3TU.Federation: Cherish our engineering programmes

The boards of the 3TUs are concerned about expenditure in the field of technology. In a letter to the mediators who are paving the way towards a new coalition government, the boards have drawn attention to the need for investment in education, research and innovation. The 3TU board members stress the importance of the engineering programmes for the economic development of our country in their letter to the mediators. They alert them to the consequences of introducing a social loan system that works to the disadvantage of students in science and technology. The continuously declining government contribution per student is an obstacle to the improvement of education. The contribution per student will again be 5% lower in the forthcoming academic year than it was in 2012. They moreover advocate the continuation of the top sector policy – with adequate financing. An enormous gap (€500 million per annum) is in danger of arising owing to the elimination of the funding provided by the Economic Structure Enhancing Fund (FES) resources (the ‘natural gas assets’). The fiscal incentive for companies used by the government to invest in scientific research as yet offers inadequate relief, according to the 3TU board members. In their letter, they point to the excellent standing of the Netherlands as an innovative country (ranking fifth in the world) that has also been achieved thanks to the successful FES programmes in recent years. Despite the financial and economic problems in our country, the mediators are urged to ensure that the coalition agreement will promote investments in education and research, i.e. in the economic foundation for future generations.

Interview with... IJsbrand Haagsma

The Executive Board of the 3TU.Federation has appointed IJsbrand Haagsma as secretary of the 3TU.Federation effective 1 June 2012. In this independent position, he is officially responsible for strategy development, management and coordination of all the activities carried out by the different organisational units within 3TU.

What are your plans for the near future?

“I’ve been meeting a lot of new people recently and got a pretty good idea of the scope of 3TU within each of the universities. Although the amount of activities is quite impressive, there are still a lot of places where 3TU is insufficiently well-known. In my previous jobs, I heard a lot about 3TU but I never really understood its added value. Now I see that this lies in combining our strengths; together we have more critical mass. That is reflected both at board level in joint action vis-à-vis the Dutch government and Brussels as well as in education and research. For scientists, the added value lies in writing joint proposals for major research programmes and in reaching agreement when submitting proposals for smaller projects. We could also be doing more to reach out in Europe. Similarly to 3TU, the Germans have TU9 and the Scandinavian countries NT5. These three strong networks can be of major significance in Europe. Finally, I believe strongly in promoting our reliability as a partner – say what you do and do what you say is my motto in that regard.”

What future do you envisage for the 3TU.Federation?

“I expect the 3TU.Federation to more frequently take the lead as a representative of the technology domain in the Netherlands in the fields of education, research and valorisation. I think the government and the business community expect that of us. The term ‘technology domain’ is used in Switzerland to refer to the ETH in Zurich and the EPF in Lausanne who jointly make agreements with the government on performance in the fields of education, research and valorisation on the basis of a total budget. In the Netherlands, we can see additional added value by linking the entire technological knowledge sector, including TNO and the large technological institutes. A shared vision of the future, each with its own culture and identity, makes both the Federation and the individual universities a powerful player. Other (regional) networks, as incorporated in each of the different universities, also contribute an extra dimension to the 3TU collaboration which, as I see it, can only go toward strengthening it. I expect that staff members of the technical universities will recognise the added value of our cooperation and play a part in promoting that.”

CV

IJsbrand Haagsma has been working at TU Delft since 1992 and has broad management and policy experience. From 2005 to 2011 he was secretary general of the faculty of Mechanical, Maritime and Materials Engineering. He then became acting Department Head of the Materials Science & Engineering department. While holding this position, he implemented a reorganisation and realised a new department strategy.
3TU citation analysis
Last year the 3TU.Federation requested the Centre for Science and Technology Studies (CWTS) in Leiden to carry out a citation analysis. This was the second time that a bottom-up citation study was done for 3TU. The period covered 2001 up to and including 2010. In September 2012, the three rectors approved the final report. After each of the Executive Boards have the final report as well, the results will be communicated within the three universities. Owing to the confidential nature of these data, a distribution schedule has been set up. Each staff member will receive the final report and his own individual citation analysis. In the conclusions the number of publications (output) and the number of times these publications have been cited (impact) are compared. The study examined publications of permanent staff members (also tenure track staff members) that were employed on 1 January 2011. In addition to the final report, the results of the citation analysis comprise a detailed dataset in which the results are presented from a range of different perspectives: at the level of each university, faculty, department, group, research school, institute (UT) and also in the light of themes or unique cooperative alliances for which an explicit request was made (for instance ICT). The starting point of the report is formed by the individual scores each faculty member.

Calendar
31 October: RoboNED Seminar
RoboNED is organising a seminar on Wednesday, 31 October from 13:15 to 18:00 in conference centre Hoog Brabant at Utrecht central station. Consortia will be set up during the RoboNED seminar focussing on four social issues for which robotics can provide a solution. More information can be found by clicking on the following link: http://www.roboned.nl

21 December: 3TU.Ethics to celebrate its fifth anniversary
To celebrate its fifth anniversary, the 3TU.Centre for Ethics and Technology will be organising a second anniversary research day on 21 December 2012 with lectures, workshops and drinks in a festive ambience. Regularly check the Centre for Ethics and Technology's website for updated information: http://www.ethicsandtechnology.eu/

Education Day 3TU Master’s degree programmes
On 11 May 2012, the annual Education Day was held in Utrecht for and by those involved in the 3TU Master’s programmes. Staff members discussed the state of affairs regarding the list of ideas to improve the 3TU MSc programmes. Jan van der Meij, assistant professor at the Instructional Technology research group of the University of Twente talked about (the didactic component of) giving video lectures. He focussed on, among other things, the different forms of video communication, assembling the equipment, getting used to video communication, promoting personal contact and creating a feeling of involvement. Participants felt the exchange of experiences and ideas contributed to a positive and stimulating day.

“3TU.Datacentrum’s usefulness is noticeable on a daily basis”
The implementation of the 3TU.Datacentrum was recently finalised and is now fully operational. The rectors have stressed the importance of expanding the mission (archive, labs and services) of the 3TU.Datacentrum. But why is the data centre so important?
Among the users of the services of 3TU.Datacentrum is (full professor information systems at the TU/e) Wil van Aalst’s team. “Process mining takes place by means of analysing event logs to establish what activity actually occurred. Also owing to the fact that it is a young and emerging field, it’s important that the datasets in the form of event logs are made available in order to test process mining techniques. By making the datasets accessible in the 3TU.Datacentrum, the results from different research groups can be compared. The datasets are stored in the 3TU.Datacentrum with a Digital Object Identifier (DOI), which makes them easy to find and to be cited by colleagues at home and abroad,” says an enthusiastic professor. “This facility is proving its usefulness on a daily basis. We can now reply to the many e-mails with requests for event data by simply passing on the DOI,” explains Wil. Incorporating the datasets at the 3TU.Datacentrum appeared to have another advantage, as Boudewijn van Dongen (associate professor at the TU/e) discovered. “As event logs can now easily be accessed and referred to, they have been used successfully for two years in a row by the ‘Business Process Intelligence Challenge’, an international competition for process mining techniques.” Interested in seeing what one of these datasets looks like? Boudewijn van Dongen’s dataset can be found on http://dx.doi.org/10.4121/uuid:d9769f3d-0ab0-4fb8-803b-0d1120ffcf54.

Relocated
As from 15 September, the offices of the 3TU.Federation relocated to Stevinweg 1, room 5.19, 2628 CN Delft. Feel free to come on in, coffee’s served!

The next issue of the newsletter will feature a first review of the teaching component of the 3TU Sector Plan for Technology.