

# Annual Report



# 2025



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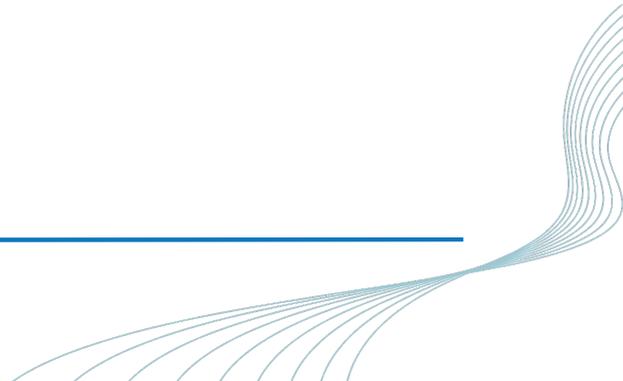


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# Foreword

Welcome! The fact that you are reading this shows that you are curious about the work of the WUR Council, and we appreciate that!

The Central Works Council (COR) and the Student Staff Council (SSC) are both central participatory councils, and together they meet as WUR Council. Although we continue to work on raising awareness, many students and staff members are still not fully familiar with the role and value of these participatory councils. This is a missed opportunity, as they play a crucial part in shaping WUR's policies by representing the voices of all students and employees.

Employee and student participation is a valuable right, one that is not available everywhere in the world. In the Netherlands, it is even a legal requirement for organisations with more than fifty employees. This legal foundation ensures that everyone within the organisation can exert influence on decision-making. It creates space for different perspectives, critical questions and constructive feedback. Through this dialogue, we aim to ensure that decisions are not only well-informed but also broadly supported.

In addition to the impact of global geopolitical developments on sustainability, (food) safety and the credibility of science, WUR is also confronted with a challenging domestic political climate, which has resulted in cutbacks in education and research. The complexity of this challenge requires collaboration between different roles, backgrounds and areas of expertise. The WUR Council demonstrates how shared decision-making can contribute to better outcomes for everyone. By working together, listening to one another and embracing diverse perspectives and viewpoints, we can navigate change with resilience and purpose.

This annual report offers an insight into the work of the WUR Council in 2025. This work was made possible by dedicated employees, students and PhD candidates. Various committees prepare the dossiers, after which they are discussed and handled within the WUR Council. The formal rights rest with the COR and the SSC. In addition, the WUR Council regularly provides unsolicited advice and contributes to ideas on developments in education and research.

We hope that this annual report not only informs you but also inspires you to actively contribute to employee and student participation within WUR. There are several ways to do so. You are very welcome at our [monthly open office hour](#), where we are happy to inform you and listen to your ideas. You can also, based on your expertise, join one of the WUR Council's committees as an external member.

In addition, a new term of office will begin in September 2026. This means that elections for all the decentral Works Councils and the central participatory councils will take place in June 2026, for which you can stand as a candidate. If you would like to stand as a candidate, you can find more information on [WUR's Support Portal](#).

We hope to see many new candidates from different parts of WUR who are eager to contribute to strong and inclusive employee and student participation.

Even if you do not stand as a candidate, your vote is of great importance. Together, we can shape the future of WUR.

*Blair van Pelt, chair SSC and WUR Council*  
*Paul Smeets, chair COR and vice-chair WUR Council*

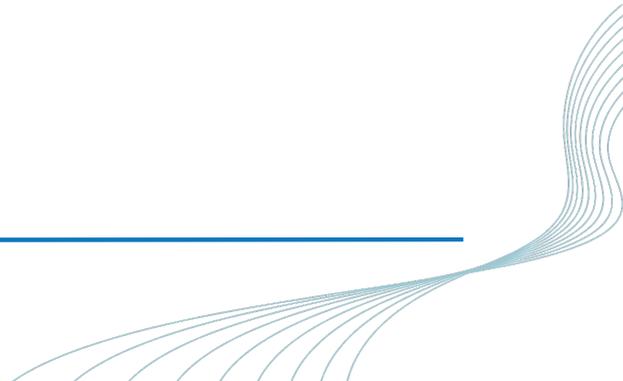


*Group picture of the WUR Council in November 2025*

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# What is the WUR Council?

Each Sciences Group has a Decentral Works Council representing Wageningen University and Stichting Wageningen Research employees working within that Sciences Group. There are also Decentral Works Councils for Wageningen Food Safety Research, Concern Staff and Facilities & Services. These decentral Works Councils consult with the Managing Directors of their respective organisational units.

WUR has three central participatory councils. The **Central Works Council (COR)** includes members delegated from the Decentral Works Councils of the five Sciences Groups, Wageningen Food Safety Research, Concern Staff and Facilities & Services. The **Student Council (SC)** and the **Student Staff Council (SSC)** are Wageningen University's central participatory councils.

The Student Council consists exclusively of students and has a one-year term of office. The Student Staff Council comprises five seats for Wageningen University employees from the Decentral Works Councils of the Sciences Groups (one per Sciences Group). The Wageningen University members of the COR delegate these members to the SSC. In addition, the SSC includes two directly chosen Wageningen University employees, two directly chosen PhD candidates, and at least six students delegated by the Student Council. Students and employees hold equal voting rights in the SSC.

The COR and SSC meet jointly as the WUR Council and consult with the Executive Board. Depending on the subject matter and relevant legal and/or regulatory requirements, the Executive Board or the Supervisory Board submit preliminary decisions to the COR and/or SSC for advice and/or approval. Each individual request for advice or approval is referred to as a dossier. The section ***Dossier overview 2025*** in this annual report lists the dossiers handled by the WUR Council in 2025.

In addition to providing advice and approval, the COR and SSC may also take the initiative to offer unsolicited advice to the Executive Board on topics they consider important. Various documents are also shared with the COR and/or SSC for information.

# Dossier overview 2025

In 2025, the WUR Council worked on **twenty-six** dossiers: **thirteen** requiring approval, **nine** requiring advice (including three from the Supervisory Board), and **four** involving informal advice or a written response. A selection of key dossiers is highlighted below, presented in no particular order.

## Austerity measures WUR

Cuts to higher education, declining student numbers, reductions at the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, Food Security and Nature, and rising costs have resulted in a budget cutting task for WUR amounting to a structural 80 million euros in 2028. In May 2025, the Executive Board took the preliminary decision to adopt the WUR Austerity Plan 2025–2027. This preliminary decision was submitted to the COR and the SSC for advice.

For the WUR Council, this was a challenging dossier, as it involved far-reaching measures that directly affect staff members and would, in some cases, even lead to job losses. In response to the request of the WUR Council, a version exempted from the confidential parts, was shared with all WUR employees. The plan focuses primarily on downsizing and savings within the support departments, which together must result in a structural cost reduction of approximately 28 million euros.

On 27 June 2025, the COR and SSC issued extensive advice on the plan. After the Executive Board approved the plan, this advice was shared with the constituency: [Austerity Plan / Bezuinigingsplan: advice from the WUR Council \(COR/SSC\)](#).

On 15 October 2025, the COR and SSC received the Executive Board's preliminary decision to adopt the Implementation plans of the WUR 2025-2027 Austerity Plan for Facilities & Services and the staff departments Education & Student Affairs, Corporate Communication & Marketing, Corporate Finance & Control, Corporate Governance & Legal Services, Corporate Human Resources, Corporate Strategy & Accounts, and Co-creating Value & Impact. This preliminary decision was submitted to the COR for advice and to the SSC for reaction.

The Implementation plans contain concrete measures for staff reductions and cost savings within each department. As with the Austerity Plan itself, an ad hoc committee was established, consisting of members of the COR and SSC, supplemented by external members from the Decentral Works Councils of Facilities & Services and Concern Staff. In 2026, the COR and SSC will issue their advice on these Implementation plans.

In September 2025, the Executive Board took the preliminary decision to discontinue the BSc Communication & Life Sciences (BCL) programme, due to the low number of enrolments in recent years. This preliminary decision was submitted to the SSC for approval.

Following the consultation meeting with the Executive Board, the SSC concluded that discontinuing the BCL at that moment was not responsible, as a clear and fully developed phaseout strategy was lacking. The SSC therefore decided not to approve the preliminary decision unless a number of specific conditions were met.

After the Executive Board had met part of these conditions, the SSC approved the preliminary decision to discontinue the BCL, on the understanding that the remaining conditions would be fulfilled at a later stage. These conditions have been placed on the long-term agenda of the consultation meetings with the Executive Board.

The SSC expects continued transparency from the Executive Board, including regular updates on the progress made in meeting the conditions. In addition, regular consultation moments have been scheduled between the SSC and the BSc Portfolio Steering Committee to closely monitor progress.

### **Education Funding Tool**

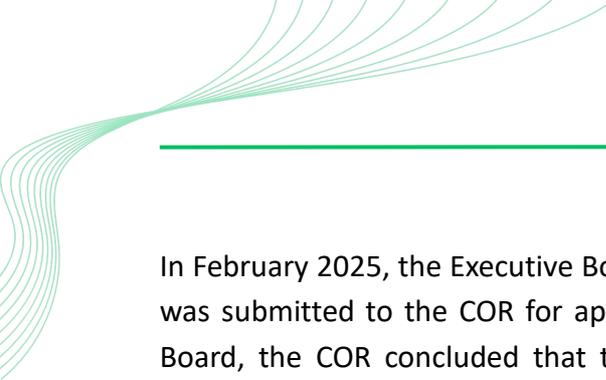
As part of the Academic Career Framework, an Education Funding Tool was developed to visualise and calculate the number of teaching hours based on uniform standards across departments and career paths. The tool is intended to address the lack of transparency in the distribution of teaching workload, support conversations between Chair Holders and employees, and enable responsible planning based on both financial resources and workload.

Despite its relevance and the Executive Board's earlier commitment related to the COR's approval with conditions in 2024 (Academic Career Framework evaluation indicators), the Education Funding Tool had not yet been formally implemented or put into use. The WUR Council therefore exercised its right of initiative to request clarification on the status of the tool, its ownership, and the strategy and timeline for implementation.

In response, the Executive Board indicated that the Academic Career Framework Steering Committee will review the Education Funding Tool and discuss how it can be made available.

### **Instrument Risk Inventarisation and Evaluation psychosocial workload**

WUR is legally required to identify occupational risks and to draw up a plan to prevent them. Research by the Netherlands Labour Authority indicated that WUR has shortcomings in the area of psychosocial workload. To address this, the Executive Board developed an instrument for the Risk Inventarisation and Evaluation of psychosocial workload (RI&E PSA), enabling psychosocial workload to be measured in a uniform way across the organisation.



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In February 2025, the Executive Board's preliminary decision to approve this RI&E PSA instrument was submitted to the COR for approval. Following the consultation meeting with the Executive Board, the COR concluded that too many uncertainties remained, meaning that the effective application of the RI&E PSA was not sufficiently ensured. The COR therefore decided not to approve the preliminary decision unless specific conditions were met.

After the Executive Board implemented improvements, including better alignment of the tool with the action plans at central and decentral level, and the explicit description of the evaluations to be carried out, the COR approved with the Executive Board's preliminary decision to approve this RI&E PSA instrument.

### **Next MyProjects**

In March 2025, the Executive Board took the preliminary decision to replace MyProjects and BAPS with a standard package through a tender process. The aim is to implement this new system, with the working title Next MyProjects, before 1 January 2027. This preliminary decision was submitted to the COR for advice.

Following the consultation meeting with the Executive Board, the COR recognised the necessity of replacing the two existing systems with one integrated system. The COR advised offering training sessions for employees prior to the system's launch and requested that the communication plan be shared with the COR so that it could provide input.

The Executive Board adopted this advice and sent the communication plan to the COR at the end of December 2025. In 2026, the COR will review the communication plan and provide additional input where necessary.

### **Digital Information Services**

In October 2025, the Executive Board took the preliminary decision to establish a new organisational unit: Digital Information Services (DIS). This new organisational unit will be created by merging existing support departments in the areas of digitalisation and information services within WUR. This preliminary decision was submitted to the COR for advice. In December 2025, the COR issued its advice on this confidential dossier.

### Principles of collaboration

The [Principles of collaboration](#) are intended as a tool to support staff in assessing collaborative partnerships. Following concerns raised by staff about both the practical applicability of the document and the underlying ethical standard, the WUR Council exercised its right of initiative. The WUR Council asked questions about the responsibilities surrounding the document, its status, and the inconsistencies that had been identified.

During the consultation meeting with the Executive Board on 10 December 2025, the public gallery was well attended. In this meeting, the Executive Board explained its own perspective, which places strong emphasis on the individual responsibility of staff. An explicit exception for the fossil industry was also mentioned, which the Executive Board indicated should be evaluated. These responses prompted broader questions within the WUR Council regarding the purpose, scope, and effectiveness of the Principles of collaboration.

In 2026, a technical meeting will be scheduled to obtain further clarification. If necessary, this meeting will result in unsolicited advice to the Executive Board.

### Position Paper and WU budget cycle

Every year, the SSC prepares a Position Paper outlining its vision on the Wageningen University budget for the coming year, which is then shared with the Executive Board. For this document, input was gathered from various Decentral Works Councils and Programme Committees.

In 2025, the SSC highlighted the following points of attention for the WU budget for 2026 (in no particular order):

1. Quality of education and research
2. Workload
3. Well-being of students and employees
4. Student recruitment
5. Student experience

Some of these points were incorporated by the Executive Board into the Framework Letter 2026, which forms the basis for the WU budget, and subsequently into the final WU budget of 2026. The main lines of this WU budget were submitted to the SSC for approval in November 2025.

Following the consultation meeting with the Executive Board, the SSC decided to approve the WU budget for 2026, subject to a number of conditions.

## Other involvement

In addition to the dossiers that were received for advice and/or approval, the WUR Council also received a large number of dossiers for information. In 2025, this occurred **forty-eight times**.

Through, among other things, annual reports from HR Management, the Occupational Health & Service provider, Social Work, the Confidential Counsellors, the Ombudsperson, and the financial and personnel quarterly and tertial reports, the WUR Council remains informed about a wide range of developments within the organisation.

Other examples include the decision to close the educational facility in Atlas and the new ten phase plan on dealing with transgressive behaviour, which is intended to provide guidance for supervisors when dealing with signals and reports of such behaviour. The WUR Council also provided input of the employee monitor that will be distributed among all staff in January 2026.

**Table 1. Other dossiers**

Dossier	Rights	Who
Changes in WU's Administrative and Management Regulations (BBR WU) 2025	Approval	SSC
WU self-evaluation (ITK)	Informal advice	SSC
Hora Finita R&O meetings for PhD candidates	Advice	COR
Changed teaching assignment for Soil Physics and Land Management	Approval	SSC
Programme of Requirements and conditions of award of new Occupational Health & Service provider	Approval	COR
Name change BSc programme Soil, Water, and Atmosphere (BSW) and the MSc programme Earth and Environment (MEE) to BSc and MSc Earth System Sciences	Unsollicited advice	SSC
Revised complaint regulation undersirable behaviour	Approval	COR & SC
Pre-employment screening policy	Approval	COR
WR joining the UNL Whistleblowers Scheme 2025	Approval	COR
Resource Editorial Statute	Advice	COR & SC
Reappointment Rens Buchwaldt as member of the Executive Board with the Finance, Business & Services portfolio (confidential)	Advice	COR & SC
Appointment profile new member of the Executive Board with the Finance, Business & Services portfolio (confidential)	Advice	COR-WR, OR-WU, SC
Appointment of the new Executive Board member with the Finance, Business & Services portfolio (confidential)	Advice	COR & SC
Change in function profile HR Together	Advice	COR
Proposed solution for the VOICE programme	Advice	COR
Education Quality Assurance policy 2025	Approval	SSC

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# Outlook

In addition to reflecting on the past year, the WUR Council also looks ahead to 2026. In that year, we will issue advice on the Implementation Plans of the WUR 2025–2027 Austerity Plan for Facility & Services and the staff departments ESA, CC&M, CF&C, CHR, CSA and CVI. In doing so, we will be confronted with the far-reaching implications these plans will have for WUR.

We also live in a world in which technological developments, particularly in the field of artificial intelligence, are advancing at a pace that is almost impossible to keep up with. According to the WUR Council, this makes it essential for WUR to develop a strategy that is flexible enough to adapt to rapid developments in this field. We look forward to contributing to this important topic.

In early 2026, the Netherlands Labour Authority will visit WUR once again, this time focusing on psychosocial workload. This visit follows an earlier inspection. Alongside other parties within WUR, the WUR Council will engage in dialogue with the Labour Authority to share our concerns and our perspective on psychosocial workload within WUR. We look forward to the Authority's findings and recommendations, so that together we can further improve the situation in this area.

In 2026, we will also welcome significantly more new members than in the past year. The term of office for the members of the Decentral Works Councils (2023–2026) will come to an end. Elections for all Decentral Works Councils will therefore take place in June 2026, after which each council will delegate several members to the COR.

In addition, 2026 marks the triennial elections for the two directly chosen staff members of Wageningen University in the SSC. As every year, elections will also be held for the two directly chosen PhD candidates in the SSC and for the members of the Student Council.

Curious to know whether employee and student participation suits you? You can find more information about the elections and how to stand as a candidate on [WUR's Support Portal](#).



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# Other notable events in 2025

On 24 June 2025, the final consultation meeting took place with Rens Buchwaldt, who served as a member of the Executive Board from 2017 until June 2025, with the portfolio Finance, Business & Services. Unfortunately, Rens had to step down from his position for medical reasons. The members of the WUR Council would like to express their appreciation for his many years of dedication and the pleasant collaboration.

His successor, Peter Ploegsma, attended the first consultation meeting with the WUR Council for the first time on 18 November 2025. He was immediately thrown in at the deep end, as this meeting was entirely devoted to the WU budget. The WUR Council looks forward to a constructive collaboration with the new member of the Executive Board and wishes him every success in his role.

In addition, on 14 May 2025 the hundredth consultation meeting with the Executive Board took place. While some saw this as a moment to look back, others chose to focus mainly on the many years of employee and student participation yet to come. Onwards to two hundred!

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