

'Teaching and research are suffering,' says WUR lecturer Michiel Köhne. ▶

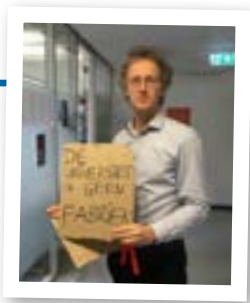


PHOTO: LUIK ZEGERS

## ‘LECTURERS ARE BEING BLEED DRY’

**With more than 700 reports of systematic overtime at Dutch universities, the protest movement WOinActie called in the Labour Inspectorate on 20 January. WUR lecturers Michiel Köhne and Bram Büscher, both active WOinActie members, support this move.**

Michiel Köhne, who lectures on the Anthropology of Law, is pleased by the fact that people are complaining about the problematic situation in academic work although he is shocked by the numbers. ‘Lecturers are being bled dry under the current system, and teaching and research are suffering as a result. It is important to expose this as in the final analysis it’s about people.’

### THE SYSTEM IS THE PROBLEM

Bram Büscher (professor of the Sociology of Development and Change) says that many universities have taken steps in the right direction in terms of individual support but he feels it is

the system that is really the problem. ‘Over the past 30 years, increasing demands have been made on academia and academics, while the money invested in universities on a per student basis has gone down. At the same time, neo-liberalism has gained the upper hand in the academic system: there is competition everywhere and you have to negotiate as if you are in a “market”. We are also becoming increasingly dependent on external funding. Over time, that has led to the current situation of huge pressure on a lot of academics, lots of overtime, all kinds of irregularities concerning publications, PhD factories, intense competition for grant applications with a reduced chance of success and so on.’ Büscher acknowledges that there are initiatives aimed at tackling these problems, such as the qualitative evaluation of research groups, but he thinks much more needs to be done. ‘And at the right structural, or systemic, level.’ **RLZ**