

International students in the Netherlands



landelijke studenten vakbond

**This is a publication of the Dutch National Students' Union
(Landelijke Studenten Vakbond, LSVb)**

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Introduction

The Dutch National Students' Union (Landelijke Studenten Vakbond, LSVb) is concerned with the interests of all students in the Netherlands and of course this also includes international students who are (temporarily) studying here. The LSVb represents this group as well, but in order to do that correctly, there is a need to know what this group wants. Therefore a survey was conducted and a roundtable was organized. The survey was completed 667 respondents and during the roundtable there were 30 students present. In this report the results of both of them are combined and presented.

Motives for this study

Because of a report from the CPB (May, 2012) about the costs and benefits of internationalization and the outcome that it can be highly profitable if international students stay here after graduation, government focused itself on the question: how can we keep those students here and how do we make sure they will get jobs?

The LSVb thinks that chance of international students settling in the Netherlands is to a large extent dependent on how the student is welcomed in the Netherlands and how their experiences are during their studies. Different studies show that students more often stay here if they have personal relations and for getting that integration into the Dutch society is very important. Therefore we conducted our own research which had a focus on the experiences of the international students themselves: did they feel welcome? How are they treated by governmental institutions? Do they feel integrated?

Aim of the study

We already knew about some difficulties international students had, but with this research the LSVb aims to get an overview of obstacles international students face and present them to the relevant institutions, such as the international offices of universities and universities of applied sciences and governmental bodies.

Chapter 1 – General statistics

1.1 Survey

In total 667 international students completed the survey. Maastricht University is the university with the most respondents, followed by Wageningen University, Delft University of Technology, University of Amsterdam, HAN University of Applied Sciences and the Erasmus University. A complete overview can be found in appendix A.

Most students in the survey were full time bachelor students. Next to that there were master students and exchange students and some were in the Netherlands for an internship or to obtain a PhD (see figure 1).

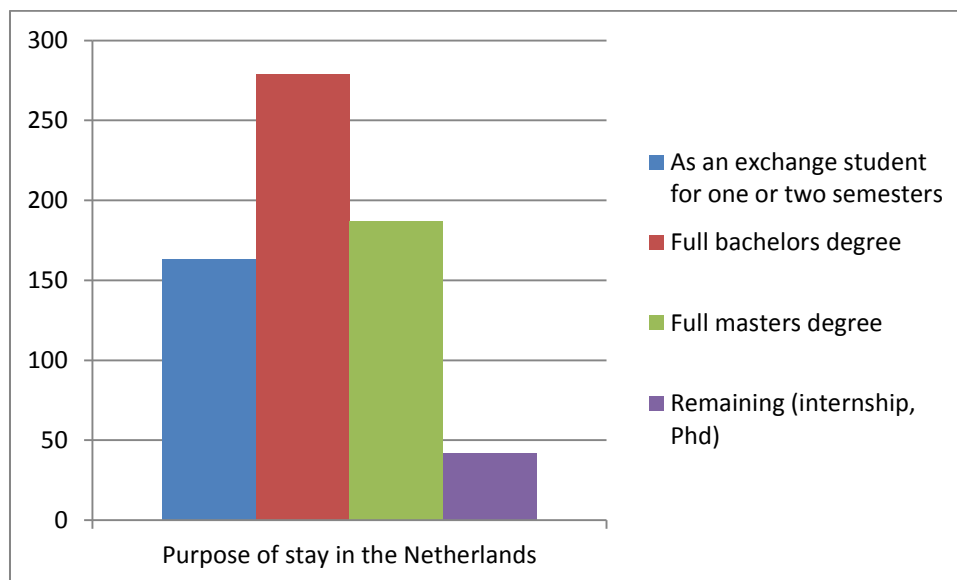


Figure 1 - Purpose of living in the Netherlands

There were many different nationalities represented in this survey. The most dominant group are the Germans (116 respondents). After that follow the Chinese, French, British, Greek, Romanian, American, Bulgarian, Spanish, Brazilian, Indian and Turkish. In total 425 respondents were from the EER.

1.2 Round table

At the end of the survey students could leave their e-mail address in order for us to contact them again. These people were invited to the round table that was held the 14th of May in the evening. In total 30 international students participated. There was a great variety of nationalities and many different institutions were represented.

During the evening there were three different groups that circulated between the different topics, which were:

- Housing: all issues concerning housing were discussed, such as the price, quality and assistance of the international office.
- Integration: everything that has to do with integration was discussed. Examples of this are the introduction periods, Dutch language and culture and job opportunities.
- Administration: since moving to another country entails a lot of administration, international students have to deal with this a lot. Examples are: visa procedures, registering at studielink and opening bank accounts.

Chapter 2 – Reasons for studying in the Netherlands

2.1 Motives for studying in the Netherlands

In the survey the international students were asked what their motives were to study abroad. This gives a general overview of what students think is important and what factors can be decisive in their choice. Figure 2 shows that quality of education, specific study programs and the chance to gain international experience are of great importance for students. International experience can be gained in any country, but when it comes to quality of education and specific study programs, the Netherlands can certainly attract more students by working on this.

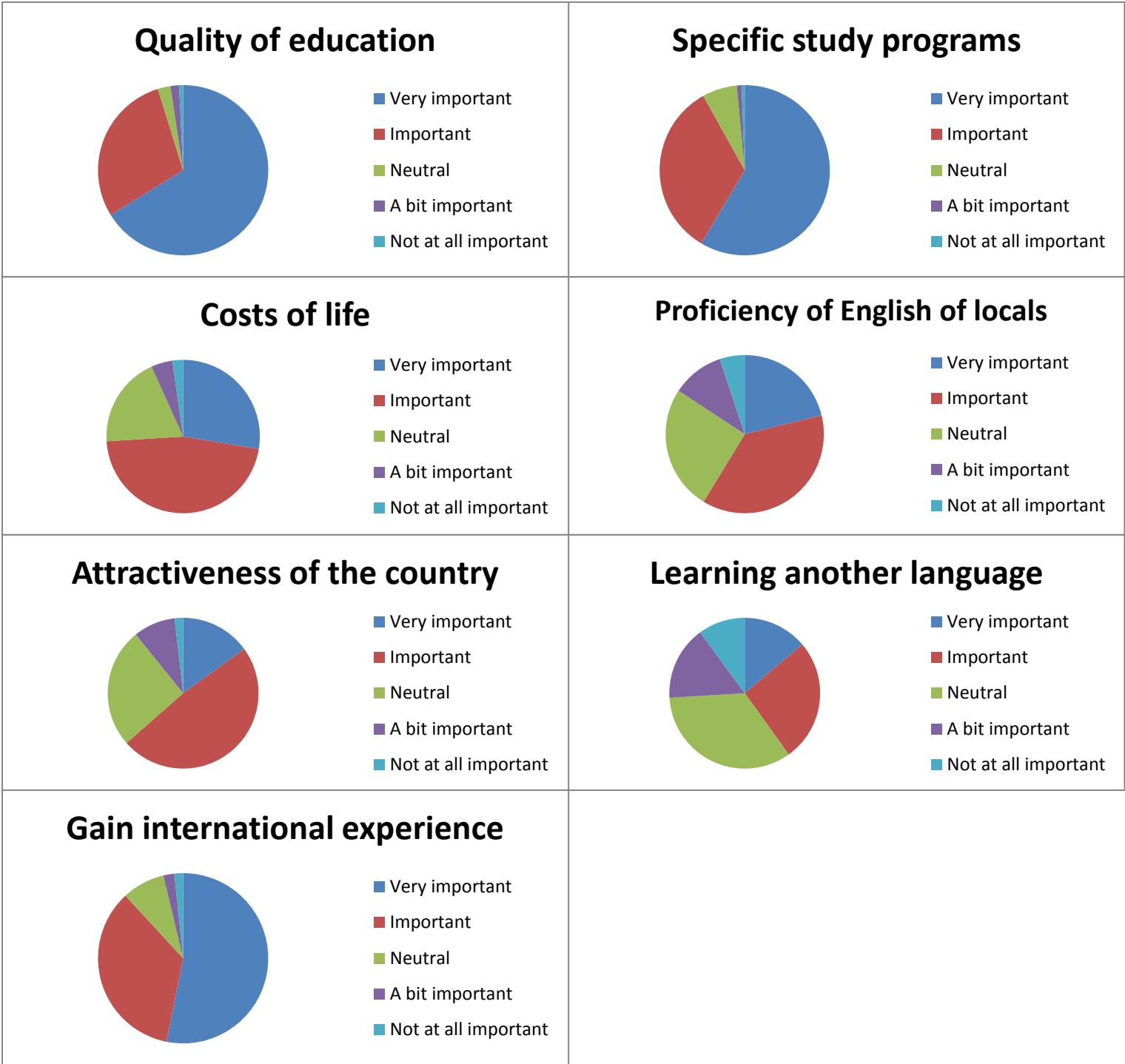


Figure 2 - Importance of characteristics to study abroad.

Other factors were also defined as important, but to a lesser extent. Furthermore the students were asked what characteristics were important when choosing a certain university. Figure 3 shows that their choice is especially based on the presence of a certain study program. Examples of these programs were international relations, agriculture, pedagogy or education and sports. Also the system of University College (Liberal Arts and Science program) is often a reason for choosing for the Netherlands, since some countries do not have this kind of program. High rankings of both the university/university of applied sciences and the study program is also seen as important by almost 70% of the students. Attractiveness of the city and partnerships with home universities were less important.

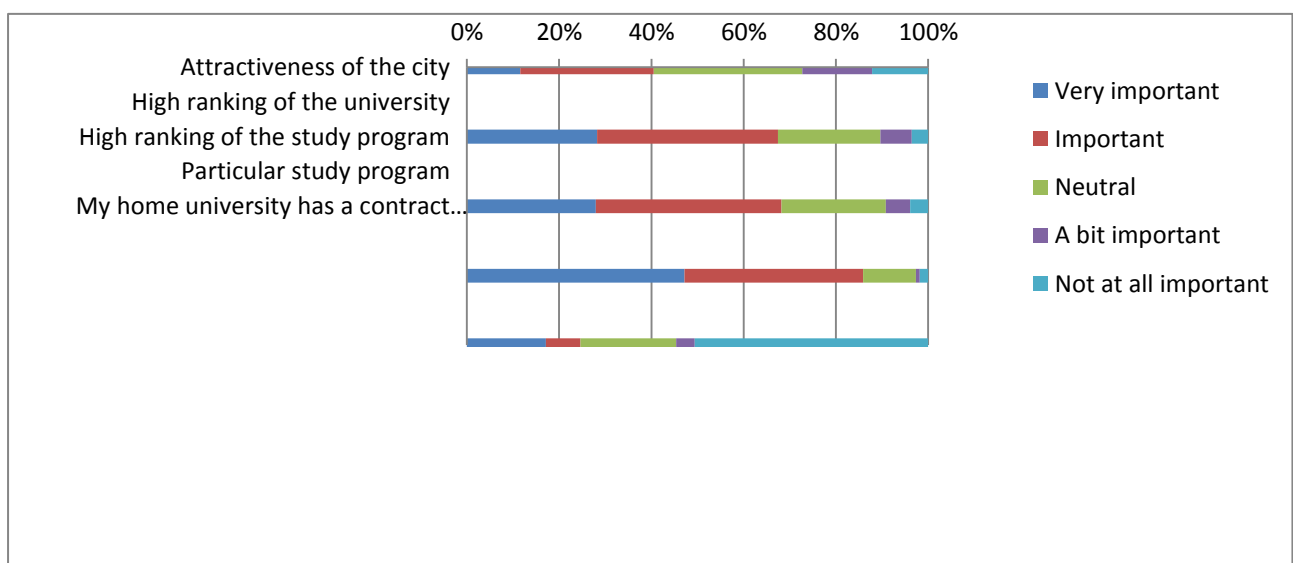


Figure 3 - Importance characteristics for choosing a certain university

Other reasons that were often mentioned for choosing a particular university are the relatively low costs for tuition fees and some specified this in that they get good quality for relatively low costs. Perhaps these comments were from British students, since tuition fees in the UK rose a lot last years. Next were mentioned the fact that courses are in English, scholarship opportunities, the quality of education (which students often relate to the personal way of teaching), international community, recommended by friends or alumni, proximity to home town (often the case for German students), the problem based learning system and the easy procedures to apply.

2.2 Websites for international students

For the availability of information on the website of the institution, the students give an average grade of 7,3.

Next to that the students were also asked to give a grade to the user friendliness of particular websites that are important to them. Remarkable is that many students do not know or do not use

some of the websites, especially more general websites like *careerinholland*. Therefore the grade for user friendliness is based only on a small group of respondents. Still it is easy to see that the website from DUO has the lowest score. During the round table students said that the website of their university is their first source of information.

	Don't know	Don't use	Grade user friendliness
Studyinholland	43,78%	19,79%	7,0
Careerinholland	61,92%	25,64%	5,9
Educationfair	67,77%	24,44%	5,8
Newtoholland	66,57%	23,84%	6
Studielink	21,74%	11,39%	5,7
Duo	41,53%	21,14%	5,5

Figure 4 - What grade would you give to the user friendliness of the website

2.3 University/university of applied sciences

Most people do know that there is a difference between them and they often mention that universities focus more on theory, research, analytical skills, et cetera, while universities of applied sciences focus on practical skills. Only 34 international students mentioned that there is a difference in degree. Other things that were mentioned are the length of the program, the difficulty and a difference in entry requirements. There were also quite some students who said they had no idea there was a difference. It shows that still students are a bit unknown with the Dutch binary education system.

Chapter 3 – Administration

Coming to the Netherlands asks for a lot of administration which is often in Dutch. Almost all students (89%) has received letters in Dutch. Most of them asked a friend or classmate to translate it, others just used Google translate to find out what the letter was about.

3.1 Registration

Municipality

A great part of the respondents are registered at the municipality (85%) and most of them did not have difficulties doing that. A minor part of them did, such as the following student from NHTV Breda University of Applied Sciences:

“As I am born in Kazakhstan but have the German nationality I needed extra documents, but during my first visit, the employee gave me wrong information about which documents to bring. So I came there with my documents and the second employee told me that he doesn't need those documents but others. So it took me about 7 months to finally register at the municipality.”

Communication about the needed documents is a complaint that is mentioned multiple times. Other complaints are the difficulty to get an appointment and the time needed for that. Also there were many problems with the birth certificate and some people did not know an apostil was needed to make their documents valid. Next to that there was a language barrier during the registration, but this differed a lot between the municipalities. At some universities the international office arranges the registration by for example organizing an afternoon at university itself, during which all students can be registered and helped if necessary. An event like this is highly recommendable for all universities (of applied sciences).

Bank accounts

Almost all students (82%) have a Dutch bank account. Excluding the fact that most information is in Dutch and that students have to get used to that, most of them did not face difficulties and some pointed out that it was actually very easy. Especially students from institutions that made deals with certain banks said it was easy. Those deals include for example English staff, information in English or special offers for international students. This is perceived as very positive. Isaac (Wageningen UR):
“My international office was very helpful in this. A month before I arrived they told me to bring enough money, because it may take some time for my bank account to be opened. My university

arranged it with ABN". Sometimes the university recommended a certain bank, while this bank was not really prepared for all students and the service was not good.

Some students complained that banks refuse to open bank accounts for international students (ABN AMRO), about the long time that it takes to open an account (ING) and about the costs for opening an account (ING, ABN AMRO), but this differed a lot between cities. This also counts for the friendliness of the staff. It seems to be unclear whether or not international students have the same right to a free account as Dutch students do. During the round table the students did not have that many complaints, but they pointed out the importance of guidance from the international offices.

Bureaucratic hassle

A student from Leiden University said: *'I needed to register in my municipality even though I'm only staying in the Netherlands for one semester (and according to Leiden University it is not necessary for this short period of time).'* Also, the registering at the municipality can take a lot of time which hinders the process of opening a bank account. Therefore students sometimes choose another bank (ING) which some were extremely dissatisfied with. There are multiple people that raised this issue to a further extent, such as a student from Radboud University: *"All process of getting these documents together is dependent to each other. It is almost a circulatory which is also called as iron cage of bureaucracy. In the beginning, I needed rental contract to get my bank account. And I think I needed my residence permit as well but not sure. Then I needed to wait for a bank account to get a phone number. (I wanted a number to use in my smartphone rather than prepaid number) and the list goes on."*

DUO

Since many international students do not receive Dutch study finance, there are only few that have to deal with DUO. Those who need it were very negative about it. Especially about the fact that the information and forms are in Dutch and that the conditions were not clear. Also, people at the customer service didn't always speak English.

Studielink

There are some severe problems with studielink. One of the most important problems is the certification of former diplomas. Often this took a long time and sometimes it was even after the universities already started, which causes problems with school systems. Students complained about the fact that there is no status update: Anastasia (HAN): *"Studielink is not updated, my diploma didn't get certified in time, neither did my language diploma. Then school starts and systems were unavailable. Also, studielink doesn't give a time frame for certification, there is no status update."*

3.2 VISA and residence permits

From all the respondents, 39% had a residence permit, 3% a visa and 58% doesn't have both of them. Probably these are students from the EER, who do not need it.

Some students thought the procedure was easy and often they got assistance of their international office. There are quite some complaints about the level of English of the employees and the waiting time. Sometimes there were problems with the picture which was not sufficient and some had problems with the statement of having enough money. Also students found the costs for residence permit extremely high, but last year this has already been brought down from 600 to 300 euros. Especially students from Turkey said the procedures were very difficult for them. Some students from non-western countries had to take tuberculosis tests, which they found unnecessary.

During the roundtable students from the EU said they like it that it is so easy to study here, but students who have another nationality sometimes have to deal with difficult procedures that take a lot of time and energy. Laura Elaine (UvA) said: *"It was very stressful to get my VISA application done. I sent all papers in time and got a message from the IND that my VISA was approved in mid January, but the embassy in Washington didn't receive the message and therefore they couldn't put the stamps in my passport. The embassies didn't have a good communication. I was calling to immigration for a week every day. Amsterdam helped, but couldn't do anything, since they send the message to Washington for approval. In the end I got the VISA on the day of my flight."*

Chapter 4 – Dutch culture and society

Integration in Dutch society is necessary for international students to feel more at home and to get to know Dutch culture. Previous research showed that this can be positive for the Netherlands since students might stay here and in the case they leave they will pose a positive image about the Netherlands. There are multiple ways in which this integration can be enhanced, for example through language courses and the international classroom, in which cultures are mixed as much as possible.

4.1 Dutch language

Language is a very important factor when it comes to integrating into a new culture. When the students were asked whether they were motivated to learn the Dutch language, 63% said they were. From this group, most already took a course (figure 5), but only few did that at an advanced level.

Yes, a basic course	41,57 %
Yes, an intermediate course	10,69%
Yes, an advanced course	8,08%
No	39,67%

Figure 5 - Students who are motivated to learn the Dutch language: Did you take/are you taking a Dutch language course/lessons?

From all the students that took or are taking a Dutch language class, 70% said it was organized by the university itself. They gave a 3.6 out of 5 as an average grade for the language courses, but there was a great variety in this. A student from Maastricht University explained: *“The course itself was really bad, we rushed through the books too quickly. However, it gave me a good foundation and since then I have studied extensively by myself through the help of books and the internet. I also have a job where I speak a lot to Dutch people, so my Dutch improves further.”* Another student from Erasmus University was very positive about the course, but it was too expensive: *“The quality of the course was really good. However, the price is way too high. I would have loved to study Dutch more extensively, but at this price it is definitely not an option for me. I would also easily accept bigger groups, if the price is a lot lower.”* During the round table the same discussion rose, the quality is low and the prices are too high. Sometimes there are free courses, but then the timetable collides with the timetable of university.

This is confirmed by more students, which can be seen in figure 6. Most students say they either don't have time or the courses are too expensive.

I don't have time to take the course	33,5%
The courses are too expensive	30,8%
I don't know where they offer these courses	4,1%
Other	31,6%

Figure 6 - Reasons for not doing a language course (multiple answers possible).

Other reasons were that the Dutch language is too difficult, everybody in the Netherlands speaks English and some said they did not like the language or saw it as a waste of time since Dutch is only spoken in the Netherlands.

Some students point out that you learn Dutch by just practising this, but because there is not that much integration many students do not have that many possibilities to actually speak Dutch that often. Because of the lack of available courses some students organize these moments themselves in the form of formal meetings. Some universities also organized free informal meetings themselves. One student during the round table also argued that knowledge of the language helps you to understand the culture.

Most respondents were very positive about the idea of a language buddy: a student from Maastricht University said: *"Really good idea, because it is easier to learn a language from a native speaker and the costs would be lower."*

4.2 Social life

Associations

Integration into Dutch society means there is more needed than just living here. Contact with Dutch students is one of the ways how international students can learn about the Netherlands, Dutch language and Dutch culture. Unfortunately it seems that international and Dutch students live in different worlds that are separated from each other. Almost half of the international students participate in international students associations¹ (figure 7) and only 22,5% of the respondents are member of a Dutch study, student or sport association.

¹ Like ESN, AIESEC, AEGEE

Yes, every week	10,06%
Yes, at least once a month	12,91%
Sometimes	21,47%
No	55,56%

Figure 7 - Are you a member of an international students association/actively participating in the activities organized by the international students association?

The most obvious reasons for not being a member of a Dutch association are that the students are not interested in associations (35,08%) and that the associations are too much focused on Dutch students (34,38%). Furthermore international students do not know how to become a member and in few cases they were not allowed to become a member. A student from Leiden University explained: *“It is hard to join a group when everyone is Dutch and you are the only international as it then means it has to be run in English. Most people don't want this and so many people 'give you the evil eye' and you become uncomfortable.”*

Out of all the international students that are a member of a Dutch association, 38% has joined a sports association, 29% a study association and 9% is a member of a student association, fraternity or sorority.

Introduction periods

From all international students 76% participated in one or multiple introduction periods. On the question to what extent these students felt introduced to the Netherlands, they gave a 6,5 out of 10. From all the students that did not participate, 30% was too late to join, 22% did not want to participate and 17% did not know about this. Other reasons were for example that they thought it was too expensive.

There were quite some different opinions about the introduction periods. Often there are two different introduction periods; a formal one with practical information and an informal one which includes city tours, cultural events, et cetera. Students feel this is a nice structure. Because of the fact that international students have a different introduction period than Dutch students there is no integration. International students often feel it is difficult to integrate in the Dutch community. Klara (UvA) said: *“with the introduction periods, the international students were in a separate group from the Dutch students, so no mix. It is hard to integrate in the Dutch community.”* On the other hand there are also many students who do point out they feel integrated *now*, it just takes some time. All students do point out that good, up-to-date practical information is a real must. This includes

information about housing, registrations, public transport and general facts about living in the Netherlands.

Buddy

Only 15% of the international students have a buddy. Most of these buddies were arranged by the university (57%) or by the international association (29%). Some students managed to find a buddy themselves. International students give a 3,3 on a scale of 5 to what extent they think a buddy is useful to integrate into Dutch society. The ones who do have a buddy give a 3,5 on average for satisfaction about it. Laura (UvA) was not satisfied with her buddy: *"I have met my buddy, but I did not talk to her ever."* During the round table, there was not one person who pointed out the buddy system worked positively for them.

The most obvious reason students give for the fact that they do not have a buddy, is that their university does not offer a buddy system (37,6%). Others did not know how to get one (25%) or just did not want to have a buddy.

All of the people that do not have a buddy give a score of 3 out 5 for interest to have a one. Next to that 82% of the respondents think it is the responsibility of the university to provide a buddy or at least to make sure there is an organization that does it.

4.3 Integration

On a scale from 1-10, students gave a 5.5 for their feeling of integration, which is really low. Reasons for not feeling integrated are:

- The inability of international students to speak Dutch and therefore they feel they have less contact with the local inhabitants. Opinions differed about the openness of Dutch people. Some thought they are always very friendly others say they are reserved and can be rude.
- Limited knowledge about Dutch culture and traditions
- Limited contact with other Dutch students, since they live in an 'international bubble' with mostly internationals.
- The difference in student culture, mostly pointing to fraternities and sororities in which students tend to put a lot of time.
- The unwillingness of Dutch students to interact with international students or to speak Dutch and explain the Dutch culture.

This last reason can be illustrated by the following quote from an Italian student studying at Leiden University: *"Dutch people are very closed when it comes to outsiders and do not help (or do not feel*

the need) to make one feel at ease. I am an advanced Dutch speaker and when I speak to natives, they always revert to English, which I find very frustrating.”

Institutions try to enhance integration by mixing internationals with Dutch students, but practice shows that getting international students integrated is not that easy. Anastasia (HAN) for example says: *“I do not feel integrated, all Dutch go in one group and the international students are apart.”* The international classroom is a nice concept, but Dutch students tend to stick together and by doing this they show a lack of interest to their international peer students. Sometimes institutions make unfortunate decisions that do not enforce integration, as can be seen from the following quote. Briel (HU): *“we are all Chinese in our class, so I feel an insider.”*

There are also students who do feel integrated. The reasons they give for this are for example:

- Speaking the Dutch language
- Therefore participating in activities such as debating clubs or (sport) associations and so on. Speaking Dutch can also be a result of participating in Dutch organizations/associations.
- Having Dutch friends or a relationship with a Dutch person. This increases knowledge of the language and culture.
- Living with Dutch students

Again language proves to be very important for integration and therefore the chances for staying in the Netherlands rise. A student from Maastricht University: *“I think it is plainly stupid of the Dutch government to not provide language courses for all students for free. It is a no brainer that if students learn the local language they will be more likely to stay in the Netherlands after their studies. And the Dutch need highly skilled labour more than ever, seeing future demographics. Finally also the CPB acknowledged in their study the tremendous positive impact of international students in the Dutch economy.”*

Chapter 5 – Housing

Housing of international students on the one hand is related with administration and on the other hand also with integration. In figure 8 an overview of the current living situations is presented.

Own apartment	21,47%
Own room in a house with other international students	39,34%
Own room in a house with international students mixed with Dutch students	20,27%
Own room in a house with only Dutch students	6,91%
Other	12,01%
Total	100%

Figure 8 - Current living situation of international students

According to the survey, the students are relatively satisfied with their current situations: 3,8 on a scale of 5. During the round table many internationals said they faced a lot of difficulties. Because they either do not know how to get a room, the websites are in Dutch or they cannot get a room because they cannot visit it physically (because they are still abroad). This is the reason why international students often have no choice than getting a room via university. These rooms are often expensive according to the students and some students are very dissatisfied with the quality of it. For example the location or the furniture in it. Another problem is that when students go into the private market themselves, they often do not know how it works. They are unknown with costs like agent's commissions and the 'hospiteeravonden', which are a sort of selection evenings in which the students who currently live there choose the student they like the most. Also sometimes agencies do not accept international students. This is direct discrimination, because there is no reason to reject a request from a student with another nationality. Yiyi from Hogeschool Utrecht experienced this: *"It is very difficult to find housing in Utrecht. I also used kamernet, made appointments with 7 landlords, but they didn't want to accept international students."* Another thing which is unusual for some people is the fact that not every room is furnished. Especially when they go on the private market this causes surprises sometimes.

On the other hand, there are also more and more agencies en landlords who do want to rent rooms to international students. This is because those students do not know what their rights are as a

tenant and are likely to pay more. Also, they often do not go to the “Rent Committee” (HuurCommissie).

When asking students to what extent they think living with Dutch students would make them feel more integrated, the average was 3,5 out of 5. This is not that high, but in previous chapters some students who felt integrated sometimes gave living with Dutch students as one of the reasons for that, because they feel more part of the Dutch student life. Often rooms for international students are provided by the university as can be seen in figure 9. In the category other, Facebook was often called as a platform to find rooms and this was also confirmed during the round table.

Almost all international offices offer a room for the first year, which is very positive since it is difficult to get a room if you are not actually in the country. When institutions do not offer this service, students tend to be very dissatisfied with the service. On the other hand it should not be an obligation to go into these special student accommodations, since some find it too expensive and others might prefer living with Dutch students to integrate more.

International students call for more responsibility of the international offices. Besides helping the students finding a room they should also assist in other matters that are concerned with, such as completing forms, subscribing for certain contracts and explaining how things work. In general students feel it is easier to get a room when you have many connections.

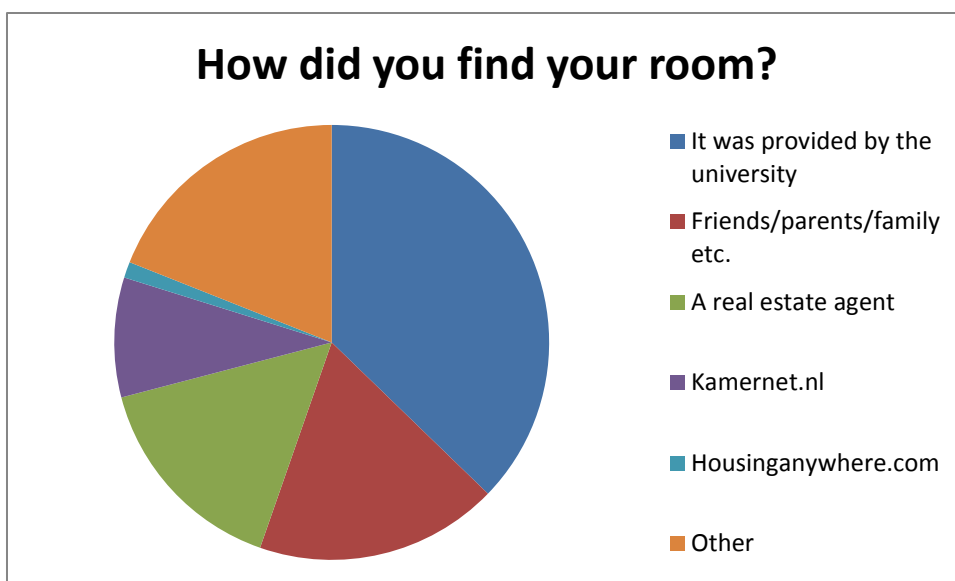


Figure 9 - Where did you find your room?

The students pay € 404,22 monthly on average for rent. They give an average grade of 6,8 for the reasonableness of this price. Sometimes international students pay more for the same room as a Dutch student does. An example of this was what Laura Elaine, studying at the UvA, experienced: *“My Dutch roommates who live in the same apartment, pay less. Which is unfair, because I don’t understand why international students pay more than Dutch students.”*

Also, some international students might have a right for the discount on their rent (huurtoeslag), but many students do not know about this and it seems to be difficult to get it: *I get a reimbursement (de huurtoeslag). But you have to arrange this with someone who talks Dutch, because they refuse to talk English at the Belastingdienst. So you need help from someone”* (Theresa, Leiden University College).

The problem here again is that international students often do not have a choice. Their need for a room is much bigger, since they do not have family in the Netherlands to live with. Therefore they are more willing to pay a higher price.

Chapter 6 – Job opportunities

Only 26% of the international students has or had a side job next to their studies. These people did not face difficulties that often, but when they did it was because of language barriers. Most of the students who do not have a side job do not want or do not need one (28%), often because they don't have time for it. Other reasons for not having a side job are that they are not allowed to work because they are not from the EU (15%), they do not know where to find a job (10%) or companies do not accept them (11%) for example because of the language barrier mentioned before.

Also during the roundtable students pointed out that not speaking Dutch is a big obstacle for getting internships or jobs in the Netherlands. Furthermore, for employers there is much more administration to hire an international student which results in employers choosing for Dutch students. One student said that during business weeks, companies are not open for international students. Also for some students the regulations are unclear. One student told that even becoming a volunteer is very difficult in the Netherlands.

Most study programs do not require internships, but those people who did do an internship, approximately an equal amount did that in the Netherlands as abroad (figure 10). This shows that students do seek for opportunities in other countries while studying in the Netherlands.

Yes, in the Netherlands	22,22%
Yes, abroad – home country	11,26%
Yes, abroad – other country	12.76%
Yes, multiple internships, both in the Netherlands as well as abroad	4.80%
No	48,95%

Figure 10 – Are you doing an internship during your studies?

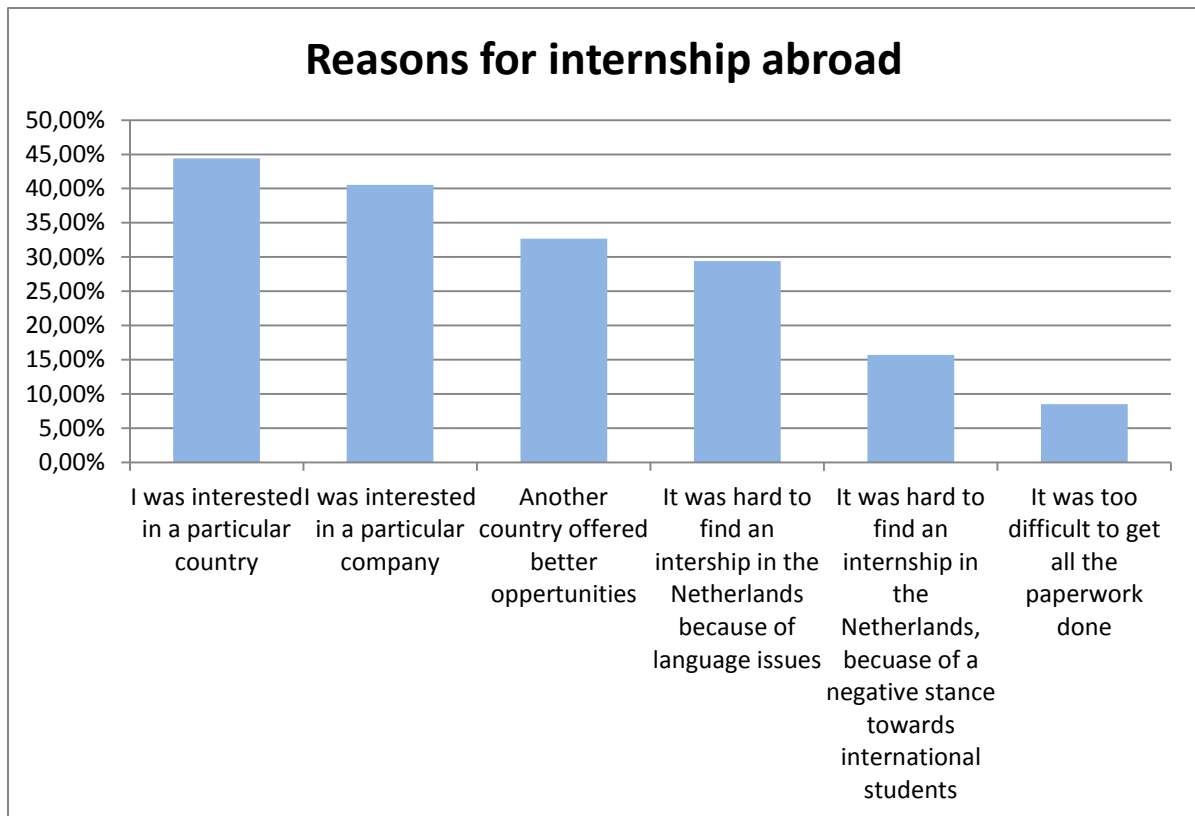


Figure 11 - Reasons for internship abroad

Reasons to do an internship abroad are mostly because the student has an interest for a particular country or company (figure 11), which relates to the opportunities available in other countries. But almost one third of the respondents gave language issues as a reason for not doing an internship in the Netherlands and 16% said they could not find an internship here because of a negative stance towards international students.

Chapter 7 – Other

During the roundtable some other subjects rose. In general, students feel they are not treated equally. For example, the right to have free public transport does not count for them is something unacceptable according to many: Elif (RUG): *“I think it is very unfair that we do not even get discount on the public transport.”* Another thing pointed out is the fact that sometimes professors allow Dutch students to write in Dutch while it is an English course.

Another thing that was mentioned sometimes is that the Netherlands claims to be international, but when students come here they feel it is not entirely true. Roberta (Leiden University College): *“The school claims to be international oriented, but there are not that much international students so I do not understand the claim of being international.”* This is a big disappointment for many and some only find this out when they search for a job, because then they notice the employer requires efficiency in Dutch language.

Conclusion and recommendations

In general international students are not dissatisfied with the situation in the Netherlands, but there surely are some points that can be improved.

Since reasons for international students to come to the Netherlands are often related to education itself (study programs, quality, English courses, way of teaching), institutions can easily attract more students by for example highlighting the quality and offering more courses in English.

The website of the institution is still the first source of information for international students and therefore it is highly important that the right information is offered. Luckily the students are fairly satisfied with this. In contrast to this are the grades indicated for the user friendliness of some other websites. Especially the website of studielink and DUO both score low in the survey and during the round table. There are many legitimate complaints that hinder students in their study progress and give a negative experience of living in the Netherlands.

When it comes to administration, experiences are very individual and therefore it is hard to give conclusions. Often the employers of municipalities and banks are friendly and helpful, but in some cases students experienced otherwise. Since it is hard to control this, it is important that the international offices inform themselves better about practicalities. Especially when it comes to banks, they often do not know where to send the students. Other things international students like to know more about are: public transport, supermarkets, help with the Belastingdienst and other institutions. An advice is to assign mentors to the students that assist with practical matters. Concerning visa and residence permits, the unreasonable waiting times and unclear instructions for needed documents are unacceptable and should be solved.

This research shows that international students often do not feel integrated in the Netherlands. This is because they do not speak the Dutch language, do not have knowledge about Dutch culture, have limited contact with Dutch students and do not participate in Dutch student culture. It is good that introduction periods also include practical matters and guidelines for international students, but for the informal part it will be good to mix international students more with Dutch students to enhance integration. Also there should be more cheap or free Dutch courses for students, if possible include it in the study program as an extra course to make sure there are no conflicting schedules. Furthermore mixing international and Dutch students in student housing can be positive, but of course this should be the choice of the students themselves. Student associations can be recommended to be more open towards international students, but another option can be for international student organizations and Dutch student associations to work together in their activities occasionally. Also buddy systems can be extended and improved a lot and buddies can take away a lot of burden from the shoulders of the international office.

International students still pay too much for their housing and too often are satisfied with this. Here lies an important task for international offices, since students that come to the Netherlands for the first time are often dependent on the information and assistance they provide. Social media are great platforms for students to find rooms.

Since many international students face difficulties finding jobs and internships in the Netherlands, they often do not have a job and therefore do not get into contact with the Dutch labour market. The fact that slightly more international students do an internship abroad than in the Netherlands, shows that either the Dutch labour market is not ready for these students or companies do not promote themselves enough.

To conclude: the Netherlands is a popular destination for international students, partly due to its international character. But companies, institutions and the government should be careful to not over promote opportunities since this might disappoint students when they find out integration is still something difficult. Especially the international offices have an important job in guiding the students. This does not mean they necessarily have to deal with every problem international students face. It can also be a more coordinating role in which they tell students where to go to find the information they need.

Appendix A – Respondents per university

