

Travel ban

You can't just go anywhere for your internships or research | **p.4** |

Toxic park

Bacteria to eat up soil pollutants | **p.9** |

Stress!

'I spent months in my room, exhausted and depressed' | **p.22** |

RESOURCE [EN]

For everyone at Wageningen University & Research

no 17 – 26 April 2018 – 12th Volume

INTERNATIONAL
EDITION



These students wouldn't sign...

...and ended up in a German labour camp in 1943 | **p.12**

FISH LENGTH

This young amateur biologist is getting a precise measurement of the length of a flounder before it goes back in the water. He was one of the visitors helping to lay fish traps around IJmuiden port last Saturday on World Fish Migration Day. Scientists, including from Wageningen Marine Research, showed how they study fish migration. In this event for the general public, large numbers of glass eels were caught as well as flounders. The researchers had marked some of the eels the previous week because they wanted to know how many enter the North Sea Canal, how they spread and how long this takes them.  TL, photo Ben Griffioen



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at resource-online.nl

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DIVIDE

My degree in Forest and Nature Conservation was full of simple Dutch jargon that other disciplines also use. Take *kwel* (seepage), for groundwater that rises to the surface. Or *zuurgraad* (acidity), *loonwerker* (contract worker) and *afrastering* (fencing off).

Many Dutch people who don't have a degree also know what these words mean. Such terms frequently get used in my discussions with 'the general public' on Twitter, in the train or on farms. Even so, I still had to explain these jargon terms to first-year students when I took them on field trips for a Bachelor's course.

Now that some of the Bachelor's programmes will only be given in English (see p.20), the students won't even get this explanation in Dutch. From now on, they will be using the English terms 'seepage' and 'acidity'. This development worries me, because there is already a divide running through society due to differences in education.

We didn't really understand one another anyway. Soon we won't even be using the same words.

Stijn van Gils, freelance journalist for Resource, among others

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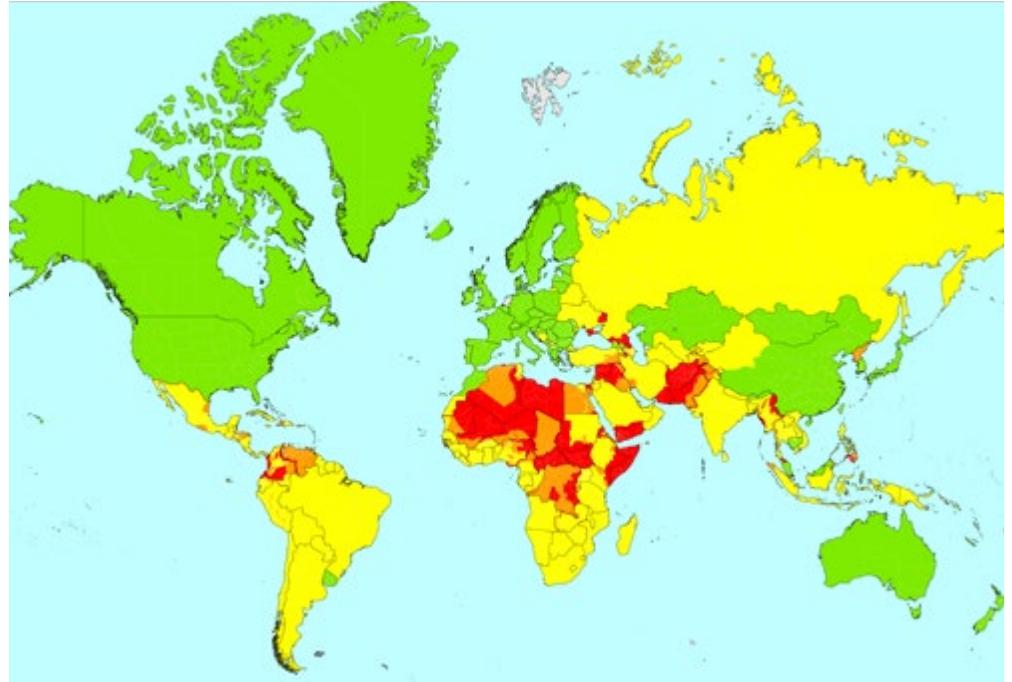
CONFUSION ABOUT WUR'S NEW TRAVEL POLICY

WUR's policy on travelling has recently been refined. From now on, a central commission will decide whether students or staff can travel to dangerous regions. But there is still a lot of confusion in practice.

The new policy relies heavily on the travel advice given by the Dutch ministry of Foreign Affairs. WUR staff and students travelling to regions that the ministry judges to be 'high risk' need permission. If working in a 'code yellow' area, they need permission from the sciences group directors, for which they require a good travel plan and must have completed the Basic Safety and Security course. If they are going to a 'code orange' area ('essential journeys only'), from now on they will also need a positive recommendation from a three-person central commission. This commission will give staff permission in exceptional circumstances. Students will only be allowed if the trip is part of the Disaster Studies specialism (part of International Development Studies).

In practice there has hardly been any communication with staff and students about the new travel policy. There was some consultation during the preparation stage but once the policy was finalized, the document was just uploaded onto the intranet. As a result, many teachers in charge of organizing internships are unaware of the new policy. Some say they apply stricter rules and don't send any students to areas that are at all risky. Others turn out to be *more* flexible.

Gemma van der Haar, who supervises students doing Disaster Studies, also did not



The Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs' travel advice in April 2018. WUR staff and students can go to yellow zones under certain conditions and to orange zones in exceptional circumstances but not to red zones.

ILLUSTRATION: MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

realize the new travel policy had been finalized. She finds the new rules OK. 'I am pleased that our students can now travel to orange regions too under certain conditions. This only affects a few well-prepared students a year who are really keen to go.' She does find the colour codes very general and would prefer more customized solutions.

Marleen de Vries of Human Resources

Management, who is regularly one of the three commission members, says they do in fact give more customized advice within the ministry's colour codes. 'We look very closely at how much experience someone has and what their plans are.' But she says WUR does not have enough expertise to implement an entire system of its own. 'The ministry is much better able to get a picture of how safe the situation really is.'  

HENRY VAN DEN BRAND IS TEACHER OF THE YEAR 2018

Associate professor Henry van den Brand has won the 2018 Teacher of the Year Award. The student jury for the teaching prize announced the winner on Tuesday 24 April.

Van den Brand was unable to attend the award ceremony for the prize (handed out every year by University Fund Wageningen) due to a trip abroad, so a colleague accepted the award on his behalf. Like the other nominees, Van den

Brand gets a replica of the statue *The Tutor* and 2500 euros. This year, the other candidates were Arie Terlouw, Jessica Duncan, Fred de Boer and John Beijer.

The associate professor won the award for his enthusiasm and involvement, says the jury. He doesn't just teach – he tells stories. And the students are clearly all ears as his lectures are always packed, even though they are recorded. Van den Brand uses an old-school blackboard and chalk

to illustrate his stories.

Van den Brand began in 2001 in the Adaptation Physiology chair group. He did not have any teaching experience when he was appointed assistant professor. These days he lectures, coordinates courses and supervises Master's students doing their theses.

The prize was handed out at the event to mark the start of the Month of Education, part of WUR's centennial celebrations.  



Henry van den Brand

PHOTO: FLEUR RAKE

22 MILLION FOR PLANT PHENOTYPING

WUR plans to set up a new research facility together with Utrecht University to study the development of plants under different environmental conditions. The facility will get a budget of 22 million euros. The Dutch Organization for Scientific Research (NWO) is donating 11.3 million and the two universities will fund the rest.

The Netherlands Plant Eco-phenotyping Centre (NPEC), as it is known officially, will have six physical units, three in Utrecht and

three in Wageningen. Utrecht University will make small ecotrons (rooms for studying ecosystems) and will build a series of small climate chambers to investigate the interactions between plants, the environment and microbes under different conditions.

WUR will set up large climate chambers and greenhouses for genetic research on plants and crops under various conditions. WUR will also develop a mobile field module and drones for studying the ef-

fect of the environment on the development of plants outdoors in fields.

'We know the DNA sequence for a lot of plant species and we know how we can get them to grow well but we don't yet know how the environment affects the development and yield of different varieties,' says Mark Aarts, professor holding a personal chair in Genetics. Aarts is involved in setting up the facility along with Rick van de Zedde, a specialist in biology and robotics. 

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A long engagement

5 May is coming up, a special day for freedom, a special day for Wageningen, and always a particularly odd day for WUR. This year it falls on a Saturday but when it falls on a weekday, 5 May is the day on which it is suddenly strangely obvious who works for WU and who works for WR.

That is because the staff of Wageningen University get a day off, stipulated in their collective labour agreement (CAO), while staff at Wageningen Research do not.

In a *Resource* article of 2014, the Executive Board said the organization was aiming at more unity by 2018: 'Wageningen UR has to become *one* organization with a common culture.' Sounds logical enough but the fiscal and legal reality is complicated. Formally, we are two completely separate organizations with their own accounting. Yet at the same time, we share an Executive Board and a Supervisory Board, and most of us work on the same campus. There are historical reasons for this unusual construction, with all its advantages and disadvantages, but we're not talking about history now, of course.

In the current construction, a decision has to be made for every patch of ground, every building and every member of staff: is it on the books at WU or at WR? That is not just a lot of work, but it also flies in the face of the idea of one organization. If you ask me, this engagement has gone on long enough. Either we should get married or we should split up. That would make things clear. Then we'd really have One Wageningen. Or perhaps Two Wageningens. 

Guido Camps (34) is a vet and a postdoc at the Human Nutrition department. He enjoys baking, beekeeping and unusual animals.



in brief

>> EDUCATION BONUS Best courses rewarded

31 'excellent courses' are getting 37,500 euros in total. The bonus was handed out last Tuesday evening. The coordinators can use the cash to improve their subjects even more. To get the bonus, the teachers needed an outstanding score in the digital course evaluation. Kees van Veluw, who won the 'in depth' category for Organic Animal Production, achieved the highest score: 4.9 out of 5. Willy ten Haaf and Aldo Bergsma won in the category 'big courses' with Introduction to Geo-information. Tinde van Andel (Ethnobotany) won in the 'special courses' category and Lars Chatou (Webs of Terrestrial Diversity) in the 'introductory courses' category. 

>> THESIS AWARD Mihris Naduthodi wins

Master's student Mihris Naduthodi wrote Wageningen's best thesis in 2017. He has won the Thesis Award, given by University Fund Wageningen (UFW) and alumni society KLV, for his basic research on bacteria that produce succinic acid. This acid, which is important in the production of medicines and plastics, is generally obtained during the process of cracking crude oil. Using bacteria to produce it is a lot cleaner but it is also very inefficient. Naduthodi genetically modified the bacterium to increase the productivity. 

>> MOOC ON BEER Mol pulls a lager

Rector Arthur Mol launched the Beer MOOC last Tuesday evening at the start of the Month of Education by pulling a glass of lager from a wooden barrel. Four honours students spent over a year working on this massive online open course (MOOC) on beer. The course consists of four modules and takes six weeks. Course participants learn all about beer, the beverage of choice for students, from the production process to the health risks. Over 7000 people have already registered for the course. The Month of Education is part of WUR's centennial celebrations. 



PHOTO: GUY ACKERMANS

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'FOCUS MORE ON INDEPENDENT THINKING'

WUR should boost independent thinking in teaching and research, says Ellis Hoffland of the Excellence strategy group. 'We shouldn't pamper students so much.'

Ellis Hoffland heads the working group that is considering the theme of Excellence in the preparation for the new strategic plan (see inset). But in fact she has pretty much 'had it' with that word. 'It's such a hype word; everyone is aiming for it or claiming it.' Excellence only means something if you define it, argues Hoffland. And she should know: she is the director of the Honours Programme for exceptional students.

That Honours Programme sets the following requirements: you should have above-average cognitive skills (preferably at least an average of 8 for your marks), you need to be creative, demonstrate social responsibility, be able to collaborate, demonstrate an ability to reflect and

take responsibility outside of class. Quite a long list, which Hoffland summarizes as 'standing out'.

The Wageningen Ambassadors, who the working group asked to give their definition of excellence, came up with roughly the same qualities, but added one more — independent thinking. Hoffland thinks this could help WUR stand out from the rest. 'We want to focus more on an academic approach in which we pamper students less and challenge them more to take responsibility for their own education. A simple example: if you don't turn up for a compulsory subject, you go to the teacher with an alternative proposal. So you take control rather than being a passive consumer of education.'

That means a different role for teachers too, continues Hoffland. 'The assignments they give to students need to be less school-bookish, with more freedom and

more room for visuals and the use of the internet. There must surely be examples of this but we haven't seen them. As a strategy group, we want to find such examples.'

Hoffland also thinks more attention needs to be paid to excellence at the team level. 'We can't all be Stephen Hawking. So the question should be: what additional skills does a team need to become or remain excellent? We think that can be an important addition to the tenure track, which deals with excellence at the personal level.' **AS**



Ellis Hoffland

Theme: Excellence

WUR intends to present a new strategic plan next autumn. One of the 10 themes in that plan is Excellence. If you would like to join in the debate, there are two options. You can post your ideas on the theme group's web page at intranet.wur.nl or you can come to the working group meeting on 14 May at 12:30 in Forum, room 031/034.



PHOTO: SVEN MENSCHER

CHAIR YOGA

'Sit on your chair without leaning against the back. Stretch your arms above your head and, keeping your back straight, bend to the left. Return to the middle, then bend to the right.' With her soft voice, Wilma Twigt guides her Biosystematics colleagues in Radix through an invigorating 15 minutes of chair yoga three times a week. Twigt is the group's secretary, but she is also a yoga teacher. About 15 members of staff attend her sessions on average. On 7 May, Twigt will also hold chair yoga sessions (19.30-20:00 and 20:00-20:30) in Forum library. **KvZ**

[Read the full story on resource-online.nl](#)

LAB ANIMAL NUMBERS FALL AGAIN

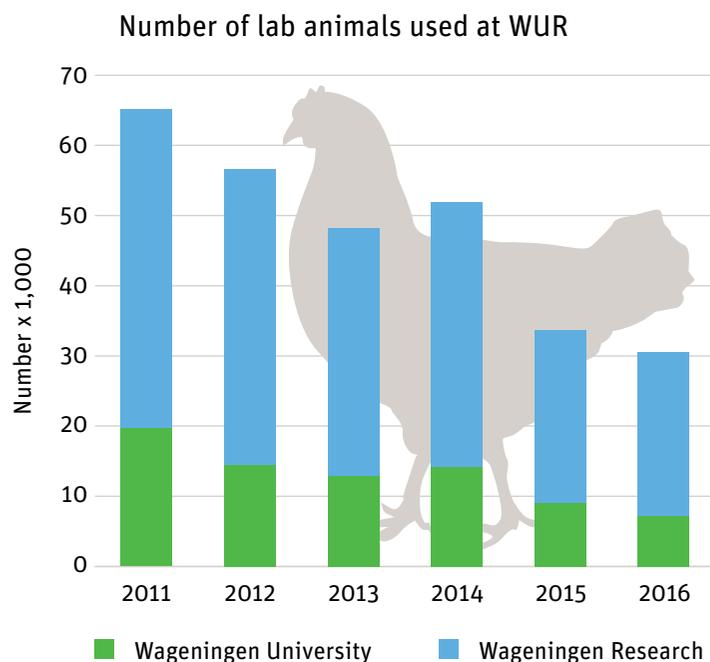
Researchers at WUR are using fewer and fewer lab animals. The latest figures show a decrease of 9 percent. Chickens are the most common lab animal.

A total of 30,512 lab animals were used in 2016, the most recent year to have been reported (see figure). Use declined by 20 percent at the university and by 6 percent at the research institutes.

There has been a downward trend for years in the use of lab animals but numbers have decreased even more sharply since 2015, one year after the new Animal Experiments Act came into effect. The act made the permit process more complicated and expensive. The government wants most research to not use any lab animals at all by 2025. This is reflected in the downward

trend, says lab animal expert Rob Steenmans. According to him, the downward trend is continued in the figures for 2017 (which have not yet been published), although the decrease is less than in 2016. Steenmans: 'Even so, it is busier than ever at Carus, our facility for animal testing. There are a lot of experiments with animals that aren't formally animal testing because the animals don't suffer.'

The lab animals used in WUR research are mainly fish, chickens and mice, but the list also includes cats, frogs, horses, ferrets, wild boar and slowworms. The figures for the institutes exclude the monitoring of the fishing industry. Wageningen Marine Research caught 25,429 fish for this government task. As of 2014, those fish also count as lab animals by law. **RK**



EXTRA MILLIONS TO STRENGTHEN WR KNOWLEDGE BASE

Wageningen Research will be investing the extra 13.2 million euros that it gets this year in research models and 10 strategic programmes. The idea is to improve the institutes' knowledge base.

The additional money came from the cabinet, which is spending an extra 200 million in total this year on applied research. Over 13 million is going to Wageningen Research. WUR drew up an expenditure plan last month that was approved by the relevant ministries on 19 April.

WUR is basing its expenditure decisions on what is known as the 'Thin Ice' analysis in 2016, in which WUR concludes that the research institutes no longer have any development money for new knowledge because of the constant cutbacks. That is why Wageningen Research will be investing an additional 3.3 million this year in modernizing research models in areas including farm incomes, crop growth and the climate. Around 40 research models are

due an update, says Karin Horsman of Corporate Strategy & Accounts.

A further 8.9 million is being earmarked for 10 thematic research programmes on such topics as organic fertilizer, precision agriculture and a nature-inclusive living environment. Wageningen Research will use a further 1 million as co-funding for EU projects that have already been accepted.

The institutes will get 13 million more from the government over the next few years as well. This extra revenue will virtually double the amount of cash the institutes have available for the knowledge base. Last year Wageningen Research had 16.4 million for maintaining its knowledge base; now it is getting 13.2 million on top. **AS**

Life

- 6 May Performance 'Getekend' ('Marked')
- 13 May Studium Generale
The Modernization of Dutch Agriculture in Films 1923-1982 - An Electric Comedy
- 16 May Potluck dinner: celebrating cultural diversity!
- 16 May Unveiling sculpture 'Must leave'

You'll find everything about 100 years of WUR on www.wur.eu/100years




MORE GIANT FORESTS WITH CLIMATE CHANGE

You only get giant forests if there is enough rainfall. But the changing climate is making it possible for more and more such forests to develop. These findings come from research by Marten Scheffer and Egbert van Nes of Aquatic Ecology and Water Quality Management, among others.

The international research team used satellite data to chart the height of forests around the world for the first time. They zoomed in on forest areas 50 by 50 km in size. 'We then mapped the 10 per cent tallest treetops in those grid cells,' explains Scheffer.

That revealed a surprising phenomenon. Giant trees, more than 25 metres tall, only grow in places with annual rainfall of more than 1500 mm. What is more, this lower limit applies everywhere, from tropical regions to temperate zones. That is remarkable. 'If the climate is temperate, it is not so hot, there is less evaporation and so the trees need less water. Yet this phenomenon is universal,' says Scheffer.

The threshold of 1500 mm of rain is not entirely random. According to Scheffer, it is the same threshold that determines the transition from savannah to tropical rainforest. 'In the tropics, that 1500 mm rainfall is as much as the evaporation via the leaves. So the net value of rain minus evaporation per surface area is zero. But in temperate zones it's not zero. That's the weird part.' Scheffer speculates that this deviation has to do with the fact that the few giant forests found in temperate regions are exceptional anyway. 'Those regions have been impacted so much by humans that the remaining forests are the most resilient ones.' They are super-survivors.

The good news for giant forests is that climate change works to their advantage. The climate will become drier in some areas but a lot wetter in others. 'As a result, the potential area for giant forests will increase by an amount eight times as big as Spain,' predicts Scheffer. 'But we



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK

do then need to make room for the forest. And that is no easy matter because there is huge pressure on tropical forests. There are also some uncertain

factors. The increase in extreme conditions such as droughts and heatwaves can also cause tropical forests to die.' **RK**

THREE ODOURS REVEAL MALARIA IN CHILDREN

Last year, WUR researchers discovered that children with the malaria parasite in their blood are more attractive to malaria mosquitoes than children without the parasite. Follow-up research has now shown which odours are responsible for this.

Children who have the malaria parasite secrete more heptanal, octanal and nonanal in their sweat, Wageningen entomologists reported last week in the journal *PNAS*. The three odours are aldehydes that smell fruity and grassy, says researcher Jetske de Boer. They are common odours but malaria mosquitoes love them.

De Boer took sweat samples from 56 children aged between

five and 12 in western Kenya. The analysis showed that in children with malaria, aldehydes accounted for 23 percent of the odours compared with only 15 percent in children without malaria. The more malaria parasites the children had in their blood, the higher the concentrations of the three odours in their odour profile.

The findings can help in the fight against malaria, says De Boer, who carried out the research in collaboration with fellow scientists in the UK, Kenya and Nijmegen. 'We can improve the odour traps for malaria mosquitoes by adding these aldehydes to the bait.' The odours can also be used as bio-



PHOTO: ANTON IVANOV / SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Children with the malaria parasite in their blood are more attractive to malaria mosquitoes.

markers to test whether children have malaria, reckons De Boer. Measuring odour is much

faster and pleasanter than taking a blood sample.' **AS**

BACTERIA CAN PURIFY UTRECHT PARK SOIL

How can you train bacteria to most effectively cleanse the polluted soil of Griffpark, a park in Utrecht? Wageningen researchers will be figuring that out.

Griffpark is attractive, green and a popular place for recreation. But things don't look so good underground. The soil is contaminated by aromatic hydrocarbons from a gasworks that used to be on this site. In the 1980s, the park was one of the most polluted sites in the Netherlands. Instead of excavating the soil, the decision was made to close off the land with a 50-metre deep wall, says environmental technology specialist Tim Grotenhuis. Since then, the groundwater in the resulting basin has been pumped up to prevent it from seeping into the surrounding area.

That pumping operation could in principle go on for ever and it costs around 100,000 euros a year. Utrecht wants to see if there might now be a cheaper method. And there could well be, says Grotenhuis: the bacteria in the soil could eat up the pollutants.

The park has bacteria that thrive on chemicals such as benzene, toluene, xylene and naphthalene, the principal contaminants in the soil. Grotenhuis

says there is no doubt about that. 'Lesson 1 in microbiology is that all bacteria are everywhere. And lesson 2 is that the environment determines which microorganism or group of microorganisms gets the upper hand.'

Wageningen PhD candidate Lisanne Keijzer will be investigating the breakdown of the pollutants by the microorganisms. Grotenhuis: 'We will take soil samples from the site and do experiments in the lab. We will study how we can optimize the breakdown rate by adjusting the right parameters.'

According to Grotenhuis, at this stage the aim is a proof of principle, to show that it is possible. Meanwhile, researchers at Deltares are getting a picture of the soil's current state and Utrecht University is studying the groundwater flows. The ultimate goal is to be able to stop the expensive pumping. But that will only be possible if the bacteria can dispose of so many contaminants that nothing more seeps away along with the groundwater through the bottom of the basin. Grotenhuis: 'The environmental conditions are probably not optimal for this at the moment. But you can create optimal conditions by adding substances in the right places.' **📍 RK**



Griffpark's soil contains chemicals such as benzene and xylene from the gasworks that once stood here.

VISION

'No such thing as a healthy glass of wine'



PHOTO: JAN HARRYVAN

It has been reported in various media, including the newspaper *De Volkskrant*, that a study in *The Lancet* suggests that even one glass of alcohol a day shortens your life expectancy considerably. A week later the media were backtracking: the research does not show that a glass a day will make you die younger. But the idea of healthy drinking is a myth, says professor of nutrition Ellen Kampman, who specializes in cancer.

What do you think of the Lancet study?

'It is an important and well-conducted study. The results are in line with the Health Council's Healthy Diet guidelines: "Don't drink any alcohol, or at least no more than one glass a day". The researchers found that the risk of death went up at more than 100 grams of alcohol per week. A standard glass contains about 100 grams of alcohol. So you don't exceed the limit on one glass a day.'

Shouldn't we just scrap that one glass a day?

'There is no consensus on alcohol and its relation to cardiovascular disease. But we have known for a long time with no shadow of doubt that alcohol raises the risk of cancer. In the case of breast cancer, even at less than a glass a day. From that point of view, it is better not to drink at all, but in view of the possible positive effects on certain cardiovascular diseases, the recommendation that was adopted was "maximum one glass a day". Not many people realize that alcohol is one of the most carcinogenic substances in our diet.'

But a small glass a day was supposed to be good for your blood vessels?

'I think we need to discard the idea that a glass of alcohol can be good for you. The best advice is still not to drink at all. The health effects of that one little glass only apply in very specific cases, namely men over 50 who are overweight and are therefore more at risk of a heart attack. But this possible advantage does not outweigh all the damaging effects. To reduce your risk of a heart attack, you are better off adopting a healthier lifestyle.' **📍 TL**



PHD STUDENT DESIGNS EGG ROBOT

PhD candidate Bastiaan Vroegindeweij developed the prototype for an egg collection robot. He received a doctorate for his thesis about it on 10 April. Now he wants to refine the robot through his own company for practical application.

Vroegindeweij already had a robot back in December 2015 that could move around a chicken barn and pick up eggs. This was a proof of concept but the robot was far from perfect. Practical tests showed that the machine could correctly pick up nearly 50 percent of the eggs in one go. It did spot another quarter of the eggs but approached them in the wrong way. The robot failed to see the remaining eggs, or missed them because it was too late lowering the picker. The battery didn't last long either, the wheel control was not optimal and the robot didn't realize when it had hit a post or feeding tray. The PhD candidate therefore took two major decisions: he rebuilt the robot from scratch and he started his own company.

Vroegindeweij, whose father has a big poultry farm, knows chicken farmers are interested in his invention. 'At the moment, farmers have to go through the entire barn picking up eggs themselves; that's not a fun job.' He has yet to find investors to help him develop the robot for practical application. 'Many suppliers in the poultry sector know nothing about robots and find it hard to assess the development risks.' But Vroegindeweij is carrying on relentlessly with writing business plans and filling in funding applications.

He spent the past two years completing his thesis and at the same time working on the new egg collection robot with researcher Sam Blaauw of the Farm Technology Group and some students. 'We finished a new prototype last year.' It has a higher 'capture rate', looks for charging stations itself if the battery is nearly empty and realizes when it has hit something. Vroegindeweij reckons that he still needs another two years plus half a million euros to develop an egg collection robot that works well in practice. **AS**



Bastiaan Vroegindeweij (right) and Sam Blaauw testing the egg collection robot.

PHOTO: LIVESTOCKROBOTICS

MEAT-EATERS WANT BACKGROUND INFO ON PORK CHOPS

Consumers want to know where their pork comes from and they are prepared to pay extra for this, according to a study by Wageningen Economic Research.

Consumers are particularly interested in information about animal welfare and health. They are less concerned about the place where the meat was produced and the impact on the environment. They would also rather not know how the pigs were transported and slaughtered. 'I think everyone realizes that this is never nice for the animals,' says project manager Willy Baltussen of Wageningen Economic Research.

In a study commissioned by

the ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality, researchers held an online survey among consumers in the Netherlands, Germany and the UK. Over 4000 people who were known to eat pork completed the questionnaire. This showed that people were willing to pay 13 cents more per kilo on average for information about where the meat came from.

However, Baltussen says German and British consumers were less prepared to pay if the product was Dutch. 'In those countries you see a clear preference for local products. The Netherlands is an exception in that respect: we are far less bothered about this.'

According to Baltussen, it is actually quite difficult to say what animal the meat comes from, or even what farm. 'Mince for instance, which is the biggest pork product, is mixed in large quanti-

ties.' He thinks the most feasible scenario is for groups of farms to collaborate in guaranteeing a certain standard. **TL**



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK

PROPOSITION

‘The Google generation is losing its memory’

Yuxi Deng did PhD research on protein breakdown. Her memory proved so valuable in her scientific work that she decided to devote one of her propositions to this cognitive skill.

‘The most important thing in science is of course to understand your field of research. But I also think logical thinking in combination with a good memory bring scientific discussions further. For example: my professor and I have a meeting and he asks me something about a subject that is related to my research project. Then it is handy if I can dig up that knowledge from my memory. If I have to Google everything before I can answer, it is not only a nuisance, but the discussion stops. Literally.



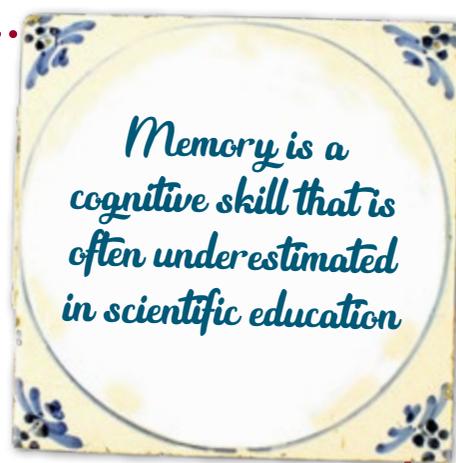
Yuxi Deng from China graduated with a PhD on 20 April for a study on the predictability of enzymatic protein hydrolysis.

Of course I do acknowledge that nowadays the internet is so extremely good that you really can find anything on it. That is why some people tend

to think that they don't have to remember anything. You could call them the Google generation. But the thing is, you do not look at your phone during a presentation or meeting.

I think that the more you use your memory skills during discussions and presentations, the faster you reach real depth and insight, which you would never reach by looking things up all the time. That is why I try to train my memory by memorizing the number of amino acids in all the proteins that I work with. I have also tried to memorize all the conditions under which I performed my experiments, like temperature and pH values. It has surprised me how fast your memory deteriorates if you don't train it.

It is like mental arithmetic. If you never practise it, you'll reach the point when you cannot even add up the amount on a supermarket receipt.’ **KvZ**



Wageningen student sent to German labour camp

He wouldn't sign

Would you swear loyalty to a brutal occupier if it meant you could stay at university instead of going to a labour camp? During World War II, Dutch students were faced with this decision. This is the story of a Wageningen student who refused to sign.

text Roelof Kleis photos Puylaert family and Guy Ackermans



100years
1918 — 2018

Just look at them on that photo. They're only lads, decent lads. Most of them Wageningen students. Looking at the camera with mild amusement. Still carefree and with no idea what the future holds in store for them. On a stool there is a can of coffee and a packet of sugar. But don't be misled: this is no student society summer camp. This is the labour camp of the aircraft engine factory in Braunschweig, Germany, and it is May 1943.

Who are these lads and how did they end up here? To answer this question we need to zoom in on the boy in the back row, fifth from the left: Etienne Puylaert, a student of General Agricultural science at the Agricultural College. He sent this photo to his family in Zuiddorpe, Zeeuws-Vlaanderen. He had left home a week ago to go to a labour camp in Germany, because he refused to swear loyalty to the German government of occupation. Working for the same occupier was the inevitable punishment for this. Unless you could go underground somewhere, an option that was not available to everyone.

IN LINE

The Nazis issued their infamous oath of loyalty in the spring of 1943. The Dutch student resistance had taken shape slowly but surely, and one of its greatest feats was the theft of the population register from Wageningen municipal council. This hindered the Germans in recruiting young men to go and work in Germany. Two students were involved in the theft. Along with other acts of resistance, this prompted the Germans to take steps. The idea of the oath of loyalty was to bring students back in line.

'THEY HAD TO GO AND WORK IN A FOREIGN COUNTRY, AND THEY DIDN'T KNOW WHETHER THEY WOULD EVER SEE THEIR FAMILIES AGAIN'

It was a clear choice: sign, and you could carry on with your studies, or don't sign, and you had to go to work in Germany. In the end the vast majority of Dutch students did not sign. In Wageningen, by the deadline on 4 May 1943, 154 students from the college had signed – one fifth of the total student population. Most of those who refused to sign went into hiding. A

total of 150 students reported for duty in the camps. All lectures had been stopped in March anyway, as a result of police raids among students, partly in response to the theft of the population register.

FOLDER FULL OF LETTERS

Etienne Puylaert didn't sign. Why he refused we can only guess, says his son Ben Puylaert. 'Those are questions I don't have answers to. My father was a member of the KSV student society at the time. Was he influenced by his Catholic peer group or was it an autonomous decision? He was 20 years old when he had to make that decision. Going into hiding was probably not an option. They would have been able to find him. His father was the mayor of Zuiddorpe. It wasn't easy to hide in Zeeuws-Vlaanderen anyway. The land is flat and empty, there is nowhere to hide. If you start running away, they'll see you at once. And he hardly knew anyone outside Zeeuws-Vlaanderen. My father-in-law, who was a student in Wageningen too, lived in Rotterdam and went into hiding there. It is much easier in a big city like that.'

Ben Puylaert, a retired electrician, has only recently learned about his father's war story. Etienne never talked about the war. His hidden past only came to light in 2002, when Ben helped his mother move house five years after his father's death. 'When I was tidying up his



◀ Etienne Puylaert's identity card.

1943

The German government of occupation forced students to sign an oath of loyalty; Etienne Puylaert refused and was sent to work in Germany.



▲ A group of students, most of them from Wageningen, poses in May 1943 in a labour camp of an aircraft engine factory in Germany.

desk I came across a folder full of letters and photos. They were the letters Pa wrote from Germany, said my mother.'

LEAKY BOAT

Ben Puylaert was astonished. 'I did know my father had worked in Germany, but he had rarely let anything slip about it. At one point it came up when, sometime in the 1970s, the BBC series *World at War* came out. Then he mentioned a few little things. That at the end of the war he was on the wrong side of the Elbe, and had to cross it in a leaky little boat to get home. But incredibly little, actually. And nothing about the camps.'

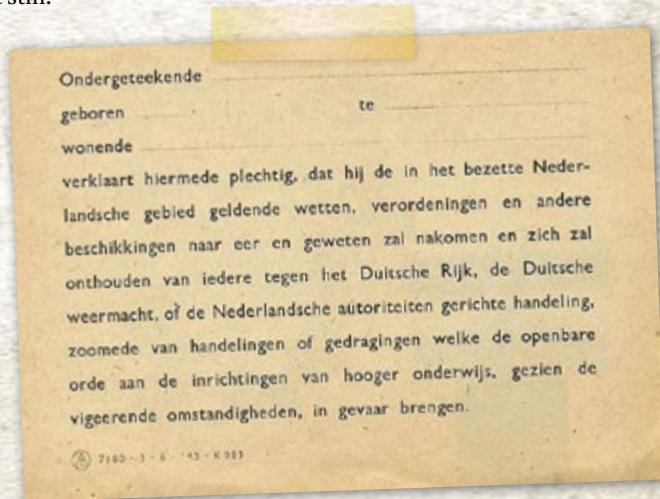
For Etienne's son, the unexpected find was the start of a long quest. He combed the letters, pored over the photos and searched the internet for clues with which to reconstruct his father's unknown wartime life. His reconstruction was first shared with others exactly one year ago in De Wereld hotel at a full Studium Generale session. Together with his son Philippe Puylaert, who teaches in the Microbi-

ology chair group, Ben brought Etienne's war years to life with excerpts from the letters. It was quite an emotional experience, recalls Etienne's grandson. 'I had never read those letters properly before. The quest really was my father's thing. But when I read those excerpts aloud, what he had gone through as a boy really sank in. Of course they were labour camps, not concentration camps. But still. These were boys who were recruited to go and work in a foreign country. Who didn't know if they would live to tell the tale, or whether they would ever see their families again. It was war. I have students that age in my classes.'

DIARY

Ben Puylaert has postcards, letters and photos that his father sent home between May 1943 and September 1944. 'The letters that were written after that, up to Liberation Day in May 1945, are missing. That

is because Zuiddorpe was liberated earlier, on 18 September 1944. From then on, it was in enemy territory for the Germans and no more post got through.' But that last period is described in the diary kept by Fons Crijns, a good friend of Etienne Puylaert's, and another Wageningen student. Ben: 'They were together at the well-known boarding school, Rolduc,



▲ This oath of loyalty was drawn up by the German government of occupation in the spring of 1943 to bring rebellious Dutch students back into line.



▲ Philippe and Ben Puylaert, Etienne's grandson and son.

they both went to Wageningen, and they left for Germany at the same time. Crijns came from Brunssum, which was liberated in September 1944 too. When post stopped getting through he started keeping a diary. My father is frequently mentioned in the diary, just as Crijns is often mentioned in my father's letters.'

CARPENTRY

The letters themselves are not very personal. 'That is what my father was like,' says Ben Puylaert. 'He didn't find it easy to talk about his feelings.' He didn't say much in the letters about the work he had to do or the deprivations and suffering he went through. Ben has pieced together some parts of his life like a puzzle. Etienne Puylaert was put to work in four different places in two years. In Braunschweig he worked in an aircraft engine factory. In Uslar, in the middle of the Harz mountains, he assembled wooden ammunition crates. 'He

learned carpentry there and developed a love of woodwork,' thinks Ben Puylaert. 'He always wanted to make things out of wood. That is one of those things that fell into place in retrospect. He didn't learn that at home. My grandfather didn't even own a hammer.'

Grandson Philippe Puylaert remembers afternoons of woodwork with his grandfather too. 'He taught me carpentry. I didn't know him for very long; he died when I was 13. But we always did a couple of hours of woodwork when we visited Grandpa. He was very good with children.'

This wasn't the only thing that fell into place for Philippe Puylaert as a result of his father's research. 'Grandpa never talked about the war. Of course I was still young. But he did always make up stories. A recurring element in the stories was that he was imprisoned in a camp. Not a German camp but a Viking one. The Vikings were the baddies. And there was always an escape in small boats, which were holed so

they leaked. Of course we should be careful not to read too much into this. But still, the camps, the Vikings, the boats...'

DUDS

After Uslar came a stint in a chemical factory in Herzberg am Harz. Ben Puylaert: 'There he literally had to stir pots of chemicals. They were making TNT and lots of other ammunition there. Foul stuff. And all without protective clothing. Of course he never wrote about that to his parents. But he does describe it in a letter to a nephew who was studying medicine. That he was in the sick bay, his nails and eyes completely blue from that ghastly stuff. And that his red blood cell count was only 57 percent of the normal level.'

Towards the end of the war, Puylaert ended up to the east of the Elbe in Glöwen. There he had to take apart duds – bombs that had been dropped but hadn't gone off. 'Because of the shortage of raw materials, the explosives had to

1945

End of World War II. Puylaert returns home and takes up his studies in Wageningen again.

STADIUM

‘The stadium on the “Wageningen Mountain” looks a bit neglected nowadays. I can still remember the days when FC Wageningen played there, but the club went bankrupt in 1992. The stadium was used for pop concerts too, like this closing festival in the AID on 23 August 1990. Later there were plans for an ice rink or a swimming pool, I think, or both. Nothing came of it. We go there every Sunday to work out with the dog.’



PHOTO: ANNEKE KIO

Guy Ackermans has been photographer for *Resource* and WUR for 35 years now. Capturing special moments through all those years. In this celebration year for WUR he shows us some of his most special 'pics'.

Fido is bad for the environment

Perhaps you are cutting down on meat and cycling a bit more instead of going by car. Doing your best to reduce your ecological footprint. But have you thought about your pet's ecological paw print? That is certainly not to be sneezed at.

text Tessa Louwerens photos Shutterstock



If you want to be eco-friendly, you'd better not keep a pet, concluded Robert and Brenda Vale in their book *Time to Eat the Dog? The Real Guide to Sustainable Living*. The scientist couple from New Zealand calculated the environmental impact of pets. If you must have an Alsatian dog, they claim, you'd better get rid of your car: its footprint is comparable.

BURDEN ON LAND

Researcher Ferry Leenstra at Wageningen Livestock Research agrees that we shouldn't forget pets when we aim at an eco-friendly lifestyle. 'A vegetarian with a cat and a horse probably has a bigger ecological footprint than a meat-eater without these pets.' Leenstra and her colleague Theun Vellinga calculated the ecological footprint of dogs, cats and horses in the Netherlands. 'These pets are not normally eaten, unlike farm animals. But they place a burden on land and food, some of which is suitable for human consumption too.' As an example: with the calories and protein required to feed all the world's dogs and cats you could feed the entire population of Germany (about 80 million people). The environmental burden of pets will only increase because their numbers are going up with rising wealth. According to the last count by research bureau TNS NIPO, in 2015, there were about 2.6 million cats in the Netherlands, 1.5 million dogs and 450,000 horses. For comparison: in the same year, the Netherlands was home to nearly 4 million cows and more than 12 million pigs. Leenstra: 'If you compare the ecological paw print of pets with that of farm animals, it is relatively small, but by no means negligible.' Feed is the biggest factor in the paw print, says Leenstra. 'Scientists are racking their brains to

answer the question of how we can feed the growing world population in future. At the moment, pets are rarely brought into the discussion.'

BY-PRODUCTS

Leenstra calculated how much land is needed for pet food production. This amounts to about 1000 m² per cat and twice that per dog. The average horse comes out at 3500 m². By way of comparison: in wealthy countries, about 12,500 m² of land is needed per person per year.

About 820,000 hectares of farmland is needed to feed all the dogs, cats and horses in the Netherlands. That is almost half the two million hectares of farmland in the country. Leenstra: 'We based this calculation for dogs and cats on average pet food contents and no food waste. And we also looked at meat and fish, products

'It is better to have a small pet like a hamster, that eats the waste from your vegetables'

which can be eaten by people. If we had only included by-products, the land use would have come out lower.' The is because the calculation must take into account the extent to which the ingredients in pet food are considered by-products or as products suitable for human consumption too. By-products such as bones and innards have a lower footprint than products such as meat, which can be eaten by people and are therefore more valuable economically. The ecological paw print of dogs and cats is therefore partly determined by the contents of their feed.

Pet-lovers often argue that pets eat mainly slaughterhouse waste products that would otherwise be thrown out. There is some truth in this, says Leenstra. 'But our analysis also shows that many ingredients in commercial pet food could also be consumed by farm animals and possibly by people too.'

CHICKEN FEET

Two thirds of the 'by-products' in tinned food belong to 'category 3', products that are suitable for human consumption. Examples are tripe, offal or chicken feet. Leenstra: 'We might not be very keen on all that in the Netherlands, but in many parts of the world these products are seen as delicacies. You can export chicken feet to China, where they are a delicacy. But with the prices we are prepared to pay for dog and cat food, it can be profitable for the meat industry to supply pet food producers.' In the Netherlands, moreover, more animal by-products are needed than are produced by the meat industry.

There is also the fact, says Leenstra, that horses graze in meadows, and stables occupy land on which no food can be produced, but which would be suitable for the purpose. 'Horses have a big impact thanks to their numbers and their size; they need a lot of food and space. In the past, horses provided traction and transport, and then food. But that is not so popular nowadays.'

POOP

Pets not only compete with us for food and land, but their faeces and urine also contribute to emissions of greenhouse gases such as methane, and therefore to our ecological footprint. 'Precise figures are not known,' says Leenstra. 'But the contribution of pets is probably insignificant compared with that of farm animals.' Horse manure is used to grow mushrooms on, but dog and cat poop doesn't usually go in the compost bin but directly into the environment.

It is a difficult dilemma for environmentally aware animal-lovers. The answer may seem simple: no pets then. But that is a bit over the top, says Leenstra. Maybe we could look for a middle way, she suggests, in imitation of the growing number of flexitarians. 'You could opt to have a pet on a timesharing basis. Or a small animal like a hamster or a rabbit, that doesn't eat meat but the waste from your vegetables.' 

WHAT IS MEANT BY ECOLOGICAL FOOTPRINT?

There is some confusion about the definition of 'ecological footprint'. Simply put, a footprint is the amount of land needed to maintain a particular lifestyle. Ferry Leenstra of Wageningen Economic Research: 'It is a way of indicating the effect of a product on the environment. A big part of it is the land or sea needed to produce the food. But other factors that are considered are the greenhouse gases emitted, the land used to live on and effects on air and water quality. All this is expressed in a hypothetical figure, representing a surface area, in square metres or hectares.'



International

Five Wageningen Bachelor's degree programmes are switching to English next academic year. That is not without consequences for student admissions and assessments, for learning materials and for what happens in the classroom. So it is hard work now on all fronts.

text Kenneth van Zijl *illustration* Geert-Jan Bruins



In the spring of 2017, WUR's Executive Board presented its plan for a phased transition to English as the language of instruction on Wageningen Bachelor's degree programmes, starting with five programmes in September 2018. The proposal ran up against initial resistance from the Student-Staff Council, which feared a drop in quality and in the overall growth of the university. But after some concessions from the Executive Board – there will be an evaluation after three years, and other Bachelor's programmes wanting to switch to English within that period can only do so with the blessing of the Student Staff Council – the proposal got the green light. Next academic year, five BSc programmes will make the switch to English: International Land and Water Management, Environmental Sciences, Animal Sciences, Food Technology, and Soil, Water, Atmos-

phere. Several WUR departments have already been preparing for this transition for months.

ENROLMENT

Every month on the intranet, the department of Education & Student Affairs publishes an update on the number of preliminary registrations for all WUR degree programmes. A distinction is made between weighted and unweighted registrations. A secondary school pupil who has registered for a Wageningen degree programme as well as three other programmes counts as one preliminary registration in the unweighted figures and as 0,25 of a registration in the weighted figures. A further distinction is made in the figures between preliminary registrations from the Netherlands, from the EER (all EU countries plus Liechtenstein, Norway and Iceland) and from countries outside the EER.

The statistics (see figure) show that the number of weighted preliminary registrations has risen sharply with the introduction of English as the language of instruction on the Bachelor's programmes. For all the programmes which will now be English-taught, the tally was at 616 weighted preliminary registrations in April, as opposed to over 421 in April 2017. Not surprisingly, there have been far more preliminary registrations from outside the Netherlands (175.4 as opposed to 13 last year). But the number of preliminary registrations from the Netherlands has risen too, from 408.3 in 2017 to 440.6 now (a growth of 8 percent).

Caution is called for in interpreting the figures, warn WUR spokesperson Simon Vink and Dean of Education Arnold Bregt. They stress that it is still anyone's guess how many students will actually embark on the international Bachelor's programmes in September. Many overseas

Bachelor's popular

students, especially those from outside the EU, will drop out for lack of funding. But one thing you can say, according to Bregt, is that the fear among some programmes that introducing instruction in English would put Dutch students off was unfounded.

EVALUATING CERTIFICATES

All the applications for the international Bachelor's programmes come into the Admissions Office in the Forum, and the aspiring students' existing qualifications are assessed. Some of them are carefully scrutinized, as the level required is equivalent to that of the Dutch VWO exam at the end of secondary school. It is not always easy to establish that equivalence. At Italian secondary schools, for instance, 'science' is taught: a mix of chemistry, physics and biology. To test the level of these individual subjects, an internal teacher is asked to assess the curricula. For general information about the educational system in other countries, various databases are used, such as those of Nuffic, the Dutch organization for internationalization in education.

But for certain countries it remains difficult to establish an admissions policy. 'There are countries in south-east Asia and Latin America where the highest level of secondary school certificate available is equivalent to the Dutch HAVO (which prepares pupils for more applied higher education),' says Puck Stamps of the Admissions Office, who is responsible for international admissions criteria. 'But that does not mean we automatically exclude people from

those countries. What we do then, for example, is consider whether we can admit them if they have a higher grade average or on condition they do an extra year at the university.'

TRANSLATING LEARNING MATERIALS

Translating learning materials is another challenge facing the international Bachelor's programmes. Technical terminology in particular requires precise translation. Some programmes have opted to make use of native speakers: Master's students from English-speaking countries who are paid to translate first-year learning materials. It is up to the teachers themselves to translate their lectures. Most of the academic literature is already in English.

In organizing the translation, an unforeseen obstacle was thrown up by the Wageningen education system, says Arnold Bregt. 'The education in the first year is strongly interlinked, with introduction courses on Ecology or Cell Biology as part of many programmes. If you start teaching those courses in English, it affects other programmes that are not switching to English.' So for a number of courses, the teaching will be in English from now on for all first-year students. For other courses a hybrid form has been adopted: English on the international degree programmes, Dutch on the Dutch ones.

CULTURE CLASH

Students will be coming to Wageningen in September from secondary schools in dozens of

countries. This can cause communication problems in class and in group work. So all the international Bachelor's programmes will start with an introductory course to help students get to know the programme and each other. Work groups of maximum eight students from a range of cultural backgrounds will get a literature assignment or be asked to make a poster on a particular topic. A coach will supervise the group work and give the students a chance to talk about what cooperation means to them.

This can be challenging, but above all it is very nice to learn from each other, says Erik Heijmans, head of the Education Support Centre. 'I was programme director of International Land and Water Management for a long time. I asked my students then, for example, what image came up for them if they heard the word "water". A Dutch student talked about rain and rivers; a Romanian student thought of drought. This creates some fun interaction, and students can learn a lot from each other.'

Bregt expects that the multicultural character of the groups will turn out to be beneficial. 'I believe that an international classroom with a good mix has added educational value. Many of the courses we teach in Wageningen are about complex problems for which contextual information is very important. The context is different in every country so it is very enriching when international students bring in experiences from their own countries.' 

Preliminary registrations for international Bachelor's programmes

Name of course	Numbers on 17 April 2017				Numbers on 16 April 2018			
	EER	Netherlands	non-EER	Total	EER	Netherlands	non-EER	Total
International Land and Water Management	1.0	60.4	0.5	61.9	12.1	66.7	10.6	89.3
Environmental Sciences	1.5	46.8	1.0	49.3	27.9	49.6	35.9	113.4
Animal Sciences	2.5	94.9	2.5	99.9	17.1	105.5	13.7	136.8
Soil, Water, Atmosphere	1.0	58.0		59.0	5.4	65.9	0.3	71.6
Food Technology	1.3	148.2	1.0	151.2	15.7	152.9	35.3	204.8
Total	7.3	408.3	5.0	421.3	78.2	440.6	95.7	616.0

This table shows the number of weighted preliminary registrations for the five Bachelor's programmes which will be run in English from September. EER stands for all EU countries plus Lichtenstein, Norway and Iceland.

Source: Education & Student Affairs

Studying causes **STRESS!**

One in four students suffer from symptoms of burnout, shows a study by Windesheim University of Applied Sciences published in mid-April. At the same time, the WUR board announced that it was allocating 50,000 euros to a campaign to address psychological problems among students. What makes student life stressful and what is the best way to deal with the stress?

text Tessa Louwerens and Kenneth van Zijl

illustration Henk van Ruitenbeek

Wim Verhagen



Third-year BSc student of Economics and Policy

'I certainly experience stress. Your studies and your social life are bound up together in Wageningen: it goes on 24/7. I take part in a lot of extra-curricular activities, including involvement in education. I also set up the branch of the Young Democrats, together with a few other people, and I'm now the chair. I sometimes leave the house at 9 in the morning and get back at 12 at night, and then I still have to reply to loads of WhatsApp messages. **At one point the stress got too much for me. But I was ashamed of that because I thought I was overreacting.** After all, everyone is busy. After hesitating for a long time I did eventually go to the student psychologist. I know perfectly well I need to do less. But being able to talk to someone about my stress is a big relief. Now I am taking a break from courses. And I don't let my diary get so full.'



Anne van der Heijden



MSc student of Management, Economics and Consumer Studies and Food Quality Management

'I have a lifestyle that is really chill for me, but it probably wouldn't work for everyone. I do what I want when I want: eating, exercising, studying, meeting friends. **Neither of my two Master's programmes have a lot of contact hours. I hardly every go to lectures and I only go to compulsory sessions.** You can't do that on all programmes and everyone is different in terms of what you need and what works for you. Because a lot of independent study also requires self-discipline. If you haven't got that, this approach can actually create a lot of stress. But it works for me.'

BSc student



Third-year student of Nutrition and Health, name known to the editor

'Last summer I developed serious psychological and psychosomatic symptoms. **I was referred to therapists and sat in my room for months, exhausted and depressed.** Now I am taking antidepressants and I'm studying again part-time so as to reintegrate gradually. That is working well. Ultimately I would like to teach at a university. Before my breakdown I was studying fulltime as well as working 20 hours a week in a laboratory. And I was also serving on a board. Anyone with any sense will say that was too much. But when you are in the thick of it, you don't realize that. I come from a family in which working hard was the norm. I'm the first to go to university. That creates expectations too.'

Jesse Mesman



MSc student of Biotechnology

'I had such a full life that I started to have symptoms of burnout. **I sometimes got panicky and people saw that I was walking around stressed. Only I bottled it all up. I didn't talk to anyone about it.** At some point I went to the student psychologist and was referred to the mental health service. The assessment made there was that I was afraid of failure and always wanted to do everything perfectly. I went there eight times and it helped a lot. I also went to a perfectionism coach. I had to keep track of what had gone well and what hadn't, and got exercises for creating a calmer state of mind. She also taught me that good can be good enough. I am going to drop a few activities and committees. Now I still cook at my student society and I play in the student orchestra. I don't go to all the parties anymore. Better for my peace of mind.'

Liza van Kapel



MSc student of Earth & Environment

'I'm a real deadline worker: I start late. Sometimes that causes stress but in the end I usually manage. I do a lot of other things too, not because I think it's necessary for getting a job but because I enjoy it. Now I am writing my Master's thesis. I've got an extension because I developed RSI halfway through it, which I don't think was due to stress as such. I talked about it and my supervisor helped me adapt my plans, and I got help with the setup of my desk. That gives me some peace of mind. **I think it can be quite difficult for students to know their own limits and to make them clear.** There are facilities but you have to sound the alarm yourself.'

Edwin Peeters



Associate Professor of Aquatic Ecology and Water Quality Management

'I notice that students have short concentration spans and are easily distracted, because they are doing a lot of things at once, including things they do on their smartphones. And students also have a lot more daytime activities alongside fulltime education. For example, sometimes they can't attend a lecture because they have to work. **I think expectations of students are high: there is pressure to finish fast but to earn money at the same time.** This is not always good for their academic performance, and I get the impression it creates more stress too.'

Anne Pluijmaekers



MSc student of Consumer Behaviour and Biology

'I am doing a double Master's, but that doesn't necessarily cause more stress. I have the same course load as someone doing one Master's. It just takes a bit more figuring out because I take various compulsory courses, which all have to be fitted in somewhere. **I try to cut the work up into small, manageable chunks so I can feel I'm making progress.** I also look carefully at my priorities: I really don't need to study until 10 o'clock every evening. People do have different expectations of me because I'm doing two Master's programmes. On the one hand, there are assumptions that I'll have plenty to say about both subject areas, that studying is less effort for me and that I'm at a certain level. And on the other hand, I can be cut some slack sometimes. I find it difficult to cope with these expectations: that is actually what stresses me out more.' **R**

The volunteers who make 5 May possible **CARRYING THE TORCH**

Every year on 5 May, Wageningen is flooded by about 120,000 revellers. They can watch a military parade and enjoy music from numerous podia. Two students and a PhD candidate tell us about what they do to help make the festival a success.

text Anne van der Heijden photos Sven Menschel

A PODIUM FOR RISING STARS

‘On 5 May, Wageningen changes from a boring village into the grounds of a festival. I love that atmosphere,’ says Sanne Bom (20), a student of Health and Society and chair of the Popcultuur Wageningen foundation. When she started on her Bachelor’s programme three years ago, she discovered how exuberantly this town celebrates freedom. She decided she wanted to be part of it, and every year since then she helps run the Liberation Festival.

Together with others from Popcultuur, this year Bom will be arranging everything for the Sena Performers Stage in the park, where up-and-coming bands get to play. ‘We only have new bands on our podium. We found some of them through Popcultuur. Niko was in the last Popronde Wageningen, for instance, and Dawn Brothers were at Loburg café last year.’

‘Music is my passion and I am keen to develop my organizing capacities,’ says Bom when asked why she devotes so much time to this voluntary work. ‘If you are involved in music in Wageningen, and you can say you are involved in 5 May, then you’ve really achieved something.’

Bom is satisfied with the setup of the young talent podium this year. ‘Our sponsor, Sena, is an organization that stands up for musicians’ rights. They demand that we are within 200 metres of the main podium. That means our podium is very central and we were involved in the organization of the main podium too. We play in turns so the music doesn’t compete.’



You can find the programme for the Liberation Parade and the Liberation Festival on 5 May on wageningen45.nl and bevrijdingsfestival gelderland.nl.

COMMANDER OF THE GUARD OF HONOUR



Besides being an MSc student of Biotechnology, Hidde Berg (23) is also president of and commander at Transvaal, a sub-society of Ceres. This student militia provides 13 students every year to form a guard of honour for the veterans and military who walk in the Liberation Parade. 'I have been in the guard of honour for the past two years, and this year I'm there as commander.'

During the Cold War the members of Transvaal learned to handle weapons, so they would be able to help in armed resistance to a possible Russian invasion. 'We are way beyond that point now, but we still form a bridge between the student world and the military,' says Berg. He thinks it is important that students know what is involved in defending a nation. 'Peace and security don't come by themselves; people often forget that other people work hard to achieve them or even sacrifice their lives for them. Transvaal makes sure that potential future leaders get to know the armed forces in a positive way, so they know the army exists for us.'

The link with Remembrance Day for the victims of war on 4 May is clear to Berg. 'Wageningen is the city of the German capitulation, a university town with a military past. We fall nicely in between.' He thinks it is important not to forget the link with the war. 'Otherwise it will just turn into a party. Of course it's great to celebrate freedom, but we mustn't forget the origins of the festival.'

'REGGAE IS ABOUT FREEDOM'

For Stefan Wilson (34), this will be his first Liberation Festival, and he gets to walk straight onto the stage as an artist. He will perform his reggae music at two thirty in the afternoon on the podium on the Salverdaplein. A nice opportunity. 'I came to the Netherlands from Trinidad and Tobago to do my Master's in Applied Statistics and a PhD in statistical genetics, but also to widen the audience for my music.'

Wilson sings reggae under the stage name Verse iTal. 'My voice is my instrument.' He wrote his first songs at the age of nine, about the girl next door. Later his music was influenced by Michael Jackson. 'And I was influenced by hip hop when I was doing my first degree in America.' Wilson generally composes cheerful reggae music. 'Reggae is about freedom. It is the music of oppressed people, a cry for freedom.' So he feels it is something special to be able to perform at the Liberation Festival. 'Although 5 May doesn't mean anything to me personally, the concept of freedom does. Reggae used music to say that everyone should have the right to be free.'

Wilson made a conscious choice not to earn his living from his music. 'Science is part of me too. I want to keep both talents alive. I would love to teach maths and statistics all academic year and sing all summer. That is actually my way of teaching outside the classroom. There is more to it than the enjoyment alone.' 





HIGH AND MIGHTY

The higher the floor we work on the more risky the decisions we take, shows research at Miami University. The height makes us feel more powerful. Seems like a good argument for getting bankers out of skyscrapers and our Executive Board down from the sixth floor of Atlas.

ON THE GROUND

In the light of the above-mentioned study, it is a reassuring thought that those who keep tabs on the powerful at WUR do not operate at a great height. The WUR Council meets on the first floor, and that is where the Resource office is too. Also, apparently blinds in the windows can cancel out the risk-taking effect of being literally high up. So that's another option.

TINT

Researchers at the Erasmus Medical Centre in Rotterdam and King's College London have discovered 124 genes that are involved in hair colour. Twelve of these genes were already known. The knowledge makes it possible to predict someone's hair colour on the basis of DNA with a lot more accuracy. Handy for forensic researchers. But of course, criminals can always dye their hair.

OLD AND WISE

The longer you spend in formal education, the longer you live. This almost linear relation seems to apply all around the world, and to have changed very little in the past 50 years, discovered researchers at the University of Vienna. Three additional years of education (after the age of 15) give you about 10 more years of life. This is because more educated people make healthier choices in terms of diet and life-style.

Unitas decides against the old post office

The plans for a pop podium and a home for Unitas youth club in the former post office are too large-scale and financially risky. For these reasons, Unitas has decided against the idea, says Eugeia Fund chair Yvonne de Hilster.

The Eugeia Fund is an association of ex-members of Unitas, and is responsible for the club's accommodation. Together with Wageningen Live, the fund was in at the start of the citizens' initiative to repurpose the old post office opposite the Junushoff theatre as a pop temple and clubhouse for Unitas. A feasibility study was commissioned by the municipality, and three options were studied. Two of them are based on keeping the existing building, possibly with an extension. The third alternative is demolition and a new building, which would include some residential accommodation.

To finance the pop concert venue, all three options studied would require up to nearly 400,000 euros in subsidies for a period of at least 15 years, the feasibility study shows. The Eugeia Fund does not see that as a healthy starting point. 'For the other participants in the plans, this poses too great a risk to the continuity. We don't want to take that risk with our association's capital,' writes the foundation in a response to the municipality.

The three options would cost between five and nearly nine million euros, for renovation and a new building respectively. According to De Hilster, the plans have become over-ambitious. 'The options that were studied don't serve the objectives we started out with in 2016: to create a place for young people in the middle of Wageningen, with a role for Unitas.' These plans grew to in-

clude a pop podium with rehearsal rooms, a musical café, a cinema, a clubhouse for Unitas, and residential accommodation. The Eugeia Fund only wants to stay involved if the plans are simplified to something that matches the original principles better. 'If it has to be based on the three options described, we shall step aside.' The Unitas board takes the same line, says De Hilster.

The youth club had to leave its clubhouse on the Generaal Foulkesweg and sell its furniture in 2009, due to financial problems. The association was temporarily housed on the Industrieweg, but could not host parties or concerts there, due to licensing problems. At the moment meetings are held in the former Unitas building up the hill, and parties at different venues around town, such as Luca café. **RK**



Plans were made in 2016 to transform the old post office opposite Junushoff theatre in Wageningen into a pop temple and a clubhouse for Unitas.

PHOTO: SVEN MENSCHER

More vegan food on campus after petition

MSc student of Environmental Sciences Noortje Keurhorst is enthusiastic about the new plant-based options in the canteens of Forum, Orion and Leeuwenborch. More than 500 people signed her petition for more plant-based food on campus, after which she started working with the caterers. ‘We have worked to bridge the gap between the demand and supply of vegan food on campus.’

Jeroen van Rosevelt, caterer at Leeuwenborch, is getting positive feedback on the new plant-based options. ‘I am happy to see people appreciating the changes. Seeing our guests enjoying their meals is why we love our work.’

Yet the vegan options are not selling as well as expected. Forum caterer Ron Nagtegaal believes the word needs to be spread that more plant-based food is now available. Keurhorst agrees: ‘The caterers have made the necessary investments. Now it is up to us.’ The caterers are open to suggestions. Orion caterer Sjaak Wolferink: ‘Even if there is no vegan meal available, we are willing to prepare something.’

The WUR Council is working on a memo on sustainable nutrition, to be handed to the Executive Board. It says plant-based food fits WUR’s vision, ‘Towards a healthier environment’. Keurhorst is pleased about this. ‘I hope WUR will continue to set an example



PHOTO: SVEN MENSCHEL

Vegans now have more choice in the WUR canteens.

when it comes to the provision of plant-based food on campus.’ @JS

Vegan options available at the campus canteens

Forum:
 soup, salad bar, sandwiches, hot meals at the evening buffet, Alpro drinks and Alpro desserts, vegan cappuccino (Grand café)

Orion:
 soup, salad bar, sandwiches or wraps, hot meals (occasionally and on demand), energy bars, soya cappuccino, coconut milk cappuccino, almond cappuccino

Leeuwenborch:
 soup, salad bar, sandwiches or wraps, hot meals like curries, Alpro drinks

MEANWHILE IN... HUNGARY

‘My parents protested against Orbán too’

Viktor Orbán’s ruling right-wing party Fidesz has once again won the Hungarian elections. Two weeks ago, tens of thousands of people took to the streets in Budapest to protest against the illiberal and undemocratic practices of the government. MSc student Anna Hátsági is very concerned about the situation in her home country but draws hope from the protests.

‘When I started studying abroad I was planning to return to Hungary. I wanted to live and work in my home country as I love my culture, friends and family. Lately I find it harder to imagine going back since the living conditions are slowly deteriorating.

For the last eight years, the Fidesz party has been concentrating their efforts on strengthening their authority. They try to restrict the work of civil society organizations through laws and cuts in funding. They take the financial support from the European Union and distribute it to those in power and their friends instead of spending it on the country’s development. Healthcare and education are poor,

due to lack of money. I feel sad about this as I think that being healthy and able to learn is essential for a good life.

The government controls



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

most of the media that spread an image of how well the country is doing and how well the government protects people from imaginary enemies such as migrants or the EU. From what I can see, many people are unhappy with the government but they still tolerate the situation. I find this frustrating. I went to vote in The Hague. Like many other Hungarians I hoped that something would change this time. Now I am disappointed. Apparently, conditions are not bad enough to motivate a majority of people to fight. There is also not really a good alternative to the ruling party.

I think the protests that started two weeks ago are a reason for hope. Tens of thousands of people from different parts of society joined forces to express their disagreement with the government. My parents protested too. They think it is the best they can do at the moment. Some of my friends are still in Hungary trying to live and work there. I think this is great as we desperately need smart people striving to make a difference.’ @JS



Anna Hátsági, an MSc student of Biology from Hungary, talks about the situation in her home country.

YOU ON CAMPUS

'First, coffee. Would you like one too?' asks Maria Uosukainen (24) The half-Finnish, half-Dutch student is the opposite of a stressed student panicking about deadlines. She radiates peace and talks in measured tones.

We are sitting in the sun outside The Spot. With her coffee cup in one hand, she gesticulates with the other. 'If it wasn't such nice weather I'd sit in The Spot. It's a nice place to study. I need a balance between background noise and concentration.'

Her interest in different cultures and travelling led her to choose the Master's in Leisure, Environment and Tourism. And she can't wait for her next trip. 'I definitely want to go abroad for my thesis. I like exploring new places. And no, I don't mind being away from home for months.' Maria left Finland at the age of 19. She has 'been away' ever since, as she puts it herself. What she misses most about Finland is peace and space. 'I of-

ten look for that in the places I want to travel to.' Sometimes Maria goes for a walk on the Utrechtse Heuvelrug. 'But even there I get annoyed by the traffic noise. What I do appreciate about the Netherlands is the cities.

'We should just enjoy life more, and not get so stressed out'

Utrecht and Leiden for example. Amsterdam as well, but I think it's a bit overcrowded. Oh, and the Netherlands has beautiful long beaches! Finland has beaches too, but they are different and not as long.'

Maria calls herself a hedonist. 'Do you know the pizzeria opposite the cinema in the centre of Wageningen? The one with the whisky bar? That is really good. I really

enjoy good food and drinks. Last summer my boyfriend and I spent a week in Italy, just for the food.' According to Maria, good food should be paired with good drinks, especially whisky. 'My best memories of travelling are a kind of constant tipsiness throughout the week.' She repeats one phrase several times; it seems to be her mantra: 'We should just enjoy life more, and not get so stressed out.' **EvdG**

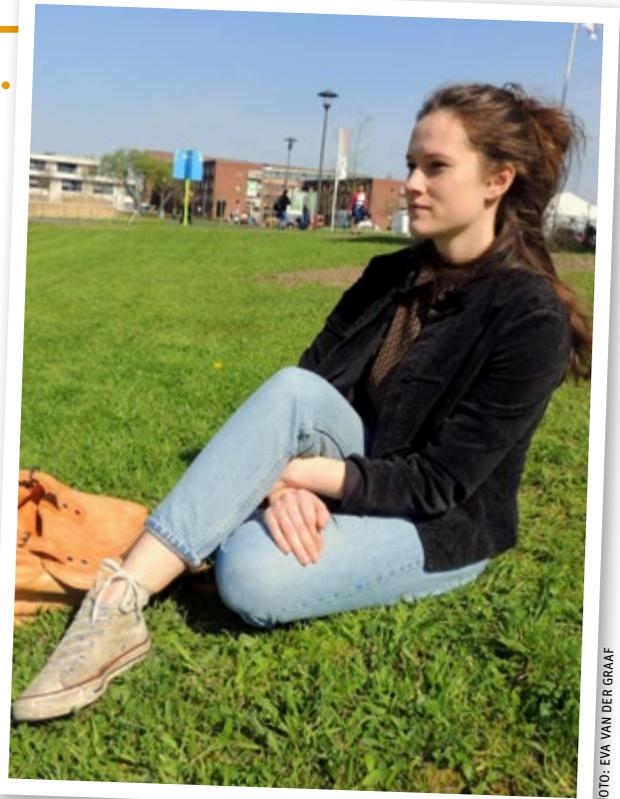


PHOTO: EVA VAN DER GRAAF

PARTIES

In the party mood? Wageningen Party Promotion (WUP) tells you where to find one. See too www.wageningenup.nl.



SSR-W - TOEBACKSUYGHERS: ORANGE BALL

Thursday 26 April from 22:00 to ?

It's a fixture the evening before King's Day: debating society Toebacksuyghers go all out with their Orange Ball. Time to don any orange clothes and accessories you can find and dance in the name of the king.

WAGENINGEN CENTRE - LIBERATION FESTIVAL

Saturday 5 May from 12:00 to 24.00

This major, high-quality event is completely free. The Liberation Festival is the annual peace offering for everyone who complains the rest of the year that there's nothing to do in this backwater. It has something for everyone, whether you are into guitar riffs, world music, new bands, the blues or Miss Montreal. For info, see [bevrijdingsfestivalgelderland.nl](http://bevrijdingsfestival gelderland.nl). **E**



PHOTO: SVEN MENSCHL

On 18 April, guests swapped their sports gear for evening dresses at the gala put on by Thymos, Wageningen University's sports club.

Wageningen Master's students do internships and thesis research all around the world, getting to know their field and other cultures. Here they talk about their adventures.

Setting mosquito traps in Curaçao

'I was out and about all the time, really. I drove all around the island in a pick-up, together with another intern and two locals. We first picked random places to take measurements, and then used Google Maps to try and find a house at that location. Only it was a challenge to then find the house we had chosen, because on Curaçao the houses are all jumbled up together. So you might get number 7 first with number 60 next, and then number 50.

The occupants of the houses we went to were nearly always happy to collaborate. They invited us in, gave us a drink and started to tell us long stories about their children, for example. The fact that I could make contact like that with local people, who were often very enthusiastic and also spoke Dutch, was what I liked best about it.

SEPTIC TANK

I made a risk map for the yellow fever mosquito, *Aedes aegypti*. At the selected houses we first asked the occupants a few questions about risk factors for mosquitoes. We asked whether they had a septic tank, for instance, because certain mosquitoes can breed there. We then set a mosquito trap at each house. This was a kind of bucket of hay, which attracts the mosquitoes that want to lay eggs. It was lidded so the mosquitoes couldn't fly out, and inside was a paper which the mosquitoes got stuck to when they flew up against it. After one week we collected the traps and counted the mosquitoes caught in them. We had to make sure the mosquito traps were covered so not too much rain got into them, and that they were in the shade so the water wouldn't evaporate. It didn't always work out well: some traps were destroyed by

dogs. If that happened we would decide just to go on to the next house.

RICH AND POOR

You notice that rich and poor live quite segregated lives in Curaçao. There were neighbourhoods with a big gate and a guard, inside which everyone seemed to lead separate lives. In the poorer neighbourhoods, on the other hand, people did a lot more things together.

We actually knocked on doors everywhere, even in the poorer parts where the police don't go at night. By day that was usually perfectly OK. But sometimes the locals we were with would say, "No, this house is not good, we'll go to the next one." And then we listened to them because they know the place better than we do.'  EVK



THE WORKS

Who? Marieke de Cock, MSc student of Biology
What? Internship at the National Institute for Public Health and the Environment (RIVM)
Where? Willemstad, Curaçao



Read all interviews on resource-online.nl

Orion Irregular Opening Hours May 2018

	2018	The Building	Bike basement	The Spot	Restaurant
Monday - Friday	30 April - 4 May	8 am - 6 pm	8 am - 8 pm	8 am till at least 8 pm	11.30 am - 1.30 pm
Saturday Liberation Day	5 May	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed
Sunday	6 May	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed
Monday - Wednesday	7 - 9 May	8 am - 6 pm	8 am - 8 pm	8 am till at least 8 pm	11.30 am - 1.30 pm
Thursday Ascension Day	10 May	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed
Friday	11 May	8 am - 6 pm	8 am - 8 pm	8 am till at least 8 pm	11.30 am - 1.30 pm
Saturday	12 May	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed
Sunday	13 May	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed
Monday - Friday	14 - 18 May	8 am - 6 pm	8 am - 8 pm	8 am till at least 8 pm	11.30 am - 1.30 pm
Saturday	19 May	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed
Whit Sunday	20 May	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed
Whit Sunday	21 May	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed



Leeuwenborch Irregular Opening Hours May 2018

	2018	The Building	Coffee Bar/ Restaurant	The Library
Monday - Thursday	30 April - 3 May	7 am - 10.30 pm	8 am - 5 pm	8.30 am - 10 pm
Friday	4 May	7 am - 10.30 pm	8 am - 5 pm	8.30 am - 5 pm
Saturday Liberation Day	5 May	8 am - 5.30 pm	Closed	Closed
Sunday	6 May	Closed	Closed	Closed
Monday - Wednesday	7 - 9 May	7 am - 10.30 pm	8 am - 5 pm	8.30 am - 6 pm
Thursday Ascension Day	10 May	Closed	Closed	Closed
Friday	11 May	7 am - 10.30 pm	10 am - 2 pm	8.30 am - 5 pm
Saturday	12 May	8 am - 5.30 pm	Closed	Closed
Sunday	13 May	Closed	Closed	Closed
Monday - Thursday	14 - 17 May	7 am - 10.30 pm	8 am - 5 pm	8.30 am - 6 pm
Friday	18 May	7 am - 10.30 pm	8 am - 5 pm	8.30 am - 5 pm
Saturday	19 May	8 am - 5.30 pm	Closed	Closed
Whit Sunday	20 May	Closed	Closed	Closed
Whit Monday	21 May	Closed	Closed	Closed

After 6 pm entrance is only possible after registration at the reception desk.



Forum - May 2018 Irregular Opening Hours

	2018	The Building	The Library	Student Desk	IT Service Point	WURshop	Restaurant	Grand Café	Wageningen in'to Languages
Monday - Thursday	30 April - 3 May	8 am - 12 am*	8 am - 12 am*	10 am - 12 pm	9 am - 10 pm	9 am - 4.30 pm	8 am - 7 pm	8 am - 5 pm	9 am - 5 pm
Friday	4 May	8 am - 11 pm	8 am - 10 pm	10 am - 12 pm	9 am - 5 pm	9 am - 2.30 pm	8 am - 7 pm	8 am - 5 pm	9 am - 5 pm
Saturday Liberation Day	5 May	9 am - 7 pm	9 am - 7 pm	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed
Sunday	6 May	9 am - 7 pm	9 am - 7 pm	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed
Monday - Wednesday	7 - 9 May	8 am - 12 am*	8 am - 12 am*	10 am - 5 pm	9 am - 10 pm	9 am - 4.30 pm	8 am - 7 pm	8 am - 5 pm	9 am - 5 pm
Thursday Ascension Day	10 May	10 am - 6 pm	10 am - 6 pm	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed
Friday	11 May	8 am - 11 pm	8.30 am - 5.30 pm	Closed	Closed	9 am - 2.30 pm	Closed	Closed	Closed
Saturday	12 May	10 am - 6 pm	10 am - 6 pm	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed
Sunday	13 May	10 am - 6 pm	10 am - 6 pm	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed
Monday - Thursday	14 - 17 May	8 am - 11 pm	8 am - 10 pm	10 am - 5 pm	9 am - 10 pm	9 am - 4.30 pm	8 am - 7 pm	8 am - 5 pm	9 am - 5 pm
Friday	18 May	8 am - 11 pm	8 am - 10 pm	10 am - 5 pm	9 am - 5 pm	9 am - 2.30 pm	8 am - 7 pm	8 am - 5 pm	9 am - 5 pm
Saturday	19 May	10 am - 6 pm	10 am - 6 pm	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed
Whit Sunday	20 May	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed
Whit Monday	21 May	10 am - 6 pm	10 am - 6 pm	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed

* Attention 12 am is midnight

During working hours, the building is open to the public. After working hours, entrance is only possible with a WUR card.



Announcements

STUDENT COUNCIL 2018/2019 ELECTION – LISTS OF CANDIDATES

On 2 May 2018, the Student Council Election Committee will publish the lists of candidates, after these lists have been validated. Students who are entitled to vote will receive an email from *WebElect verkiezingen* (info@webelect.nl) about the publication of the lists of candidates. From 2 May 2018, students will know who might represent them in the Student Council during the next academic year. The lists of candidates will also be available for inspection at the office of the Secretary of the Student Council, or on the Student Council election team website. Any person who is concerned may lodge a notice of objection to the validity of a published list of candidates, up to and including 9 May 2018, with the Secretary of the Election Committee of the Student Council, Gaby Schmelzer, Droevendaalsesteeg 4 (Room B.103), P.O. Box 9101, 6700 HB Wageningen. Email: secretariat.sc@wur.nl

In memoriam

Peter van der Kamp (1958-2018)



On Monday 26 March we received the sad news that our colleague Peter van der Kamp has passed away after a short illness. Peter worked for 10 years at Wageningen Marine Research as database developer and manager.

In recent years Peter focused his efforts on developing new software for marine and freshwater research, and on developing WMR's existing and new databases. Peter also contributed a lot to the automatization of access to WMR data for various projects. He did this with great passion and creativity and in close collaboration with the researchers concerned. And he was good at tailoring the databases to the requirements of the research. As well as being a database developer, Peter chaired Wageningen Marine Research's Works Council and was a member of the Central Works Council. During the reorganization of the institute, that was no easy task. In his capacity as chair, Peter was able to formulate the course to be taken by Wageningen Marine Research carefully and with consideration for the various interests at stake. We are full of admiration for the way Peter did his job at our institute: expertly, reliably, and with loyalty and great commitment. We are happy that he worked here and will remember him as a good and modest person. In our institute he will be sorely missed.

*On behalf of the data core team and ourselves,
MT Wageningen Marine Research,
Tammo Bult, Jakob Asjes and Jeannette Riensema*

In memoriam

Leonie Janssen-Jansen



Professor Leonie Janssen-Jansen passed away on Wednesday 11 April after a long illness. Leonie joined Wageningen University as the new Chair Holder of Land Use Planning on 1 June 2015. Sadly, Leonie fell ill a few days after she joined us. Throughout her illness, between her chemo sessions, Leonie remained fully committed to her work: giving lectures, doing research and leading the chair group. It was this fighting spirit that enabled Leonie, on the day before her 41st birthday, to hold her inaugural lecture, culminating in a big celebration.

We all knew that Leonie would continue to fight until the end, but that it was an unequal fight. We are very much indebted to Leonie for her exceptional commitment to the field of Land Use Planning, despite the difficult circumstances. Leonie always highly valued quality in research and education, and did not shy away from confrontation or her personal responsibility. The time was too short and conditions were too difficult for Leonie to be able to achieve all her objectives in Wageningen. Our thoughts are with her family, friends, acquaintances and colleagues as they cope with the loss of our resilient and brave Leonie.

*On behalf of the Management of the Environmental Sciences Group,
Bram de Vos and Machteld Roos*

Leonie Janssen-Jansen

Our professor, Leonie Janssen-Jansen, passed away after a long illness on 11 April 2018. After earning her PhD in Utrecht in 2004, Leonie went on to the University of Amsterdam to work on the themes of real estate development and land politics. In June 2015 she was appointed to the Land Use Planning Group at Wageningen University, where to everyone's dismay she had to be hospitalized just two days into her appointment, due to an aggressive form of colon cancer. Leonie was a dedicated researcher and had an inspiring vision for the field of spatial planning. She argued for a new role for spatial planning in our country, worried that the government was placing too much responsibility in the hands of local government and citizens' initiatives. Leonie had a keen eye for the negative consequences of such decentralization, and was averse to the euphemistic platitudes used about it. Leonie was visiting professor at the University of Ulster, and very involved in both the International Academic Association on Planning, Law, and Property Rights (PLPR) and the Association of European Schools of Planning (AESOP). In her short period leading our group she boosted its vitality, despite her illness. She was dedicated to the chair group to the very last.

On behalf of all colleagues and PhD candidates at the Land Use Planning Group

colophon

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>>TYPICAL DUTCH



ILLUSTRATION: HENK VAN RUITENBEEK

No naps at the office

In my country, it is very common to have a nap in the office after lunch, especially in summer. Apparently, people in the Netherlands don't have that custom, possibly because they only eat a simple sandwich instead of a hot meal, or because they drink a lot of coffee.

It took me quite a long time to get used to the Dutch custom of staying awake the whole day. And sometimes, after a crazy night or really exhausting meeting, I still want to nap at my table for a few minutes to get my energy back. But it never works here. Usually I am woken up by the polite but persistent sound of a voice calling my name: 'Danny, Danny, are you okay?' If I keep ignoring it, it is often followed by a tap on my shoulder until I respond. Those nice Dutch people are really surprised when I stare at them with red eyes and tell them I am just sleepy. I visited Japan once and saw with my own eyes that people there even sleep standing up in the metro. So I do think the people in the office could leave me alone while I sleep briefly at my desk. Disturbing my nap like that is actually making me not okay! I am considering putting a sticky note with the text 'sleeping' on my forehead next time. Mind you, they might then wake me up to ask: 'Why is there a paper on your forehead, and are you okay?' 🇨🇳 Ying – 'Danny' – Deng, a PhD candidate in Food Immunology, from China

It took me quite a long time to get used to the Dutch custom of staying awake the whole day

Do you have a nice anecdote about your experience of going Dutch? Send it in! Describe an encounter with Dutch culture in detail and comment on it briefly. 300 words max. Send it to resource@wur.nl and earn twenty-five euros and Dutch candy.