

Response of the Executive Board to the results of the June 2020 Corona Monitor survey

In June, the first of our regular Corona Monitor surveys was sent out. These surveys are intended to find out how staff at VU Amsterdam are coping during the pandemic. We were very pleased with the response rate: 57% of university employees took part. The subject is clearly an important one among staff, and it is also important to find out, collectively, what people need in order to continue working under these new circumstances. This applies not only during the coronavirus crisis, but also in the longer term. Because it is now clear that this crisis is leading to a permanent and structural shift in the way we work.

Proud

In recent months, everyone has made a huge effort to make the best of this unexpected situation. We are very pleased that employees have been satisfied with communication during the coronavirus crisis. As an employer, VU Amsterdam also enjoys high levels of satisfaction. This makes us proud and we are determined to ensure this continues to be the case going forwards.

Concerns

Nonetheless, there are some concerns too. The abrupt transition to working from home has been hard for many employees. Employees now have an even higher workload and their work-life balance has suffered. People feel much less connected to colleagues and the university; another cause for concern. Since June, some on-campus activities have cautiously been resumed and we are looking for opportunities to expand these further. We are learning from our experiences with reopening in order to make arrangements for this as best we can, while taking social distancing requirements into account. But we also know that not everybody will be able to return to the campus in the foreseeable future. As such, it is therefore all the more important to consider how we can make the best possible use of the scarce space available on campus. We will also have to find other ways to communicate and make sure that everyone stays involved with the university - whether that is online or off campus.

The university after the coronavirus crisis

The results of the survey also show that we need to start thinking about the university after the coronavirus crisis. Working from home has certain advantages: greater flexibility, lower travel costs and no more commuting over sometimes considerable distances. Many employees would like to continue working some of their hours from home even after the battle against coronavirus has been won. This will require some changes to policy. For example, how will we handle travel expenses and how can we make sure that everybody has a suitable place to work at home? Working from home more also means a change in the reasons for coming to the university: the social aspects of work become more important, such as catching up with colleagues, networking, inspiring one another and creative processes. How should we design our buildings in such a way that these functions are facilitated? How do you manage a team in a hybrid situation? And how do we maintain a sustainable policy on travelling to work when some employees prefer not to use public transport? We have already brainstormed these questions extensively.

Discussing the results of the Corona Monitor

We invite everyone to read the extensive report on the findings of the Corona Monitor and to

discuss these findings within their team and with their manager: which findings seem familiar, and what is important to you and the team? This will enable us to chart the best course through the coronavirus crisis that we can, and prepare us for a future in which many things remain uncertain.

Second Corona Monitor at the end of October

The June Corona Monitor was the first survey, and has yielded valuable findings, some of which can be actioned immediately while others will be taken into account when formulating longer-term policy. But we realize that the situation is constantly evolving. As an employee, the coronavirus crisis may be affecting you differently today than it was in June. We very much hope, therefore, that everybody will take part in the next round of the Corona Monitor survey (this autumn) and the extensive Employee Survey in 2021.

Executive Board
Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam
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