

## **Decentralised employee participation at the University of Twente**

The Reinforcement of Control Act came into effect in 2010. With this law, participation in higher education has been reinforced on a number of points. Recently, the position of participation has been further strengthened with the Reinforcement of the Administrative Power of Educational Institutions Act that came into effect on January 1, 2017. To strengthen 'governance' in the field of education, the legislator has thus better equipped and positioned participation as a 'countervailing power'. Due to recent legislation, education committees have formally become a representative body with the right of approval of part of the OER. At the same time, the University Council has been given the right of approval on the general outline of the budget. With this, the legislator wants to encourage employee participation bodies to have a say in decisions about the use of resources that are invested in the quality of education by abolishing the basic grant (resources released through the student loan system are therefore linked to quality agreements at institutional level).

The Executive Board has drawn up a memorandum on decentralised participation at the University of Twente: 'Exploratory memorandum on possibilities for strengthening decentralised participation'. The reason for drawing up this memorandum is the request from the University Council to also give the faculty councils the right of approval on the general outlines of the budget. The memorandum also lists other aspects that have to do with strengthening the Faculty Councils' position and can, in the eyes of the University Council, serve as a good starting point for further elaboration.

To this end, a broadly composed committee has been put to work, which makes things concrete. The 7 points for attention (from the above memorandum) can be mentioned in the task of the committee, whereby the actions that have already been taken (such as regular consultation of the University Council with decentralised councils) obviously do not require further attention. The points for attention are: the cooperation of the various councils, the provision of information at the University of Twente, the training of the members of the decentralised participation, the support, the facilities, the roles and powers of the decentralised participation and the term of office and the reflective principle of the employee participation bodies.

Possible actions that can be taken by the committee:

1. Identifying a list of topics falling under basic information for the proper functioning of faculty councils, service councils and education committees. The director is then expected to provide this information to the board without being asked to do so.
2. Taking stock of the facilities (such as secretarial support, training, meeting space and catering) of the decentralised councils and establishing a minimum package of facilities on which the council can depend.
3. Inventory of the financial and/or time compensation that members of decentralised councils receive for their work and determining a minimum for this.
4. Developing a suitable training offer for faculty councils, both UT-specific (budget, working conditions, etc.) as well as suitable external training.
5. Formulating what the "general outline of the budget" means decentrally so as to include the power of approval in the University Council regulations.

The University Council believes that reinforcement of decentralised employee participation is necessary in view of the increased administrative effectiveness of faculty boards, and agrees with the aforementioned memorandum. The University Council advises to put a broadly composed committee to work. The professionalisation of decentralised participation contributes to the quality and support of decision-making at the unit level.