



WAGENINGEN
Young ACADEMY

Annual Report
2018-2019

Authors:

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The Wageningen Young Academy is an independent platform that brings together enthusiastic, ambitious young Tenure Track academics at Wageningen University and Research. Our mission is to inspire current and future scientists, act as an advisor in scientific and political debates at the University, create links with (inter)national inspiring eminent scientists and communicate science to society.

This report outlines our activities from the last academic year (September 2018 - December 2019).

Members

In the table below an overview of the WYA members at the beginning and end of the reporting period is given.

	Total	Gender		Nationality		Science Group				
		M	F	NL	non-NL	AFSG	ASG	ESG	PSG	SSG
1-Sep-18	19	10	9	13	6	4	4	5	2	4
1-Sep-19	24	10	24	15	9	5	5	5	3	6

Note: Two of our members (Michael Seidl and Roy van Beek) left during the reporting period.

Current members:

Maarten Smulders	AFSG	Franzel van Duijnhoven	AFSG
Bart Pollux	ASG	Ingrid van der Laan - Luijkx	ESG
Kevin Matson	ESG	Bernice Bovenkerk	SSG
Marnix Medema	PSG	Yann de Mey	SSG
Jessica Duncan	SSG	Reindert Nijland	ASG
Betina Piqueras Fiszman	SSG	Pariya Behrouzi	PSG
Louis de Smet	AFSG	Ingrid Boas	SSG
Lisa Becking	ASG	Mehdi Habibi	AFSG
Sylvia Brugman	ASG	Sabrina Simon	PSG
Gert-Jan Steeneveld	ESG	Maryna Stokal	ESG
Cathelijne Stoof	ESG	Maarten Voors	SSG
Diana Machado de Sousa	AFSG	Hannah van Zanten	ASG



Retreat


It is our tradition that in September we start the academic year with a retreat to prepare ourselves for the new academic year. During this retreat we discuss current and future university policy and strategic plans as well as plan our new activities. Next to this we use the time to get to know each other to increase the social coherence and to foster interdisciplinary collaboration. During the 2018 retreat we discussed the 2019-2022 WUR strategic plan. Just prior to the retreat a meeting was held with the Board on the 80% finished version of the document that was sent to us for feedback. We made several comments to improve the document and were part of the WUR-wide focus groups on the different themes. We voiced our concerns and ideas on the following different topics:

1. Granting pressure
2. Teaching load and student numbers and selection
3. Diversity
4. Investment themes: Digital twins, Protein transition, Connected circularity
5. WUR ecological footprint and sustainability

Next our activities were discussed in light of our mission statements. How do we engage the Tenure Track community (grant writing, portfolio writing for BAC and UTQ/BKO) and how do we engage with the university in general (sit on working groups, investment theme discussions, public lectures, book clubs). A plan was drafted for focus of the coming year. Visibility is key.

On the same page: WYA book club, Menno Schilthuizen: 'Darwin comes to town'

Following the success of last years 'On the same page' event with Vamba Sharif, the 'On the same page'-working group of WYA invited Menno Schilthuizen, biologist at Naturalis in Leiden, to talk about his new book: 'Darwin comes to town' at the 25th of October. In this book Menno Schilthuizen investigates the adaptation of wild species to our urban environment. The event held in Impulse was attended by some 100 people and his enthusiastic presentation was followed by a very lively discussion.



National collaboration Local Young Academies and National Young Academy

In an attempt to organize the young academies of different universities, the University of Groningen took the initiative to invite representatives of the local and the national YA to Amersfoort. During this meeting it became clear that there is a lot of variation between universities. YA Groningen is very focused on early career researchers. Utrecht just does a lot of 'cool projects' (outreach and science, based on internal selection), had a joint project with Utrecht city council on prejudice. Some universities pay the YA to hire PhD students which are then shared between members of the YA, other YAs have a smaller budget. Our budget (18.000 euro) is in the bottom 25% compared to the other young academies. A lot of experiences were shared at this inspiring meeting. At this meeting it was decided to hold these meetings twice yearly to learn from each other and coordinate with the National Young Academy, to take joint action on topics we feel need to be addressed in all Universities or concerning government policies.

Embedding Guarantee NWO grants

There were concerns raised last year about the way the embedding guarantee for Vidi grants were handled. We will continue to monitor this process and play a role in increasing the writing support, communication to applicants and transparency of the procedures. Also in the light of the plans of NWO (internal evaluation first before submitting to NWO).

Visibility

The visibility working group made a flyer to distribute throughout the university. This flyer will be updated every year to include pictures of our new members and showcase our latest activities. The aim is to have them included in the Tenure Track welcome packages. We recognize the need to work more on Twitter and Resource exposure for the coming year.

Diversity working group

The diversity working group decided to organize a sticker campaign that will launch in October 2019, on 'coming out day'. The "You are Welcome Here" campaign seeks to increase visibility, to identify multiple points of access to LBGT support services, and to create a more welcoming campus environment.


The campaign asks WUR faculty and staff to consider posting a "You are Welcome Here" sign in a visible location. By posting the sign, individuals are affirming that they:

1. Will avoid heterosexist assumptions, confront homophobia, and use inclusive language ("partner" or "spouse," rather than "boyfriend" or "wife");
2. Believe that our campus is enriched by the inclusion of LBGT people; and
3. Will refer individuals to appropriate resources.

In connection with the "You are Welcome Here" campaign, Wageningen Young Academy, with the support of SHOUT, has set up a website where people can find more resources. The Campaign is built upon similar "Safe Space" programs that have been implemented in schools, universities, companies, and communities across the United States and elsewhere.

Near the end of the 2018-2019 academic year the diversity working group began investigating WUR's policy on pregnancy and parental leave, particularly in relation to the Tenure Track. This work will continue into the next academic year also in collaboration with the GenderSmart project.





New members recruitment

In December/January new members could apply for a position at the WYA. We are very happy to welcome: Pariya Behrouzi (PSG), Ingrid Boas (ESG), Mehdi Habibi (AFSG), Sabrina Simon (PSG), Maryna Strokak (ESG), Maarten Voors (SSG) and Hannah van Zanten (ASG) to the team as of April 2019.

Welcome new members meeting: General Assembly


Yearly we welcome our new members and say goodbye to 'older' members (membership has a 5 year term). On the 4th of April, 2019 the new members introduced themselves via pitches and were welcomed by the group. Maarten Smulders stepped down as chair and Louis de Smet took up the position of co-chair together with Jessica Duncan. Sylvia Brugman stayed on as secretary.

PlanS

Some members were involved in the discussions around Plan S. Louis de Smet provided a review of Open Access at WUR during our May meeting, which was also attended by the Rector. Approach of Plan S: As of January 1st 2020 scientific publications resulting from research funded by public grants (including NWO) will need to publish in open access only journals. We pay careful attention to the development of this long process related to open access in science.

Van Rijn report

In May, the committee van Rijn that evaluated the funding of Universities and higher education institutes shared their report with the government. We are happy that the report acknowledges that the work pressure is high, and that there is too much competition for grants. Next to this the committee confirms the increased pressure on universities and its staff by the increasing number of students and competition between universities for students. However the van Rijn committee was instructed to propose budget neutral ideas. Therefore



it was decided to redistribute the money. 4TU's get extra (WUR gets almost 5% extra) at the expense of the alpha and gamma Universities. A statement on the multidisciplinary nature of all of our research and the fact that we need alpha and gamma as well as beta-sciences has been written by the Young Academy in collaboration with the Local YAs.

Student evaluations

We have been in close contact with Arnold Bregt about education evaluations. The Educational Board proposed a new questionnaire for the upcoming year. Arnold Bregt is of the opinion that these student evaluations are meant to improve teaching and not to assess Tenure Trackers. He also suggested that teachers should always hold their own evaluations alongside the central one. Still BACs are using these metrics to evaluate Tenure Trackers, so action needs to be taken in the Tenure Track working group.

Finding answers together (FAT)

These FAT meetings are held as a soundboard for the Concern Raad. WYA was asked to join a FAT meeting on 1) Increased Mobility/Diversity/Rejuvenation of the Workforce and 2) Future collaboration between WUR, Utrecht University and TU Eindhoven. This is an idea of the Rector, following examples from abroad. Formal start is in January 2020. Some funding may also become available for e.g. collaborative projects. Three topics are prioritized: Molecular Life Science, Artificial Intelligence and Education. One of our members is involved in the molecular life science topic.

WUR is part of forming an Alliance with TU/e, UU and UMCU. There will be a big Launch even the 11th of March. The YAs of these universities have been asked to come up with big ideas (High risk, high gain involving all or multiple universities) in the areas of Health, Food, Energy and Circular Society. The first meeting with all the YAs was the 20th of November to brainstorm on the possible themes. From that time onwards the Boards of the YAs have been in contact to provide the rectors with an advise on how to proceed.



11-12 June Visit Rana Dajani

One of the highlights of this year was the visit of Prof. Rana Dajani organized 11 and 12 of June. During lunch, a book discussion was held in impulse for which e-books of her novel 'Five scarves' were provided prior to this meeting. About 70-80 people joined this book discussion. In the evening Prof. Dajani gave a second lecture at which the attendance was around 50 people. Professor Dajani is an enthusiastic and inspiring speaker and talked about her journey as a scientist, Muslim, woman, activist and mother. We had a very nice discussion after her presentation in which several female Muslim students spoke up and made us realize how much more we need to focus on diversity and inclusivity at our university and how role models can change the atmosphere. Trouw, one of our national newspapers had a two-page interview and report of the meeting. The next day, we arranged a visit for Prof. Dajani to the Pantarijn secondary school in Wageningen which was a great success and led to a lot of interaction. During the dinner we had with Prof. Dajani a seed was planted for a collaborative project. Several weeks after the event one of our new members (Maarten Voors) actually submitted a grant together with Prof. Dajani.

Looking back at 2018-2019 we can conclude we had a very active and inspiring year in which we as WYA again learned and professionalized further. We are looking forward to the next year! Yet there is still work to do, sharpening our interventions and participation in strategic committees and enhancing visibility. We are up for the challenge.

WYA Board

Jessica Duncan, Louis de Smet/Maarten Smulders, Sylvia Brugman