

Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap

>Return address P.O. Box 16375 2500 BJ The Hague

The President of the House of Representatives of the States
General P.O. Box 20018
2500 EA THE HAGUE

**Higher Education
and Student Grants
and Loans**
Rijnstraat 50
The Hague
P.O. Box 16375
2500 BJ The Hague
www.rijksoverheid.nl

Our reference
26214618

Date 18 December 2020
Re International Knowledge and Talent
Strategy

Knowledge institutions in the Netherlands have traditionally had an international orientation. They work closely with partners from abroad in a range of different areas and in various forms. This international orientation is necessary to maintain the high quality of our higher education and science. International knowledge partnerships provide access to the best people, the best ideas, the best research facilities and the best (digital) infrastructure. It is for these reasons that the government supports and encourages international cooperation.

At the same time, geopolitical developments such as increased tensions between the US and China and the UK's departure from the European Union require more strategic choices when cooperating with foreign partners. We must also keep an eye on the balance between the opportunities that international cooperation can bring us and the potential risks that exist. This applies in the field of knowledge security, with respect to national security ¹, but also in a wider sense, as the Interdepartmental Policy Review on the Internationalization of (Higher) Education ² has shown in the case of student mobility. In this letter, the government therefore presents its International Knowledge and Talent Strategy.

The International Knowledge and Talent Strategy (or IKTS) provides a clearer direction for international cooperation in higher education and science. The strategy, which I announced in the Strategic Agenda for Higher Education and Research, also reflects my own commitment to higher education and research abroad. This is a commitment that I work on together with the Minister of Economic Affairs and Climate Policy, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation and various stakeholders in and around the knowledge sector in the Netherlands. We can further the interests of international cooperation by combining the forces of education and science with economic and diplomatic networks. A collective approach has clear added value, because it brings together multiple perspectives and policy agendas. Over the next few years, the government will continue to focus on ensuring that the international knowledge has strong international roots, on greater strategic bilateral cooperation with other countries, and on raising awareness around knowledge security.

¹ Parliamentary papers II 2020/21, 2020Z23069

² Parliamentary papers II 2019/20, 31288-782

The focus is shifting to cooperation on a more equal footing. The emphasis will be less on actively recruiting students and more on

- cooperation that is based on equality and reciprocity as part of sustainable, strategic partnerships;
- *brain circulation*;
- operating tactically in multilateral forums;
- capacity building, the Sustainable Development Goals and knowledge diplomacy.

The years leading up to 2024 will be a transitional period, when deployment via the Netherlands Education Support Offices (NESOs) will make way for strategic deployment through our network of missions. This new approach will also require changes in which countries that we choose to work most closely with. On this point, I will continue cooperation with most countries in which a NESO is currently located, but also invest in a number of important partners closer to home (Germany, France, the UK). During the transitional period, we will continue to shape the IKTS, begin implementing the strategy where possible and experiment with new forms of collaboration. This will give new impetus to cooperation between the fields of higher education and science, governments, the network of missions and international bodies. In this way, the efforts of the IKTS can also contribute to knowledge diplomacy and foreign economic relations.

In this letter I will first briefly outline the value of international cooperation in education and science. Then I will move on to the primary goals. Finally, I will discuss the countries and focus areas involved in the shared framework of the IKTS.

The IKTS gives substance to the motion of members Wiersma and Paternotte regarding an international talent strategy for Dutch higher education³, to the motion of members Wiersma and Van der Molen on the intake of international students based on macro-efficiency⁴, to the motion of members Wiersma and Paternotte on connecting the knowledge sector to economic missions⁵, to the motion of members Paternotte and Bruins on an action plan to increase the stay rate of international students⁶, to the motion of member Futselaar on reducing the active recruitment of international students⁷ and to the motion of members Paternotte and Wiersma on intensifying cooperation with the United Kingdom.⁸

1. The value of international cooperation in education and science

Higher education and science of an international standard

For scientific organizations and higher education institutions, the benefits of an international orientation are obvious. Knowledge does not respect international boundaries. Scientific breakthroughs are achieved by teams operating internationally at knowledge institutions around the world. Continuing to play a part in world-class science requires cooperation at the international level and a strong, high-quality higher education and research sector. That means access to the best people, the best ideas and the best research facilities. We achieve

³Parliamentary papers II 2019/20, 3 5282-34

⁴Parliamentary papers II 2019/20, 3 5300 VIII-83

⁵Parliamentary papers II 2019/20, 3 5282-35

⁶Parliamentary papers II 2019/20, 3 5282-30

⁷Parliamentary papers II 2019/20, 3 5282-38

⁸Parliamentary papers II 2019/20, 3 5282-29

much more working together than the Netherlands could achieve on its own. Research programmes involving international partners (including private actors) increase the chance of excellent science and effective innovation taking place. They make the Netherlands one of the most important knowledge and innovation hubs in the world. In certain research areas, such as healthcare, biodiversity and social cohesion, transnational cooperation is actually essential in order to arrive at sound conclusions and provide meaningful recommendations.

Our reference
26214618

Tackling global problems

Social challenges around climate, sustainable food and migration are not limited to national borders. They require a global, interdisciplinary response, as well as knowledge of the local context. International cooperation in education and research is essential for this: on the one hand in order to share knowledge and on the other hand to gather knowledge and pave the way for ground-breaking innovations. This means that research has to be carried out by consortia of Dutch, international and local scientists. Research programmes involving international partners (including private actors) increase the chance of excellent science and effective innovation taking place. And the economic and scientific positioning of the Netherlands also benefits as a result, contributing to the competitive position of the Netherlands in the longer term.

International added value in education and research

For individual students, lecturers and researchers, working in an international environment is an enriching experience. Recent research by Nuffic shows that this added value includes learning to deal with diversity (acquiring intercultural skills), better career prospects and improved language skills in other languages⁹. But in terms of intellectual output, too, it is often extremely valuable to take part in an exchange via the European Erasmus programme or the Marie Skłodowska-Curie programme, a strategic partnership for educational innovation or a pioneering research collaboration in a transnational consortium. In addition, by attracting international researchers and lecturers, students come into contact with more diverse perspectives on their material. This helps international insights and knowledge to become part of the curriculum.

Targeted approach to talent

As far as mobility for incoming students is concerned, the aforementioned Interdepartmental Policy Review on the internationalization of (higher) education has shown that there are also challenges associated with internationalization, with warnings concerning the absorption capacity of Dutch higher education and accessibility at the system level. In addition to the measures subsequently taken in the Netherlands in the form of the Language and Accessibility Bill (Dutch acronym: WTT)¹⁰, the IKTS therefore also proposes a more targeted approach to the active recruitment of students from abroad. The government's commitment to attracting and retaining international talent is therefore linked to regions and sectors where (future) labour market shortages are expected, in particular engineering and information technology. The Netherlands also wants to continue to provide fertile ground for talented researchers, in accordance with the science letter.¹¹ This will make the recruitment of talent more efficient and more focused on the Netherlands' future earning capacity.¹²

⁹Nuffic (2020). The added value of internationalization in vocational and higher education. An inventory of research and opportunities for the future.

¹⁰Parliamentary papers II 2019/20, 3 5282-61

¹¹Parliamentary papers II 2018/19, 2 9338-186

¹²Cf. motion of Wiersma-Van der Molen, Parliamentary papers II, 2019/20, 35300 VIII-83

2. The need for direction and strategy

Our reference
26214618

For a number of reasons, the government now needs to approach international knowledge cooperation in a more strategic and integrated way, so that the Netherlands can retain its place at the top table:

- the importance of international cooperation for education and science;
- changing geopolitical circumstances;
- increasing competition for talent;
- the growing need to raise awareness of and tackle risks; *and*
- the broader importance of international cooperation in education and science for the Netherlands as a knowledge economy and in order to tackle global challenges.

Through cooperation between the government and the knowledge sector and linking up with the Netherlands' existing branding, we can prevent the efforts of the various government departments and knowledge institutions from becoming fragmented. And by profiling the knowledge sector in a more coordinated manner, we can add mass and effectiveness and promote mutual cooperation and synergy within the knowledge sector itself. In addition to providing a framework and promoting and facilitating international cooperation, in some cases the government can also play a role in providing funding – for example through scholarship programmes for specific countries or target groups, or by helping to organize a conference or developing large-scale research infrastructure.

Of course, this will leave all actors free to cooperate (internationally) outside the framework of the IKTS, but this joint effort will require direction and prioritization. To achieve this more strategic and integrated approach to collaboration on international knowledge, we intend to focus our collective efforts on:

Working together in sustainable, strategic partnerships on the basis of equality and reciprocity

Geopolitical developments and security factors will affect which partners we choose to enter into cooperation with, but also the principle of academic freedom.

We prefer to work with countries that ensure high quality standards in higher education and science, share our core academic values and can also partner with the Netherlands in the geopolitical field. Equality also relates to funding: when a research project is funded in full by a country that is not free, and that country also provides the relevant facilities, it is not inconceivable that our core academic values will be compromised. Reciprocity is about access to resources and information, and about being able to utilize research results.

The knowledge sector will benefit the most from sustainable, strategic partnerships between governments (government-2-government) and between knowledge institutions. Cooperation within what the European Commission terms the 'knowledge square' (education/science, innovation/business, government, civil society) is also suited to creating or reinforcing sustainable strategic partnerships.

Brain circulation

It is important that knowledge is able to circulate – whether through broad accessibility and open science or through 'brain circulation'. This is not only good for the Netherlands, but it also expands knowledge infrastructure and the quality of education and research elsewhere. In addition, returning students and researchers can become excellent

ambassadors for the Netherlands, just as Dutch researchers and students are flagbearers for the Netherlands abroad.

Our reference
26214618

Mobility among researchers was recently considered by an advisory committee.¹³ Based on its report, the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences concluded that there has been no brain drain or brain gain in the Netherlands over the past decade, but that there has been growing brain circulation. The number of scientific researchers who came to the Netherlands was in equilibrium with the number of researchers who left. We also see a reasonable balance in short-term student mobility, but when it comes to diploma mobility (students going abroad for an entire study programme), no brain circulation occurs. The harmful consequences of brain drain faced by certain already vulnerable countries must also be considered. The IKTS will therefore place less emphasis on the active recruitment of students from abroad, with the exception of certain sectors. By facilitating cooperation between institutions, the IKTS can also serve as a springboard for greater mobility for outgoing students, which may lead to a better balance in brain circulation. Work is also being done in this area at the European level, including through the European University Alliances, which promote cooperation and exchange between institutions from different parts of Europe.

Operating tactically in multilateral forums

The Netherlands uses multilateral forums such as the EU, the OECD and UNESCO to advance the academic values that are important to us: academic freedom, open science, reciprocity, excellence, greater diversity and inclusion, the wider recognition and appreciation of research results and career paths. As relationships in the world change, relations in multilateral forums are also shifting. It will therefore also be necessary to consider which countries we want to work closest with in order to build a stronger position within these multilateral forums, and thus create more fertile ground for our message, our interests and our academic values. By working more closely on education and science with certain countries, we are confident that the Netherlands is more likely to find allies in these countries with respect to our important input on the multilateral stage.

Capacity building and the sustainable development goals (SDGs)

Together with the EU, the OECD and UNESCO, we believe that the knowledge sector is crucial to achieving the SDGs. Indeed, the Dutch knowledge sector is already actively committed to achieving them. This is underscored continually by institutions and umbrella organizations. Much of this happens within the borders of the Netherlands. But Dutch knowledge institutions can also play a relevant role in international education and research partnerships – in the form of capacity building, for example. This often results in economic growth and makes a meaningful contribution to tackling global challenges, such as improving sustainability, tackling climate change and improving the quality of our living environment. International cooperation in this field also contributes to the further development of our national knowledge sector.

Knowledge diplomacy

International cooperation in education and research can also promote peaceful relations. Knowledge can be used to strengthen relations with certain countries - even countries with which we have a complex relationship. In situations where formal relations may be difficult, cooperation on education, research and innovation can ensure that people from different countries can continue to connect. Some specific examples of this are the projects from the NWO's Science Diplomacy Fund, such as workshops, seminars and exchanges that are designed

¹³ Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (2018). De aantrekkelijkheid van Nederland als onderzoeksland.

to strengthen ties with other countries. And this cuts both ways: healthy diplomatic links can also lead to opportunities for knowledge institutions and companies.

Our reference
26214618

3. Primary goals

Dutch knowledge institutions have a leading position and a good academic reputation due to the academic freedom that the Netherlands guarantees, as well as the open attitude of our knowledge institutions towards the world. Our activities abroad are designed actively to propagate our core values such as academic freedom, scientific integrity, openness, reciprocity, accessibility and institutional autonomy, and we also focus on knowledge security and preventing knowledge from getting into the wrong hands. The direction set out in the IKTS thus leads us to the following four primary goals:

1. Promote the quality of (higher) education and science in the Netherlands by strengthening international knowledge cooperation

- this will lead to a widening of horizons, it will facilitate preparations for an internationally connected labour market and provide a means of solving international problems together;
- it will ensure that our scientists and institutions can work with the best people and (large-scale) international research facilities; *and*
- it will contribute to our prosperity and well-being.

2. Strengthen our innovative capacity and the position of Dutch (higher) education and science abroad by improving its visibility and promoting exchange and long-term collaborative partnerships

- international educational and scientific cooperation, including with companies, institutes for applied research and civil society organizations, will improve the Netherlands' capacity for innovation and contribute to solutions to global problems and societal challenges in the Netherlands and abroad;
- this will improve the position and reputation of Dutch institutions and the sector in general abroad;
- it will reinforce the Netherlands's image as an advanced knowledge society, a competitive knowledge economy and an innovative, creative and inclusive country, in line with *NL branding*;
- when recruiting international students, we will opt for a targeted approach based on regions and sectors that have (or will have) shortages in the labour market, in particular engineering and information technology; *and*
- we will retain existing talent and attract new talent by offering a safe and pleasant working environment.

3. Strengthen Dutch policy through exchange and peer learning as part of bilateral and multilateral cooperation

- this will contribute to the quality and relevance of Dutch higher education and science policy;
- it will create opportunities to showcase Dutch policy and academic values, and thus create a wider reach;
- this will create opportunities to realize financing for international cooperation;
- the principles that are important to us around the wider recognition and appreciation of research results and career paths¹⁴ and around the active pursuit of greater diversity and inclusion in science and higher education¹⁵; *and*
- by cooperating internationally, we will prepare to make open science and open access the norm in publicly funded scientific research.

4. Address the global problems and societal challenges as formulated in the SDGs

Our reference
26214618

- cooperation on education and science will help to arrive at solutions to global problems and societal challenges, both in the Netherlands and abroad;
- in bilateral relations with other countries, knowledge and public-private research cooperation will strengthen the reputation and the competitive position of the Netherlands, and create opportunities to promote mutual understanding and trust (knowledge diplomacy);
- educational and scientific cooperation will strengthen knowledge and skills in all the countries involved, promote upward convergence and thus make an essential contribution to achieving the SDGs; *and*
- this will create opportunities to enter into a dialogue concerning norms and values (both academic and non-academic).

These goals can be pursued in conjunction and as individual goals.

4. Countries and areas of interest

The IKTS provides a guideline for international cooperation, and can therefore be used worldwide. Within this framework, the choice will be made to focus on a number of countries in the coming years in the joint efforts of the government and the knowledge sector. The choice of countries has been made on the basis of a combination of factors and criteria. We will focus on countries:

- that are the most crucial to our primary goals;
- where government commitment will provide the most added value in the field;
- where joint efforts will yield the most added value;
- that are relevant to the quality and innovation of education and research, either at present or in the near future;
- that provide substantive and economic opportunities for the Dutch knowledge sector;
- where our efforts have social relevance;
- with whom we have a historical relationship; *or*
- where our efforts serve a foreign policy interest.

For each country, further agreements will be made between the relevant players regarding cooperation and implementation. We will connect higher education and research to the international economic and foreign policy priorities of the Netherlands through tailor-made solutions for each country.

The countries of Europe are our main trading partners and allies with whom we have a great deal in common. The Netherlands therefore has a significant interest in maintaining good relations with these countries. Like-minded countries such as Germany, Belgium (particularly Flanders), the Nordic countries, the UK, Austria, France and Italy are logical partners in many respects. We are already working with many European countries – in the negotiations over European programmes, for instance. We can therefore strengthen and support one another. The US and other Anglophone countries outside Europe are also obvious partners for international cooperation in higher education and science. We would like to continue our existing cooperation with all these partners. However, the work that we do as part of the IKTS can only involve a limited number of countries. We will therefore concentrate our presence in European countries in a number of important missions. Within the EU, Germany and France are the most attractive countries for this. In addition, we are strengthening the embassy in London in order to continue the relationship with the UK after Brexit. English-speaking countries outside Europe are already relatively easily accessible for the knowledge sector, and the IKTS makes no specific additional provisions for these.

We have successful science and higher education partnerships with Indonesia, South Africa and Brazil, which we wish to continue supporting through the IKTS. For each of these countries, we will aim to expand our presence through the network of missions. A more detailed plan on how this will be done in the future will be drawn up for each country.

In Asia, in addition to Indonesia, we will focus on China, India, Japan and South Korea. In China, India and South Korea we are drawing up transitional plans for our presence following the closure of the NESO offices. There is already a great deal of activity with Japan in the field of science and innovation – from quantum technology to hydrogen. We will build on this by intensifying cooperation in higher education.

Cooperation with Switzerland and Israel would also seem logical. Both have high scores on various rankings relating to science and innovation, and Switzerland has a higher education system similar to that of the Netherlands. For both countries, an examination is underway regarding how the IKTS can support and strengthen existing cooperation and whether any presence would provide added value.

The refocusing of efforts also means that for a small number of countries a reduced presence is foreseen, or no presence at all. Activities are being phased out in Turkey, Mexico, Russia and Vietnam, for instance. This does not mean that cooperation is no longer possible with those countries. However, the provision of information about and support for that cooperation by the NESO office will be terminated or provided in a different way. In Russia, the NESO office will remain open longer than was previously reported to the House. This will provide a little more time to work on a structural solution that better safeguards the interests of people-to-people contacts, as set out in the letter addressed to the House by the Minister of Foreign Affairs.¹⁶ Discussions with Nuffic and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs regarding what the situation will look like afterwards have not yet been completed. There will be more details regarding each country no later than spring 2021.

This means that the focus on education and science via the mission network will be focused in the following countries: Germany, France, the UK, Brazil, China, India, Indonesia, Japan, South Africa, South Korea and possibly Israel and/or Switzerland. The exact form and scale of the activities for each country will be decided in more detail. The duties of the official concerned will include expanding and strengthening relationships with local government, knowledge institutions and other relevant organizations, as well as establishing cooperation and exchange between Dutch knowledge institutes and partners from the respective country. Specifically, the relationship of the education and science attachés with the innovation attachés that are part of the Ministry of Economic Affairs and located in eight of the ten countries selected will necessitate close cooperation and proper working agreements, both on location and in the Netherlands.

In addition, we will further develop the efforts of the knowledge sector in the field of capacity building and cooperation to achieve the SDGs in line with the policy agenda of the Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation.

Our reference
26214618

The IKTS adds to and builds on the government's efforts in the field of foreign trade and development cooperation. In close consultation with the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Minister of Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation, the IKTS will also take into account changing levels of prosperity and the development of knowledge infrastructure in the world. The Dutch knowledge sector can make a valuable contribution to building and strengthening knowledge infrastructure, including in the continent of Africa. This can be done by building on existing knowledge partnerships between the Netherlands and African countries, such as the knowledge platforms.

Multilateral work

We intend to promote and strengthen Dutch policy by prioritizing multilateral forums and collaborating with others. The Netherlands plays a pioneering, standard-setting role in this regard. This is already the case in the field of open science. Adding 'recognition and appreciation' to the international agenda could improve awareness of its importance, as well as greater diversity and inclusion in higher education and science. The flexibilization and modularization of higher education is another area where it would be valuable to cooperate across the EU or as part of Bologna, so that standards are adopted beyond just the Netherlands. Peer learning is an essential part of this. The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science and Nuffic are therefore working on promoting the recognition of micro credentials in Europe through European projects and working groups. Prioritizing the challenges that we face here in the Netherlands on the international agenda, both bilaterally and multilaterally, can also lead to the (quicker) discovery of solutions. The prioritization of 'brain circulation' in Europe is a good example of this.

European cooperation is also essential with respect to improving knowledge security, as I recently informed the House in my letter regarding knowledge security in higher education and research¹⁷. In order to prevent the undesirable transfer of knowledge and technology, knowledge security must be properly safeguarded in the countries with which the Netherlands has extensive scientific cooperation. The Netherlands plays an active role in a number of initiatives set up by the European Commission.¹⁸ We also want to work more closely with other European pioneers in the field of knowledge security. This will enable countries to learn from one another, share information and take forward the debate within Europe together. We will also look beyond the borders of Europe to learn from policies and measures that have been taken elsewhere.

We will base our work in multilateral forums on the policy goals taken from the Strategic Agenda for Higher Education and Research and the science letter mentioned previously. The commitment to working on the various multilateral forums set out in the IKTS will be developed in tandem with the work in the various countries selected. All of this will be presented in the spring of 2021.

¹⁷ Parliamentary papers II 2020/21, 2 020Z23069

¹⁸ For example, the process of arriving at European guidelines for higher education and research institutions, and in the EU knowledge network on cooperation in science and innovation with China.

Talent and missions

Facilitating innovative interdisciplinary modes of cooperation, such as enabling Living Labs abroad, is another way of identifying talent and facilitating outgoing student mobility. At present, Nuffic informs and inspires Dutch students regarding the options for outgoing mobility at one central location: the 'WilWeg' website. Additionally, through the 'Mobstacles' network - which comprises various stakeholders in and around the higher education sector - Nuffic is committed to identifying and removing obstacles to outgoing mobility, along with higher education institutions and partners in the sector.

The Netherlands has been highly successful in attracting international students in recent years. The government's policy is to attract more international talent in the Netherlands through instruments such as the Code of Conduct for International Students in Higher Education and the consequent short lead times for residence visas, the orientation year for highly educated individuals and the reduced salary criterion for the highly skilled migrant scheme. This is consistent with policy of the Ministry of Economic Affairs, which, together with regional and national partners, presents the Netherlands as an attractive location for international talent seeking paid employment. Campaigns are mainly aimed at attracting knowledge migrants who have the skills to take advantage of economic opportunities and societal challenges, including the energy transition, digitization and the (further) development of key technologies. Retaining international students in the Netherlands is another focus area. Efforts are already being made to involve Dutch employers at leading international universities and national and international events and career fairs. Other activities include the development of an information and landing page and a *Netherlands Branding* campaign aimed at attracting and retaining highly skilled international migrants. These will be launched by *The Netherlands Point of Entry*, part of the Netherlands Enterprise Agency (RVO), in early 2021.

With an attractive knowledge infrastructure and working environment to offer, the Netherlands also wishes to attract and retain a diverse range of research talent. This message can also be communicated through our economic missions abroad.¹⁹With respect to recruiting international students, the government wishes to shift the focus from quantity to quality. For the purpose of the IKTS, the active recruitment of students is therefore limited to study programmes in sectors where there is currently a labour market shortage.²⁰The Research Centre for Education and the Labour Market (ROA) predicts structural shortages in the education, healthcare, engineering and information technology sectors.²¹Recent research undertaken by the UWV indicates that, despite major shifts in the labour market due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the need for human resources in these sectors remains undiminished.²²In terms of recruiting international talent, however, the IKTS is limited to technology and ICT, because the ability to speak Dutch plays a greater role in education and healthcare than it does in engineering and information technology

¹⁹ Cf. motion of Wiersma-Van der Molen, Parliamentary papers II, 2019/20, 35282-35

²⁰ Cf. motion of Wiersma-Van der Molen, Parliamentary papers II, 2019/20, 35300 VIII-83

²¹ ROA (2019). The labour market by education and profession until 2024.

²² U WV (2020). *Promising and less promising professions: first inventory since the coronavirus pandemic*.

Language also plays a role in strengthening the ties of international students with Dutch culture and the Dutch labour market²³. These ties can already be encouraged when students take part in a study programme – by facilitating an introduction to (potential) employers in the Netherlands and giving students the opportunity to develop a professional network, for instance. There are also various examples of initiatives that focus on ties within a specific region and the regional labour market. Maastricht University offers an honours track at its Faculty of Data Science and Knowledge Engineering (DKE), for instance, in which talented (international) students work for a company in the region for two days a week and carry out a project there. The University of Twente has its Talent Pact with local government and local companies, to encourage talented graduates to move into the (regional) labour market. Maastricht University brings talented Dutch and international students closer to the labour market at its four ‘Brightlands’ campuses, which are located all across the province of Limburg.

The Technology Pact, about which the State Secretary for Economic Affairs and Climate Policy has already informed the House in a letter²⁴, also aims to encourage international graduates with technical skills that are scarce in the Netherlands to put down roots in our country. Various educational institutions and companies are already cooperating at the regional level to enable (international) students to gain work experience during their studies. The government will enter into discussions with institutions and Technology Pact partners to explore the options for expanding the range of work and internship positions available, and supporting the exchange of knowledge and best practices. Higher education institutions would like to explore the options for strengthening cooperation between higher education and the business community, for example by organizing (regional) matching days and career events, to bring students and (potential) employers closer to one another.

International students who do leave the Netherlands after finishing their studies can still act as ambassadors for the Netherlands, and are more likely to think of the Netherlands when carrying out research in their home country or doing business internationally. This means that they can also play a valuable role for the Netherlands. The same applies to students who have studied in the Netherlands through scholarship programmes, for example, and go on to use the knowledge and skills acquired to build capacity in their home country.

5. Implementation and toolbox

The government recognizes the importance of good cooperation between the various players, with enough scope to include everybody’s role and expertise. We therefore propose a coordination mechanism that will enable us to allow for those differences, but in which shared goals will lead the way. This joint strategy will allow room for flexibility and customization for different countries and forums. We are aiming for a multi-year approach that is consistent with the multi-year strategic country commitment, the Strategic Bilateral Agenda of the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Climate Policy, and the Knowledge and Innovation Covenants. In this way we can work on building constructive cooperation and arrive at a clear division of roles between the various partners. As indicated previously, the period up to 2024 will be a period of transition with scope for experimentation with new forms of collaboration.

Dutch representations abroad (the missions)

Our embassies and consulates-general are our eyes and ears abroad. They also have extensive local networks. This is important

²³ Cf. motion of Paternotte-Bruins, Parliamentary papers II, 2019/20, 35282-30

²⁴ Parliamentary papers II 2019/20, 3 2637-438

when it comes to building and maintaining relationships, identifying opportunities and matching supply with demand. Education and science attachés will therefore be posted to a number of missions during the transition period. At each mission, an examination will be conducted into how best to integrate the attachés in order to serve the interests of education and science and the Netherlands. We will ensure that the work done by the mission is consistent with the ambitions and possibilities of knowledge collaboration in the relevant country by creating links with the network(s) of innovation attachés and/or culture attachés. With respect to cooperation with the innovation attachés, coordination with the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Climate Policy in the Netherlands will also be important. Given the close relationship between science, technology and innovation, further agreements will be made.

Our reference
26214618

Umbrella organizations

The umbrella organizations for higher education, the VSNU (Association of Universities in the Netherlands) and VH (Association of Universities of Applied Science), will be closely involved in the work around the IKTS. Providing information to the institutions and input from the institutions to the IKTS partners will be an important aspect of this. The importance of a joint approach towards enhancing the reputation of the Dutch knowledge institutions and the positioning of the sector as a whole is clear. Individual educational institutions and research organizations that are active in the relevant countries are also invited to share their knowledge and expertise, whether through the umbrella organizations or through other channels.

Nuffic

Both Nuffic and NWO have an important supporting role to play in implementing the IKTS. Nuffic provides information and advice to Dutch educational institutions about their internationalization policy and oversees a number of scholarship programmes, including the *Holland Scholarship Programme*. As much as possible of the knowledge and expertise that has been amassed in the NESO network will be retained when implementing the IKTS and, where relevant, in the role of the education and science attaché. The transition period will be crucial for comprehensive knowledge transfer.

NWO, KNAW

The NWO (Dutch Research Council) and KNAW (Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences) are important government partners in science. The implementation of government policy on international research cooperation will largely follow the lead of the NWO. The NWO is funded by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, and subsequently oversees various research programmes that researchers from all over the world can take part in. To this end, the NWO has introduced *Money follows Cooperation* (MfC) and *Money follows Researcher* (MfR) within its regular funding grants. In addition, funding instruments have been established for multilateral and bilateral cooperation with sister organizations inside and outside Europe, including the Merian Fund (with its focus on the SDGs), Science Diplomacy and European partnerships in Horizon Europe, and cooperation is taking place on large-scale research infrastructure via the NWO institutes. The KNAW wishes to increase the influence of science on national and international policy by linking scientific knowledge to current issues. In Europe, for example, the KNAW is doing this through the Scientific Advice Mechanism (SAM) for the European Commission. There are also long-term partnerships with China and Indonesia. The KNAW thus acts as an advocate for Dutch science in Europe and the rest of the world.

Dutch (scientific) institutes abroad

Dutch institutes abroad represent a form of knowledge diplomacy *avant la lettre*. For countries with which relations are sometimes difficult, higher education and scientific cooperation can still take place through these institutes. By involving the institutes in the International Knowledge Strategy

we can bring in more knowledge about international cooperation abroad, expand the network involved in the IKTS and ensure that we have a shared face.

Our reference
26214618

Toolbox

The implementation partners identified above are in the best position to develop their toolbox and make joint agreements. We will ensure scope for flexibility for exactly this purpose. Support may consist of, for example, providing information, advice, matchmaking, visitor programmes, guidance and research. We also encourage the forging of better links with the knowledge sector during outgoing state visits and trade missions in the countries that are important in this strategy. Both the president of the KNAW (on behalf of the scientific field) and the motion of Wiersma-Paternotte²⁵ have asked for this.

The transition period (until the end of 2023) will be used to identify what is needed at which location and how best to approach cooperation. We will also look specifically at other opportunities for cooperation, such as:

- agreeing joint research themes with the relevant countries (at a high level) and bringing together the right partners: where can we strengthen one another? What is each partner good at? Which research and facilities can we use or set up together?
- removing obstacles (such as research visas, access to funding, access to organizations, access to research facilities, etc.);
- investing in long-term programmes for scientific cooperation that go beyond mobility: sharing results, using facilities, working remotely on joint research, using a research population from a specific country;
- encouraging outgoing mobility among students, lecturers and researchers (brain circulation);
- providing information about the bifurcated Dutch system of higher education;
- improving the competitive position of Dutch institutions
facilitating participation in missions *and*
- more targeted recruitment of talent.

6. Direction and coordination mechanism

The IKTS has come about partly as the result of specific requests from the higher education sector for a clearer direction from the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science. The home base for the coordination mechanism therefore resides within the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science. A multi-year strategic commitment to the IKTS will be decided together with the stakeholders in the coming period, with an elaboration for each country being completed in the spring of 2021. From 2021 onwards, a **semi-annual umbrella meeting** will be held (OCW, EZK, BZ/BHOS, VSNU, VH, NW O, KNAW, Nuffic).

In addition to this overarching meeting, there will be cooperation in the form of individualized solutions for each country. The directing role will lie with the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, but the **country teams** may also be coordinated by an external party or parties.

The **education and science attachés** will play an important role within each country team. A (semi-)annual

²⁵ Parliamentary papers II 2019/20, 3 5282-35

return week will be arranged, with a programme at OCW, partners and in the knowledge field.

Our reference
26214618

Knowledge exchange between partners (possibly regarding specific themes within the knowledge policy) will be encouraged by targeted information for stakeholders about (country) programmes and (multi-annual) schemes, and through training programmes and exchange of personnel.

7. Final points

International cooperation in the field of education and science provides an anchor for quality in our education, research and policy. It also contributes to our relations with other countries and reinforces our reputation and competitive position. Dutch students, lecturers and scientists are a calling card for Dutch higher education and research outside our country, and at the same time they can show how academic freedom and collaboration with companies, institutes for applied research and social organizations can lead to innovation and growth. They can therefore serve as an inspiration for colleagues abroad. We value this role in exchange and inspiration, and based on our joint responsibility we wish to support it in the years to come. We have opted for a targeted strategy involving a limited number of countries.

The Minister of Education, Culture and Science,

Ingrid van Engelshoven