

ABP
Attn.: Ms drs. C.M. Wortmann-Kool
P.O. Box 75292
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Executive Board

your reference

our reference
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Maastricht
18 February 2021

Subject: Fossil Free

Dear Ms Wortmann-Kool,

Further to a previous meeting in which the President of Maastricht University (UM) and a representative of Fossil Free Maastricht had the opportunity to enter into a debate with you, we would like to draw your attention to the following.

Sustainability is one of the core values of Maastricht University.

This applies to our institution, which has embedded the issue in both its education and research, as well as in a specific, multi-year development programme that has been established to make UM's business operations more sustainable in every possible area, from real estate to air travel policy.

It applies to our social engagement, which is expressed in a variety of ways in our surrounding region, from the role that UM plays in the development of the Circular Hub at the Chemelot site in Geleen to our contribution to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through our participation in and multidisciplinary research at the Brightlands campuses.

Last but not least, it applies to our students and staff, for whom contributing to the realisation of a sustainable world is not only a matter of deeply felt conviction, but increasingly also a way of life.

In its entirety, this issue extends to all aspects of life. In the case of our staff and our students – many of whom will also be future participants in your pension fund – it also relates to very specific issues, including their existing or future pension provisions. Your pension fund manages the pensions of UM staff, whose concerns about the climate are serious, and are shared by our students. To be clear, we are not only referring to the Fossil Free movement, which played a part in the inspiration for us to write this letter. Concerns for the climate and the desire to achieve sustainability are broadly felt throughout our university community.

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Partly on the basis of our dialogue with you a year ago, it has become evident that there is a growing sense of urgency regarding this issue among our staff and students. This feeling resonates far beyond our university: concern for the climate is a social issue that appears to be constantly gathering momentum.

We are aware that sustainability is also high on your agenda, and that in response you are taking action in a variety of ways. We believe that the climate crisis is one of the greatest threats to global society. A strong policy regarding sustainability in the context of genuinely achieving the UN SDGs therefore deserves an urgent and prioritised approach by all social actors.

In the debate in February last year, it became clear that for you the issue of fossil fuel divestment versus engagement with the sector with regard to sustainability is a difficult issue. You provided us with extensive insights on this matter. As the Executive Board, having heard from our socially engaged community, we advocate an unequivocal choice: we call on ABP to take a systematic approach to enable the pension fund to sever its ties with sectors associated with fossil fuels within the shortest possible time. We wish to convey this position to you with absolute clarity.

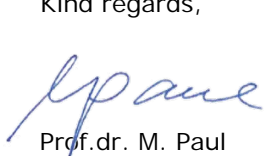
Having said this, we would also like to raise a number of questions with you in the light of our previous dialogue. We would like to inform our community about what steps you have been able to take regarding this issue, and in particular, what effect they have had, partly in view of the fact that challenging the oil sector has not proven to be very effective. We are curious to know how ABP intends to achieve tangible results. Other questions we wish to raise: how do you assess whether changes in the sector are in line with the Paris Agreement? Which sectors do you focus on in this context (coal, utilities, oil, gas, cement, etc.)?

In short, we would like to request more explanation, evidence and justification regarding the effectiveness of your engagement with fossil fuel-related companies, with the ultimate question: what if it doesn't work? Are you prepared to stop investing in funds that are in any way associated with fossil fuels, which, as we have indicated, in our view is the most desirable course of action?

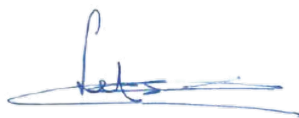
Sustainability is not only an environmental issue, but also a principle that incorporates transparency, equality, fairness and ultimately human rights – values that are of paramount importance to UM. Listening to our staff and students and inspired by their initiatives, we ask you to share with us the actions, progress and effectiveness of your engagement with fossil fuel-related companies and inform us of your long-term vision regarding your contribution to the Paris Agreement. In this context, we would be pleased to offer our scientific expertise to support you in your endeavours.

If you would like a further explanation of our request, we would be happy to provide it.

Kind regards,



Prof.dr. M. Paul
President



Prof.dr. R. Letschert
Rector



Dr. N. Bos
Vice-President



Prof.dr. P. Møllgaard
Co-chair Sustainable UM 2030