

Press statement on the vote of no confidence

The Central Student Council (CSR) voted to lift the vote of no confidence against the university's Executive Board (CvB) – a decision that reflects our commitment to a fair, transparent mediation process focused on student interests and democratic accountability. As a result of the vote on October 28, the CSR decided to reopen formal communication with the CvB. We, the students, have power – power to ensure democratic participation, power to be an active force for accountability rather than a passive participant.

The vote does not mark the end of a struggle for structural change within UvA medezeggenschap.¹ Rather, it is the starting point of re-building a functioning relationship with the CvB and securing a better foundation for our joint work with the Board. The aftermath of the vote of no confidence and the mediation has enabled us to find mutual commitments to address specific concerns raised by the student body. Those cover, in our own terms: institutional fees, collaborations with Israeli universities, the right to protest and to ensure safety while doing so. Lifting the vote of no confidence does not imply a full endorsement of the administration's past actions but rather a commitment to check and balances and ongoing accountability.

Why was the vote taken in the first (and second) place?

Last academic year, the CSR lost trust in the CvB in April over institutional tuition fees. Acting on student complaints, the CSR initially found evidence of overpayment and formally alerted the CvB eight times in the period from February until April 2024. The point of institutional fees was addressed in mediation and put to rest. Nonetheless, the CSR's underlying concern remained: we observed that the issues were not treated with due seriousness, and meaningful action only occurred after the situation escalated to a vote of no confidence. The vote was re-confirmed and restated in May, prompted by the violent eviction of the encampments at Roeterseiland and BG4.

Following the vote, the CSR and the CvB agreed to enter into mediation. Two mediation sessions were held in early and mid-July, and the sessions continued into late August and early September. The last session occurred in the middle of October.

What did mediation achieve?

Short-term topics of improvement, as agreed upon by both CvB and CSR are measures instituting clarity on roles and expectations, formulating a code of conduct, and better rules for communication and information-sharing, as well as better agenda- and goals-setting. Furthermore, the CvB and the CSR agreed to work on finding escalation mechanisms – establishing a system where the CSR would not need recourse to last-resort tools (such as the vote of no confidence) to ring the bell about an issue we deem important.

Long term-topics we will be working on are respecting the representativeness of students in the CSR and discussing how the structure of medezeggenschap can be adapted or elaborated upon. Further, we will be addressing safety on campus and police on campus, ethical collaborations with other universities, as well as social safety issues (sensitivity and boundaries, human rights,

¹ Medezeggenschap = roughly translated as 'co-determination'. Medezeggenschap is the exercise of influence of UvA students in the decision-making of the university. Students participate in deliberations with the UvA management (CvB) about university policies in an organized and legally established form.

accessibility). Within the process of mediation, mutual agreements were made between the CSR and the CvB. They included providing consent rights to the CSR on the new house rules, advisory rights to the ethical framework for collaborations, and input in the processes of crisis policy. The CSR and the CvB will also work on better information sharing between the two bodies to produce more effective and productive working relations.

Why was the vote lifted?

This vote was not taken lightly. In addition to the outcomes of the mediation, we decided to re-enter into formal relationships with the CvB because we recognize that student voices must be actively included in UvA decision-making. The issues surrounding maintaining no confidence in the Executive Board entailed major consequences for all students. For example, a non-functioning medezeggenschap would cause dire delays on the university's accreditation (ITK). In the worst-case scenario, this would entail increasing tuition fees and could jeopardize specific programs, since, in the face of budget cuts, being targeted by quality assurance would help in their complete removal. We take our responsibility to protect students seriously and, considering the pledges made during mediation, lifted the vote.

As the council, we believe that students must have a decisive role in shaping university policies, and we will continue advocating for changes that make the administration more accountable to the student community. This decision is only a step in that direction. We call on the CvB to honour its commitments for more inclusive decision-making and to address the structural challenges that led to the vote of no confidence in the first place.

Further, the CSR undertakes to be as transparent as possible about the process now that it ended. Due to confidentiality agreements during the mediation, the council did not speak out to third parties about the status of the vote of no confidence.

We remain steadfast in our duty to hold the CvB accountable, and we encourage all students to join us in ensuring that our university reflects the values of equity, transparency, and collective responsibility. At the same time, we look forward to working together with the CvB on improving our university.
