

WAGENINGEN GRADUATES TAKE LONGER TO FIND JOBS

- Crisis now seems to affect Wageningen students too.
- More permanent contracts.

It is taking Wageningen Master's graduates longer to find a job these days than it used to. This emerges from the data collected by the Wageningen alumni network KLV, which sends a questionnaire to students when they graduate. In

the academic year 2012/13, 48 percent of the students already had a job in the bag when they received their degrees. The year before that figure was 56 percent. The decrease suggests that the economic downturn is affecting the job market for Wageningen graduates too, although they are still faring better than graduates from other institutes of higher education.

One striking change is that students who did find a job were more often offered a permanent contract: 27 percent, as opposed to 18 percent the year before. That is not what you would expect in a time when competition on the job market is hotting up. It may be related to the fact that a larger proportion of graduates are landing government jobs, for which permanent contracts are offered


more readily than in the private sector. The number of graduates starting their own business has almost halved: from 5 to 3 percent.

Wageningen's graduates live up to its international reputation, the figures show. Of the Dutch nationals among the graduates, almost one quarter go straight off to work overseas. Of the foreign students, 14 percent stay on in the Netherlands.  RG

in brief

>> STUDENT

Free public transport

Students are probably going to enjoy free public transport for another year, confirm sources at the Higher Education Press Bureau HOP. It would now be very difficult to make cuts to the student pass as early as 2016. The contract between the government and the transport companies stipulates two years' warning of termination, and this would have to be announced before 1 January. So if minister Bussemaker has not found an alternative to the current student pass by New Year, the chances of termination on 1 January 2016 look very slim indeed. And if Bussemaker does reach an agreement with the transport companies, she still has to push her plans through in parliament.  HOP

>> BIOLOGY

Nature Today

Biologist Arnold van Vliet is working on an international version of the Dutch Nature Calendar. His idea for the site, Nature Today, won him a prize of 15,000 euros starting capital from the Climate

Adaptation Business Challenge, a competition run by Knowledge for Climate and Climate-KIC. Van Vliet's aim with Nature Today is to make knowledge about nature accessible to a wider public. 'There is so much going on outside in the natural world. Researchers have fantastic data but they don't reach the general public.' Whether and when the site will go online is not clear. Van Vliet is using the 15,000 euros for more market research.  RK

>> RESEARCH

Eighty billion

After endless negotiations, they've sorted it in Brussels at last: the European multi-annual budget is approved. Almost 80 billion euros has been allocated to the Horizon 2020 research programme: 30 percent more than in the last seven years. Originally, the European parliament wanted to raise the amount to 100 billion but the compromise arrived at – after a tug-of-war lasting two and a half years – is 80 billion. There is a struggle going on in Europe between 'cows' and 'knowledge'. Some countries benefit strongly from agricultural subsidies and funds for poor regions. Wealthier countries, on the other hand, see knowledge and innovation as the way out of the crisis and would prefer to spend their money that way. In the last few years Wageningen UR has been relatively successful in bringing in European projects.  HOP




KEES VAN VELUW <<

Tree

On the longest dog walk of the day I pass a felled tree trunk. A whopper! If I stand in front of the trunk, which lies flat on the ground, it comes up to my chest. I count the rings: 180. One hundred and eighty? That means it was born around 1830. Which idiot chopped it down? This tree was here when the whole area was still health. When my great-great-grandmother was alive. Whoever would take it into their head to murder an ancient living being like that? There is only one thing worse, to me, and that is murdering a human being. I can still remember how shocked I always was as a child when I saw a chopped down tree. I only have to hear a chainsaw to get angry. Why? The penny dropped, way back, during a lecture by emeritus professor Roelof Oldeman. He explained that theoretically a tree never dies of its own accord. The cambium can live for ages. A tree dies because the water table drops, or because of a flood, a storm or a disease. Never just because the cambium gives up the way a heart can stop beating. The cambium goes on reproducing itself for centuries. That is what makes a tree the symbol of sustainability. If you plant a tree, you plant sustainability. An orchard is a fantastically sustainable farming system.

Nowadays farming has a one-year cycle. Our food production system is largely based on annual crops and animals that just about reach puberty. Multi-annual crops and agro-forestry are actually much more sustainable systems, require fewer inputs and create their own cycles. But an annual farming cycle is highly lucrative for the agro-industry.

After that lecture I understood my own emotion: felling a tree constitutes murdering sustainability. My dog is oblivious to such concerns: the dead tree is as good a target as any for his umpteenth scent marking.  Kees van Veluw