

### *Study Loan and Debt Info Event (25-04-2019)*

This year the study loan, and especially the possible change in interest, was often on the news. VeSte heard from a lot of students that there was confusion about study loans and debt, this is why VeSte decided to organize an information event in cooperation with DUO and Rabobank. Firstly, a representative of DUO explained the current situation with study loans. After that, a representative of the Rabobank explained what kind of effect a study loan can have on a mortgage. The audience came up with a lot of questions for the two speakers.

### *Board Congress (18-06-2019)*

Each year around June VeSte organizes the VeSte Board Congress. During this event, (future) boards from all kinds of student organizations can join workshops and network with each other. The goal of this event is to make sure that the board members are well prepared before starting their board year. The workshops this year were: networking & lobbying, time-management, acquisition, budgeting, policy & Change Performance Indicators (CPI), LinkedIn and Matching skills with future career. Around 80 students participated. After the workshops there was a drink during which the (future) board members could get to know each other. The event was very well perceived by many the partaking students.

## VeSte committees

### *Acquisition*

VeSte decided to stay independent this year, this means that there were no deals made with businesses to promote their product in exchange for a financial compensation. There were some local shops who sponsored VeSte in natura during the election week. Next to that there was the deal with Kruimig where students could get a discount on their food during the election week.

### *Promotion*

VeSte promotion has the task to show to our constituency what we do and to involve new students besides those current supporters. This year we had a lot of contact with the Resource. As a result VeSte, or VeSte members were regularly mentioned in the Resource. We also introduced 'a day in the life of' on Instagram. Each VeSte member had the possibility to manage the Instagram story of VeSteWageningen for one day, to show what their day looks like. This makes it easier for students to understand what we do every day. Last but not least we had a lucrative stunt in Forum, called 'Broaden Yourself'. We hired a distorting mirror and arranged several poster-boards. We asked students to look into the mirror and think about how they want to broaden their selves. VeSte promotion was not in charge of the social media of VeSte, this is the task of the Commissioner Public Relations.

### *Elections*

Of all students at Wageningen University, 35,19 percent voted during the Student Council election week. This year VeSte used new stunts and gadgets for increasing the visibility. Similar to the past two years, VeSte managed to get the majority of the seats in the Student Council. Namely, 7 of the 12 seats. Meaning that also next academic year 7 enthusiastic active students will represent you.

### *Training*

To support active students, VeSte gives several trainings. This year VeSte gave the trainings 'effective meetings' and 'teambuilding, based on the Belbin roles' to boards or committees of student organisations. The training 'LinkedIn' was given on request but not promoted. Next to this, VeSte developed a new training for the VeSte Board Congress about Time Management which received many positive reactions. Next year, this training will be taken up in the trainings we offer.

### *VeSte Goes Abroad*

In 15'16' VeSte created a website for students to share their exchange experiences: [VeSte Goes Abroad](#). In 18'19' VeSte transferred the administration of the website to the exchange office of WU. VeSte is still acknowledged on the website for initiating the idea.