

Introductory remarks at the 2018 start of the academic year – Annetje Ottow, vice-president Utrecht University

Ladies and gentlemen,

On behalf of my fellow Executive Board members, Anton Pijpers and Henk Kummeling, a warm welcome to you all – and in particular to the mayor of Utrecht, our campus partners and alumni. Welcome also to all of our lecturers, students and support staff!

And of course a warm welcome to our foreign guests. We are delighted that you are here. I will continue in Dutch, but translations of all the speeches have been distributed and are available online.

This past academic year was a great one for our university. A year of impressive achievements and impressive awards – of which I'd like to mention in particular the Spinoza Prize presented to Anna Akhmanova and the Stevin Prize presented to Beatrice de Graaf. [Yes, that deserves a round of applause.] This is the second year running that we have harvested such a wealth of awards for research and knowledge transfer. We have also made great strides in education this year, thanks to the efforts of so many of you, and with Haza Rahim *almost* had another lecturer of the year in our midst!

These are accomplishments of which the university and the Executive Board are rightly proud. They are the fruits of our shared labours and have taken hard work to achieve. That's worth pointing out on a special day like today. From our researchers, lecturers and support staff to our students, everyone at this university has dedicated themselves to high-quality education, pioneering research and the betterment of society.

However, all this hard work can come at a cost. Are we pushing ourselves too far, are we setting the bar too high?

How can we strike the right balance between ambition and hard work on the one hand and leaving enough time to relax and ensure everyone's well-being on the other?

That is our theme for today: **balance and well-being**. And, more precisely, the pressing issue of **workloads**.

The Executive Board believes it is vital to put the spotlight on this question and to put this up for debate with all of you. In the competitive arena we work in, the problem of heavy workloads is becoming increasingly urgent and demands a response – not only in words, but also, as we'll set out for you today, in actions.

The Executive Board and all of the faculties, together with the Association of Universities in the Netherlands, have already begun hammering out workload plans and made collective labour agreements. We also have a Student Welfare Task Force tackling this issue.

However, in order to understand more fully what's really going on and to observe it at first hand, Anton Pijpers and I have been conducting 'workload lunches' with staff over the past few months. We have heard your thoughts about the pressures, the problems and the bottlenecks in your work. In *his* speech, Anton will talk more about this and the input we have gathered.

We want it to be clear that we take the workload problem very seriously. What's also clear is that we cannot solve this problem alone. That's why we want to join with staff,

students, other universities and the government to explore which measures we should take together.

Today we also have Tanja van der Lippe, Professor of Sociology here at Utrecht University, to share her expert perspective on this with you. Tanja is a sociologist who makes a point of looking beyond the boundaries of her own discipline. Her research, funded by an ERC Advanced Grant, is looking at which organisational investments contribute to a sustainable labour market. This involves three interrelated factors: employee satisfaction, profitable enterprises and a high employment rate in a healthy economy. Her research spans nine European countries, 270 businesses and thousands of employees. Tanja van der Lippe is a distinguished member of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and a very active contributor to the Future of Work hub within our strategic theme of Institutions for Open Societies.

We are delighted that she has agreed to share her insights and thus shed light on the societal context in which our university operates, and on what we can do in the coming years to achieve greater balance and well-being.

I am pleased to give the floor to Tanja van der Lippe. After her address, Rector Magnificus Henk Kummeling will present the 2018 student awards.