

Aan de minister van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap
De heer prof. dr. R.H. Dijkgraaf
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Datum: 23 januari 2023	Ons kenmerk: 2023/1207	Contactpersoon: Erica Schaper	E-mailadres: erica.schaper@nhlstenden.com
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Subject:
Response to your letter dated 22 December 2022 regarding stopping the active recruitment of international students

Dear Mr Dijkgraaf,

Internationalisation is extremely important in the development of young adults. The many nationalities in the classes make NHL Stenden a diverse and inclusive university of applied sciences. All those students, with all their different backgrounds, really do come into contact with each other and the local area, and learn to look at things differently. Internationalisation helps create an inclusive society and an outward-oriented region in which the strength of diversity and seeing things from a different perspective are encouraged.

The recruitment of international students also actively contributes to solving shortages on the labour market. In the coming years, an ageing population will mean there will be thousands of job vacancies in small and medium-sized businesses, the cornerstones of the economy in the north. There is a high demand for personnel and in the second quarter of 2022, there were 114 and 145 vacancies per 100 unemployed in Friesland and Drenthe respectively (CBS). This is a structural shortage in which Northern Netherlands is ahead in terms of population decline (CBS/PBL, 2022). The higher professional education sector has the task of ensuring there are sufficient well-trained professionals available for the labour market and therefore plays an important role to society in this region. It is not an easy role to play in an area experiencing population decline. In industries and regions that are now and will soon be facing shortages, training foreign students can actually form part of the solution.

Programmes in Computer Vision & Data Science, Information Technology, Water Technology, International Teacher Education, International Business, Leisure & Tourism, Logistics Management, Hotel Management and Creative Business all attract international talent to the region. This growth hugely benefits the local economy and knowledge infrastructure with students doing internships and assignments based on real-life questions set by organisations in the area. In so doing, they contribute to innovation, participate in society and learn to love the beautiful provinces of Friesland and Drenthe. It is what our university of applied sciences strives for. Once they have completed their studies, they are then available for work in the regions where they might not have otherwise ever come to but where there is a huge demand for the talents they offer.

nhlstenden.com

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Ioana Cojocaru (24) from Romania came to Emmen in 2017 to study – and ended up staying. She studied Information Technology and Emmen proved to be exactly what she needed, although the difference with Bucharest was large. "At first thought the city was very small, but I liked it and I integrated well." She realised it was the same for her fellow students. "Some have left, but I do have classmates that have stayed to work in the North." Cojocaru started working as a basketball referee. "I played basketball in Romania and came into contact with the basketball association here." She completed her training and is now refereeing in the Dutch top division of men's basketball. She also works in a gym and for an IT company in Zwolle. It didn't prove difficult to get a job: "They needed people and I needed a job. It was that simple." Cojocaru has now decided to stay definitively in the Netherlands.¹

Students doing the international teacher education programme are fully trained to teach in international schools and international departments within schools. This means schools do not need to recruit from the far-too-small pool of teachers from regular programmes. Furthermore, these students bring tremendous added value to regular schools in the region as they carry out various assignments in Dutch schools during their studies, thereby contributing to the pupils' language abilities and to the internationalisation of those schools and their teaching.

"International students play an important role in improving the quality of life in a city and region contributing to a bustling city centre, a rich clubs and associations life, an impulse for the labour market. International students are hugely beneficial to the local economy and the knowledge infrastructure in Leeuwarden."
Sybrand van Haersma Buma, Mayor of Leeuwarden

Attracting international students to Friesland and Drenthe has no negative effects on accessibility to higher education for Dutch students. On the contrary, the influx of international students means we can continue to provide high quality education and research in an otherwise shrinking region where small-sized programmes are under pressure. 80% of our programmes are offered in Dutch or also offered in Dutch, and internationalisation helps us to maintain a wide range of programmes covering the many industries represented in the labour market in Northern Netherlands, without compromising opportunities for Dutch students.

We understand that there are problems nationally (and particularly in the Randstad) concerning for instance housing, but in Friesland and Drenthe, these problems are less of an issue. The challenges you list in your letter of 22 December that are a result of internationalisation such as pressure on facilities and work pressure for lecturers, do not play a role at NHL Stenden. In fact, international collaborations and foreign students play an important role in the development of the vitality of a region. The total intake of international students to our university of applied sciences is approximately 12% with the majority coming from Europe. As a broad university of applied sciences in a shrinking region, this group of students actually help to ensure facilities can continue to be offered both within and outside of the university of applied sciences. For students and staff from the Netherlands, the diversity in the classroom and the 'groundbreaking' way of studying and working add a very valuable extra dimension. This manageable scale of internationalisation means it contributes to the quality of education and research, to the personal development of students and to the development of the region. International students make the city centres of Leeuwarden, Emmen and Meppel more vibrant and help to strengthen the quality of life in the region.

The House of Representatives' proposal to limit the active recruitment of international students is the wrong policy choice for our region. The decision does not tie in with the reality in the northern regions where internationalisation is actually crucial. We assume that your 'February measures' will take into account and leave room for the crucial role internationalisation plays in particular regions.

Friesland and Drenthe welcome international students. With their presence, a vital northern region has a world of opportunity.

¹ <https://www.rtvdrenthe.nl/nieuws/15203081/drenthe-heeft-buitenlandse-studenten-juist-nodig>



Yours sincerely,

Erica Schaper
Chair Executive Board

The letter is also supported from the industry by the following companies:

First & last name	Jobtitle	Company
Erwin van der Graaf	Vice President Operations Hotels Benelux and DACH region	Accor Hotels
Jochem-Jan Sleiffer	President Middle East, Africa & Turkey	Hilton World Wide
Cleo van Amelsfort-Pinck	Managing Director	Independent Recruiters Groep
Caroline Receveur	General Manager	Maritim Hotel
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Gönül Uyanik	Cluster General Manager	Social Hub Hotels
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Walter Kok	Regional Director The Netherlands	NH Hotel Group, part of Minor Hotels
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Richard Veerbeek	General Manager	Zanzibar Bay Resorts
Evelien Walstra	Senior Business Account Manager	Gemeente Leeuwarden (adviesraad Hotel Management School NHL Stenden)
Audrey Root-Muskee	Sr. Manager Distribution Ops & SCM Excellence	Apex Tool Group B.V.
René Dale	CEO	Oldenburger Fritom
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Eva van Leeuwen	Managing Director	YFK Research & Marketing
Mike Weston	Head	International School Groningen
Michiel Bregman	Operationeel directeur	Husa Logistics
Jelle Vonck	Program Manager	UC Group
Harjo Claus	Financieel directeur	Terra Carta
Harrie Wolters	Directeur	Hunebedcentrum
Michiel Kasteleijn	Business Manager	International Welcome Centre North Netherlands
Erik Veenstra	Manager Marketing, Communicatie en Sales	Wildlands Adventure Zoo Emmen
Josse Kunst	Chief Commercial Officer	Cure Technology
Els Raedts-Franssen	HR-Office Manager	Proxcys BV
Gerhard Pool	Directeur	Friesland Campina
Jan Ybema	Regioambassadeur	HISWA RECRON
Kor van der Meulen	Voorzitter Regio Fryslân	Koninklijke Horeca Nederland
Jorrit Volkers	Bestuursvoorzitter	FB Oranjewoud
Gerlof Reijneker	Voorzitter	Club Diplomatie
John Vernooij	Algemeen voorzitter	Omrin

Voor- & Achternaam	Functie	Bedrijf
Alex van Dalen	Managing Director	Batenburg Groep
Arnold de Jong	CEO	Fritom Group
Jelmer Algra	Directeur en voorzitter	Rabobank in Friesland
Wido van den Bosch	Managing Director	Brink Industrial
Bert Spijksma	CFO	SMI Groep
Joyce Walstra	Voorzitter	MKB Noord
Piet Smit	Algemeen directeur	Poiesz Supermarkten
Henriette Herbschleb	Programmadirecteur	Dutch TechZone
Peter Cool	CTO/algemeen directeur	Intergas Verwarming
René Krijnsen	Directeur	IJssel Technologie
Erwin van Maaren	Directeur	NedCam
Martin Matser	Managing Director	Van der Valk Hotels
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Willem van der Ark	Directeur	MSC B.V.
Arjan Romp	Change Manager	Tuindeco
Arthur Bos	Supply Chain Director	Pet Europe at Spectrumbrands
Binne Visser	Voorzitter	Innovatiecluster Drachten
Patrick Vink	Voorzitter Raad van Bestuur	MCL