

## Lecturers protest about heavy workload

# 'WE ARE CONSTANTLY RUSHING'

**There were protests throughout the Netherlands last week against the increasing pressure of work at universities. Wageningen too saw protests as part of the WOinActie (Universities in Action) week. 'We are doing twice as much work with the same number of people as 10 years ago,' said protesting lecturer Gerard Verschoor.**

The nationwide protest movement WOinActie wants to reduce the pressure of work at Dutch universities so that students can get a better education. The movement wants the 'efficiency' cuts of 183 million euros to be scrapped and for government funding to be restored to the level in 2000 (which would mean 1.15 billion euros more every year).

Assistant professor of Sociology Verschoor ran round some of the university buildings with his students as a protest. 'We are always busy, we are constantly rush-



▲ Assistant Sociology professor Gemma van der Haar gives an open-air lecture as a light-hearted protest against workloads.

ing,' he told the students. 'You want a good education, but it's becoming increasingly difficult for us to deliver that.' WUR's lecturers are actually paying the price for their own success, says Verschoor. 'In the past 10 years, we have seen the number of students nearly double for the Master's pro-

grammes in Forest and Nature Conservation, International Development, and Development and Rural Innovation. In our chair group, we are doing twice as much work with the same number of people as 10 years ago. Teaching is suffering as a result.'

'The Netherlands has constant-

ly been cutting back on higher education over the past 20 to 30 years, whereas more and more people have been going on to university,' says Bram Büscher, professor of the Sociology of Development and Change. He and his colleagues are barely able to use their holiday allowance because that would leave them unable to get the work done. 'Of course science is a lot about your love of the subject but the current system allows less and less time for really profound study.' There wasn't even much time for organizing the protests. 'The FNV trade union gave us some help. They took over the coordination,' says Büscher.

'The situation is getting desperate at all Dutch universities,' continues the professor. 'We want to draw attention to that with these actions. This is the first step. But if it doesn't produce any results, WOinActie will turn to different kinds of protest, such as strikes.' **LZ**