

ANNUAL REPORT

VeSte 2019-2020

Student Council party Wageningen University



VeSte Wageningen

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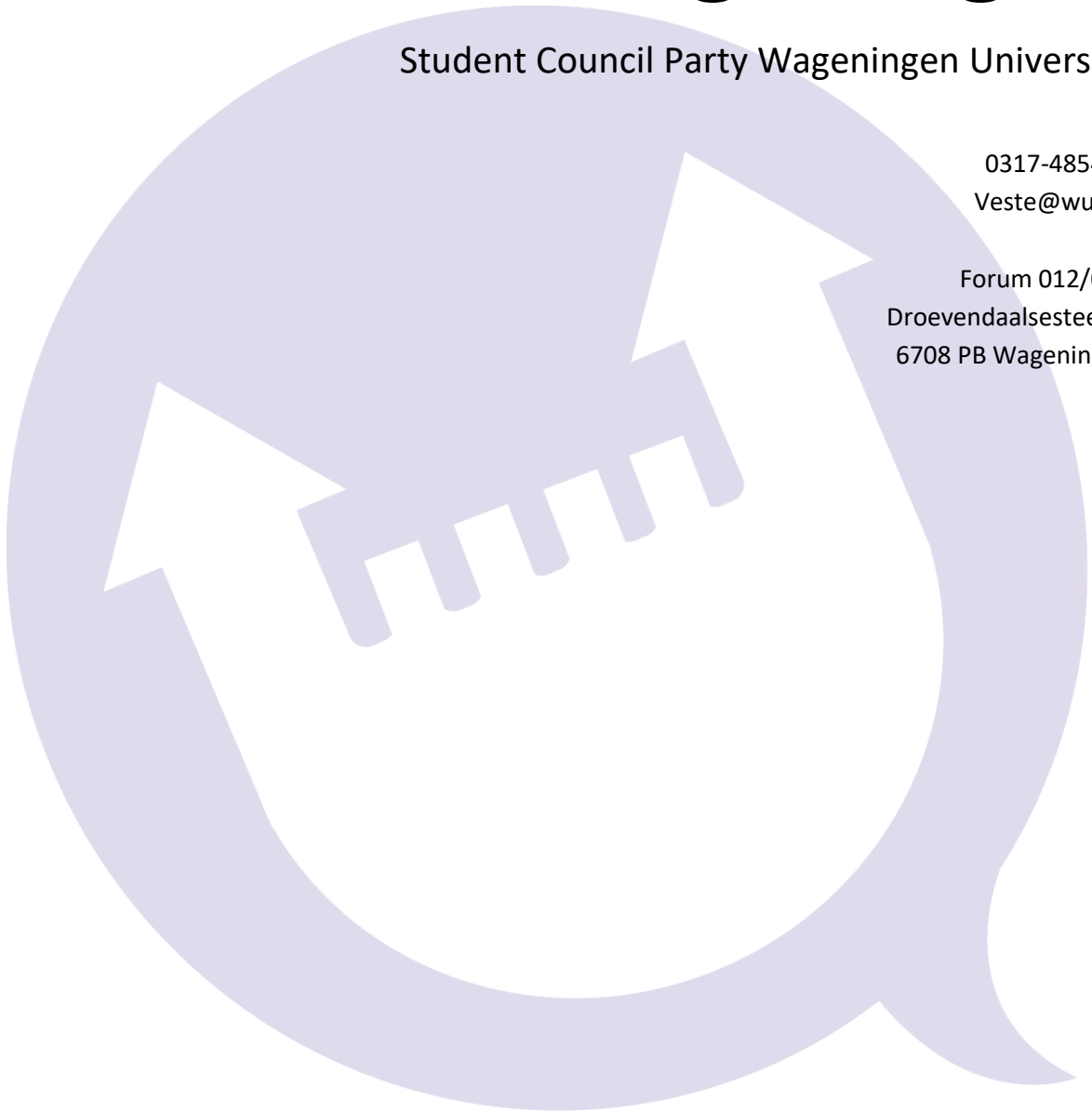
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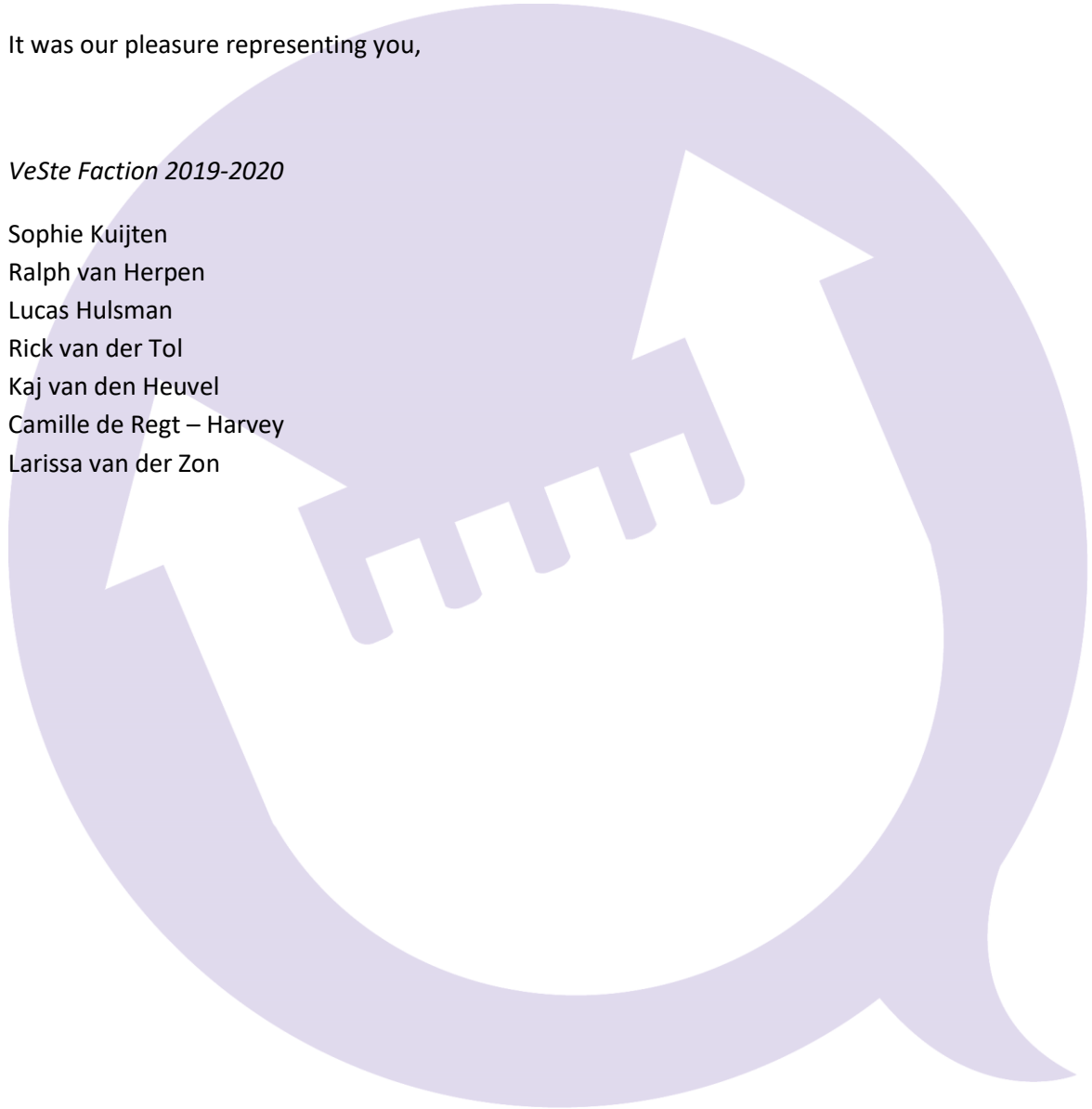
Foreword

Before you lies the Annual Report of the VeSte faction for the year 2019-2020. VeSte is a party in the Student Council of Wageningen University & Research, and represents all active students of Wageningen. With seven seats in the Student Council, VeSte was able to reach a lot. This Annual Report elaborates the vision and the focus of our faction and summarises the main accomplishments and new initiatives. We would like to thank all our supporters and staff for their tremendous support through the year. Please feel free to contact the VeSte faction with any thoughts or ideas you might have.

It was our pleasure representing you,

VeSte Faction 2019-2020

Sophie Kuijten
Ralph van Herpen
Lucas Hulsman
Rick van der Tol
Kaj van den Heuvel
Camille de Regt – Harvey
Larissa van der Zon



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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 consisted of seven members in 2018-2019 as depicted in Table 1.

Table 1 VeSte Board functions 2018-2019

Chair	<i>Sophie Kuijten</i>	Commissioner Internal Relations	<i>Kaj van den Heuvel</i>
Vice-Chair	<i>Ralph van Herpen</i>	Commissioner National Affairs	<i>Camille de Regt- Harvey</i>
Secretary	<i>Lucas Hulsman</i>	Commissioner Public Relations	<i>Larissa van der Zon</i>
Treasurer	<i>Rick van der Tol</i>		

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

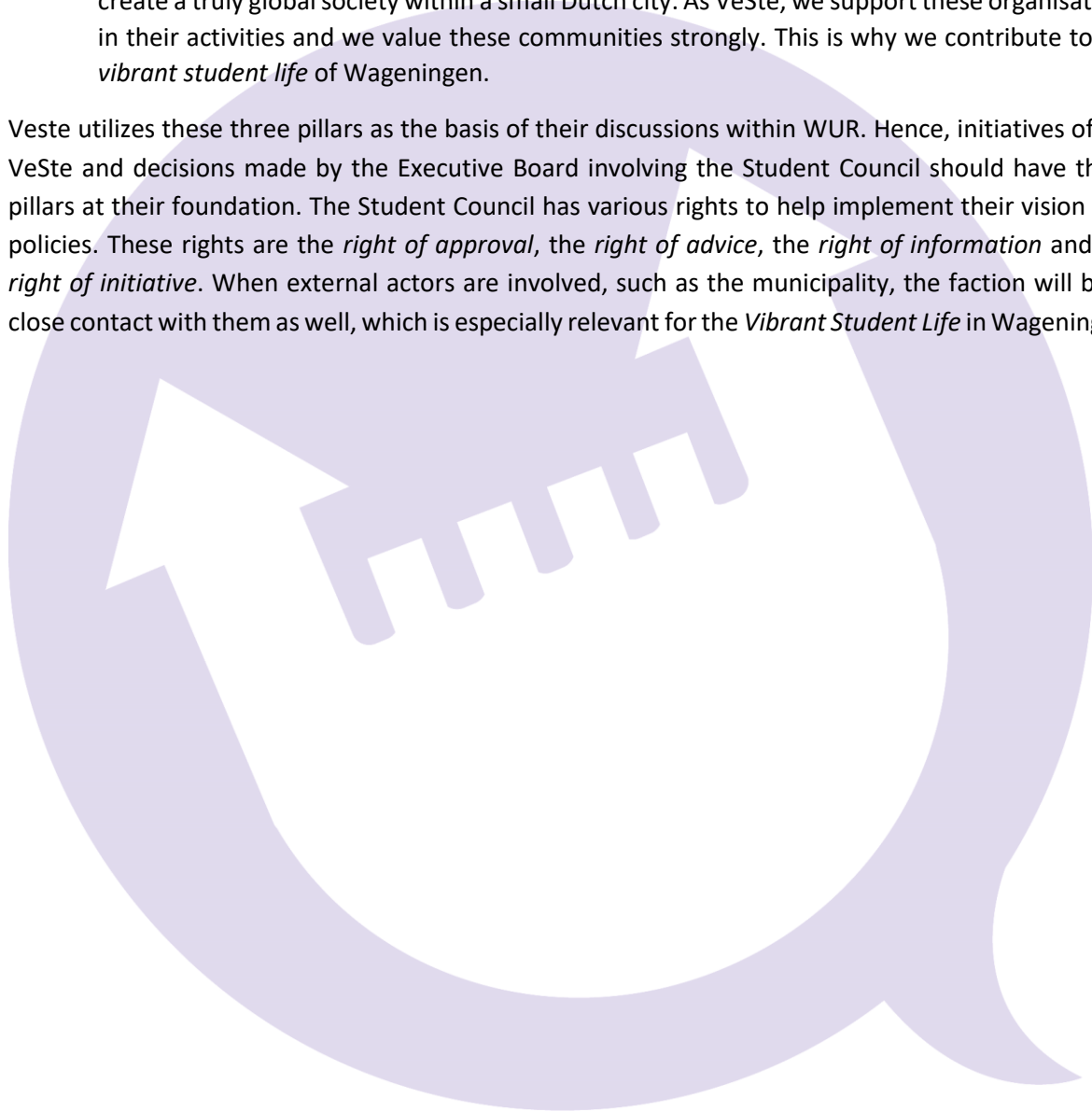
The VeSte vision consists of three pillars: *World Class Education*, *Broad Academic Development* and a *Vibrant Student Life*. By improving the internal and external environment of WUR with a focus on these pillars we aim to support all active students. Hereunder, we will elaborate more on what each 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 the VeSte faction 2019-2020 was quite different than in other years. The Student Council was requested for her approval on a couple of irregular dossiers, as for example the Vision of Sports Centre de Bongerd and the FOS regulations. The VeSte faction always strived to apply her vision in the decisions that Student Council made. After a couple of months, the Coronavirus broke out. The COVID-19 outbreak had a big impact on our work and our dossiers. In this situation, the focus of our faction was ensuring that the measures were implemented in a manner most beneficial to students, and that online education and examination was of high-quality. The measures that are a result of COVID-19 are also the reason that our faction, unfortunately, did not have the possibility to organise our biggest events.

To formulate the specific vision of VeSte on different matters, it was essential to be aware of the opinion of all different organisations and students within our constituency. Therefore, the VeSte faction has put additional energy in involving her constituency as much as possible in the content of these decisions. This is done via discussing these matters during general member meetings of student organisations and involving these organisations in writing our policy. 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.

As mentioned before, improving online education and examination was an important focus of VeSte this year. Our faction was active in the TaskForce about online education, the BoE and in the finalizing the addenda of the EER, which all play a critical part in improving online and on-campus education. Some of our initiatives, like the policy on digital failures and the policy on students' own financial contribution were initiated before the crisis, but turned out to be especially relevant in these times.

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 scholarships in 2015, new funds became available from the government that must be invested in the quality of education. Wageningen University was to develop their own plans for investing these funds over the course of 2019-2024. These plans, the so-called Quality Agreements WU 2019-2024, were developed by WU in cooperation with the SSC in 2018-2019. VeSte members took the lead in these discussions and the VeSte vision is well incorporated in the plans; most of the funds are being used to improve small-scale education, contributing to World Class Education. Also, more extracurricular trainings for students are being developed, more activities are being organised by the Student Career Services, and personal skills development is being integrated in the study programmes, all contributing to Broad Academic Development.

This year, the Quality Agreements had to be approved by the NVAO (Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders) and accordingly, some adjustments had to be made to the plans. VeSte was well involved in both the approval of the NVAO and the discussion and approval on the proposed changes. One major change was the re-allocation of the budget for the project named 'free space', which allowed the SC to invest in a project of their choice every year. Because the free space was not in line with the guidelines of the NVAO, it was proposed to re-allocate this budget to small-scale education, so that more chair groups could intensify their courses. For the free space of 2020, VeSte ensured that this budget partially was allocated to a project named SWAP, which allows students to loan a laptop in case of emergencies, so they can still fully participate in their study. Next to these changes in the initial plan, the implementation progress had to be monitored and critical questions were asked. VeSte has held many discussions with WU to foster the implementation process and played a big role in monitoring the implementation of the Quality Agreements.

Improving facilities of Sports Centre De Bongerd

During the academic year 2019/2020, VeSte strived to get more invested with the sporting facilities at Sports Centre De Bongerd and the sporting students of Wageningen University. Additionally, VeSte has looked at ways to improve the situation for student sport associations. A part of this improvement is investigating the possibilities to expand current sporting facilities, training grounds and the gym. Furthermore, VeSte critically looked at the long-term policy plan of Sport Centre De Bongerd. In this discussion, VeSte had pledged for more additional funds for staff members and trainers, to increase the amount of trainings Sports Centre De Bongerd can offer and increase the amount of time staff has available to guide student sport associations. VeSte hopes that this will improve the sporting experience for all students.

Extended Daytime Schedule

In the academic year 2018-2019, the Extended Daytime Schedule (EDS) was implemented. VeSte had gathered as much input and opinions from students as possible, by means of a contact point, questionnaires and letters, in previous years. This academic year, the EDS was evaluated. During the discussions on the evaluation, VeSte has, on the basis of the input gathered by previous factions, intensively searched for possible improvements in the schedule. As a result, four important subjects were brought forward: the combination of on-campus and digital education, the reimplementation of a longer universal lunch break, the minimalization of the last two lecture hours, and the increased use of the available self-study space. As the evaluation and the associated discussion were on the Student

Councils agenda at the end of the year, these improvements will be discussed with the university by the next faction.

FOS Regulations

When dealing with the new FOS regulations. It is the mission of VeSte to ensure and improve the financial situation for all active students. VeSte realises the importance of the FOS regulations, and its effect on the amount and quality of extracurricular activities students tend to join. Additionally, VeSte has stimulated a more equal treatment for all international students, both EER and non-EER, in the new FOS regulations, and to make a fairer system for all international students. Finally, VeSte strived to increase the financial situation for all top sport student, and to improve the system so more top sport students could more easily benefit from the FOS regulations.

Framework Letter

The yearly recurring framework letter is unfortunately not one of the subjects which has managed to evade the consequences of COVID-19; the framework letter process has been partially delayed. This means that the discussion on the annual SSC position paper, which states the vision of the SSC on the allocation of funds, has not been able to take place and will take place coming academic year. However, the SSC position paper itself has been finished and VeSte is proud that the main thought behind the position paper is on 'Improving workplaces for staff and students', which is a subject that VeSte proposed and worked out. These improvements entail measures such as ergonomically improved workplaces at the university, as well as at home, as VeSte believes that if the university should aid students in improving the quality of at-home workplaces.

Smoking Policy

From July 2020 onwards, the campus of our university has become smoke-free. VeSte was involved in the preparation of this new evolvement and has represented the needs of students in this dossier. VeSte finds it important that WUR provides tools to smoking students, to aid them with quitting this unhealthy habit. On this dossier, VeSte has ensured that students can join the Smoke Free Program. Furthermore, VeSte has advised the Executive Board to work together with the student associations of Wageningen on this subject, as these associations are often places where many students may start smoking. VeSte hopes this will contribute to the smoke-free generation that the government wants to accomplish by 2040.

Third Educational Building

A new educational building, Aurora, is being built on Wageningen Campus, which according to current planning will come into use in September 2021. The student council has been involved in the interior design of this building by means of giving input on where and how to situate study places, relaxing spots and lunch spots. In the development of the interior, VeSte was involved in conversations with the architects. Herein, VeSte expressed the importance of ergonomic workplaces and that relaxing spots are present and used as intended. Additionally, VeSte has also delivered input on the colour scheme and the furniture, and was a member of the jury of the new buildings name. VeSte is very glad to be involved in this topic and will continue to give input in the future.

Food and Beverage

Since a number of crucial food and beverage contracts within WUR (catering, coffee and vending) will expire within the next two years, a working group has been established at the beginning of this year, called "Future of Food & Beverage @ WUR". Together with this project group, VeSte has been co-writing a new vision on Food & Beverage on campus for the next 5 years. It has been important herein to collect as much input from staff and students as possible. For this, surveys have been set up and "hackaton" will be organised that starts at the end of October 2020. Input will be used in the tenders and will therefore influence what is available in terms of food and drink on campus.

Resits and EER

After the negotiations about the Education and Examination Regulations (EER) for academic year 2020 – 2021, a few remarkable things were concluded:

First of all, VeSte has advised the university to develop a more elaborate prioritisation scheme for courses that have a maximum. Currently, courses with a maximum follow an order of priority (art. 35) when admitting students. With the introduction of OSIRIS, it would result in unfairness should the old order of priority be kept. Therefore, VeSte proposed to extend the prioritisation scheme, in order to make it more fair for students, for example by including minor students, exchange students and more. This was approved and the EB will be adopted in the next EER.

Another big development was the change in resit policy. Under the current student information system, it is not possible to enforce the intended resit policy of one interim examination and two resits per year. Given the implementation of OSIRIS, this possibility would arise again, leading to the EB's proposal to actively limit (in comparison with the current situation) resit possibilities again, to only allow interim examinations in the periods where the course is being followed, and limiting the resit possibilities to the resit weeks. This would drastically limit the opportunities to pass a course. After thorough negotiations, the concluded change allows students to have three tries at an examination each year (regardless of whether it is a resit or not), which can be held whenever the course is given and during the resit periods. This gives students more flexibility and more resit possibilities.

Online Education

With the COVID-19 outbreak and the following measures from the Dutch government, all education became online from the fifth and sixth period of the academic year. Next academic year, education will continue to be partially online and partially on-campus, asking for many adjustments in courses, from students and staff, and in WU regulations. During the re-organisation of education, VeSte has been very active in several taskforces dealing with online and offline education, as well as the changes in the EER that needed to be made to make it all work. Also, VeSte stayed closely in touch with many students through our personal networks, social media and supporters. Therefore, VeSte was able to stay informed about the consequences of the transition to online education on students. Accordingly, VeSte has taken a lot of initiative to provide WU with constructive feedback and input to further improve. For example, VeSte noticed that many students prefer on-campus exams over online exams. This was addressed through multiple channels at multiple levels at WU. As a result, it will be adopted to maximize on-campus exams. Regarding changes in the EER, VeSte took the lead in the discussions and asked many critical questions on the temporary regulations, ensuring fair rights for all students.

VeSte Initiatives

Sustainability Fund

The VeSte faction 2018-2019 proposed a new initiative: the Sustainability Fund. This fund should make it possible that more student organisations have possibilities for sustainable investments, facilitated by WUR. In addition, this fund should increase awareness about sustainable options among the members of these organisations and associations. In the end, this fund must be accessible for all student organisations that are connected to WUR. During the academic year 2019-2020, VeSte has been in contact with the university, student organisations and the municipality in order to gain more knowledge about the possibilities and the demand for such a fund. In addition, to gain new insights, VeSte has had contacted other student councils such as the Student Council in Groningen, to look at their example of a Sustainable Fund.

Dyslexia (OSIRIS)

This year, VeSte completed the initiative that would make it easier for students with dyslexia to get the additional exam facilities they need. Currently, students repeatedly need to file a written contact with their teacher in order to prove their dyslexia. With the implementation of OSIRIS, students only need to prove this once, and from then on can check a 'I have dyslexia' box whenever they apply for an exam or course. Next to this, more options will be added for other disabilities.

Students' own financial contribution

During this academic year, VeSte has handled a case together with study association Genius Loci and the Programme Committee of Landscape Architecture and Spatial Planning. The case included students who had to buy an Adobe license, necessary for their study program. By law it is not allowed to ask students to buy necessary digital education tools for their studies, if there is no working alternative. Besides setting up a project to get these students a refund for their expenses, VeSte erected a new initiative: the "Students own financial contribution"-policy. This initiative aims to have a policy created that clearly states what expenses regarding educational materials and activities can be asked from students, and what expenses are of the responsibility of WUR. This should prevent students from having to make expenses that should not be asked from them.

RSI/CANS Prevention

RSI and CANS are problems that have been occurring more and more in students' lives in the past years due to the increase of work done digitally. To prevent getting RSI, VeSte believes it is important that WUR gives clear guidelines on ways to prevent RSI, hand out tools to prevent this and take into account not to let students having to work for hours on end for their studies.

Several projects have been worked on this year that involve RSI prevention: including ergonomic workplaces in the design of Aurora, making laptop risers available to borrow in the library, and improving communication on how RSI can best be prevented at WUR. VeSte has also been involved in deciding on the new range of laptop risers, keyboards and ergonomic mice. Initiatives that we have worked on concerning this topic, which haven't been completed yet include free laptop risers for all students, RSI walking routes on the Campus and anti-RSI lessons at Sports Centre De Bongerd.

WUR-TV Cameras and WebLectures

VeSte has been addressed multiple times this year about the lack of recordings of lectures, when these lectures were given in smaller lecture rooms. As VeSte highly values the ability to rewatch a

lecture, an initiative has been erected that intends to ensure WebLectures cameras in all educational rooms. Moreover, as a result of opening this conversation with the university, VeSte is involved in improving the functionality of the WebLectures programme, which will be worked out by the next faction.

Mandatory answer model

To prevent that different teachers at one course grade students in a different way, and to make revision moments more effective and attractive, VeSte initiated to make it mandatory for courses with written exams to have an answer model made available for the exam at inspection moments. This proved to be difficult, since chair groups oppose this idea. The alternative idea is to make a description of the form of revision a mandatory part of the course guide. This is the start of the process where teachers are more aware of the way they organise their revision moments, which can ultimately lead to the same goal as initially envisioned. This idea has more widespread support amongst staff and examining boards and will be expanded upon by staff members.

Digital Failures

During the first period of this academic year, there were quite some difficulties with digital means. During the self-study and exam week, both WebLectures and Brightspace did not work for different amounts of time. In a university that embraces digitalisation and therefore has quite some education materials only available online, it is essential that all digital means function properly. Therefore, VeSte proposed to create a policy and plan, and to decide on the rights of students when digital malfunctions occur. This initiative has been adopted by the university and is under development.

Mandatory Test Exams

In spectrum of providing students with the best preparation material as possible, VeSte brought forward the initiative to include a mandatory test exam for every course. VeSte has worked on the development of a plan that could function as a directory that course developers could use to adopt a suitable test exam. This plan will be discussed with the chair group Education and Learning Sciences, in order to come with a didactically well-worked out proposal.

Research Career Preparation

Research Career Preparation is an initiative from a VeSte member within the Euroleague for Life Sciences (ELLS) network. There is currently very little support for students who aspire to do a PhD. Prospective PhD candidates struggle to find a PhD position at international research institutes, that matches the expertise and specialisations well with their ambitions and talent. Also, there is very limited support for students during the application process. The main objective of better Research Career Preparation is to create a new support team within ELLS, aiming to better prepare students to become a PhD candidate at any ELLS university, and thereby, a research career in life sciences.

Reader Availability

Reader Availability is an initiative of VeSte to ensure broad availability of both study books in the Study Store and readers both in the Study Store and online, while limiting waste of study materials and putting an end to the queue in front of the Study Store every period. Regarding the online availability of study readers, all study readers have become available online this year, which is partially due to the ongoing implementation of the BYOD policy and partially due to online education, as a result of the COVID-19 measures.

In the coming year, VeSte will continue with this initiative, focussing on better informing students about when they can pick up their study materials and that readers are always available online.

Major Events

The VeSte faction 2019-2020 was eager to organise a couple of interesting events which would have been aspiring for students. Unfortunately, because of the COVID-19 outbreak, our faction was not able to organise these events anymore. However, in January we organised one of our yearly events, which was still a succes.

Board Market (15-01-2019)

The Board Market is one of the yearly recurring events VeSte organises, focusing on drawing attention to doing a board year at a student organisation. This year, fifteen student organisations were present at the event. The event allowed these boards, and the VeSte faction, to make themselves more known amongst students, while also providing a networking moment for various student organisation boards. The organisations gave good feedback on the event, and were enthusiastic about having been given this opportunity.



VeSte committees

Acquisition

This year acquisition mainly revolved around the elections and the organized events. However, due to the COVID-19 measures, a sum of events had to be cancelled. Therefore, the focus of the acquisition committee was to ensure sufficient and diverse promotion during the election. This included for example a voucher from Kruimig, paid digital promotion and the distribution of seed bags

Promotion & Design

This year, the committees 'promotion' and 'design' have been merged. It was decided that this committee supports the Commissioner PR in developing promotional material, as the workload of the Commissioner PR can, especially in the time around the elections, be high. However, the whole faction was involved in the development of promotion material. This year, the P&D committee made, amongst other things, a student support poster to inform students where they can find support from WU and a students' rights poster to inform students about their rights.

Elections

Of all students at Wageningen University, 28,14 percent voted during the 2020 Student Council election week. This is a drop compared to previous years, however expected due to physical promotion being not possible. This year, VeSte used new activities and gadgets for increasing the visibility. These activities include the radio, the pubquiz, and many more ways to activate our voters which we can be proud of. Similar to the past two years, VeSte managed to get the majority of the seats in the Student Council; namely seven of the twelve seats. This means that also next academic year 7 enthusiastic active students will represent you.

Training

To support active students, Veste offers several trainings. This year VeSte organised the trainings 'effective meetings', 'teambuilding, based on the Belbin roles' and 'time-management' to boards or committees of student organisations. The training 'LinkedIn' was given on request but not promoted.