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# **ENHANCING THE ATTRACTIVENESS OF EUROPEAN STUDY PROGRAMS IN BIOSYSTEMS ENGINEERING – THE NETHERLANDS**

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## **Abstract**

Wageningen University and all study programmes are very internationally oriented. First, most of the master programmes have a mandatory internship of 24 credits and the students are stimulated to go abroad. Second, the new structure of the programmes by September 2010 make it for especially the bachelor students more easy to go a certain period abroad to follow courses at an other university. Third, all master programmes are fully taught in the English language, making it possible for foreign students to come to Wageningen University for a master programme.

Much effort is put in promoting Wageningen University. The websites play a very important role in informing prospective students on the possibilities offered by Wageningen University. In addition there are paper brochures available with information on all master programmes. Wageningen University is also present on several educational fairs to promote the study programmes.

## **1.TOOLS FOR ENHANCING INTERNATIONAL ATTRACTIVENESS**

Each year Wageningen University produces brochures on each study programme. There is special brochure for each bachelor programme. Much effort is put in making an attractive brochure that attracts attention in the large amount of brochures that is available for the high school student. The brochure is limited in the information and is supported by a website with much more detailed information. The main purpose of the paper brochure is to get the attention of the student, i.e. to get into his or her shortlist of study programmes to consider after high school.

For the master programmes a brochure is prepared each year with an overview of all master programmes Wageningen University offers. The brochure contains a one page description of each study programme. The brochure is sent world wide to stakeholders and students interested in a master programme at Wageningen University.

The main tool to inform the stakeholders on the Biosystems Engineering program is nowadays the internet. Internet offers the possibility to provide detailed information on the study programme, not only on the content of the programme, but also other relevant information as future careers, experiences of current and past students. Wageningen University has a main website ([www.wageningenuniversity.nl/uk](http://www.wageningenuniversity.nl/uk)) with the general

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information and in addition each study programme has its own website ([www.bat.wur.nl](http://www.bat.wur.nl) and [www.mab.wur.nl](http://www.mab.wur.nl)). The structure of the website of each individual study programme is the same for all study programmes.

As of today there are no links to the websites of USAEE-TN or ERABEE-TN. All websites will be updated later this year and the links to these websites will be established so students can get easy access to similar programmes elsewhere in Europe.

The main tool for promoting the practical training for students are the students itself. A student that shows during his internship that he is valuable for the organisation, opens the door for new students to do their internship at the same company or organisation. In many enterprises active in the field of agricultural and biological engineering are graduates of the programme employed. These graduates are also an easy way of access to positions for internships. The study association organises about twice per five year a career day. Companies and organisations are invited to come to these days to present their company or organisation to the students. Two main points of attention during these days are internships and job positions.

The bachelor programmes of Wageningen University have by 2010 a mandatory unbroken period of 30 credits in which the student can do minor. This period can also be used to go abroad and follow courses at other universities in Europe. However, a serious limitation is the very limited number of courses on agricultural and biosystems engineering related topics offered in the English language at most universities across Europe.

A compulsory part of the master programme is an internship of 24 credits. Students are stimulated to go abroad. Internships are coordinated by a staff member who also assists students in finding an good position for an internship. Important is the network of the coordinator. The availability of the websites developed in the framework of the USAEE-TN and ERABEE-TN is an easy way to enlarge the network. Wageningen University has become very reserved in establishing new Erasmus agreements or continuing existing agreements. There must be real interest in this exchange of students in both directions to establish or maintain an agreement. Practice until now shows that many students across Europe come to Wageningen University but a limited amount of students go abroad to a university elsewhere in Europe. A main obstacle is the limited amount of relevant courses available in the English language. Students prefer to go countries were they speak English. Most students had at high school German and French making it somewhat easier to go countries where they speak one of these languages. If they have to learn a language, they prefer a language that is important in global perspective, for example Spanish, Russian, Japanese or Chinese.

Career opportunities for graduates are usually disseminated among the students for whom it is of interest. The same holds for European or international job positions on the field of agricultural and biosystems engineering. Within the social network LinkedIn there is a special group of only graduates of the programme; this offers also the possibility to disseminate job opportunities among graduates. An addition to the passive way of waiting until job positions are available, is the curriculum vitae booklet the study association compiles every year with the students that are expected to graduate the coming year. This booklet is sent to a large number of enterprises and organisation that may be interested in hiring and agricultural or biosystems engineer.



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Wageningen University has appointed some marketeers to promote the study programmes of Wageningen University both in and outside Europe. Part of their job is to visit universities abroad to inform them on the possibilities of Wageningen Universities or to attend educational fairs to promote the programmes of Wageningen University

## **2.IMPLEMENTATION OF AGRICULTURAL AND BIOLOGICAL ENGINEERING IN THE NETHERLANDS AIMED AT PROMOTING THEIR INTERNATIONAL IMAGE**

Wageningen University changed in the past academic year the bachelor and the master programmes. The main objective of the changes was to create more flexibility in the programmes. More flexibility meant that it should become easier to incorporate new developments in the programmes. This larger flexibility consists of realising in each study programme a block of 30 unbroken credits in either the first or the second semester. This block of 30 unbroken credits offers the students the possibility to a minor but makes it also easier for the students to go abroad for a part of their study programme.

The change of the study programmes was also used to adjust the programme more towards the outcomes of the USAEE-TN and the ERABEE-TN. However, the very tight prescription of the framework programme made it not possible to completely meet the requirements of the framework programme. Another major effect of the USAEE-TN and ERABEE-TN was that the (English) name of the programme will be changed into Biosystems Engineering. The English name for the bachelor programme became Biosystems Engineering by September 2010 (the legal Dutch name is still Agrotechnologie and will not be changed). Since the legal name of the master programme is in English, this change will be implemented by September 2012 because it requires a change of the law.

## **3.PROMOTING MULTI-LINGUISM IN AGRICULTURAL AND BIOSYSTEMS ENGINEERING PROGRAMMES**

An important aspect of promoting multi-linguism is that all master programmes of Wageningen University are taught in the English language. An additional effect is that part of the courses in the bachelor programmes are taught in the English language too. In this way the bachelor students are gradually confronted with courses in English. A second additional effect is that students have much more opportunities to exercise their English language ability which is an advantage in global market.

Education and Research in Biosystems or Agricultural and Biological Engineering in Europe; a  
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