

Give knowledge migrants and international talent more security of residence during the corona crisis

BLOG 'Migration in times of corona'



The Dutch newspaper [Het Financieele Dagblad](#) recently reported how Prof. Zadpoor of Delft University is developing a ventilator (respiratory equipment) consisting entirely of standard parts and therefore easy to reproduce. Zadpoor once came to the Netherlands to obtain his PhD and his innovative contribution has a global impact. Just like him, there are many knowledge workers and talents from abroad working in the Netherlands. Some of them experience insecurity over their residence status due to the corona crisis.

The Netherlands has an innovative economy, also thanks to migrants

According to the Dutch government, [innovation](#) is essential for our economy and necessary to secure jobs and income in the future. In this context, The Netherlands wants to be as attractive as possible as a country of destination for [highly skilled migrants](#), international entrepreneurs, [innovative start-ups](#) and [international students](#). Data from Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union, shows that at the end of 2018, more than 71,000 migrants had a residence permit in the Netherlands to work, and more than 28,000 to study. Dutch migration policy is aimed at attracting highly skilled migrants; they serve a [Dutch economic interest](#). To this end, we have relatively well-functioning policies, such as the [system](#) whereby highly skilled migrants quickly receive a residence permit when employed with an employer who is a recognized sponsor. In recent years the Netherlands has made a

lot of efforts to welcome enterprising international talent. Worth mentioning are Initiatives such as [the City Deal Warm Welcome Talent](#) and a scheme for innovative [start-ups](#). International students know how to find the Netherlands and make use of the [orientation year](#) to continue working here after their studies.

How can we sustain our talent and knowledge migrants in the corona crisis?

Good first steps have been taken in recent weeks:

- Employers of highly skilled migrants will [not be fined](#) by the Minister of Social Affairs and Employment if they are temporarily unable to meet the income standards;
- Self-employed persons, also with a non-permanent right of residence, may appeal to the [support measures](#) for entrepreneurs, although this is contrary to the conditions attached to their right of residence;
- Their right of residence will [not be jeopardized](#) by their recourse to public funds;
- The [IND website](#) points out to educational institutions that the corona crisis can be an excusable reason for insufficient study progress for international students.

The emergency measures still leave the target group in uncertainty on a number of points. Highly skilled migrants who unexpectedly lose their jobs are given three months to find new employment. This does not seem a realistic deadline at the moment. Former students in the middle of the orientation year now see no chance of finding a job before they must apply for an [extension of their residence permit](#). Also startups may not be able to develop their business further now, while they will have to show results at the end of their residency period. Possible solutions are:

1. **Freeze the time lapse in order to retain knowledge and talent for the Netherlands.** As soon as the supporting measures for the economy have been terminated, the search period or the period over which results must be shown can be resumed;
2. **Also support knowledge migrants during the corona crisis in employment mediation.** The UWV-EURES network works together with the National Platform [Nederland werkt door](#), offering support to European labour migrants who unexpectedly become unemployed. Pursuant to [European law](#) (Article 12 of Directive 2011/98), highly skilled migrants are equally entitled to support in employment mediation. This is an opportunity for the UWV and the international business community in The Netherlands to retain their international talent. It is conceivable, for example, to employ ICT professionals directly in essential positions. Think of extra ICT support for healthcare and educational institutions.
3. **Rule that highly skilled migrants who do not meet the income standard during the corona crisis do not lose their right of residence (even afterwards).** If employers of Highly Skilled Migrants invoke the Shortening of Working Time or the Emergency Measure Bridging for Work (NOW) of the UWV, and only pay 75% or 90% of the salary, it may happen that the Highly Skilled Migrant no longer meets the applicable income standard. According to the website of the IND, most recently visited on 29 April 2020, it was not yet known at that time whether this lower income would have consequences for the knowledge migrant's residence permit. "Discussions on this subject are still taking place between various departments. If more is known, this will be reported on this page". The consequence of insufficient income could, under normal circumstances, be the withdrawal of the residence permit.

Now we can show appreciation for knowledge and talent migrants that makes a substantial contribution to our innovative economy and research. Likely, we will need them in the near future in order to rebuild the economy in an innovative, creative and social way.

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