

# Demands that aim to tackle the housing crisis in Wageningen

## ABOUT THE DEMANDS:

The right to housing is a **freestanding** international human right, supported as such by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It is also an essential and irreplaceable component of studying at Wageningen University, an institution that attracts students from all over the world just to accept them and then tell them they are responsible for finding their own housing.

Currently, many students face the problem of lack of safe, comfortable, and adequate housing. As a result, they often must lower expectations, agree to live under any form of contract (subrent, short stay etc) and accept any conditions of the landlord. Moving between subrents and not having a permanent home has physical, emotional, and mental implications that can cause stress and limit ability to follow through with studies. Sleeping in tents is also a common alternative in case of necessity. Current predictions are that some students are predicted to be homeless until May.

This prediction is unacceptable, considering the winter approaching. We therefore present a list of demands to serve as a wakeup call for action to the WUR and related partners (e.g. housing corporations, municipality etc.). Only through collaboration and working towards a common goal, will the students of Wageningen have a place to call home.

Due to the urgency of the situation of current homeless students, the demands are divided in short- term and long-term change. A short-term urgent action is needed to provide temporary alternative housing while long-term actions involve preventing future homelessness, supporting students with an international background, and tackling discrimination among housing offers.

## Short-term/emergency demands

1. **Provide emergency housing** to students who are currently homeless (between subrents, do not have a home).
  - A. This could include any space (including housing in university/sports facilities buildings), given that it is safe, comfortable, and adequate.

- B. This space must include access to sanitary and cooking facilities and a heated common space.
- 2. **Negotiate a rent freeze** with WUR contractors on the base rent so that the price does not increase by more than 3% in the next year.
- 3. **Provide rent subsidies** for students that need to live in a hostel/hotel out of necessity because of insufficient housing
- 4. **Issue a public official apology** towards students that have remained homeless until now and are calculated to be homeless until May.

### **Long-term demands**

- 1. **Invest** in the development of more affordable and livable student housing, including improving existing accommodation.
- 2. **Collaborate** with WUR contractors to maintain rent prices stable through agreeing upon a permanent base rent freeze and a minimal increase of extra costs
- 3. **Support students** in requesting governmental subsidies by providing information in different languages
- 4. **Ensure** that paid student accommodation is safe, comfortable, and adequate by controlling health and safety standards.
- 5. **Limit** the number of incoming students as to correct for the limited housing available
- 6. **Provide financial compensation** to students that suffer from study delay because of:
  - A. Unstable and inadequate housing (e.g. in a tent, moving between subrents, etc),
  - B. Travel long hours between the university and their home.
- 7. **Set up a contact line** for students that feel discriminated against in their homes and
  - A. Ensure urgent support from the student psychologists;
  - B. Ensure rapid house transfer in collaboration with the student and whilst tending to their needs;
  - C. Investigate interventions amongst the perpetrators of discrimination (e.g. through antiracist trainings and discussions).
- 8. **Develop an awareness** for this issue by launching and funding a one-year educational campaign that:
  - A. Stimulates a cultural change in student and study organizations towards inclusivity and celebration of diversity.
  - Tackles discrimination (and resulting discriminatory housing practices) amongst students
  - B. Emphasize the need of one's home as a safe space of belonging and (mental and physical) well-being

9. **Setting up a student-run commission** that is financially compensated, in which people affected by the housing crisis, under which marginalized perspectives that can have priority and have their voices are centered. This commission will aim at:
  - A. Being representative by including marginalized groups of people with different cultural and socio-economic background; including other relevant stakeholders
  - B. Setting up a regular meeting with board members of all student and study associations that WUR funds.
  - C. Provide oversight of the process of addressing housing crisis.
  - D. Provide communication between students & people who undertake.
  - E. Bring in lived-experiences and various perspectives during the policy-making process.
10. **Address discrimination of any kind** in a more efficient way the discrimination issue through collaborating with DARE etc...
  - A. Hire and pay experienced educators specialized in (forms of) structural discrimination.
  - B. Offer space in university buildings 7 days a week to host events of this educational campaign, such as lectures, trainings and discussions on antiracism or gender.
  - C. Implement a zero-tolerance policy for racism and sexism in student and study associations. Cut any funding when transgressed.
  - D. Provide resources about various forms of discrimination (e.g. racism, sexism, genderism, ableism) on the WUR website; (already happening)
  - E. And stimulate study and student organizations to provide such resources on their communication channels.

## Annex

**Adequate:** Housing that meets minimum structural, heating, lightning, ventilation, sanitary and health and safety standards. This includes access to sanitary and cooking facilities, as well as a heated common space.

**Accessible:** Housing that can be adjusted to the needs of the individuals using it. This can include modifying housing for persons with disabilities and special needs.

**Affordable:** Housing that people with a household income at or below the median (as rated by the government of origin) can pay for.

**Quality:** Housing that provides a healthy, safe, secure, sustainable, and resilient environment that allows for individuals to live and participate in the natural environment and communities.

**Safe:** Housing that does not jeopardize the welfare of the occupants.

**Resilient:** Housing that provides foundation for vulnerable groups to develop positive social relationships and economic livelihoods.

**Comfortable:** Housing that allows to create a personal space that will serve as a refuge from the outside world.

**Respected:** Housing that actively applies the moral principles of honesty, fairness, and acceptance to all occupants, including marginalized groups.

**Marginalized groups (e.g. queer, BIPOC people):** Groups that experience social, political or economic discrimination and exclusion as a result of different perspective/ personal characteristics such as sex, gender, age, ethnicity, religion or belief, health status, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, education or income, or living in various geographic localities.

**Rent subsidy:** A monthly financial support aimed to make student housing affordable to all students

**Freeze rent:** Prevent an increase of rent price of more than 10% of the total base rent price.

**Zero tolerance policy for discrimination:** Code of conduct that states clearly that harassment or hate of any kind is not tolerated or ignored.