

DSP Election Manifesto 2022-23

The Democratic Students Party - The Hague was founded in 2018 by students studying in Campus The Hague, who noticed that the students of the campus possessed unique concerns mainly facilitated by its high percentage of international students, that were not being addressed or adequately represented in University politics at Leiden University. Over the course of two months, the DSP was founded and took part in its first university elections, as a recognized student party. In these elections we gained enough votes across Leiden University, beyond Campus The Hague, that ensured the seat of our first non-Dutch speaking representative, Viktor Blichfeld, who was elected to the University Council in 2018. In the following years, the DSP has consistently been reelected to the University Council and while also securing seats on the Humanities Faculty and the Social and Behavioral Sciences Faculty Councils.

Since our foundation, the DSP has been working tirelessly to represent the student community who call Campus the Hague their home, as well as the larger international student body of Leiden University. As the student party with the first and only international representatives on the University and Faculty Councils, the DSP enjoys a unique and brief but incredibly rich history of engaging with the university on difficult, confrontational, and incredibly important issues like student mental health, inclusivity and diversity. We are a party that has always strived to represent the voices of our fellow students actively and in a respectful manner, in the ambition of addressing their hopes and concerns. A pursuit that is firmly entrenched in our belief that everyone has a voice that should be listened to, respected and represented.

While as a party we have always and continue to advocate for Campus the Hague and internationalization, we have expanded our focus to ensure a university environment that is inclusive and sustainable for all students. Taking this into consideration, we are excited to introduce our 2022-23 election manifesto with seven focus points: internationalization, Campus the Hague, inclusivity, mental health sustainability, financial fairness and, Accountability and Transparency.

Internationalization

The number of international students in Leiden University has been increasing significantly over the past few years. However, the divide between the cities of Leiden and The Hague has become more visible and intense over the past few years. International students feel alienated from the Leiden or more Dutch parts of the university, making it difficult to feel more included. The international community of Leiden University is further divided into those with European nationalities and those without. Some of the issues faced by both groups range from the housing crisis to difficulties understanding the Dutch bureaucratic system.

1. International Student Support

- a. Currently, there are no provisions within any administration of Leiden University to help ease the transition to life in the Netherlands for international students. For non-EU students, often the change is very intense and the lack of support can make this experience more difficult. The DSP wants to continue rallying for an international support center for centralized assistance and guidance for issues such as housing, insurance, and internship regulations. While this may sound like a big undertaking, it is important to note that such an office already exists for international staff members, the “Service Center International Staff.” As international students face many of the same issues, we want these facilities to be expanded to be easily accessible for international students. Another criteria we would like to add this year is assigning university psychologists/advisors specifically for students who may have a hard time settling in. This should also include help with better understanding the Dutch tax system since students are also required to pay taxes for waste, water supply and etc.

2. Dutch and English Language Provisions

- a. As international students are full and equal members of the Leiden University student body, they should have access to the same information as Dutch students. We therefore urge for an equal provision of information in Dutch and English, including but not limited to annual reports, newsletters, election materials, and the minutes of the co-participation bodies in university democracy. There is often also

a difference between the English and Dutch versions of some sections in the Leiden University website. For students willing to learn the Dutch language, the DSP also urges the university to make more subsidized/voluntary language classes for international students.

3. Housing in Leiden and The Hague

- a. Given the increasing student community in Leiden and The Hague (not limited to Leiden University), there is a huge housing crisis. Students have had to move to cities like Delft, Rotterdam, Nootdorp, Schiedam and/or pay a lot of rent for a room to live in while studying. While the housing crisis is widespread and it will take time to build/create enough rooms for all students, Leiden University can start by partnering up with more housing agencies and websites (DUWO, Geste Groep, Pararius, HousingAnywhere, Funda, and etc.) to make the process more student friendly. Often, landlords aren't willing to rent to students but if students go through the university, landlords may be more open to rent to Leiden University students.

Campus the Hague

The issues faced by students in Campus the Hague will always remain a core part of the DSP agenda. As a party that originated in and is primarily composed of students from Campus the Hague, we are uniquely situated to advocate for this wonderfully diverse segment of Leiden University. Here is our vision for Campus The Hague over the next year and beyond:

1. Working towards affordable transport between Leiden and The Hague
 - a. We believe that the figurative distance between these two integral cities in Leiden University should be as small as possible. While for Dutch and working EU students, free travel is a viable option, international students are obliged to pay full fares if their academics are based in both cities. This reduces the selection of electives, minors, and services that international students can engage with, and limits their scope as students at Leiden University. We want to continue our narrative within the university to find a solution to this. This could be by way of subsidized train costs, a university-funded reimbursement scheme, or establishing a university-run bus system between The Hague and Leiden.
2. Sustainable growth of Campus the Hague
 - a. During the last academic year, Leiden University has been formulating a Campus the Hague Strategic (Growth) Plan. The campus is growing to the center of the Hague. While the DSP welcomes the idea of greater services and courses at Campus The Hague, we firmly believe that any growth in students must be matched by a growth in facilities. Campus the Hague is already vastly over capacity and must be expanded to include more academic spaces and housing plans in The Hague to accommodate student needs. Considering this, we will hold the Executive Board of the University accountable to the plan they have created - ensuring that possible new programmes to be started in The Hague are equated with a growth in study areas, common places, meeting rooms and housing made available.
3. Study spaces
 - a. The student body and its needs exceed the available facilities in Campus the Hague. To counter this, we intend to advocate for the creation of new study

spaces, weekend openings of Stichthage and Schouwburgstraat, a possible partnership with the third parties, and will consult on what system would be best to ensure that study spaces are used appropriately. Lastly, the DSP advocates for a more sustainable workspace for students, especially since greenery and fresh air are essential to student performance.

4. Expansion of Campus The Hague

- a. A point of interest would be to ensure that the planned University building in the former Hudson's Bay premises at Grote Marktstraat 48-50/Spui 3 possess enough study spaces for the current and future students in Campus the Hague. Thereby ensuring that the expansion of the facilities in the Hague is sustainable and proportional to the number of students studying in the campus.
- b. Facilitating the permanent presence of Student psychologists in the Hague, as students studying in the Hague possess limited hours to engage with student psychologists or have to travel to Leiden in order to meet with them. In order to alleviate this stress on students that need to talk to psychologists, the DSP would like to see a permanent presence of student psychologists in the Hague as a measure of the proportional growth and increasing size of Campus The Hague and to ensure that its students have close access to such a vital resource.

Inclusivity

The DSP stands for inclusivity, and as the student party representing international students, we recognize that everyone has a voice, and a right to be heard. Our representatives in the respective councils have been at work on different ways in which we can improve inclusivity within the different faculties and the student body. However, we recognize that not everyone's voice is treated the same, and our objective for the upcoming year is to continue with our current momentum to facilitate concrete and public measures to change this. We hope that the trust placed in us so far in our commitment to inclusivity will continue in the future as we strive to implement the following measures to ensure everyone's voice is heard and respected.

1. Implementation of Anti-Discrimination Measures and More Inclusive Curricula
 - a. Our aim is to facilitate measures within the university to make Leiden University more inclusive for minorities, LGBTQ+ students, and those with disabilities. We hope to reach this goal by monitoring the Diversity and Inclusion Work plan and ensuring that everyone's voice is heard throughout the process. Furthermore, the DSP aims to promote an inclusive curriculum at the university in an effort to diversify and include a wider range of perspectives in academia, including but not limited to literature from LGBTQ+ and BIPOC individuals.
2. Greater Inclusion of Students in 'Medezeggenschap'/ University Democracy
 - a. The current format through which students engage with co-participation bodies at Leiden University is limited and there is an acute need for more transparency. We hope to achieve this transparency by advocating for information sessions and seminars where students can learn more about the responsibilities and roles of the co-participation bodies at the university, but also can voice their opinions and concerns. Furthermore, the DSP aims to increase the reach of 'marginalized' voices in student sounding boards and think tanks by advocating that these bodies should seek to include different minorities to ensure their representation in the University.

Mental Health

The mental health of students has always been and will continue to be a cornerstone issue of the Democratic Students Party. The return to full-time in person education has reemphasized the importance of addressing mental health challenges students face such as anxiety and depression. Many students continue to struggle with difficulties brought on by the isolation and hardship of the national lockdowns we experienced throughout the course of the past two years. We believe that the mental well-being of students at Leiden University should be given a top priority by the University. The DSP will continue to advocate for increased availability and ease of access for mental health facilities.

1. More Psychologists
 - a. The work of student psychologists at Leiden University is vital to the mental health of our student body. They have been an extremely important part in ensuring students are able to receive the necessary treatment. We seek to increase the number of student psychologists as the current support system is unable to cater to the increasing needs in the student body. Students stay on waiting lists for up to two months and are unable to get appointments due to the dearth of services at the university. This serves as a significant obstacle to students seeking help and may also impact their education. We believe more student psychologists would not only result in more immediate, robust treatment of students but also alleviate the pressure on the current student psychologists.
 - b. As Campus The Hague continues to expand with the planned construction of the former Hudson's Bay building, the University must consider full time Psychologists employed in The Hague. This will ensure that students will not be required to travel to Leiden in order to receive mental health counseling.
2. Flexible Education
 - a. Many students who struggle with mental health issues that impact their ability to study have found relief and comfort in the online and hybrid education at Leiden during the pandemic. Additionally, those who have internships, part-time jobs, or other commitments, alongside their studies greatly benefited from this

type of flexible education. Now, they find themselves in fear that the resources they have grown accustomed to will no longer be available. We propose that the continued use of recorded lectures may serve as an opportunity for students to develop outside of the university and are able to balance these responsibilities without a toll on their mental health. We also want to articulate that these recordings should be conducted in a manner that respects and protects the intellectual property of Professors and prevents their use in a disrespectful manner.

3. Living with Corona

a. As we are transitioning back to physical education, the DSP is intent on maintaining the focus on mental health and student well-being. Specifically, the DSP aims to continue to advocate for an early warning system, where instructors and staff are aware of available facilities and can direct students to channels of support when evidently required. The aim is not to place the onus on staff, but rather involve them within a mental health support system that can act early on signs and help students. Furthermore, as social distancing and restrictive measures are eased, the DSP strongly advocates for networking events for students as a means to help transition students towards a more engaging university experience and to help restore social connections and ties to the university.

Sustainability

Sustainability and the environment have enormous consequences in terms of the quality of life, our ecosystems, and the resources we give to future generations. The DSP is strongly committed to sustainability and we argue for the university to pay greater attention to this issue in education and infrastructure. Below you will find our ideas for a greener Leiden University:

1. Composting within Leiden University

- a. The university currently collects its organic/food waste which is subsequently converted into biogas or compost. The DSP encourages the university to extend these facilities to students i.e. students would be able to bring their compost to the university/a collection point to be processed alongside the university organic waste. This would save a significant amount of food scraps from going to landfills as students are often not able to compost themselves in apartments/ temporary spaces.

2. Sustainability within University buildings

- a. The faculties and institutes should reduce the use of single use paper and plastic for events and in general consumption and use more sustainable alternatives such as wooden compostable cutlery and digital flyers whenever possible.
- b. As the costs are relatively similar, the DSP encourages the university to use recycled paper for all university printers and have accessible paper recycling bins beside them.
- c. In line with information presented by our councilors in the FSW Council, the DSP encourages the university to examine the possibility of removing all paper cups from the campus.

3. The creation of a LU sustainable donation space

- a. A possibility identified in the 2019 Sustainability Report, the DSP suggests that the university create a 'LU marketplace' where furniture and equipment that is about to be discarded can be shown online and donated to students and student associations on a first come first serve basis. Not only does this increase the

longevity of these materials, but it potentially saves the student community significant amounts of money that can be better utilized elsewhere.

4. Increased educational focus on sustainability/climate policy
 - a. The DSP strongly commits to pushing for an increased educational focus on sustainability. Students have, in DSP and official university surveys, indicated a growing interest in this subject and its implications. We not only want more electives and minors, but also for sustainability and the environment to be better included in the existing curricula for bachelors and masters' programs, particularly in faculties such as FGGA, FSW and FGW. Moreover, we encourage the university to increase the funding for sustainability-related research.
5. Sustainable Infrastructure and Buildings
 - a. With the plans for a new building to be built in The Hague, DSP implores the university to ensure that the construction is done in as sustainable manner as possible. Construction and buildings more generally constitute a very high level of emissions, and the university should take every step possible to not contribute to this.
 - b. Improvements to existing buildings should use sustainable materials and always contribute in a positive manner to reduce the university's ecological footprint.

Financial Fairness

The financial constraints experienced by students can significantly affect the opportunities students receive and the overall university experience. We aim to enter into dialogue with Leiden University to discuss and investigate the most viable options to reduce the impact of financial inequality within the university.

1. Advocate for the use of older versions of literature and the material available in the e-library
 - a. Professors tend to prescribe newer versions of the course study materials when available. Most often, these newer versions contain minimal adjustments in comparison to older versions. However, the consequence is that most students are forced to buy more expensive books and that older versions can't be sold anymore. Therefore, this tendency to prescribe newer versions could lead to a higher burden on students with limited financial means and as a side effect place limits on the sustainable use of books as well. The DSP wants to decrease this tendency and encourages professors to assign the freely available literature from the Leiden University Catalogue when possible.
 - b. When professors would like to assign reading materials that are not a part of the university library or otherwise freely available to students, they must justify this choice in writing to the relevant program board when a similar or previous edition is available in the library.
2. Identify the constraints that influence the financial choices made by students
 - a. Reports have shown that due to the 'studieleenstelsel' (study loan system), Dutch students do not experience more constraints regarding their choice to go to university. However, the (financial) choices made during their study programs are affected. Dutch and international students alike may not fully utilize the opportunities in university due to financial constraints. To illustrate, students choose not to go on exchange abroad or do a minor in another city. These choices are then even more affected by the implications of the pandemic. The DSP is in favor of university-wide research on the financial constraints experienced by students during their study program and to what extent the university has

influence over it. The results should be debated, and appropriate measures should be taken if possible.

- b. Due to recent talks of compensating those who have taken part in the 'studieleenstelsel' (study loan system), the university should also investigate the impact of the 'studieleenstelsel' (study loan system) on those who did not take part due to their not wanting to take on debt, but rather worked several jobs or put themselves in another difficult position. These students may not have been as directly impacted by the 'studieleenstelsel' (study loan system), but still deserve to be compensated in some manner.

Accountability and Transparency

Over the last two years at Leiden University, there have been developments and issues that have taken place between the administration and the student body that have drawn the attention of the media and fostered tensions between the two. To this extent, the DSP is committed to ensuring that students are well informed of developments occurring at the university in terms of policy making and ensuring that they are part of the decision-making process. The DSP recognises that there is limited interaction between students and university politics outside of elections and aims to address this situation at the university by facilitating new and innovative means of facilitating co-participation.

1. Working towards Monthly newsletters from the different councils
 - a. The purpose of these monthly newsletters is to ensure information such as the agendas of meetings containing policy points and subjects discussed are accessible to students — a means of actively ensuring that students are aware of developments and issues that are of interest to them. It would also serve as a means for student representatives on the councils to have a platform through which to engage with their peers and receive information, insights and perspectives beyond the scope and framework of the council to ensure that students are truly represented.
2. Town Hall & semesterly information events
 - a. The intention of a Town Hall is to establish a format of communication between students and student representatives on the social and behavioral sciences faculty council. Specifically, these Town Hall sessions intend to provide an interactive medium where students can address and raise issues and concerns, they have that may be brought to discussion within the council. The purpose and intent of the Town Hall is to inform and share with students a general overview of the structure of university politics, in particular the role of the faculty council. Furthermore, the objective of the event is to establish and lay down a potential foundation for an interactive format for students and representatives to engage with one another and promote co-participation.