The Executive Board's reflections on the Employee Wellbeing Survey 2025

At the University of Twente, we foster an inclusive community where everyone has the opportunity to learn, grow within agreed frameworks and feel at home. We value the differences that make us stronger and we treat one other fairly and with respect. Our open culture means that we hold each other accountable for expectations and results while remaining receptive to change. In doing so, we create a university where diversity is embraced and every employee feels recognised and valued.

The wellbeing of our employees is of great importance: people make UT, and the way we work, collaborate and lead strongly shapes how wellbeing is experienced. That is why we remain committed to strengthening everyone's wellbeing. The wellbeing survey is an essential and transparent cornerstone of this effort.

The survey clearly shows that recent developments – marked by financial challenges, organisational changes, and broader societal trends – have affected our employees' sense of security and confidence in the university. At the same time, we see encouraging developments, particularly in terms of social safety and the willingness to speak up. We greatly appreciate the high response rate and the constructive engagement of employees in sharing their views. This provides a strong foundation for reflection as well as for learning and improving together as an organisation.

Trust

We see that financial challenges, reorganisations, discussions about UT's future and wider political developments have a direct impact on the wellbeing of our people. These developments affect employees deeply and at times even personally. It is understandable that they cause stress, uncertainty and a decline in trust. We take these signals seriously.

The survey makes clear that strengthening trust requires predictable, transparent and meticulous action. We are therefore intensifying our efforts by investing in transparent and predictable decision-making, establishing clear roles and frameworks and harmonising our ways of working. Leadership at all levels is essential. We are committed to fostering a culture in which managers articulate expectations, make them discussable, agree on them together and follow up on them, always in a way grounded in trust and clarity.

At the same time, we acknowledge that trust is not built on structure alone but also on how we interact with one another. That is why we continue to prioritise open and timely communication and restoring working relationships. Step by step, we will keep strengthening the stability, clarity and sense of connection that are needed to build trust.

Social safety and connectedness

Social safety is a fundamental building block of a healthy work and learning environment. Despite a decline in trust in the organisation, employees report higher levels of social safety and a greater willingness to speak up. We see this as an important and positive development. At the same time, that does not automatically increase motivation, strengthen connectedness or create more mental space.

As the survey shows, social safety and connectedness are not self-evident; they require continuous attention. We therefore continue to invest in visible and accessible support,

providing a structure that is both trusted and transparent. We also remain committed to a working environment in which differences are discussed with respect and professionalism and in which tensions or conflicts are addressed thoroughly and fairly.

Collaboration, strong relationships and meaningful interactions with colleagues are essential prerequisites for wellbeing. Facilitating these interactions and fostering an inclusive work culture require sustained, deliberate attention. One way we do this is by creating space for team dialogues in which expectations, work processes and collaboration can be openly discussed. We also provide opportunities for reflection and focused work and recovery, enabling people to stay balanced and perform their responsibilities with clarity and concentration.

Leadership plays a connecting role in all of this. We encourage leadership that acts fairly, appreciatively and with care. Finally, we recognise that interpersonal connections are an essential part of a sustainable work environment. We therefore continue to foster a culture in which people can connect, support one another and feel jointly responsible for a professional, sustainable and inclusive workplace.

Workload

Many employees experience increasing, and in some cases structural, workload, directly influenced by organisational changes, administrative burdens and continuous performance pressure. Although teams continue to support one another, this is not always enough to maintain balance. We are encouraged by the fact that many employees take ownership in reducing workload and apply personal strategies such as planning, prioritising and setting boundaries. At the same time, we recognise that these efforts are not sufficient when structural causes persist.

Structural workload decreases when an organisation as a whole provides greater clarity, predictability and coherence. The harmonisation of faculties plays an important role in this. By organising processes, working methods and support structures more uniformly, dependency on local customisation is reduced, as is variation in how tasks, expectations and responsibilities are defined.

In the Focus in Support programme, we are also taking steps to make support services more stable, accessible and consistent. This enables employees to receive better support in their work and spend less time on administrative and organisational requirements. Managers play a crucial role by defining boundaries, giving direction and guiding teams in making realistic agreements about tasks and pace.

Leadership

The wellbeing survey highlights the fact that leadership plays a decisive role in how employees experience change and perceive wellbeing. In an organisation in transition, effective leadership requires clarity, predictability and the ability to guide people through change. To support this, we continue to invest in leadership that builds trust, takes responsibility and communicates carefully about choices, dilemmas and next steps.

The UT Leadership Framework reinforces this: leaders are responsible for creating social and psychological safety, ensuring transparent communication and fostering an environment in which talent can grow. We are therefore committed to further embedding this framework. We

are building on it by strengthening targeted leadership development, with specific attention to inclusion, social safety, effective communication, respect, recognition and appreciation.

In addition, we are intensifying mentoring and career guidance as well as supporting managers in recognising and responding promptly to signals of vulnerability and wellbeing.

Lastly

We express our appreciation to all employees who contributed to the Employee Wellbeing Survey 2025. The high participation rate and willingness to share experiences and signals underline the strong engagement within our community and provide an important foundation for reflection and improvement.

The survey shows that recent developments – marked by financial challenges, organisational changes and broader societal developments – have had a noticeable impact on trust and the sense of security among employees. At the same time, we also see positive developments, particularly in social safety and the willingness to speak up.

The results of this survey serve as an important compass for further improvements. We will use the insights provided by it to follow up on existing initiatives and, where necessary, to take additional measures. The survey also confirms the importance of continuing our efforts to harmonise faculties, processes and working methods, as well as strengthening support structures and facilitating collaboration within and between teams.

We will also continue to invest in leadership development in line with the UT Leadership Framework, with explicit attention to social safety, clear communication and supporting employees in their work and development.

Together, we will continue to build an environment in which everyone feels safe, valued and connected and in which we can confidently shape the future of the University of Twente.