

# EMPLOYEE EMPOWERMENT!

Vote for FNV Universiteit Leiden  
during University Council elections  
from 18 - 21 May 2026



## ELECTION PROGRAMME FNV Universiteit Leiden



Universiteit  
Leiden

# EMPLOYEE EMPOWERMENT!

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For the first time since years, the FNV is standing as a party in the University Council elections. In recent years, we have seen too many poor policy decisions, shrinking space for university democracy, and too little accountability from our employer. There is a clear gap between policies set on paper and the actual experience of staff. With a renewed Executive Board, there is now an opportunity to improve participation, decision-making and accountability. That is why we are stepping forward. The university we want and we deserve is one where staff feel heard, respected and taken seriously. A university where people work together constructively for high-quality education, research and knowledge-sharing. Equality must be central to this, regardless of someone's role, salary scale, background or position.

**When staff are treated as equals, everyone can do their best work and the university is stronger for it.**

The coming years will be difficult. University income is expected to decline, and budget cuts continue to loom on the horizon. Decisions will have to be made about jobs, workloads and priorities. That is why staff need a strong voice in the University Council - one that can protect all of us when difficult decisions are made. The FNV has extensive experience with reorganisations and with protecting workers from the worst effects of austerity. With a strong FNV presence on the Council we will be able to pursue three clear goals:

- Good working conditions and good employment practices
- A healthy and pleasant working environment
- A genuinely socially responsible university

## 1. GOOD WORKING CONDITIONS AND GOOD EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES

### Work pressure

Work pressure at the university is too high. Staff regularly work 80-hour weeks or take on unexpected extra shifts. Lecturers often find it difficult to take sick leave because their work cannot be covered, or because they are expected to catch up later. This is not acceptable. The university must take workload seriously and ensure that tasks are distributed realistically. If the work cannot be done by the current number of staff, then the university must either hire more people or stop doing certain tasks. Collaboration between different parts of the university can help, but only if it actually reduces work instead of increasing it. New technologies, including GenAI and digitalization, should be introduced only after critical and collective consultation, and only when they are used to reduce workload. They must not become an excuse to cut jobs.

### Transparent leadership

Staff have a right to clear information. Managers and administrators must share relevant information in a timely and understandable way. This requires clear procedures, but it also requires a different attitude. Decisions that affect staff should not be made first and justified later. Staff input must be requested before decisions are made, and that input must genuinely shape policy. The university also needs to learn from its mistakes. Accountability should not be a box-ticking exercise. It should lead to better decisions.

### Equality

Every staff member matters. The university cannot function without academic staff, support staff, administrative staff, technical staff, security staff, cleaners, catering workers and everyone else who keeps the place running. In practice, not everyone is treated equally. Differences in salary scale, contract type, gender, background and role still affect how people are heard and valued. The FNV stands for gender equality, emancipation and inclusion across all levels of the university. We represent both academic staff and support and management staff, while recognising that different groups face different challenges. We have and will continue to oppose unequal treatment between staff in different salary scales.

## Accessibility

All staff should be able to participate fully in university life. Accessibility must be a serious part of how university buildings are designed and renovated. Colleagues with disabilities must be able to reach and use their workplaces comfortably and safely. The university must also do better for young parents, including by providing enough good lactation rooms at every faculty and by giving staff the time to use them. Accessibility is not only about buildings. It is also about recognizing the different barriers people face. That includes barriers linked to time, place, disability, care responsibilities and neurodiversity.

## Development opportunities

The university should invest in all staff. We are stronger when everyone has opportunities to grow. That starts with job security. Structural work should be done on permanent contracts. Support and management staff should have the same access to development opportunities as academic staff. The principles of Recognition and Rewards should apply to them too. For both academic and support staff, there must be clear and realistic criteria for career progression. People should know what is expected of them, and those expectations must be achievable.

## 2. A HEALTHY AND PLEASANT WORKING ENVIRONMENT

### A proper workplace

People feel more connected to their work when they have a proper place to be at. We want fewer flexible workspaces and more stable workplaces, so that colleagues can sit and work together. This strengthens collaboration, improves workplace culture and helps people feel part of the university. Workplace allocation should be based on the needs of staff, not just abstract efficiency targets.

### Physical safety

Many colleagues do physically demanding labor and their working conditions must be taken seriously. Whether someone works in a lab, a lecture hall, security, facilities or another part of the university, staff safety must come first. People who perform safety-related tasks for the university must also be properly recognized and rewarded for that work. We oppose generic security measures that create the appearance of safety without actually making people safer. Closing off the university with card checks and gates can increase feelings of insecurity and often produces little more than symbolic security. The FNV supports evidence-based safety measures that draw on the expertise already present within the university.

### Social safety

Social safety is still not guaranteed at Leiden University. We hear too many stories about toxic work cultures and about colleagues who are not properly supported after difficult interactions with students, managers, or other staff. The university must actively protect its employees. That means taking action against discrimination, offering care after harmful incidents, and building a healthier workplace culture at every level. A lot of policy work has already been done on this issue. The priority now is implementation. Nice documents do not protect people. Good practice does.

### An international workplace

Leiden University is an international workplace, and that is one of its strengths. International colleagues must feel that they are fully part of the organisation. Inclusion, equality and diversity are therefore core values for the FNV. We support local initiatives that are already leading the way, but we also want strong central policy. Inclusion cannot depend on which department you happen to work in.

### Trust, not control

Too much university policy is built around control, reporting and accountability from staff to managers. This creates distrust and adds to already high workloads. We want a workplace based on mutual trust between employer and employee. There have already been positive steps, such as the introduction of GROW conversations, but more is needed. Policy works better when staff understand why decisions are being made and when they are involved early enough to shape them. Too often, policies fail because the people affected by them were not included in the process. Staff input should not be a courtesy. It is necessary for effective, efficient and widely supported policy.

### 3. A GENUINELY SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE UNIVERSITY

#### Education, research and knowledge-sharing come first

The university's core tasks are education, research and sharing knowledge with society. These should be priority one, two and three. Too often, the university is distracted by other agendas, such as real estate, entrepreneurship or income-generating partnerships. Building plans should serve education and research. They should not become goals in themselves. The same applies to entrepreneurship programmes and external collaborations. These can be useful, but they must support the quality of education and research, not undermine it. The university's greatest social value lies in education, research and knowledge-sharing. That should be defended and communicated clearly.

#### Academic freedom

Teachers and researchers are best placed to decide what students need to learn and what research matters for society. Academic standards must guide those choices, not the financial interests of multinationals, governments or external funders. We are especially alert to the influence of the fossil fuel industry and Big Tech on education and research. Researchers must also feel free to publish findings that do not match what funders hoped to hear. If they do not feel that freedom, there should be a central reporting point where concerns can be raised, followed up and properly supported. There should also be a reporting point for intimidation by colleagues or students about the content of teaching materials. By actively defending academic freedom, we want to push back against censorship and self-censorship.

#### Responsible international partnerships

Academic freedom also requires the university to think carefully about its international partnerships. The FNV calls on the university to evaluate existing partnerships and to establish clear criteria for future ones. These questions should not be left unanswered in committees for years. Following calls from our members, the FNV supports ending institutional ties with regimes that systematically violate human rights, including, at present, Israel. We welcome the fact that the Executive Board is taking steps on this issue, but we will pay close attention to implementation.

#### Sustainable, green and animal-free where possible

The campus is the beating heart of the university. A heart needs more than bricks. We want enough green space around university buildings. This improves the climate, the working environment and the quality of campus life. The university must take responsibility for the future of the planet. Sustainability criteria in procurement should be stricter, and sustainability must be embedded in all parts of university operations. This also means taking energy use seriously, including when making policy choices about GenAI and digital infrastructure. Animal testing should be discouraged wherever alternatives exist, even when those alternatives are less financially attractive.

#### Responsible financial choices

The university has a responsibility to spend its largely public funding wisely. The FNV opposes unnecessary external hiring. The university already has enormous expertise in-house. We see little value in spending large amounts of money on expensive headhunters and consultancy firms to fill positions or reorganise the university. We can do much of this work ourselves, as long as the workload for colleagues involved is properly recognised. We also believe that support and management staff who work structurally for the university should be formally employed by the university itself. Direct employment strengthens the sense of belonging, shows real appreciation for colleagues's work and can also be financially smarter, because money is not lost to intermediaries.

## WHAT THE FNV HAS ALREADY ACHIEVED

The FNV has already made great strides on many of these themes and achieved concrete results for university staff. Many of these were won together with partners, including the other unions, but they would not have happened without our involvement. And we did all this without having a seat in the University Council. With representation in the Council, we can do even more.

### Standing up for young parents

In March, we published a report on the lack of proper lactation rooms and time for young parents. The university was not complying properly with health and safety regulations in this area. After we raised the issue, the university began working on improving these facilities and addressing related workload problems.

### Protesting cuts to higher education

Partly thanks to our efforts, Leiden University became one of the frontrunners in the 2025 strikes against cuts to higher education. One of our colleagues received national recognition for her role in this campaign. Because of the pressure created by collective action, the new government now appears to be reconsidering some of the proposed cuts.

### Protecting PhD printing-cost compensation

The university wanted to unilaterally abolish compensation for PhD thesis printing costs. We pushed back. We asked the university to first present a proper plan to reduce these costs for PhD candidates before scrapping the current arrangement.

### Helping individual staff members

Many members and non-members come to us when they experience problems at work. We have helped colleagues find solutions, understand their rights, and protect themselves in difficult situations. When we see that individual problems point to wider structural issues, we have brought those people together and helped them raise those concerns at the relevant consultation tables. That way, signals from the workplace reach the people who need to hear them.

### Securing a new collective labour agreement

The FNV is one of the main actors involved in the negotiation of a new collective labour agreement for Dutch universities every year. Most recently this included an average wage increase of 4.2%, with lower salary scales receiving a proportionally larger increase. The agreement also includes clear commitments on reducing workload, improving social safety, protecting job security during reorganizations, limiting teaching duties for PhD candidates, and ensuring equal pay for equal work.

## WHY VOTE FNV?

Vote FNV if you want a University Council that puts staff at the core of decision-making.

### Because of what we stand for

Our priorities are clear: realistic workloads, secure jobs, transparent leadership, equal treatment, accessible workplaces, social and physical safety, academic freedom, sustainability and responsible use of public money.

### Because we listen and respond

FNV members are present throughout the university. That means we hear concerns from many different parts of the organisation, from both members and non-members. We work hard to address those concerns and will continue to do so in the University Council. If something is happening in your workplace, let us know. We are here to represent your voice. You can reach us at [fnv@leidenuniv.nl](mailto:fnv@leidenuniv.nl).

### Because we are staff, representing staff

Our work is shaped by the people we represent. We organise staff consultation sessions and surveys to find out what matters to our colleagues. We have an active workplace members's group with FNV members from different parts of the university. This group will advise the FNV faction in the University Council. This helps us avoid tunnel vision and prevents faculties or staff groups from being played off against each other. With this broad and diverse representation we are uniquely able to stand for academic staff as well as support and management staff.

### **Because we can strengthen participation**

University decisions are made in different places. The University Council discusses broad policy and strategy. The Local Consultation Body is where unions formally discuss employment conditions, reorganisations and staff rights with the employer. Too often, issues move between these spaces without anyone taking clear responsibility. That makes it easier for problems to be delayed, diluted or fall through the cracks. The FNV can help close that gap. We already know the union side of the table. With a seat in the University Council, we can make sure staff issues are followed through, from policy discussion to employment conditions— and back again.

### **Because we bring expertise**

The FNV is the largest trade union in the Netherlands with a wealth of expertise and a long history of fighting for workers's rights, reorganisations and collective bargaining. We will use that expertise to achieve the best possible results for staff. We also learn from colleagues at other universities and in other sectors. With access to national experts, we can push for well-informed policy choices that genuinely help our university move forward.