

Dear Interim Dean Semiha Denктаş, Head of EUC Gera Noordzij, and EUC Management,

This Monday, some students and staff from EUC, as part of a student-led coalition of university staff, professors, organizations and other activists, peacefully occupied a building on the Erasmus University campus¹. The goal of this action was to draw attention to different pressing issues regarding the imminent climate catastrophe, precarization, accessibility on campus and student debt².

We believe that any university has the obligation to stand at the forefront of *real* societal change and that despite previous incentives and promises Erasmus University is severely failing to do this. We demanded Erasmus University Rotterdam to take its responsibility and immediately impose alternatives to its current lack of transparency regarding ties with fossil fuel industries, as well as inaccessible and precarious arrangements.

During this occupation, we created a space for reflection about the current state of affairs and problem-solving - we listened to speeches, read texts, arranged teach-ins, took part in creative workshops of mending and zine making, and ate non-waste food. We created a mini-economy of the commons and space for self-directed learning. Is this not what the University wishes to teach their students? - Unfortunately, despite 9 hours of peaceful occupation, which did not hinder students from attending class, our safe space was unexpectedly silenced by the university. The CvB had agreed to meet us at half past six in the evening, yet instead, we were visited by the anti-riot police.

Minutes before our General Assembly, to which the CvB had agreed to join, we were told by the police and security to vacate the building immediately, without any prior warning. This shows that the CvB does not welcome a space for free critical thinking and debate, core academic values themselves. Instead of listening to our concerns and proposals, and taking our invitation to dialogue, the CvB responded by violating the right to peaceful protest when calling the anti-riot police to intimidate, forcefully evict and arrest its own students. Apart from the obvious damage of the physical violence used against us, the stress that was caused by the sudden appearance of armed and masked riot police forces and the little time we were given to vacate the building cannot be overlooked.

Not only did the University expose these students to police violence, assaulting students' mental and physical wellbeing, but it also demonstrated its fear of change and lack of trust in the entire community by allowing the police to remove ALL students from campus even after the Sandberg's building was empty. We demand a public response from Erasmus University College regarding the violation of student and academics' rights. Silence against these outrageous acts is complicity.

Safety first. But for who?

One of the reasons for the forced removal, according to the CvB, is that 'trusted sources' informed about a chance of the situation escalating. They mention a risk for the safety of students and staff. Nonetheless, the space created was peaceful and did not indicate a safety risk for anyone at any point³. Furthermore, the movements involved with the occupation that were referred to as safety risks, XR and Occupy, have shown extensive commitment to non-violent action.

The words of Ed Brinksma, the president of the Executive Board of EUR, deeply concern us. Brinksma has claimed in an interview with Erasmus Magazine that: "We're talking about sixty people and some of them are external people from Extinction Rebellion and Occupy." Is it unfathomable to this board member that the students of this University are activists? Does the CvB believe its students

¹ Find further information on the website <https://occupyeur.hotglue.me/>

² Read more about the demands that were put forward on the Open Letter: <https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=1gJZcT72jUuSm0uxcLrUkupAb54xXgJCuC15HIuUD9lUMINMVzBRRIU2M1pYTINBRIJDT0VIUkdISy4u>

³ Read the action consensus of the occupation: <https://occupyeur.hotglue.me/?Action%20Consensus>

to be a compliant mass, encompassing no difference and no critical thinking? We believe that the CvB wants us to stay passive while we live through a time of ecological catastrophe, precarity, economic turmoil and ableism. This will not happen.

Moreover, a poignant question must be asked: Whose safety is the CvB exactly concerned about? Do they truly care about the safety of all students equally? The occupation consisted mainly of EUR students, so if the CvB cared about our safety, then why did they send a disproportionate amount of ME to remove us? If there was an actual threat, why did they dispose of ALL of their students to the streets?

We must highlight that this occupation was part of the End Fossil movement. An international call for student solidarity to occupy universities across the world to demand an end to the fossil fuel industry. **No University in Europe** has reacted with such tactics of silencing and violence towards their students. Instead, most of these have been open to dialogue with their students, thinking together, listening to their demands and, in cases such as the University of Barcelona, reaching consensus.⁴

The importance of EUC's public response

EUC presents itself as a critical and progressive institution, giving its students the tools to untangle and address 'complex scientific and social issues'. In order to have the 'positive impact' the university expects its students to produce, we need EUC support when we, as a student body, practice what we preach.

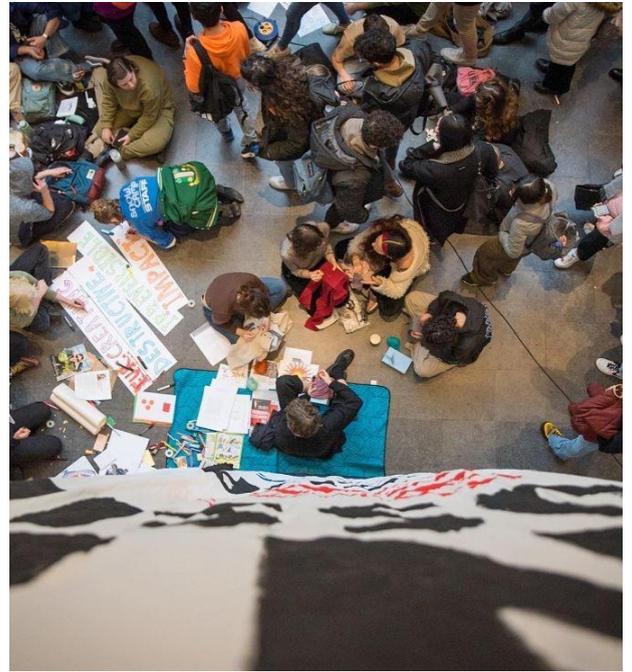
We once more reach out to our university in the hopes that this time silence will not be chosen over action. The way that the Executive Board dealt with our request to dialogue affects everyone at the university and beyond. We need solidarity from the Erasmus community, students and staff so that basic core academic values are not systematically infringed. This is why, as part of the Erasmus University Rotterdam, we hope that the faculty that we hold so dear, Erasmus University College, will not fold under the hierarchical chain of command and instead, stand by its Erasmian values and offer support to the student body and staff whose rights and safety were repudiated.

The following [link](#) will redirect you to the signatures attached to this letter

EUC students, staff and alumni from OccupyEUR.

⁴<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/nov/12/barcelona-students-to-take-mandatory-climate-crisis-module-from-2024>

Appendix 1: Our Action



Appendix 2: CvB response



Appendix 3: memes

occupied erasmus



occupy erasmus



CvB EUR: Reliable sources informed us the protestors were planning an escalation so we had to call in riot cops

The escalation:



Erasmus University College

Concerning OccupyEUR

Dear students, dear colleagues,

Thank you very much for your message. We fully understand your concerns and we are in constant contact with various colleagues within several faculties at EUR and in contact with the Executive Board.

There will be at least two meetings in the relatively short term:

1. A Roundtable organized by ESPhil, ESSB, ESL and DIT, among others, with support from the Executive Board. This will most likely be Thursday 15 December. From what we know now, the Rector spoke to the event organizers on Monday and yesterday. This organizing group is now working on the location, speakers, etc.
2. And a *Studium Generale* meeting will be organized after the Christmas/New Year holidays.
3. In addition, the Executive Board is meeting with the University Council today, which is in principle also a public meeting. For more information about this, we would like to refer to the University Council.

We spoke to the Executive Board and shared our concerns and we are looking forward to the dialogue. We encourage you to do the same.

Finally, let us also do what EUC can do best, i.e. creating a space for dialogue and to explore important topics via personal experience and academic knowledge. There are already some ideas for hosting a discussion on activism and academia with joint student and staff speakers. We are looking forward to working further on these ideas, and we are open to new ideas too.

Warm regards,

Semiha Denктаş, Gera Noordzij, Matthew Harvey, Robin van den Akker
Also on behalf of the Dean Victor Bekkers

Dear Semiha Denктаş, Gera Noordzij, Matthew Harvey, Robin van den Akker, and Victor Bekkers,

We appreciate your fast response. We are aware of your dialogue with EUR and the Executive Board. Nonetheless, this was not our concern. We did not ask for a dialogue, instead we asked for a **public statement condemning the way EUR handled the protest**.

Despite your encouragement for entering dialogue, we want to make clear that we have tried this route many times, and we are aware that most of these conversations are ways of making students feel heard whilst simultaneously silencing us, since action never follows. OccupyEUR was an attempt to start a dialogue on our terms. A dialogue that is public, respects our non-hierarchical structure, and does not function through representatives.

We feel disrespected that you are now encouraging us to engage in dialogue, while that was our intention in the first place, before the Executive Board sent the riot police, instead of accepting the dialogue we invited them to.

We need our university to be a place where political action can happen. This is why a **public statement condemning the way EUR handled the protest** is so necessary. EUC should realise the value in speaking out as an institution within EUR. This is not a time to rely on the insufficient statements made previously by ESSB and the Executive Board. We are asking for your solidarity with the students and staff that have been mistreated.

We hope you will take a second look at our [letter](#), signed by over a 100 EUC students and staff, to fully understand our concerns.

Kind regards,

EUC students supporting OccupyEUR