

# **Under pressure: the impact of (upcoming) budget cuts at Utrecht University**



Publication by the Teaching Community at UU (T@UU) and the Utrecht Young Academy (UYA)

Major budget cuts are coming to Utrecht University, but how will they unfold, and what do staff<sup>1</sup> members really think about them? Despite the scale of this shift, the most significant financial reorganization in decades, little is known about how it will affect the daily reality of UU employees. To shed light on staff perspectives and concerns, the Teaching Community at Utrecht University (T@UU) and the Utrecht Young Academy (UYA) launched a university-wide survey<sup>2</sup>. Their goal: to make sure that the voices of those who teach, research and support at UU are heard in this time of uncertainty.

### ***The survey***

The survey drew 212 responses from staff across all faculties and job levels. Assistant professors made up the largest group (39%), followed by associate professors (14%) and support staff (14%). Other groups include PhD candidates (9%), professors (8%), (junior) teachers (8%) and post-docs (5%). The Faculty of Humanities was most represented (38%), followed by Social and Behavioral Sciences (22%). The remaining respondents came from Law, Economics and Governance (10%), Science (10%), Veterinary Medicine (7%), Geosciences (6%), Medicine (2%) and the University Corporate Offices (3%). A majority (71%) reported holding a permanent contract.

### ***Key take aways***

- **Deep concern and negative outlook:** most staff view the budget cuts as harmful, expecting declines in both teaching and research quality.
- **Rising workload and pressure:** larger class sizes, less research time, and reduced flexibility, leading to more stress and overtime.
- **Job insecurity hits early career staff hardest:** non-renewal of temporary contracts and reduced opportunities heighten uncertainty, especially for junior academics.
- **Declining morale and job satisfaction:** staff report lower enthusiasm and motivation, with many considering leaving academia altogether.
- **Lack of involvement and unclear communication:** many do not feel included in decision-making and struggle to understand how the cuts will affect them personally.
- **Support needs remain unmet:** staff call for clearer communication, workload reduction, mental health resources and stronger advocacy from the university.
- **Perceived inadequate response from UU:** despite some positive actions, the university's approach is seen as insufficient.

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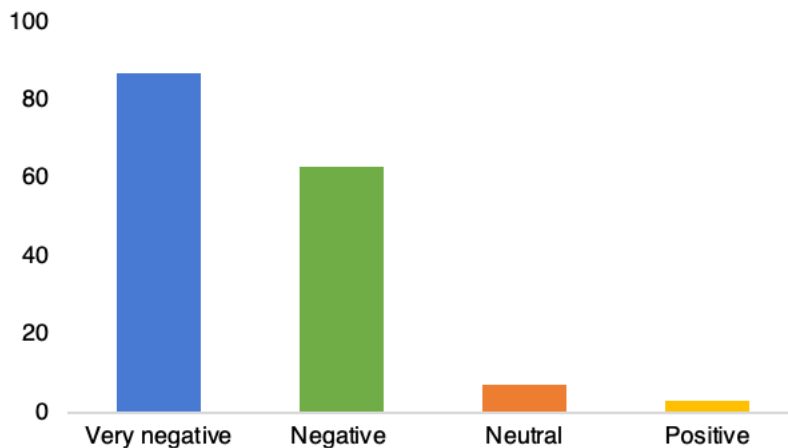
<sup>1</sup> The term 'staff' is used throughout this publication to references all groups of respondents that filled in this survey, which includes assistant and associate professors, full professors, PhD candidates, post-docs and support staff.

<sup>2</sup> While the survey provides insights across faculties and job levels, the responses are not fully representative of Utrecht University staff as a whole. Certain groups and faculties are overrepresented, reflecting self-selection into the survey. Achieving representativeness was not the primary goal; rather, the survey aimed to capture experiences and perspectives from a diverse range of staff members.

## Upcoming budget cuts

The vast majority of respondents (72%) are aware of the upcoming budget cuts. Most (93%) view these cuts in a (strongly) negative light, expressing serious concern about their potential impact.

Figure 1. Distribution of perceived effects of budget cuts on work.



Respondents pointed to a range of budget-cutting measures, either currently being implemented or planned for the near future, including: not renewing temporary contracts, implementing a hiring freeze, discontinuing study programmes, increasing class sizes, reducing research time, cutting administrative leave ('strooitijd'), shifting focus toward AI, reducing 'buy-out' time, tightening building opening hours, increasing Dutch-language instruction, and altering assessment methods, such as allocating fewer hours for exams or relying more heavily on multiple-choice questions.

As one respondent puts it:

*"Hiring freeze, so not extending temporary contracts, not replacing teachers who retire or fall ill; focusing on AI; merging or treat to remove study programmes; higher workload; less or no money for research or initiatives; making it harder for international teachers and students; grants become useless because they are considered as part of one's pre-existing research time; possibly moving office after already having a flex kind of desk; overall atmosphere that we all need to work harder and not complain because "things are hard and will get harder"."*

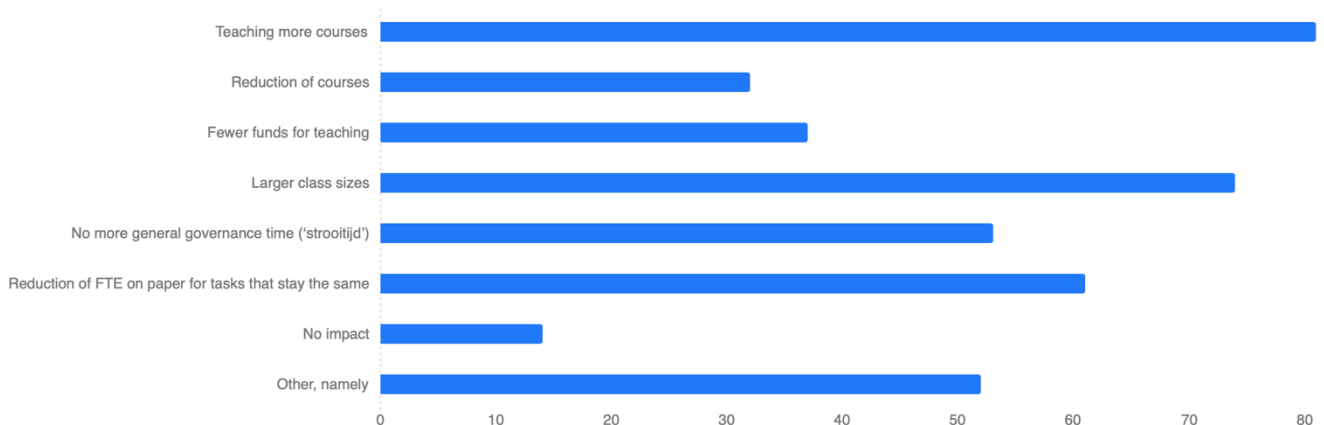
- Assistant professor at the faculty of Social and Behavioral Sciences.

These examples paint a clear picture: the anticipated measures are wide-ranging and far-reaching. Staff perceptions reflect this severity. More than half (54%) of the respondents expressed a strongly negative view of the upcoming budget cuts. 58 percent of respondents see that their enthusiasm for teaching/ research was negatively influenced by the budget cuts.

## Impact on teaching

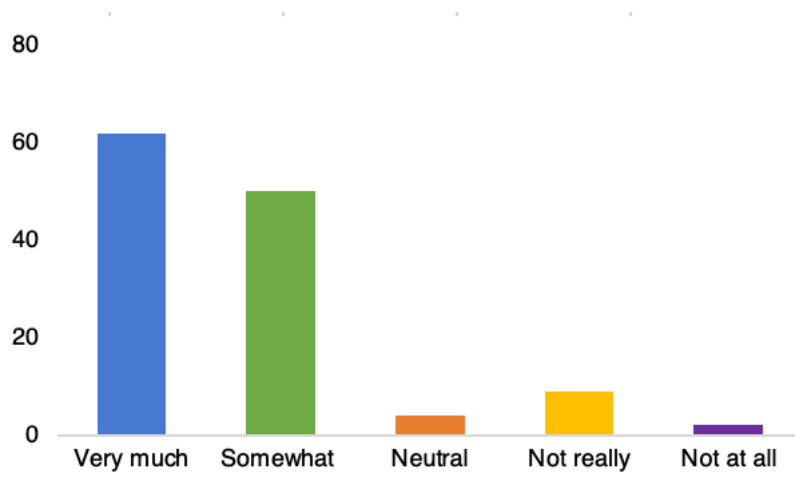
If staff perceive the budget cuts negatively, what effects do they expect – particularly on their core responsibilities? Many respondents anticipate that (their) teaching will be significantly affected. The most frequently mentioned changes include teaching more courses and handling larger class sizes. Other expected consequences that are not mentioned in figure 2 are fewer experimental or interdisciplinary courses, reduced use of student assistants, limited opportunities for teaching ‘buy-outs’, and less time available for student supervision and support.

Figure 2. Effects of the (upcoming) budget cuts on teaching.



These anticipated changes also raise concerns about teaching quality. When asked about this, most respondents (76%) indicated that they expect the overall quality of teaching to decline. 42 percent expect a very strong decline.

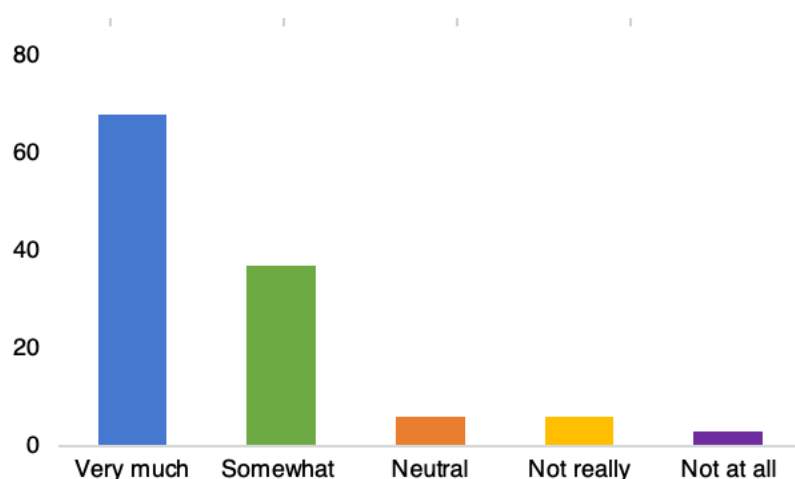
Figure 3. Distribution of affected ability to teach at the quality level that respondents want.



## Impact on research

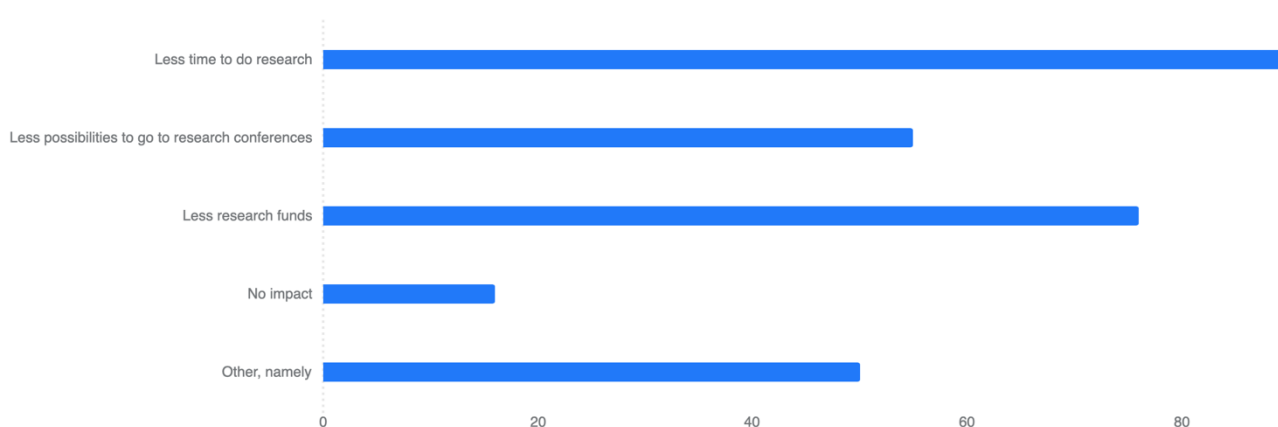
Budget cuts also affect research activities, as the same concerns raised for teaching apply here: the quality of research is likely to decline under financial constraints. 71 percent expect a quality decline, and 46 percent expect a very strong decline of research quality.

Figure 4. Distribution of affected ability to conduct research at the quality level that respondents want.



Many respondents indicate they will have less time and fewer resources to conduct research. Others highlight the reduced time available to publish, lower chances of securing grants and an increased focus on teaching at the expense of research. Additionally, some mention that opportunities for fellowships or other forms of research support are diminishing, further threatening the development of their research profiles.

Figure 5. Effects of the (upcoming) budget cuts on research.



### **What impacts staff the most?**

The most recurring effects are an overall increase in workload, particularly in teaching, while research time is systematically reduced or increasingly difficult to protect. Many respondents express frustration about the loss of ‘strooitijd’ and the abolishment of teaching buy-outs, both of which previously allowed for a balance between teaching and research duties. As a result, staff are expected to do more work within fewer hours and often work overtime or sacrifice private time to maintain quality standards.

This intensifies the risk of stress and burnout, particularly in the context of broader job insecurity: several respondents are worried about losing their jobs, know colleagues who are at risk, or already face non-extension of temporary contracts. Others anticipate future reorganizations that may further threaten their positions. Many also worry about the long-term impact on career opportunities, since reduced time and funding for research hinders their ability to build academic profiles, apply for grants and engage in professional development.

Overall, the changes result in a general demotivation and decline in work satisfaction, with several respondents stating that the pressure will negatively affect not only their well-being but also the quality of education and research provided.

*“Uncertainty about future and fact that everyone everywhere at UU and elsewhere is affected and that workload increases everywhere - meaning everyone I work with has even less time to do the things they do which in turn affects my work because this depends on the work of other people and then negative spiral into no-one being able to do job the way they want it to do, people being demoralized, and ongoing uncertainty about future and feeling government does not care about teaching & research at all.”*

- Assistant professor at the faculty of Science

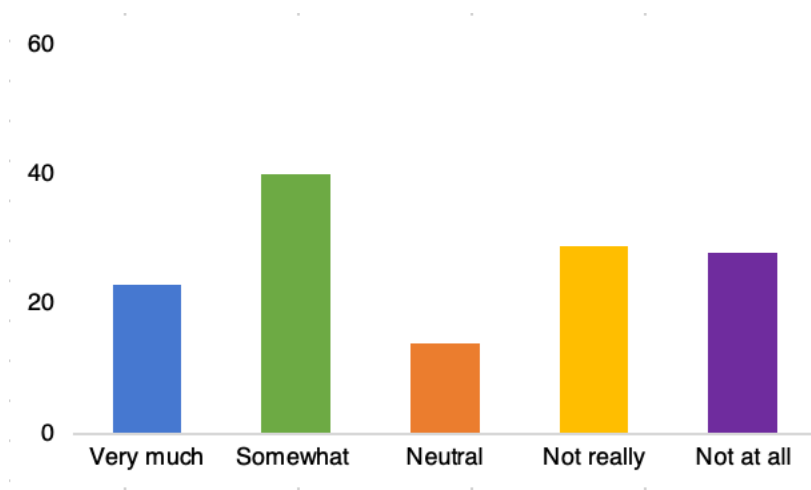
### **Job security and well-being**

Some respondents highlight that their job security is impacted by the budget cuts; 43 percent report that their job security has been impacted, while 39 percent do not experience an impact on their job security. Especially early career academics and junior staff on temporary contracts express concerns regarding job security:

*“I will be moving away from UU as my temporary contract will be finished soon. This is not because of the budget cuts but these definitely do not encourage me to stay at UU as the possibility of a stable position here are unlikely. Job security (or even outlook) within academia for Early Career Researchers is a disgrace.”*

- Post-doc at the faculty of Science

Figure 6. Affected job security by the (upcoming) budget cuts.



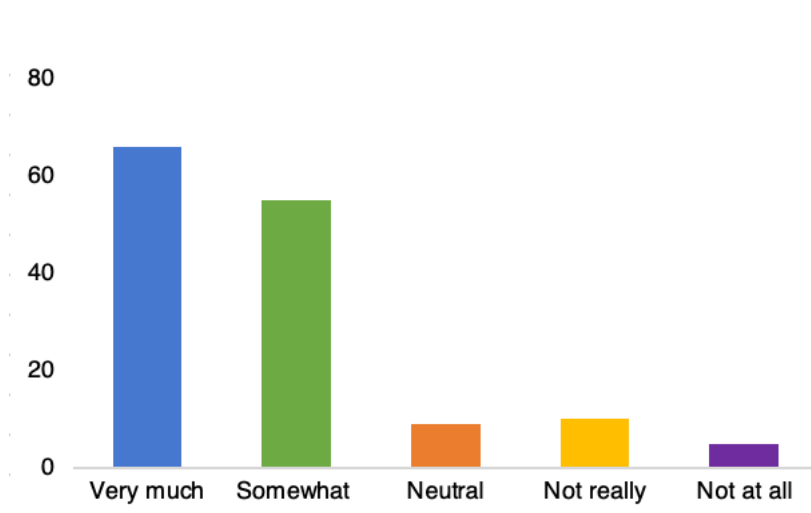
When asked about work-life balance, 21 percent of respondents indicate the ability to achieve a healthy balance is very much impacted. In terms of well-being, most respondents highlight that their well-being is somewhat impacted (48%). 33 percent see their well-being very much impacted.

*"It's all very depressing and I fear for my own future as I do for the wellbeing of people at our department as well as the quality of the work we do."*

- Assistant professor at the faculty of Humanities

The results show a clear impact on stress and work pressure among staff. About 45 percent of respondents report a significant increase in their own stress levels due to the upcoming budget cuts. Additionally, 51 percent observed a sharp decline in the morale of affected colleagues, while 89 percent noticed a general drop in staff morale.

Figure 7. Distribution of increased stress by the (upcoming) budget cuts.



*"I'm extremely stressed. I feel unimportant and redundant. Why bother working hard for a university that thinks I'm so unimportant?"*

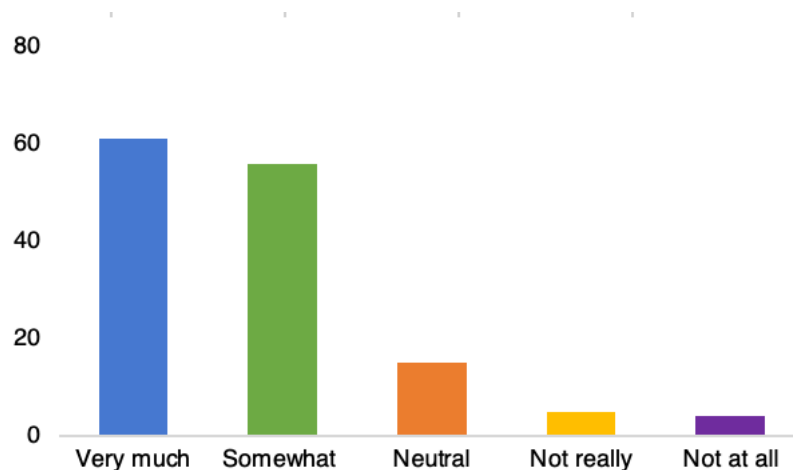
- Post-doc at the faculty of Geoscience

Work pressure is also on the rise: 42 percent indicate that their workload has increased considerably, and 80 percent report an overall increase in work pressure.

*"The budget cuts mean more work pressure across the board, coupled with the constant stress and uncertainty regarding what lies ahead. This means there is very little time and above all "head space" to do meaningful writing. The days are filled with teaching, supervision, and endless meetings."*

- Assistant professor at the faculty of Humanities

Figure 8. Perceived increased work pressure due to (upcoming) budget cuts.



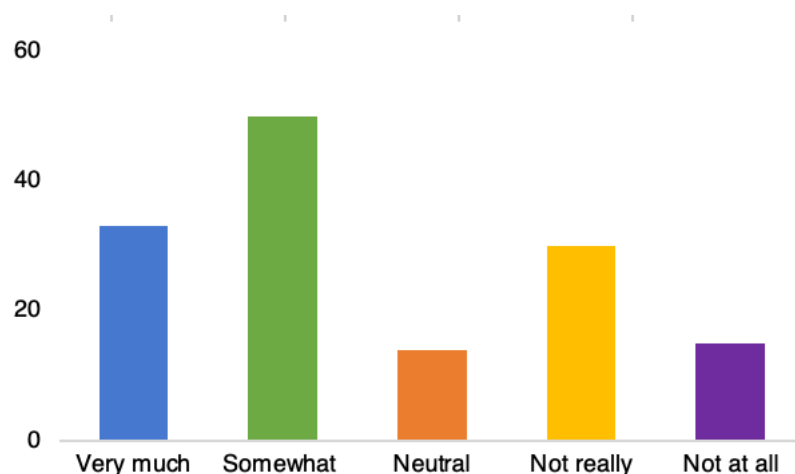
### **Job satisfaction and leaving academia**

When asked about their overall job satisfaction, most respondents indicate that they are either very satisfied (35%) or satisfied (33%). However, a striking 60 percent report that their job satisfaction has declined over the past year, while only 6 percent experienced an improvement.

Regarding whether they feel valued in their work, 60 percent feel (very) valued, while 20 percent feel not particularly valued, and 9 percent do not feel valued at all. Respondents were also asked if they still feel valued specifically in light of the budget cuts. The results show a similar pattern: 58 percent continue to feel valued, however, 10 percent does not feel appreciated and recognized at all.



Figure 9. Perceived recognition and appreciation for work despite (upcoming) budget cuts.

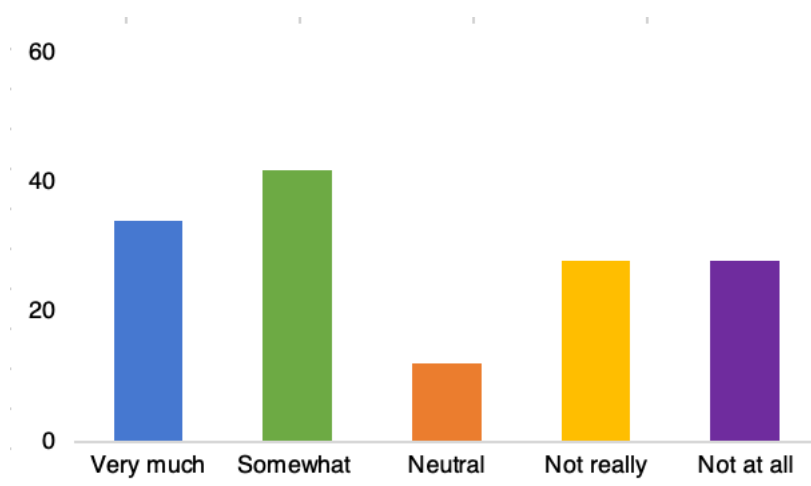


When asked whether respondents have considered leaving academia as a result of the budget cuts, the responses paint a nuanced picture. Over half of the respondents (52%) have thought about leaving, with 23 percent indicating they are seriously considering this option.

*"I fear for good people leaving or not even considering to start working in academia at all, due to this direction we are moving in."*

- Assistant professor at the faculty of Law, Economics and Governance

Figure 10. Distribution of respondents personally considering leaving academia due to the (upcoming) budget cuts.

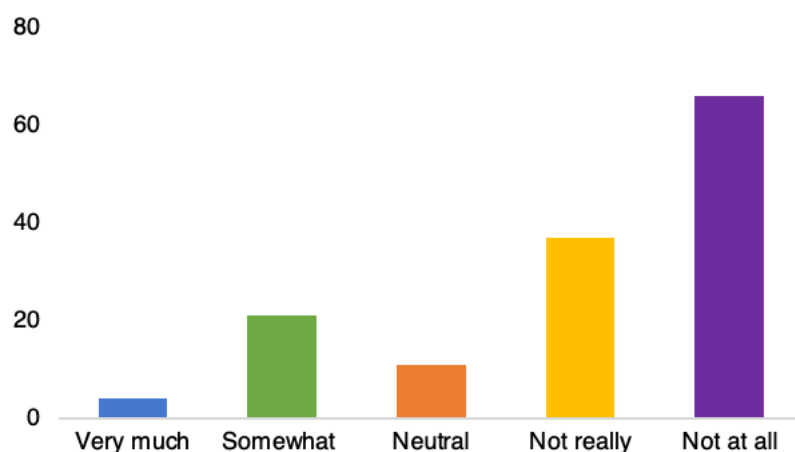


### **Information and support**

The largest group of respondents (44%) feels adequately informed about the budget cuts, yet 25 percent feel (very) uninformed about what lies ahead. Nearly half (49%) indicate that it is (very) unclear how the cuts will affect them personally.

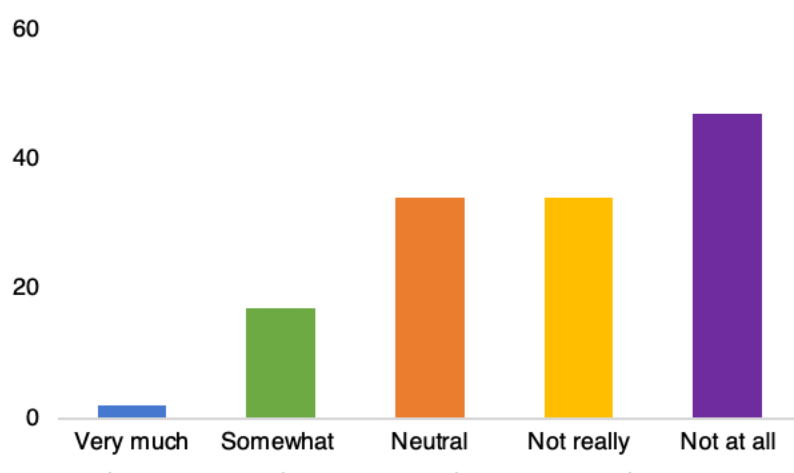
A majority of respondents (53%) feel very or somewhat informed about decision-making at the department or faculty level, while 8% feel completely uninformed. However, when asked about their sense of involvement in these decisions, 47% indicated that they do not feel involved at all.

*Figure 11. Feeling of involvement in decision-making regarding the upcoming budget cuts at the department/ faculty level.*



Staff were also asked whether they observe any positive actions from the university to mitigate the effects of the upcoming budget cuts. The largest group (38%) reported that they do not really see any such actions, while about a third noted somewhat positive steps. When asked about their overall satisfaction with the university's response, the largest share (33%) said they are not satisfied at all, and in total, 57% expressed a negative view of how the university is handling the situation.

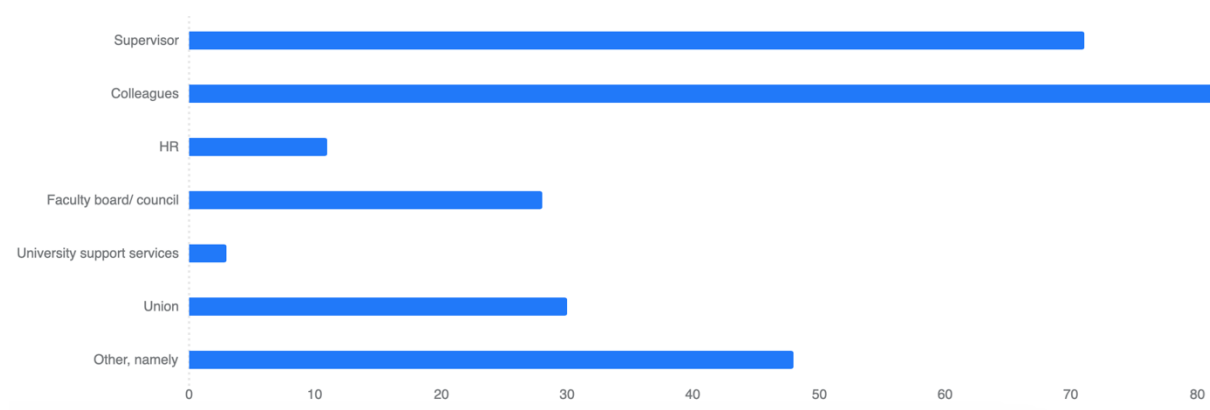
*Figure 12. Satisfaction with the university's response to the (upcoming) budget cuts.*



When asked about where to find support, the picture is mixed: 34 percent do not really know where to turn for support, while another 34 percent somewhat know where to find it. Most staff primarily rely on colleagues or supervisors for support<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> Most respondents who answered 'other', answered that they did not seek any support.

Figure 13. Sought support regarding the (upcoming) budget cuts.



Staff were also asked what kinds of support they would like to receive in light of the budget cuts. The most frequently mentioned needs include clearer communication and stronger advocacy regarding the measures being taken, as well as concrete workload reduction. Respondents also expressed a desire for financial compensation for additional tasks, career development support, mental health resources, legal assistance and greater involvement of staff in decision-making processes.

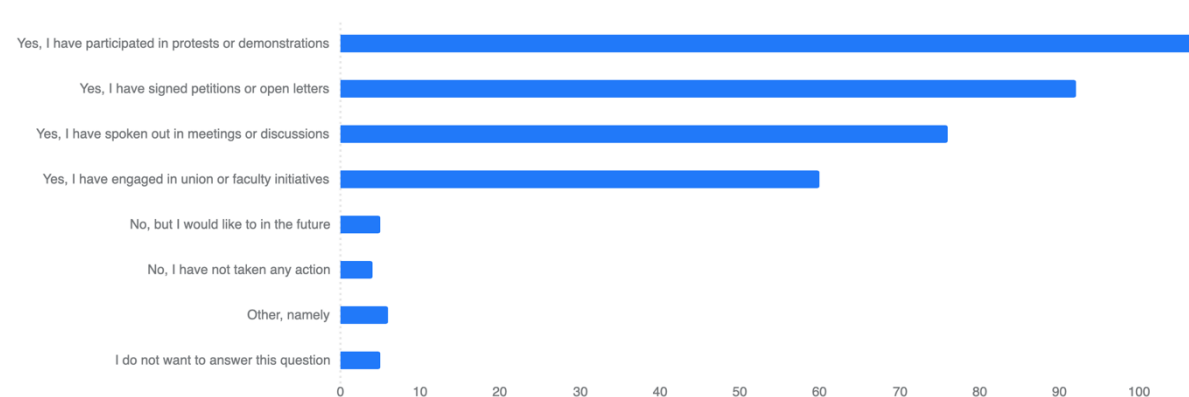
*“Clear communication, especially for early career staff it would be fair if it could be communicated if there is still a future here for us. Now it sometimes feels like we are treated like: when it will turn out fine, we can stay but should absolutely have no hope for any career growth; when it will be 'necessary', we will be the first ones to go.”*

- Assistant professor at the faculty of Law, Economics and Governance

## Actions

The final question of the survey asked what actions staff had personally taken in response to the budget cuts. The most common responses were participation in demonstrations (76%), signing petitions (65%) and speaking up in meetings or discussions (54%).

Figure 14. Taken action in response to the (upcoming) budget cuts



## ***In conclusion***

The results of this survey offer a clear and sobering picture: the upcoming budget cuts are causing significant concern, frustration and uncertainty among staff at Utrecht University. While some employees remain committed and satisfied with their work, many are already experiencing higher work pressure, reduced research time, declining morale and growing insecurity about their jobs and careers. Worryingly, a substantial number of staff are considering leaving academia altogether. The findings also reveal that staff do not feel sufficiently involved in decision-making, and many struggle to find clear information or support. Despite some positive actions, the university's overall response is perceived as inadequate by most respondents. This underscores an urgent need for more transparent communication, concrete support measures, and meaningful involvement of staff in shaping the way forward. If left unaddressed, the combined impact of these changes risks not only the well-being of university employees but also the long-term quality of education and research at Utrecht University.

## ***What can we do?***

The survey results show that the impact of the budget cuts goes far beyond finances: they threaten the well-being, motivation and long-term prospects of staff. To address this, Utrecht University must go beyond acknowledging the problem and take concrete action. First, **communicate clearly and consistently** about the scope, rationale and timing of the cuts, so staff know what to expect. Second, **involve employees meaningfully** in shaping the measures at faculty and departmental levels, for example by setting up open consultations, staff panels and transparent feedback loops. Third, **reduce workload where possible**, by prioritizing essential tasks, streamlining administrative processes and ensuring adequate teaching support. Fourth, **safeguard research time and career opportunities**, especially for early career academics, by protecting buy-outs where possible and offering mentoring and development programs. Fifth, **strengthen support systems**, from mental health resources to peer-support networks, so that staff do not feel left alone to cope with the pressure. Finally, **acknowledge and value staff contributions** visibly, reinforcing that their work is essential to the university's mission even in difficult times.

By acting along these lines, UU can not only mitigate the negative effects of the cuts but also foster a stronger sense of solidarity, trust and resilience within its academic community.

## ***What are you fellow colleagues thinking?***

Throughout this report, we have included quotes from colleagues. To share even more experiences and reflections, we've compiled this list of authentic voices from the UU community. You are not alone in this — especially in challenging times, staying connected and supporting each other is essential. Take care of one another and keep the conversation going about what these changes mean for us all. Read here what others have shared:

### **Consequences of budget cuts:**

“Many teachers (with temporary contracts) **leaving** and the remaining staff having to take over their teaching duties (tutorials, grading) - this might also ask a lot of **mental labor** as an assistant professor coordinator might now need to lead a full professor on how they should teach and grade. I do struggle with the idea that the budget cuts will mean **lower-quality education** will have to be provided (eg multiple choice exam as an assessment, while open-ended questions are a better fit to assess the knowledge transfer; more lectures, fewer tutorials).”

“If you are not publishing sufficiently you quickly become **irrelevant** and this will serve as a barrier to professional growth.”

“Decrease research time. We do not have 'strooitijd', which means that leadership (b&o etc) is already decreasing research time. If that time will be limited even more, either time for employees, my research time or my private life will be decreased. The UU needs to think very carefully about this: what can you ask from your leaders? A decision/vision needs to be formulated. **The UU cannot have it all.**”

“Abandonment of strooitijd as this means that **education is going to spill over into research time**; and the reduction of opportunities for teaching buy-out with research money as this would mean that I would hesitate to invest in writing a research grant proposal.”

“beeindigen tijdelijke contracten > **meer onderwijs dat niet op mijn expertise gebied ligt**; beurzen voor onderwijsinnovatie moet je uitvoeren in je onderzoekstijd (zonder dat dat erkend of gewaardeerd wordt); het opheffen van cursussen en programma's op onduidelijke gronden en zonder dat de juiste paden of governance gevolgd zijn stemt **somber.**”

“You didn't ask about **leadership**. I will cut down on investment in leadership and the glue that keeps sections together. The amount of **structural, unpaid, overwork has been excessive for years**; we've raised the issue for years; nothing seriously has been done about it. The budget cuts, and the way this has been handled by our leadership at the faculty and university level, has basically ruined the remaining goodwill I still had towards this university. So I'm going to try to move towards a **"9-to-5 mentality" since "work doesn't love you back"**. All people with whom I work in this university - students, junior scholars, colleagues from my own and other faculties - will be affected, since my standard answer to requests will now be 'no'.”

“Reduced research funding opportunities, as I am just starting out as an assistant professor and it is **very difficult to acquire funding** and build my research group with only 0.4 fte of research time and very limited funding opportunities.”

“Higher workpressure for teaching as a result of having a lot **fewer people to do the work that we cannot replace**, will result in less time for research. If not on paper, then in practice.”

“The lack of **spontaneous interactions** and presentations at a conference makes our research more predictable and therefore likely **less innovative**.”

“I think the work in the realm where I work could be much more efficient (financially), but because **now everything is unclear**, the decisions being made seem **vague, counterintuitive, and are not communicated clearly**.”

“I am afraid that if I do not get time to serve on committees and review grants and journal articles, we will **isolate ourselves as an institution**. Who is going to serve on my PhD committees if I do not serve on other committees? Also, if applying for grants means we have to do our other 'research duties' (service) in our spare time, I wonder **who will still apply for the grants**? And is it reasonable to ask that as an institution, that people apply for grants and if successful they can do all the other research activities in their free time?”

“**Uncertainty about future** and fact that everyone everywhere at uu and elsewhere is affected and that workload increases everywhere - meaning everyone I work with has even less time to do the things they do which in turn affects my work because this depends on the work of other people and then **negative spiral** into no-one being able to do job the way they want it to do, people being **demoralized**, and ongoing **uncertainty** about future and feeling government does not care about teaching & research at all (see also nee cuts in voorjaarsnota).”

“More teaching/no governance time, will increase workload, stress, en **reduce my work enjoyment**.”

“The budget cuts mean more **work pressure** across the board, coupled with the constant stress and uncertainty regarding what lies ahead. This means there is very little time and above all "head space" to do meaningful writing. The days are filled with teaching, supervision, and endless meetings.”

“Reduced funding for research, increase of overhead. This kills all possibilities for international grants. This is a **career killer for any non-Dutch researcher**.”

“Research limitations in particular funding. **Huge amounts of time will be wasted** by everyone scrambling for ever smaller pots of money.”

“Our justification for our ba/ma is lost bc of general cuts. There is no leadership on what is more or less relevant for our students. **Short sighted decisions** across the board without long term vision: **penny wise pound foolish**. Some courses /aspects

of the curriculum are crucial. But motto seems to be 'all staff wants to keep more hours for their course'. **Guiding principle should be quality of education!** Every decision that is not taken in that perspective is damaging. For clinical programs cutting on clinical / teaching staff means greater ethical and moral problems of offering our program to students..as **we do not offer them a quality program.**"

"There are no benefits to doing contract work anymore and no ability to buy myself out of teaching, so there is no clear incentive to spend weeks working (very, very long hours!) on impactful work for governments, for example, as there is no tangible benefit. There are **no promotions, no salary benefits, no buyout from teaching** - so it will be very hard to justify doing this (even if there was time) - especially in a packed schedule full of courses. This means **I do less impactful work** (and that's a shame as UU has been all into impact now for several years), my networks diminish, my ability to do research-led teaching, my ability to send students for internships, bring speakers from outside to the classroom...All those things diminish. Also, my research will suffer because this source of information and insight will be gone. I also just fear there will be no time for serious work on books, grants, etc."

"Senior staff have effectively had their research time cut by 10% with the invention of a new task category called "leadership," with assignable hours. While this new category does recognize and allot hours to some old tasks for the first time (desirable), it does not see all that we do. And if not all the leadership hours are filled, then we get more teaching tasks. This is a **burden** and a disincentive to function at a high level outside of the University, since leadership of external or international publications, committees, societies, etc is not recognized. Too bad."

"While it's difficult to estimate how the revised BA programme will impact my work, I do think this will eventually have the biggest impact as courses are revised to have **fewer examinations and less time for feedback**. For now, though, the biggest impact is in cutting back strooitijd so my teaching load increases to 47,5 DCU."

"No more time for research, no more time for applying for funding, ... this will severely impact my career, **increase of work pressure + chance to burn-out will increase.**"

"All of them - it's one **horrible cocktail of negative impact that is complete intertwined** (sorry to be so negative!)."

"In case programmes were removed including one where I'm teaching, I'd be asked to teach new courses. I may be asked to teach courses in multiple programmes, having to adjust to different settings and never getting to know the students better. Same applies to thesis supervision. All in all, I'd most likely **suffer consequences also in terms of research time** - which will affect both the quality as well as opportunities to conduct research."

"**Teaching load was disproportionately underestimated** in the current DCU system, but a series of solutions were offered to balance teaching and research time. This will no longer be the case, meaning that we will have less time and interest in applying for

small grants and pilot research projects. Our research performance will diminish and teaching will no longer be connected with cutting edge development in the subject .”

“Effects on teaching also **take away joy**.”

“Less time, more workload and overall treat of things getting worst makes it impossible to **1) do the job in high quality, 2) feel motivated to work at all**.”

“The **reduction of international students** is a serious issue for one program in which I teach, which is in English. This reduction in possible classes in the long term raises serious questions about existential security of my position.”

“My **mental state**. I have become very stressed about the news, as well as my colleagues.”

“Possible reorganisation: **I might lose my job**. After that, the abolishment of strooitijd and abolishing of teaching buy-out both have dramatic effects on my work, including motivation.”

### **Support:**

“I will be moving away from UU as my temporary contract will be finished soon. This is not because of the budget cuts but these definitely do not encourage me to stay at UU as the possibility of a **stable position here are unlikely. Job security (or even outlook) within Academia for Early Career Researchers is a disgrace**.”

“Clear communication, especially for early career staff it would be fair if it could be communicated if there is **still a future here for us**. Now it sometimes feels like we are treated like: when it will turn out fine, we can stay but should absolutely **have no hope for any career growth**; when it will be 'necessary', we will be the first ones to go.”

“**I just want to be able to do my work, that's all**, and my supervisor, and others, have no clue about how this is actually going to play out so my supervisor cannot help me. My supervisor also emphasises the need to comply with the increase in teaching but I don't want to just teach in life and that's what I fear will happen. We will just teach all the time, and in a few years, we won't be competitive on the job market and then we'll also be stuck. I fear this will have an effect in reducing the **quality of all work** - teaching included - if our research, travel, and engagement with society is diminished (and it will diminish because it looks like we won't have time for much).”

“The issue is that I feel that my work is **not appreciated** very much, difficult to keep being motivated.”

“The workload will stay the same I think, basically removing the work so that junior teachers are not needed anymore after a while which is of course a fucking great solution. I am **very frustrated** at the moment, so it is nice to vent in a survey. It seems like my function is seen as something not necessary at all if they are going to hire less junior teachers. Finding budget for hiring a new UD is of course very fucking important



but hiring junior teachers is not. **Seems like my work is not important after all, huh?** I would like mental health support and support finding new employment! It would be great if I could find a way to be **less pessimistic about my future career.**”

“Workload reduction (or at least realistic changes in workload), clear communication, transparent decision making process, making use of expertise that we have in house to guide decisions on what would be effective changes to the curriculum, or how we can communicate clearly etc. Now all decisions seem **top down** and it is completely **unclear who was consulted** and when.”

“I face a dilemma: the department informs colleagues about the situation at hand - meetings on prospects for the department re. budget cuts. But I don't attend these meetings, as I am at the final stage of my PhD (passed my contract) and want to / can afford to focus solely on writing matters. Therefore, I don't know the details, I could find out and there are several people to turn to (department manager, bachelor manager, other senior colleagues). And I get the impression that my **perspectives for working in university were already tight**, and with the (upcoming and present) cuts are even more negative.”

“Just a good atmosphere to discuss and work on those budget cuts. Starts to feel **messy** (like running around) and **ieder voor zich**’.”

“De workload is al heel hoog en ik weet al dat ik toch niet mag blijven. Ik word hooguit eerder ontslagen, maar daar ga ik niet vanuit. Ik maak me dus niet zo zeer zorgen over mijn eigen positie, maar wel over de bezuinigingen in het algemeen en de **consequenties voor de academische wereld en de maatschappij**.”

“Clarity on what I can expect, especially in terms of changes in the 'taakstelling', and clarity about what is expected of me to maintain my research time. I am afraid that there will be some **randomness or covertness** when it comes to changes in research time, in the sense that some UD's will get less research time and others maintain their research time, and that there is not a very clear or fair process.”

“More fundamentally, there is **no trust on the workfloor** in our faculty board, and especially in the Dean. This creates additional stress. Yes, they communicate, but if you've lost our trust because of earlier top-down actions, then we also don't trust the communication.”

### **On impact on teaching / research**

“**Im extremely stressed**. I feel **unimportant** and **redundant**. Why bother working hard for a university that thinks I'm so unimportant.”

“Less interest to continue working cooperatively, and to contribute. The **pleasure doing so is gone**.”

“My faculty uses the the 40% research time first, when acquired research funding. This means that all 'general' research activities, like PhD committees, reviewing for journals,

NWO committees, talking to the press, other students than your own, or colleagues, etc. will have to happen in your **own free time**. My colleagues and I calculated this is about 300 hours per year, about 2 courses. This makes it very unattractive to apply for external funding. I enjoy conducting research, but I can only do it if I get time to enjoy my free time too.”

“We are **losing the enjoyable aspects that enrich our work**, but the research will only be affected in the longer term.”

“The impact on research will be significant and extremely damaging. No teaching buyout, the department essentially robbing researchers of the money they bring in for their own salaries (up to 40%), has immense impact on one's ability to conduct **large and innovative research as part of a grant**. It is also **demoralising** to know that your research is not supported and even discouraged, unlike in all other non- Dutch universities in Europe, where scholars who bring in grants are recognised and rewarded. To keep and essentially rob a researcher of their own salary funds, which they bring into the university, is not only an exploitative practice, it might be borderline illegal under the funder's rules.”

### **Actions**

“I have not spoken out, but internally am having a good look at what is **really urgent or a priority, and what is (and always has been) 'nice to have'** and a sort of voluntary burden on teachers.”

### **General thoughts that could be shared at the end of the survey**

“I'm a postdoc with a temporary contract. My partner has a permanent contract as an assistant professor. We both moved to the Netherlands from abroad for these jobs. Already, the four year limit on temporary contract has been stressful -- I will have to work elsewhere, and cannot apply for the Veni at UU, etc, even though we cannot and do not want to move because of my partner's job and because **we just moved across an ocean to be here**. Now, we are hearing that there are no permanent jobs at all in our institute, even though people are retiring, and that there won't be anyone hired until 2030 or later. This is completely **demoralizing** from the perspective of an early career researcher.”

“Refusal to even consider the **massive cost of "support staff"** because they're not a single line item, they're budgeted across teaching/research and admin, so nobody knows what they cost and they can't be cut... meanwhile, our support staff now have their own support staff O\_o.”

“The fact that temporary contracts will not be extended, and that external funding can no longer "buy out" teaching time, massively increases both work pressure. The **uncertainty has ramifications** for various aspects of my personal life and makes **work/life balance more complicated** (which it was already in academia).”

“There is significant **personal stress** due to the **sacrifices many of us made to thrive in this job, especially women**. Some wait for a permanent position to start family life. The personal stress also accounts for those who have given up lives elsewhere (and asked their partners and families to do so) to move to the Netherlands for a permanent position in academia. The possibility of a reorganization and the possibility of losing the permanent position, potentially leads to quitting academia after having invested immense personal sacrifice.”

“If budget cuts remain inevitable, it is crucial our **work attitude and especially work load also need to change**. I would be in favor of cutting work load and ensuring the work we do (in the time set aside for it such as contract hours) is of good quality, while maintaining professional en personal wellbeing of staff and students.”

“I have been **extremely disappointed in the response** to the bezuinigingen by the university. **Complying in advance with draconian budget cuts should never have even been on the table**. The general message in official communication seems to be, "Oh well, too bad." We need the university to fight for us, not roll over. Decision-making is too opaque and bureaucratic.”

“1. I understand that the UU tries to do everything to **not have to fire colleagues**: that puts the negative feelings about the cuts in perspective. 2. "structurally reducing the number of square metres, especially in offices, so that **our accommodation better matches actual use**. This involves a reduction of approximately 15%. We will use spaces more intensively, for example by scheduling more intelligently, planning better and sharing facilities more often." If this is done on the wrong way, this will have a very negative impact on work production and work-hapiness.”

“**Especially early career colleagues will be impacted**, I've seen PhDs/postdocs **crying** in meetings.”

“I fear for **good people leaving** or not even considering to start working in academia at all, due to this direction we are moving in.”

“**UU try to do what they can** :) It's just adding extra pressure in the direction of overwork and stress that we as academic community were already struggling with and trying to reduce. But sometimes in my department there is a resistance against the idea of playing into people's strengths (e.g. people who enjoy teaching could teach more, hiring full time teachers etc.). That is regarded as 'bad' and as if research-focused people are asking too much.”

“I would like there to be more attention for people working on **temporary contracts**. Now people pretend that because it was a temporary contract the budget cuts have no real impact. But the fact that the uu but also all other universities are not hiring is devastating. Moreover, the university should take a stance and reach out to us and ask how best to support us. Perhaps offer to extend library access, let us keep the email adres to finish publications, I will lose access to the software that allows me to analyse my data etc. The university can do something to make the impact less.”

“The University management has **not shown it is backing its employees**, but silently collaborates with this (extreme) right government, while the Faculty's management presented the transition plan without financial backing, clearly showing the choices are ideological.”

“The rhetoric at faculty and university levels is completely misleading. Nobody cares about work pressure, the well-being of esp temporary staff, or anything but short-time effects. Plus: this is again an exercise in **backroom deals**, notwithstanding claims about transparency and fairness. There is **zero democratic mechanism** in place.”

“The **burden has been unequally borne**. I could wish that our excellent Humanities Faculty were better recognized for its amazing contributions to knowledge, education, and society.”

“It's all very **depressing** and I fear for my own future as I do for the **wellbeing** of people at our Dept as well as the quality of the work we do.”

“The management (from Psychology) hold a session to inform us, which I valued, but reacted very **dismissive to negative comments** or concerns from our side, indicating we just have to be motivated to get through this instead of negative.”

“The ‘taken, functies en verantwoordelijkheden’ in our department are very unclear. Decision making takes place in a small group - no formal ‘representatives’ - with **no communication or shared input from the staff**. The impact of the budget cuts ( questions above) is not so much due to the limiting of funds itself, but due to the way decisions are being made, choices made, inequality of affecting staff (‘all are treated equal but some are more equal than others’) and lack of leadership in the department.”

“I think most of the conversations regarding the budget cuts are focused on teaching/research staff. It would be good to make sure **supporting staff** is not left out of the conversation!”

“The attitude of the Executive Board is deeply **disappointing**, and many senior directors are overly compliant.”

“I feel very **sad for the students** :( UD's do not even like teaching most of the time.”

“I feel the university boards should **do more to resist and protest these budget cuts**, and to communicate this point of view to the public, especially since the uni budgets have structurally decreased since the 2000s already. We have to spark a societal debate on when we think higher education is properly financed. In any case, as it is now, the work load is too much. So if society demands this quality and this amount of education, then it should finance us more. this is perfectly possible, as its a matter of **political will**. We have to draw a line as a national community of staff, in solidarity with one another, because otherwise we will only keep working harder or we will have to decrease the quality of education. I am missing this willingness to protest, strike etc.”

“The initial roll-out of the cuts at GW was badly done. Vaessens presented the plans as **fait-accompli**, when the political situation wasn't clear yet. There was no effort in creating '**draagvlak**' before the decisions were made.”

“My department **informs me very well** of what they know and do, and they are very active in defending the interests of the staff. But the opposite is the case at the level of my faculty and the university as a whole.”

“The **early career scientists are most vulnerable** to the cuts in comparison to more senior scientists, but I see no actions taken to support us.”

“I am sure that the university could function **more cost effectively** in certain regards, for example in more interfaculty/departmental collaboration. I feel like this rather strong division between the administration offices (in some aspects) and the faculties creates an environment where decisions are not thought through and made in a way that some other department/team will be responsible for certain tasks. Just so the total budget goes down, which can be framed as a budget cut, but actually might be counterproductive.”

“By sending the message that **research is not valued** at Utrecht, the university will see its researchers who have opportunities, typically the top ones, leave. This will highly impact the university on all fronts for years to come, including its outputs, teaching and its global reputation.”

“Looking at efficient spending within the university is long overdue and the budget cuts provide a **good opportunity to check this in a serious way**. Each level (uni, faculty, department, section) has a certain amount of budget autonomy and it seems most measures are focused on keeping things the way they were as much as possible. I do not think this is realistic.”

“To be honest, I am more afraid of my job possibilities outside of the UU than my job security within the UU. I have a permanent contract, so I am currently not very afraid I will lose my job. However, I am afraid that the job will change quite a bit, and that I will have limited opportunities to change jobs if these changes make me less satisfied with this job. That kind of gives me a '**beklemmend gevoel**'. ”

“I note that **medezeggenschap** is not taken aboard in the decisionmaking. The stress and urgency around the budget cuts have ironically made this a lot worse, while it is even more important to do this carefully.”

“What is being communicated on **paper does not always translate what is happening in reality**: e.g. the policy is to not do the same work in fewer hours, but in practice this does turn out happening. Or e.g. not getting the time to realize budget cuts, because you should 'cut extra to give yourself the time' which is not possible, since the cuts are difficult to make anyway.”

“We are in a **crisis**, which is amplified by the fact that universities effectively have no **democratic** structures. Staff members who are doing the core work of the university

feel they have no say at all in what is happening. **We have been consulted too little, too late.** Our CvB will respond that we have the MZR, but law and practice have made our MZR weak. I think we need a major reform of the university structures to properly deal with major crises like the budget cuts. Some colleagues have argued for this for years, but they are sidelined by our leadership. All of this has made many colleagues disillusioned and cynical; and the top management seems to have no clue of how much goodwill has been destroyed in this process.”