



Job profile



WAGENINGEN
UNIVERSITY & RESEARCH

Executive Board Member
(Finance, Business &
Services)





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The organisation

Wageningen University & Research

'To explore the potential of nature to improve the quality of life'. That is Wageningen University & Research's mission. Over 7,000 employees (in fte), 13,500 students (Academic Year 2023/2024), 2,400 PhD and EngD candidates and over 150,000 Lifelong Learning participants from more than 100 countries contribute to this mission. Our drive is to maximise the potential of WUR as a force to accelerate the transitions required to achieve a more sustainable world for all life on Earth.

The strength of Wageningen University & Research lies in the strong domain-oriented focus of our work and our ability to join the forces of eight research institutes and the university, enabling us to work from curiosity-driven to applied research. It also lies in the combination of a technical university with social and natural sciences, enabling us to work in mono-, multi-, inter- and transdisciplinary ways. WUR collaborates with partners from government, society, industry and research, from very local to international partners. This is our 'Wageningen approach'.

Research, education and impact are integral to the six key themes of our work: sustainable food systems, biodiversity and resilient ecosystems, global health, climate-proof futures, biobased and circular society, sustainable water and land use.

WUR is recognised as a pillar of scientific research in its domain, a reputation that is built on excellent and independent research. We strive for high quality in everything we do and consider the quality of our work more important than the quantity. Our research is either scientifically innovative, societally innovative or both.



The ability to combine monodisciplinary strength in multi-, inter- and transdisciplinary approaches and to cover the range from discovery science to application-oriented research in our domain, enables us to provide different insights and offer alternative pathways. WURs research can be conceptual, agenda-setting or applicable in the real world (field labs), on a local, regional and global scale.

Since its foundation in 1918, Wageningen University has been an internationally oriented university which educates students from around the world to address challenges at a local, national and global level. Our 'Vision for Education' embodies a shared vision for the future, grounded in our values and principles. This vision outlines three directions for the future: stimulating ownership for personal development, cultivating an inspiring learning community, and developing a world-oriented curriculum. Our education is highly valued by our students for many years. We continue to build on the strengths of our education such as high-quality scientific knowledge, our interdisciplinary approach, a rich and small-scale learning environment, flexibility in our learning arrangements, and a diverse academic community.

Organisational structure

Wageningen University & Research (WUR) consists of Wageningen University and Wageningen Research Foundation. Combined they have an annual turnover of around €914 million (all figures and numbers mentioned in this profile refer to 2023 and the numbers of employees are in fte).

Wageningen University and Wageningen Research Foundation are separate legal entities, yet their respective departments and research institutes cooperate across various scientific domains in five science groups:

- Plant Sciences Group
- Animal Sciences Group
- Agrotechnology and Food Sciences Group
- Environmental Sciences Group
- Social Sciences Group.

Each science group consists of a department of Wageningen University and one or more of the eight research institutes of Wageningen Research Foundation (see the attached organisation chart) and is managed by a Managing Director, supported by a Director of Operations. As an exception to this, given their statutory research tasks, Wageningen Food Safety is led by a Director and is not linked to a WU department. The Managing Directors of the science groups report to the Executive Board. The Managing Directors of the science groups and Director of Wageningen Food Safety Research, together with the Executive Board, form the WUR Management Board.

The Facilities Department and the Corporate Staff support the primary process of teaching, research and value creation.



Central employee and student participation is an important partner in policy-making for the Executive Board. The Student Council, Student Staff Council and Central Works Council comprise the central participation structure of WUR. The Central Works Council and Student Staff Council meet together as the WUR Council. The Executive Board consults with the WUR Council. The employees in the Central Works Council serve for a period of three years.

Wageningen University

Wageningen University is the only university in the Netherlands that focuses specifically on the 'healthy food and living environment' domain. We have been selected by students as the best university in the Netherlands for the past 20 years according to the Keuzegids Higher Education reflecting high regard for both our teaching and research.

Wageningen University has over 13,500 students enrolled in 20 undergraduate programmes and 31 master's programmes. Of these students 3,717 are international. In addition, Wageningen University has over 2,400 PhD candidates who contribute substantially to our research. Wageningen University consists of one faculty with five departments comprised of over 95 chair groups. Spread across these departments and chair groups are 3,588 employees including 234 professors.

Wageningen University is governed by a number of bodies, including the Academic Board (responsible for granting PhD degrees), the Wageningen Graduate Schools with six research schools (quality control PhD trajectories and training PhD candidates), the Board of Education (responsible for content and quality of Bachelor and Master programmes), the programme committees (ensure quality of the programme) and four Examination Committees (overseeing the examination of Bachelor and Master programmes and providing students binding study advice).

The university has a budget of over €495 million, of which €307 million comes from government funding, €144 million from indirect government funding, subsidies and private funding, and the remainder from tuition fees.

Wageningen Research

The eight specialised research institutes (see the attached overview), united in the Wageningen Research Foundation, employ 3,456 staff contributing to project-based applied research that is commissioned by international organisations, governments, commercial businesses and non-profit organisations. These research projects often involve collaboration between various research institutes of Wageningen Research, as well as with Wageningen University and/or national or international partners. The research institutes have close ties with the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, Food Security and Nature. In addition, various statutory research tasks are carried out by our research institutes on behalf of the Dutch government.



The annual turnover of the Wageningen Research Foundation amounts to €419 million, of which 40% comes from Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, Food Security and Nature for by way of Core and Programme funding and 26% from the top sectors, co-funding and subsidies. Around 22% is funded by industry through contract research.

Governance

The members of the Executive Board of Wageningen University & Research form the Executive Board of Wageningen University and the Executive Board of the Wageningen Research Foundation through a personal union. The Executive Board is responsible for the management and administration of the entire organisation.

The board consists of three members: dr.ir. Sjoukje Heimovaara (President), prof. dr. Carolien Kroeze (Vice-President and Rector Magnificus) and Rens Buchwaldt MBA (Board Member). The President and Vice-President of the Executive Board were appointed for a four-year term in 2022 and 2024 respectively. Mr. Buchwaldt's appointment ends on 1 January 2026.

The Executive Board is accountable to the Supervisory Board. The Supervisory Board of Wageningen University and the Supervisory Board of the Wageningen Research Foundation oversee the management, administration and general affairs of Wageningen University & Research, also in a personal union. They also advise the Executive Board. The members of the Supervisory Board are appointed by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, Food Security and Nature and the Minister of Education, Culture and Science jointly. The current members of the Supervisory Board are prof.dr. Elbert Dijkgraaf (chair), prof.dr. Frank Baaijens, drs. David Fousert, drs. Sigrid Hoekstra, drs. Tjarda Klimp, dr. Kirsten Schuijt.



Position

Executive Board core responsibilities

To ensure the continued success of Wageningen University & Research (WUR) the Executive Board has the following core responsibilities:

- Cohesive management and coordination of the various parts of Wageningen University & Research, in which encouraging diversity of perspectives and expertise as well as stimulating courage and making choices are important factors.
- Steering the strategic position of the research institutes, also aimed at strengthening their international orientation, ensuring independence, market orientation and social and economic value creation.
- Innovate teaching and research to further enhance Wageningen University's strong international position and profile, as reflected in our continued top position in the world rankings, taking into account the influence of international developments and technological transformation such as artificial intelligence and lifelong-learning.
- Securing value creation as one of the core tasks of WUR next to research and education.
- Overseeing the quality and reputation of the organization.
- Ensuring an attractive, safe and inclusive working and study climate and sustainable employability of staff.
- Ensuring a sound financial basis and adequate support, infrastructure (ICT, buildings) and, where necessary, implementing efficiency measures in light of changes to government funding and market conditions.
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Working method of the Executive Board

The Executive Board is jointly responsible and works according to an agreed division of portfolios amongst its members. Each member sets the agreed course within their own portfolio, provides inspiring leadership and acts on the basis of the shared cultural values. The President ensures the proper functioning of the Board as a whole; the Executive Board operates according to a collegial model, which involves shared decision making, mutual respect and equal participation.

The Executive Board works closely together with the Wageningen Management Board (WMB), consisting of the Managing Directors of the five sciences groups and WFSR. The WMB makes recommendations to the Executive Board regarding the policy and frameworks at the strategic and operational levels. In addition, the Executive Board regularly consults with the WUR Council, the meeting of WUR's central works councils.

The portfolio distribution is as follows:

- President of the Executive Board: overall strategy, strengthening the (international) market position, external (international) relations, internationalisation, public affairs and communication, leadership development and fundraising.
- Rector Magnificus and Vice-President: strategy regarding education, research and student affairs, including quality assurance and internationalisation.
- Board Member Finance, Business & Services: Finance, HR, Legal and Facilities (including IT, real estate and campus development), value creation (participations and spin-offs) and regional external relations.

Vacancy Executive Board, Board Member Finance, Business & Services

We are looking for a candidate with extensive experience as board member or chief operations officer, who is used to operating in a complex setting and feels at home in an environment with highly qualified professionals.

The person in this role provides leadership over the operations of WUR, ensuring the sustainable financial and human resource development for the organization. A key focus is on enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of supporting processes in balance with the (administrative) workload on staff.

The prospective Executive Board Member is someone who is able to facilitate strategic processes within a rapidly changing and complex environment and is qualified to both formulate strategy and lead the process up to implementation. The Executive Board Member sought possesses a balanced, connecting personality with a good sense for relationships who is visible to the internal organization, but can also play an important role in the extensive stakeholder field of WUR.



Candidate profile

Job requirements

The Board Member we are looking for should have:

- extensive experience in acting at administrative/board level, as well as in leading operations (Finance, HR, Facilities, IT, Legal) in a complex and preferably knowledge-intensive organization;
- commitment to the field and mission of Wageningen University & Research, recognizing its significant societal impact;
- a (business) economics and finance background;
- the ability to set a clear direction and drive transformative change processes, with a strong talent for structuring these processes and connecting all levels of the organization.
- strong in forward thinking and open to new ideas, effective at problem solving and dealing with dilemma's posed by rapid and profound changes and developments;
- a vision on innovation in business operations and information management, combined with experience in the renewal and management of IT in a large professional organization and affinity with managing real estate;
- is someone who connects well while providing clear guidance, motivating those around them, and being sharp and decisive in their actions and communications;
- an international outlook and be able to operate effectively in the international setting that WUR is part of;
- a good command of Dutch and English in word and writing.



Competences

Visionary

Ability to guide the strategic direction for the organisation, mindful of (geo)political circumstances and technological developments; can formulate long-term policy objectives and stimulates vision creation as a group.

Cohesive leadership

Possesses natural and proven leadership and is therefore seen as a respected leader. Establishes and maintains effective partnerships, internally and externally. Inspires others to cooperate and lead, based on trust and in connection with the environment.

Results-oriented

Focuses actions and decisions on achieving intended results and is able to translate plans through conceptualising and organising short, medium and long-term actions and goals into operational process.

Collaboration and building support

Has an interpersonal style that is both collaborative and inclusive, valuing diverse perspectives and co-creation. A strong team player, who builds support in the organisation and consults openly and transparently with parties involved, such as representative organisations of staff and students.

Communication and persuasiveness

A strong listener who navigates leadership by listening and facilitating. Demonstrates flexibility in communication, balancing softness and strength.

Employment conditions

The appointment of the Executive Board Member with responsibility for the portfolio of Finance, Business & Services is for a period of four years with the possibility of reappointment.

The salary is in accordance with Wageningen University & Research's salary policy for Executive Board members and complies with the framework of the Senior Executives in the Public and Semi-Public Sector (Standards for Remuneration) Act. The position comes with competitive secondary employment benefits. The place of employment is Wageningen.



Procedure

Maes & Lunau Executive Search supports Wageningen University & Research during the selection procedure for an Executive Board Member.

Application procedure

The application procedure is carried out by the Supervisory Board, which is responsible for appointing members of the WUR Executive Board. The profile for this position was adopted by the Supervisory Board after consultation of the Executive Board and after advice from the central participation bodies. The selection committee consists of members of the board of directors, the supervisory board, staff directors and a delegation from the central participation bodies.

The selection procedure is as follows:

- Approach and interview candidates by Maes & Lunau.
- Presentation of longlisted candidates 23rd June 2025.
- Presentation of shortlisted candidates 4th September 2025.
- 1st round interviews, 10th September 12.00 – 15.00 hrs, 12th September 09.00 – 14.00 hrs.
- 2nd round interviews, 19th September 12.00 – 15.30 hrs.
- The Supervisory Board invites the nominated candidates for an interview.
- The Supervisory Board requests the advice of the Central Works Council and Student Council.
- The Supervisory Board shall inform the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries, Food Security and Nature of the proposed appointment.
- Final decision appointment mid/end October 2025.

Contact information

This search is performed by Irene Wolfs, partner at Maes & Lunau. For more information about this position, please contact Inte Koopman, research consultant via inte.koopman@maeslunau.com or T 020-5356268.



Maes & Lunau: Beyond the obvious

We always go that little bit further in everything we do – go beyond the obvious. And why? Because every organisation needs an inspiring leader with unifying qualities and a clear vision. As an executive search firm, our aim is to play an important role in this by helping organisations to improve. This begins by understanding where the organisation wants to go, as well as getting a good sense of the culture, the people and the organisation itself. We will then work on creating a very clear profile which will form the basis for evaluating candidates. We are there for the candidate and the client when the ideal candidate starts in their appointment and continue to keep in touch long afterwards.

Insights in search

Our process is transparent. We say what we do, do what we say and never give up. During the process we hear and see many things and share this information with our clients and candidates. We provide insights in search. Sometimes, when we think a different choice of candidates can be more successful, we will endeavour to make our point by of course talking it through with the client and explain our reasoning.

Your success is what motivates us

Over the past 47 years we have felt responsible for the success of our clients and our candidates. This can only be done with professional and passionate people who are experienced, have the right skills and are genuinely committed. This is how we get results for the organisations and candidates we work for. We believe that success comes from the talent and drive people have. It goes without saying that there's nothing better than combining the success of our clients and candidates.