



Statement of support for *WO in Actie* – 10 July 2019 – Young Academy Groningen

We, the members of the Young Academy Groningen, would like to express our deepest concern about the proposed reallocations of university funding from ‘alpha’ and ‘gamma’ to ‘beta’, as recommended in the ‘*Commissie van Rijn: Wissels om*’ report.

Although we understand that the natural sciences and technology fields structurally need additional funding to remain internationally competitive, which holds true no less for other disciplines, we fully disagree with the proposed solution of reallocating money to these fields at the expense of the social and medical sciences and humanities. A country that claims to strive for a leading ‘knowledge economy’ should invest in its academic education and research, rather than prune budgets by not correcting for rises in prices.

We call upon everyone to join the *WO in Actie* initiatives for the following reasons:

- 1. It is unacceptable that in times of economic growth, 14 out of 18 universities will not see any increase in their funding. Even worse: the reallocation will force some universities to perform drastic budget cuts. In particular, the University of Groningen (UG) faces an expected budget cut of €9.649.000 in the year 2023.**
- 2. The proposed reallocation of money will undermine multi-disciplinary collaboration between and within universities (urgently needed to tackle a multitude of societal challenges) and will further increase work pressure for (young) researchers and staff.**

Van Rijn accurately highlights that the current way of distributing money is based on the ability of universities to attract large numbers of students, which leads to competition between universities and therefore forms a *perverse incentive*. Implementation of the Van Rijn recommendations, however, will exacerbate the problems. Implementation will lead to budget cuts for general universities such as the UG. These cuts will go at the expense of either (a) the breadth of academic disciplines represented at those universities, or (b) the alpha-gamma disciplines only. In the first scenario, pressure on quality of teaching and research will rise across the board, and researchers in the natural sciences at general universities will face unequal competition with their colleagues at technical universities, which will see their budgets go up rather than down. In the second scenario, quality of research and teaching in the affected disciplines will suffer a significant blow as work pressure will increase even further. We want to stress that scientific and technological advancements cannot be properly developed and implemented without the humanities and social and medical sciences.

- 3. We are astonished that parliament accepted the proposed measures based on a wholly unclear picture of the budget reallocations involved. The scenario presented by the Minister is radically different from the calculations made by the universities (amongst others).**

The Minister argues that large sums of money will be invested and that everyone will profit, but at the same time she acknowledges that she does not know how the proposed measures will work out within the universities. The universities, in contrast, say that they do know how the budget reallocations turn out: instead of the net result being a profitable situation for all, immense budget cuts lie ahead for



most universities. We are genuinely disappointed that decisions with such grave consequences, which will result in a loss of many FTE's, further increases in work pressure for academics, and a decrease in the quality of education, are taken on such shaky grounds.

For these reasons, we support the proposed *WO in Actie* initiatives and will join the strike on September 2nd, the True Opening of the Academic Year. We recommend that all academics subscribe to the *WO in Actie* [email list](#), join the action, and share this information with their colleagues.

The Young Academy Groningen

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